Essays Toward

A Symbolic of Motives

1950–1955

Kenneth Burke

Selected, Arranged, and Edited by
William H. Rueckert

Essays Toward a Symbolic of Motives, 1950–1955

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For David Blakesley and Barbara Rueckert,
Dedicated Burkeans
—WHR

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Preface

The purpose of this collection is to finally make available in a single volume the essential texts, some long out of print and hard to come by, some never published, from Burke's earliest version of *A Symbolic of Motives.* Some of the texts included here have been readily available in *Language as Symbolic Action*—such as the "Goethe's *Faust,* Part I" essay—but others have not, and they include most of the rest of the material in this collection. I have briefly discussed all of these selections in the Introduction, "Versions of *A Symbolic of Motives.*"

I am a big believer in the power of books, of having things readily available in a single volume one can take off the shelf and study over and over again. I have known most of the essays for a long time, but it has always been my ambition to have them in a single book on the shelf next to Burke's other books. Thanks to David Blakesley, Parlor Press, and my wife Barbara, I have finally realized that ambition in this, my last, Burke project.

William H. Rueckert
Fairport, NY
January, 2003

Introduction

We know of at least three versions of *A Symbolic of Motives:* there is the one that I have assembled here, which is now called *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives, 1950–1955*. It consists of selected essays from among those Burke wrote and published between 1950 and 1955, which he clearly indicated were to be part of *A Symbolic of Motives,* as he originally conceived it. He has left us various lists indicating which of these essays were to be part of *A Symbolic of Motives.* The most complete list[1] can be found at the end of his essay, "Linguistic Approach to Problems of Education" (1955). I have included selections from that essay in this collection, as well as the list of items Burke added in a footnote at the end of the essay. The second version of *A Symbolic of Motives* is called *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered,* which

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[1] At the end of "Linguistic Approach to Problems of Education" (1955), Burke writes:

> A work now in preparation, *A Symbolic of Motives,* will deal with poetics and the technique of "indexing" literary works. Meanwhile, among articles by the present author already published on this subject are: "The Vegetal Radicalism of Theodore Roethke" (*Sewanee Review,* Winter 1950); "Three Definitions" (*Kenyon Review,* Spring, 1951); "*Othello:* An Essay to Illustrate a Method" (*Hudson Review,* Summer, 1951); "Form and Persecution in the *Oresteia*" (*Sewanee Review,* Summer, 1952); "Imitation" (*Accent,* Autumn, 1952); "*Ethan Brand:* A Preparatory Investigation" (*Hopkins Review,* Winter, 1952); "Mysticism as a Solution to the Poet's Dilemma" (in collaboration with Stanley Romaine Hopper (*Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature,* edited by Stanley Romaine Hopper, published by Institute for Religious and Social Studies, distributed by Harper & Bros., 1952); "Fact, Inference, and Proof in the Analysis of Literary Symbolism" (paper presented at Thirteen Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion, and published in a volume distributed by Harper & Bros., 1954).

Burke wrote and assembled from published and unpublished material from 1957 to 1958, during the year he spent as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. Burke sent me a copy of this manuscript in 1959, after I first wrote to him. He also sent it to others and distributed it in multi-lithographed form to his classes at the Indiana School of Letters. Many Burke scholars are familiar with this manuscript. David Cratis Williams has written a long, comprehensive essay on this manuscript, which he included in *Unending Conversations,* the volume of Burke studies and writings that he edited with Greig Henderson in 2001. The third version of *A Symbolic of Motives* is actually called *A Symbolic of Motives.* I first saw this manuscript when Anthony Burke sent me a copy after he discovered it among Burke's papers in the house at Andover after Burke's death in 1993. As far as we can now tell from Burke's letters to me and others, Burke put this version of *A Symbolic of Motives* together from published and unpublished material around 1963. We know that Burke gave copies of it to others, like Trevor Melia when he was at Pittsburgh, long before I ever saw it, but that nobody ever did anything with it until I sent a copy to David Cratis Williams while he and Greig Henderson were choosing the material that would go into *Unending Conversations.* This was Burke's last serious attempt to prepare a coherent, sustained version of *A Symbolic of Motives.* He abandoned this manuscript midway through Part 2 while he was revising and shortening his long essay entitled "The Thinking of the Body." This essay must have been written sometime after 1955. Burke included a long version of it in *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered,* published it separately in *The Psychoanalytic Review* in 1963, and included a shortened version of it in *Language as Symbolic Action.* Although there are references to a Part 3 in this third version of *A Symbolic of Motives,* there is no indication anywhere of what Burke intended to include in Part 3. We know from his letters that Burke was still struggling with *A Symbolic of Motives* in 1969 after Libbie died when he spent some time at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs. Burke finally abandoned his attempts to put any kind of version of *A Symbolic of Motives* together in the late 1970s.

What we have, then, are three versions of *A Symbolic of Motives* and more than twenty years of struggle on Burke's part while whatever *A Symbolic of Motives* was to be underwent a whole series of transformations in his mind and in his published and unpublished work.

Burke began work on *A Symbolic of Motives* as soon as he finished *A Rhetoric of Motives* in 1950. His intention from the very beginning was to write a dramatistic poetics to go with his dramatistic *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives.* By 1955, he clearly had enough written and published on this project to make a book called *A Symbolic of Motives.* But there were some problems that must have stopped him. He did not like Prentice-Hall and did not want to go on with them as his publisher. He had begun his relationship with Hermes in 1951 and was engaged, with them, in reissuing all of his books from the 1930s, plus his first book of poetry, *A Book of Moments.* His work on the poetics also was bogged down in his attempt to work out the physiological counterparts of his theory of catharsis—the central concept in his poetics. He began to do this in an essay called "The Thinking of the Body" in which he tries to show that the pity, fear, and pride that were purged in tragedy, according to Aristotle, had their physiological counterparts in the sexual, urinal, and fecal purges of the body, which Burke had identified as the "demonic trinity" in his *A Grammar of Motives.* Burke began to insist that no catharsis was complete until these bodily purges had been expressed in the imagery of a given work. Burke's long essay "The Thinking of the Body" is an attempt to prove this thesis and involves him in some of the most tortured and absurd analyses he ever wrote, most of which are dependent upon the analysis of what he takes to be puns and hidden references to what he liked to call the no-no realm of the three bodily functions mentioned above. The absurdities to which proving this thesis led Burke can be clearly seen in the final pages of the third version of *A Symbolic of Motives* in which he revises and shortens "The Thinking of the Body" essay and offers us long lists of the many kinds of references that could be functioning as puns and hidden references to various kinds of bodily purgative functions.

Burke was very busy with a variety of projects between 1950 and 1961 when *The Rhetoric of Religion* was published and then again in the early and mid-1960s when he resolved his problems about a publisher and began his happy relationship with the University of California Press—thanks largely to the work of Bob Zachary. A *Symbolic of Motives* got lost in all of this because Burke still could not decide what to do with it or how to put together what he had written to make a book. The closest he came to presenting us with a coherent version of his dramatistic poetics was in *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered*

which, although it seems complete as it stands, Burke never seemed inclined to have published as a book but let circulate as a manuscript for all of those years. Burke did include material that was clearly part of all three versions of *A Symbolic of Motives* in *Language as Symbolic Action,* and although he did occasionally try to work on *A Symbolic of Motives* after that, he had really abandoned the project because in most ways, his dramatistic poetics was all written in one form or another and complete for anyone who wanted to take the trouble to assemble the different essays and manuscripts and work the theory and methodology out. As usual, Burke was ready to move on to new projects, and did, after *Language as Symbolic Action.* Libbie Burke's death in 1969, after her long terminal illness, was a devastation to Burke. Libbie Burke was always a great champion of *A Symbolic of Motives.* We know that she typed the third version and that she kept at Burke to finish this grand project. Had she stayed well and lived, he might have brought it to closure. As it was, Burke lost his drive to make books, although he never lost his drive to keep writing, to keep working out his latest project, which was logology. He worked on with great energy and intellectual vigor until 1984 when he finally completed the two new afterwords for *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes toward History.* But he never resumed work on his *Symbolic of Motives* after 1969, even though he refers to it in notes for some of his essays in the 1970s.

If we want to know what Burke's never-published *A Symbolic of Motives* is all about, what his dramatistic poetics consisted of, we have to work our way through all three of his versions of it and sort them out to try to determine the transformations that the original conception of it went through and why, as David Cratis Williams has argued, Burke was never able to settle on any single conception of what *A Symbolic of Motives* was to be. Here, then, is a brief summary of what we have in the three versions that Burke left us between 1950, when he first began writing the essays that were to go into *A Symbolic of Motives* and what he took out of these different versions to include in *Language as Symbolic Action* in 1966. The three versions have the following titles in what follows: *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives, 1950–1955*, *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered* (1957–1958), and *A Symbolic of Motives* (1963–1964), and, finally, *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966). All of these versions of what might have been in *A Symbolic of Motives* had Burke ever decided to make a book or books of it have been discussed at some length in my book, *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human*

Relations, 2nd edition, and by David Cratis Williams and I in our essays in *Unending Conversations.* Other Burke scholars, such as Robert Wess, have also discussed them. Hopefully, at some future point, all three versions will be published and we will have all the necessary texts readily available to us for study and analysis.

In *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives, 1950–1955*, I have selected only some of the major essays Burke wrote and published in this time period while he was still working from his original conception of what *A Symbolic of Motives* should be, as he defined it in *A Rhetoric of Motives.* Burke's grand plan for his dramatistic project was to follow Aristotle and write a modern grammar, rhetoric, poetics, and ethics. Working with a five-year schedule, Burke published *A Grammar of Motives* in 1945, *A Rhetoric of Motives* in 1950 and was ready, it seems, to publish *A Symbolic of Motives* in 1955, and, presumably, his *Ethics of Motives* by 1960, at the end of a twenty-year period of prodigious work and thought. But Burke became a victim of his own genius and his tendency to succumb to what he has called the "counter-gridlock motive." In the twenty years after *A Rhetoric of Motives* was published, which were certainly among the most productive years of Burke's long and productive life, he pursued one project after another: he finished up his work on Dramatism with his omnibus *Language as Symbolic Action* collection of essays; he began work on Logology with *The Rhetoric of Religion;* he had his books from the 1930s reissued by Hermes, he found a new publisher for *The Rhetoric of Religion* in The Beacon Press, and began his relationship with the University of California Press which, at one time in the 1970s had all of Burke's books in print at the same time; he traveled and taught and lectured all over the United States; he became famous both here and abroad. It is no wonder, then, that *A Symbolic of Motives* never got assembled and published as a book, though it certainly got finished—that is, thoroughly worked out—as Burke's dramatistic poetics. What we lack is not the dramatistic poetics, but a definitive version of it as selected and arranged by Burke. Burke was a great reviser and a careful arranger of the material that was included in his published books. But he did not leave any instructions as to how he would have put *A Symbolic of Motives* together in one or, probably, two volumes, and although he left us lists of essays written between 1950 and 1955 that were to be part of his *Symbolic of Motives,* he did not indicate how to arrange them or

even which ones would have survived and been included when final decisions had to be made.

I have arranged the material included in *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives, 1950–1955* in a logical rather than a chronological way. The essays in Part I are methodological in the sense that they represent points of departure for a dramatistic analysis. The essay on "Imitation" is common to all versions of *A Symbolic of Motives* in one form or another because Burke kept revising it when he did later versions. It is essential to Burke's dramatistic analysis because it redefines imitation to include the essential Burkean conception of entelechy—or the drive toward perfection intrinsic to language and to all forms of imitation and to literature in general. Burke loved definitions, as we can see in "Three Definitions," and always preferred to work from them, as is obvious in the individual analyses in Part II or in Burke's "Definition of Man" in *Language as Symbolic Action.* In "The Language of Poetry 'Dramatistically' Considered, Part 1," Burke uses the classic definitions for the three main functions of language (to teach, to please, to persuade) and adds a fourth, to portray, as a way of understanding what it is poetry (literature in general) does. The final methodological essays, "Fact, Inference, and Proof" defines and illustrates two of Burke's most basic analytic approaches to a text, Indexing and Joycing (pun analysis) and uses Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* to illustrate the application of these analytic techniques. Both are featured in all of Burke's dramatistic analyses of individual texts. Properly understood, Indexing is the key to Burke's theory of what a literary text is and how it works, and Joycing is one of the keys to Burke's theory that words contain multiple meanings.

Part 2 contains five essays that show Burke at work on individual texts and the work of individual authors—Roethke ("The Vegetal Radicalism of Theodore Roethke," 1950) and Whitman ("Policy Made Personal: Whitman's Verse and Prose-Salient Traits," 1955). Two of these essays—"The *Oresteia,"* 1952, and "*Othello:* an Essay to Illustrate a Method," 1951—work out Burke's theory of tragedy as an imitation of a tension, and the other, "*Ethan Brand:* A Preparatory Investigation," 1952, is one of the best examples we have of how Burke sets up a text in order to go to work on it. All of Burke's literary criticism is characterized by an emphasis on individual texts and what he liked to call their labyrinthine internal consistency.

The two selections in Part 3 are intended to explain, in different ways, what Burke means by "socioanagogic" and why he selected whole texts as his representative anecdotes. The selections from "Linguistic Approach to Problems of Education," 1955, is probably Burke's most concise and articulate discursive explanation of why he analyzes texts the way he does; and the analysis of "Goethe's *Faust,* Part 1," 1955, is probably Burke's most brilliant and comprehensive dramatistic analysis of a single text we have. Only his analysis of "*Othello:* an Essay to Illustrate a Method" can really be compared to it for what it tells us about Burke's dramatistic poetics and what it reveals to us about Burke as a literary critic.

I have deliberately minimized my commentary on these selections because, for one thing, I have discussed this material before in *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations* and because I want readers to encounter Burke's analyses directly and experience the full force of his encounters with these great texts and, to use his own terminology, to "earn" them for themselves. These early essays that Burke wrote for *A Symbolic of Motives* are among the most concentrated and most detailed analyses of individual texts that Burke ever wrote in his long involvement with literature. They reveal Burke at the height of his powers as a reader (analyzer and interpreter) of texts, fulfilling his own definition that the original *A Symbolic of Motives* should be devoted to the study of individual, self-contained symbolic actions and structures.

If we take the list of essays that I have included in *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives, 1950–1955*, all of which are on Burke's 1955 list of what was to be included in *A Symbolic of Motives,* and compare it to the contents of *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered,* his second version of *A Symbolic of Motives,* which he wrote and assembled in 1957 and 1958, we have a ready way to see what transformations occurred in Burke's conception of *A Symbolic of Motives* between the first and second versions. It is easy to do this by noting, what, based on version one, has been included, excluded, and added in version two.

Poetics, Dramatistically Considered

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Still to come, Burke says in a note, are a section on comic catharsis, further references to individual works, footnotes indicating other developments, and an appendix reprinting various related essays.

First of all, note that the only individual text left for analysis in this list is the *Orestes* trilogy and that all of the other individual texts and individual author analysis have been excluded. What has been added is all of the new material on catharsis: "Catharsis, First View," "Pity, Fear and Pride," "The Thinking of the Body," "Beyond Catharsis" and "Catharsis, Second View." It is true that there are many references to individual texts in all this new material on catharsis, but there are no sustained analyses like the one of "*Ethan Brand:* A Preparatory Investigation," "*Othello:* An Essay to Illustrate a Method," and "Goethe's *Faust,* Part I" nor any analyses like those of Roethke and Whitman. Also gone is most of the material I included in *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives, 1950–1955*, Part 1, especially items 2, 3, and 4. What is left or still included is the essay on "A 'Dramatistic' View of Imitation" and multiple references to Aristotle, drama, and tragedy. Most of *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered* works out a theory of drama, tragedy, and literature in general as symbolic action. The major emphasis in *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered* is on catharsis, both as Aristotle defines it and as Burke redefines it, adding pride to pity and fear, and adding the whole concept of body thinking (the demonic trinity, the physiological counterparts of pity, fear and pride—the sexual, urinal, and fecal—to the cathartic process. Catharsis—the purgative redemptive motive—has been at the center of Burke's thinking about literature since *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, but what is added in *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered* is what Burke describes as his great

"breakthrough" in his thinking about his dramatistic poetics, which is "The Thinking of the Body" essay, and Burke's insistence in that essay that, to be complete, all cathartic experiences must also express the three major bodily motives, or Freud's cloacal motive, the whole realm of privacy. As Burke says in his note on this essay, once this idea occurred to him about the thinking of the body, it ran away with him and he used his considerable intellectual powers and ingenuity to work the idea out and to apply it, with his usual thoroughness, to a great variety of most unlikely texts. The original version of this essay in *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered* is 104 typescript pages. All the later, revised versions are much shorter.

After *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered* in 1957 and 1958, Burke was preoccupied with other matters than *A Symbolic of Motives*—chiefly with logology and *The Rhetoric of Religion,* which he had begun writing, and with the Hermes editions of his works of the 1930s. Burke did not go back to his *A Symbolic of Motives* until the early 1960s after *The Rhetoric of Religion* was published in 1961 and he had written the final chapter for it, his masterful dialogue between TL (The Lord) and S (Satan), "Epilogue: Prologue in Heaven." When he did go back to *A Symbolic of Motives,* probably in 1963, he wrote and assembled what I have called the third version of *A Symbolic of Motives,* the manuscript that was actually called *A Symbolic of Motives* and was more about 270 pages long and clearly a sustained and coherent effort to rethink his *A Symbolic of Motives* by choosing a different point of departure (*A Symbolic of Motives,* third version, begins where *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered* ends, with an essay called "The Poetic Motive" (see the table of contents for this manuscript in *Unending Conversations*) and proceeding in a very orderly fashion in Part 1 from language in general, to poetry in particular, and then to imitation, catharsis, examples from many different kinds of literary works, tragedy, and finally his breakthrough in the much-revised "Thinking of the Body" material in Part 2, where the manuscript abruptly ends.

The history of *A Symbolic of Motives* after this point gets very complicated because of the essays Burke decided to write in the 1960s and because of what he decided to include in *Language as Symbolic Action* in 1966 from his earlier versions of *A Symbolic of Motives* and from the many essays he wrote in the early 1960s. From the earlier version of *A Symbolic of Motives,* Burke included the Roethke essay (1950), a revised and shortened version of his *Oresteia* essay (1952), the whole of the

"Goethe's *Faust,* Part I" essay (1955) which was originally published as parts 2 and 3 of "The Language of Poetry Dramatistically Considered," "The Poetic Motive" (1958), "The Thinking of the Body" (1957–1958) in a shortened, revised version, which first appeared in full in *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered,* various versions of essays on language in general and poetry in particular that were part of *A Symbolic of Motives,* version three, and *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered.* Burke also included all of the literary essays he wrote in the early 1960s in Part 2 of *Language as Symbolic Action,* which really completed work on his dramatistic poetics when combined or added to what we have in the three earlier versions of *A Symbolic of Motives* and the long essay on St. Augustine's *Confessions* that he included in *The Rhetoric of Religion.* Burke seldom wrote about literary texts after 1966, one of the few exceptions being his 1969 essay on *King Lear* ("Form and Psychosis in *King Lear*"). He was done with his dramatistic poetics and focused his mind and energy on logology, which was his successor to dramatism. *Language as Symbolic Action* is really the culmination of Burke's long involvement with dramatism, which began after *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941) and lasted for the next twenty-five years.

Burke maybe showed more sense than most of the critics who kept asking him when he was going to finish his Symbolic—or, as he referred to it in his years with one of his wonderful puns, his Sin Ballix. He kept insisting that it was done and that all of it had been published or was available in manuscripts so why make a fuss about getting it out in a single book. Yes and no to that. Much of it had been published, but going back over the documents as I have done here, one realizes that by 1993 when Burke died, much of what had been published was out-of-print or that Burke had revised and shortened many of the original essays so that it was not really possible to get a sense of the nature of Burke's achievement in his mature years as a literary critic. In fact, Burke has sort of been forgotten as a literary critic as scholars have become absorbed in working out dramatism or logology or Burke's comic perspective or his rhetoric and his language theory and the place of all this in the whole movement toward explaining everything in terms of language that has prevailed in recent years. Burke, of course, encouraged this because of the centrality of language in both dramatism and logology and the emphasis on rhetoric throughout his work and his insistence that his work is really primarily about the drama of human relations (*On Human Nature*) rather than literature.

My purpose here in collecting some of the early essays Burke wrote for his *A Symbolic of Motives* is to reclaim a little of Burke for literary criticism. I first encountered Burke in his capacity as a literary critic and it was with his literary criticism that I did my first serious work on him way back when. I have been down a lot of different roads with Burke since then, so I suppose it is most appropriate that I end up where I began in this attempt to reclaim some of him for literature and literary criticism, which after all were my own fields for all my years of teaching and writing. It seems ironic to me now that when I began writing on Burke in the late 1950s, all of the essays that I have collected here were available for study, but what eventually happened to his *A Symbolic of Motives* over the years through 1966 was not, and it is only after Burke died and finally let go of all this material (because he would not agree to any arrangement of it while he was alive), that it became possible to finally study the unpublished manuscripts as well as all of the published material and begin to make sense out of it and see it for what it is and rediscover the power and resourcefulness of Burke's dramatistic poetics.

Hopefully, another scholar will do for the third version of *A Symbolic of Motives* what David Cratis Williams has done for *Poetics, Dramatistically Considered"* and then someone will come along and put all these dramatistic poetics texts into their appropriate place in relation to Burke's other books and dramatism as a whole and establish or re-establish Burke's proper place in the history of modern American literary criticism.

—*William H. Rueckert*

Essays Toward a Symbolic of Motives, 1950–1955

Part 1

Some Basic Requirements for a Dramatistic Poetic

1

A "Dramatistic" View of "Imitation"[1]

[This is an excerpt from a much longer essay concerned with the "carving out" of a Poetics, and taking Aristotle's treatise as its point of departure. Its stress upon "Dramatism," as contrasted with "scientism," is in no way meant to imply a derogation of science as such. The "Dramatistic" perspective approaches the poem in terms of *action,* whereas "scientism" approaches the poem in terms of *knowledge.* And the author would contend that, though poems, and even works of sheer persuasion, may have value as information, or "news," the direct approach to their nature as forms is not through such a route.

Any scientific work can be studied purely for its persuasiveness or beauty (i.e., as rhetoric or poetic); any rhetorical work can be studied purely for its beauty or truth (i.e., as pure poetry or as scientific information); and any poem can be studied either as a piece of rhetorical exhortation or as a means of purveying information (news, knowledge, science). But *essentially, culminatively,* it is only *scientific* works that should be approached *directly* in terms of truth, knowledge, perception, and the like. (Unless we have overlooked it, the word "truth" does not appear in the *Poetics.* It does, however, appear in many scientistically tinged translations.)

In the present pages, we consider Aristotle's key term, *mimesis,* from this point of view, as we try to show how the *culminative* emphasis in his notion of the "entelechy" was obscured by a notion of representa-

[1] *Accent* 12.4 (August 1952): 229–41. © The Kenneth Burke Literary Trust. Used by permission.

tion that is nearer to the stress upon the average or "statistical" as a test of the representative. Othello, for instance, would be a "culminative" or "entelechial" depiction of a jealous husband. He is not the statistical average (though some people seem to think they have reclaimed him for science by discovering that there actually was one notorious case of a Moor who strangled his wife in Shakespeare's time).]

"Dramatistically," we would admonish that "imitation" and "representation" are not wholly adequate translations of *mimesis.* These words are slightly too "scientist" in their connotations. There is no reason to replace them, particularly since the usage has been established by so many centuries of tradition—and there are no handier equivalents anyhow. We need merely to point out the respects in which, unless we deliberately make allowance for differences between the original word and its translations, the translations can mislead.

First, when you are told that drama is "the imitation of an action" (sometimes also phrased as "imitation of life" or "imitation of nature") you might get around the overly photographic or "documentary" suggestions in such expressions by recalling that Aristotle also lists flute-playing and lyre-playing as "imitations." The overly scientist emphasis may also arise in this way: Where the original says merely *mimesis,* translators often add words, making the statement read "imitations (or representations) of life (or of nature)."

Greek tragedy being much nearer to grand opera than to the style of modern naturalism, its "imitations" included many ritualistic elements (as with the masks of the actors and the traditional dance movements of the chorus) that could only be interpreted as *interferences* with imitation, if the term had merely some such meaning as the faithful depicting of the "lifelike."

For a beginning, let us consider a scattering of terms that might help us loosen up our notion of "imitation." To an extent, we might substitute: "the *miming* of an action." (Recall where Chaplin, for instance, "imitates" a dancer by taking two forks, sticking a roll on the end of each, and acting "life-like" *in terms of this* greatly disparate medium.) Or: "the ritual figuring of an action" (since Greek tragedy was built about "quantitative" parts that, whatever their origin in nature, were as ceremonious as the processional and recessional of the Episcopalian service). Or: "the stylizing of an action." (The characters in Greek tragedy stood for certain civic functions somewhat as with

the heroic posturing of an equestrian statue in a public park.) Or: "the symbolizing of an action." (Hence, we would hold that our term, "symbolic action," aids greatly in the reclaiming of lost connotations here.)

"Nature" or "life" is the world of *history.* And history in Aristotle's scheme is the realm of *particulars,* whereas he tells us that "imitations" are concerned with *universals.* What does he mean by this distinction? (The distinction would allow us to add, among our scattered correctives, "the universalizing of an action.")

The difficulty seems to involve the fact that many critics who have directly or roundabout adored Aristotle's stress upon "imitation" do not at all share the particular "philosophy of the act" implicit in his use of the term. Such short-cutting makes for what we call the "scientist" fallacy, a materialist stress upon the scenic document, "truth to life" in an "informational" sense, whereas Aristotle rated Spectacle (that is, scene) as the lowest among the six parts of Tragedy. An obscuring of the distinction (Coleridge's) between "imitation" and "copy" results, we believe, from the use of Aristotle's term without reference to the theory of the "entelechy" that was an integral part of it.

The world of modern technology is so thoroughly built in accordance with concepts of place and motion developed from Galileo and similar experimental geniuses, that if we approach the whole subject of motivation from this point of view, not only shall we not believe in the notion of the "entelechy," we shall have trouble in understanding it, and even more trouble in understanding how anybody ever could have believed in it.

In Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry,* there is a passage admirably designed to show how the notion of the "entelechy" gradually ceased to be applied in the Western critics' use of the term, "imitation." (And since the "entelechy" is essentially Dramatistic, a term for action, in contrast with the great Renaissance inquiries into *motion,* it would be fitting to recall that Sidney was a contemporary of Galileo's, though Galileo survived him by more than half a century.) Sidney is discussing the "Heroical" (that is, Epic poetry):

> But if anything be already said in the defense of sweet Poetry, all concurreth to the maintaining the Heroical, which is not only a kind, but the best, and most accomplished kind of Poetry. For as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so

> the lofty images of the Worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy [let us at this point interrupt to recall the almost psychotic emphasis upon the *digne* and *indigne* in Corneille's tragedies, the test of worthiness being, of course, such as fits the ideals of the French court, or more specifically, submission to the French monarch, whose rule was by Corneille identified with both the will of God and the love of country] and informs with counsel how to be worthy. Only let *Aeneas* be worn in the tablet of your memory, how he governeth himself in the ruin of his Country, in the preserving his old Father, and carrying away his religious ceremonies: in obeying the God's commandment to leave *Dido,* though not only all passionate kindness, but even the humane consideration of virtuous gratefulness, would have craved other of him. How in storms, how in sports, how in war, how in peace, how a fugitive, how victorious, how besieged, how besieging, how to strangers, how to allies, how to enemies, how to his own: lastly, how in his inward self, and how in his outward government. . . .

Now, in the "entelechy" is the idea that a given kind of being fully "actualizes" itself by living up to the potentialities natural to its kind. (Man is not wholly complete as man, for instance, unless he has completely attained the rational maturity possible to man as a species. A tree's actualization requires not only not rationality, but not even locomotion for its completeness of being, though of course its actualization requires the kinds of motion needed for its growth.) We can see the strong vestiges of "entelechial" thinking in Sidney's statement; for he would have us note how Aeneas imitates kinds of perfection (finishedness, completeness, in the sense of "the compleat angler"). According to this interpretation, by "how in storms" Sidney means that Virgil shows Aeneas perfectly *storm-tossed;* "how a fugitive" would mean, the sum-total of fugitive, the very essence of the fugitive, the embodiment of the exact traits, in the exact proportions, that would best imitate the fugitive's role.

No, we would modify our account here somewhat. Pure entelechial imitation would obviously have a less moralistically didactic slant

than we find in Sidney's formula. Already, the entelechy is on the way out. Insofar as foul-mouthed Thersites, in the *Iliad,* is the "perfect" exemplar of what Hegel calls "Thersitism," he too would be an entelechial imitation. A playwright entelechially motivated might thus look not just for perfect heroes; he would also seek for the exact situation, the exact expressions, the exact relationships, the exact thoughts and choices, that would constitute the perfect coward, the perfect hypocrite, the perfect traitor, and so on.

We do not say that the actual concept of the entelechy is needed for literary criticism. We are saying that the full significance of "imitation" has been lost to us—and by thinking of the "entelechial principle" we can better discount the scientist meanings that have engrafted themselves upon the strongly Dramatistic term. Philip Wheelwright's thoughtful translation of selections from Aristotle variously renders the term as: "actuality," "fulfilment," "state of perfect fulfilment," "realization," "full actual character." W. R. Ross, for the *Metaphysics,* uses "complete reality." In his introduction to an edition of Leibnitz's *Monadology,* Robert Latta defines entelechy as "the principle of a thing in the sense of its implicit perfect realization." And in another passage he says: "*Entelecheia* in Aristotle is the state of perfection or realization in which *energeia* [actualization] as a process, ends." Windelband gives his definition a somewhat idealistic twist: "self-realization of the essence in the phenomena." *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Eleventh Edition: "The perfection of the form of a thing is its entelechy, in virtue of which it attains its fullest realization of function." Zeller points to the etymology: "Entelecheia means that which has its perfection, its end *(telos*) in itself."

In the *De Anima,* Aristotle calls the soul an entelechy. In the *Metaphysics* the term is applied to God, the "first essence," which "has no matter because it is complete reality."

Leibnitz borrowed the word to describe his monads, each of whom is said to be an entelechy. The word here means *tendency* of a thing to unfold its nature. But the application is atomistic, and incipiently scientist (since each monad is said to be a unit of innate *perception,* a notion that fits well with the epistemological turn from act to cognition as generating principle of the terminology).

However, Leibnitz's notion of his sensitive monads, each partially reflecting the nature of the entire universe, is useful for our purposes. He says: "The world is entirely in each of its parts, but more distinctly

in some than in others." This may or may not be true of the particles that compose the material universe, but it is certainly true of the various terms that cluster together in a single universe of discourse. Hence our belief that *entelecheia* is present, though not "distinctly," in Aristotle's use of *mimesis* with regard to the symbolic action of poetry.

We might put it thus: Given the full range of human characters and situations there would not merely be the entelechial imitating of man's noblest potentialities *qua* man; there would also be the actualizing of human types within the species. For though man, in his perfection, would be essentially rational, according to the Aristotelian scheme, there will also be characteristic ways of departing from this rationality. And the entelechial principle would prevail insofar as you "imitate" any such departure, or imitate different situations. Thus the ruler's typical ways of being to perfection "himself" as ruler would differ from those in which the poet might "be himself," etc.

We deliberately use here the expression "be oneself" to give a glimpse of entelechial thinking behind the formula, though the notion of "kind" has been individualized. One is exhorted to be a kind all by oneself, in accordance with idealistic emphases that transform the realistic concern with role or act into a cult of "pure" personality.

This is not the place to consider at length the many ways in which the *entelechial* principle was later lost in the idea of "imitation," or warped into a different shape by the increasingly "scientist" connotations that obscured the original implications of the term. But a few of the main ones are obvious, since they can be seen in Sidney's statement.

The didactic emphasis (the Renaissance stress upon "instruction" as an important element of poetry) is the first great deviation. The how's of Sidney's statement were given a moralistically pragmatic slant, with the hierarchal motive in art conceived too narrowly. Thus when discussing "the utility of tragedy" (*Reflections on the Poetic Art,* Section XLV) Fontenelle says that he does not understand Aristotle's formula for "the purgation of the passions by means of the passions"; then he continues:

> It seems to me that the greatest utility of the theatre is to render virtue amiable to men, to accustom them to interest themselves in virtue, to touch their hearts, to put before them great examples of resoluteness and courage in their misfortunes, and by that

> means to fortify and elevate their sentiments. From that it follows that not only must characters be virtuous but also that they must be virtuous in the proud and elevated manner of Corneille, so that they will strengthen the heart and give lessons in courage.
>
> There are endless variants on this notion, of tragedy as a set of models for noble action (though the connotations of nobility gradually shift from the gestures of the Court to the bourgeois virtues of sentiment, a shift discernible in the Fontenelle quotation).

By the same token, comedy is praised for producing the same effect by opposite means, since it uses ridicule to deter men from temptations that would threaten the social order. One sample of this endlessly varied theme should be enough for our purposes. (René Rapin, *The Poetics of Aristotle,* section XXV):

> Comedy is an image of common life; its end is to show on the stage the faults of particulars, in order to amend the faults of the public, and to correct the people through a fear of being rendered ridiculous. So that which is most proper to excite laughter is that which is most essential to comedy.[2]

Another mode of departure was, of course, through the use of stock characters and stock situations, a burlesque of "universality" got through sheer lack of invention. Such procedure did not need to be asked for; low canons of rhetoric would spontaneously lead mercenary playwrights into this path, since one must appeal through an audience's sense of the "natural," and a convention can become "natural" in this sense (as with superficial "typing," the "typical" Irishman, "typical" Jew, "typical" Englishman, etc.). Such canons of "naturalness" now help protect a great deal of Hollywooden art against the encroachments of serious foreign films. Largely, of course, such protection is contrived by an extra-artistic device: control over the system of distribution. But it can also rely on a low form of aesthetic conservatism (there are admirable kinds of such) in the movie audiences.

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[2] Both of these citations are from *Dramatic Essays of the Neoclassic Age,* edited by Henry Hitch Adams and Baxter Hathaway.

Our movie-goers are supposed to be in search of "entertainment." But actually, they will pay good money *to be bored.* We do not mean that they are cheated, in being led to expect more than they get. We mean that they *positively demand boredom.* For in such boredom there is solace, there is the implied assurance that all is as was. It is the modern equivalent, in "movie temples" (when witnessing a murder mystery, for instance) to the almost irresistibly sleep-producing intonations of a hell-fire sermon in the earlier dispensation.

Be that as it may, once "typicality" (in the sense of stock characters and stock plots) has come to be deemed "natural," a scientist test can raise good aesthetic questions. (Above all, for instance, it questions the habit of assigning to each nationality a single role, like the animals in Aesop's Fables.) There is thus a positive reason for becoming insensitive to the entelechial aspect of imitation: insofar as universality has thus degenerated into the use of conventional signs for recalling conventional attitudes, art can reinvigorate itself only "scientistically," by fresh "observation," by checking its utterances against the many *particulars* of life.

But while realism, in this "naturalistic" sense, is necessary, the very zeal of critics in expounding it can take us too far from a concern with the range of major motives that figure in aesthetic appeal. And if you read a novel, say, about nondescript, Bohemian, cosmopolite, and perverted characters roaming through the bars and brothels of pre-war or post-war or between-wars Europe, we would propose that you'd come nearer to explaining its nature if you adapted Sidney's formula than if you heralded it as a purely "naturalistic" emancipation from "moralistic" and "didactic" bias. That is, you should say: The author is showing us *how to be the perfect,* "compleat," nondescript, Bohemian, cosmopolite, perverted wanderer in the bars and brothels, etc. In this sense, his imitations would have the kind of *fulfilment* that we would associate with the entelechial aspect of imitation, in contrast with a purely naturalistic kind *(reportage).*

Here would be the bond between "imitation" and the "universal." After the German romantic philosophers, perhaps the notion is often contained in the term "idealization." (It is a useful term for the purpose, if you remember its range: at one end, the questionably eulogistic attributing of excellencies to someone or something; at the other, the attaining of the purposive simplicity we get in such ironic expressions as "the ideal liar," "the ideal thief.")

One imitates entelechially, thereby attaining a universal, insofar as the individual is shown living up to the potentialities of its genus. There is such entelechial thought in Shakespeare's phrase, "every inch a king." (One also glimpses the hierarchal motive in the notion of the entelechy.)

And so, in sum, were the poem (for instance) to imitate a sailor universally, entelechially, it would have him represent to the full the potentialities of sailor as such: speaking nautical terms (even perhaps to the extent of applying nautical analogies to non-nautical matters), scrupulous in the performing of his duties at sea (yet revealing exactly the most relevant temptations to the dereliction of such duties), looking perhaps with a carnival eye upon his times in port, etc. He would not be merely "typed," though typing would be the corresponding corruption of such a norm. And insofar as the feeling for this norm began to weaken, the same insight might be preserved somewhat in canons of "instruction" (which would involve the corresponding antithesis, canons of "amusement"). "Instruction" could then become conceived in hierarchal terms overly narrow: hence would result a kind of moral pragmatism, instructions how to be the ideal sailor for the greater glory of such-and-such an empire-builder. And whether we end with merely the stock character of a sailor, or with a falsely heroicized figure, "naturalism" would be our corrective. However, though its "scientist" emphasis might help refresh art, it would in turn lead to a faulty analysis of poetic excellence. Critics would suggest that the writer appealed by purely naturalistic imitation of particular sailors. At this point, we would attempt to recover the entelechial ingredient in imitation. Or at the very least, even if you would ban the entelechy as a bit of outmoded nonsense, we would reaffirm our contention that you must at least take it into account when asking what *Aristotle* meant by *mimesis* (in contrast with what the term can seem to mean, when translated as "imitation" or "representation," and thus used after several centuries during which "nature" came progressively to be equated with the processes of technology).

And when thus summing up, we might note how the "fourfold method" of mediaeval criticism in its way also departed somewhat from the entelechy even while partially preserving its genius. In effect, it broke the entelechy-universal into four pieces, each of which thereafter could be featured, or even proclaimed exclusively. From the stressing of the literal could come the "documentary" school ("naturalism,"

the "scientist" bias). From the stressing of the moralistic or "tropological" could come "instruction" (hence, tragedy as a book; of etiquette for the heroics of empire; comedy as a book of etiquette in reverse, the use of ridicule to deter deviations). From the stressing of the "allegorical" would come the featuring of temporal or local allusiveness as the be-all and end-all of poetry. (One can see how both "allusiveness" and "instruction" could be telescoped eventually into aspects of the "documentary.") And from the "anagogic" could come "amusement." (Once the concerns with grace, power, felicity, perfection, and the like have been secularized for use as terms to describe purely *aesthetic* ultimates—in accord with the translating of the religious passion into the romantic passion—then the "radiance" of an aesthetic object can be said to reside in its sheer delight as a pleasurable sensuous thing existing here and now, obviously another emphasis that has been telescoped into the scientist-literal.) In our *Rhetoric,* we have sought to show how such "grace" (of the *ars gratia artis* sort*)* is emblematic of a *social* anagoge, as the objects of "natural" experience (in the empiricist sense) can secretly represent social judgments related to the real but somewhat confused hierarchy of social classes. "Amusement" thus now covers the use of art to ends implicitly "propagandistic." For the "naturalness" of such art derives from its conformity with conventions that would uphold the status quo (even though, inexorably, by the ironies of history, they are making for exactly the contrary outcome: general inaccuracy, when coached and perfected with systematic efficiency, *must* become a Pandora's box that opens itself).

The present cult of the "myth" can also be fitted into these thoughts on entelechy. For the "mythic" now is usually proposed in opposition to overly scientific, naturalistic, "documentary" or materialistic criteria in art. In part, the controversy is rooted in extra-aesthetic considerations. The myth can serve as "idealization" in the merely eulogistic sense; or, when not downright eulogistic, it can at least be *deflective,* as were some immediately present and materialistically explainable politico-economic conflict to be viewed exclusively in the "higher" terms of some mythic or prehistoric struggle, fall, or curse. In this respect, the market for a myth may be explained by critics on purely aesthetic grounds, whereas the supposed "universality" of the supposedly "aesthetic" can be a temporary way of using art to avoid the accurate contemplation of non-aesthetic elements.

But there is one good argument in behalf of myth, as we realize when we consider, for instance, the various ways in which the three great Greek tragic playwrights used myth. If you relate characters to one another after the analogy of some myth, you automatically acquire an underlying simplicity of structure that almost requires you to make the various roles "universal." You can get the point by thinking, in contrast, of some complicated modern novel or drama of intrigue (a feeble variant of the "scientist psychosis"), in which you are dragged through a "mysterious" muddle of false leads and loose ends, to end on some hastily contrived gadget of explanation (or rather, an anti-climax disguised as an explanation). Contrast such an unprincipled contraption with the stark lines of a Greek tragedy, which possesses in its way the same simplicity as one finds in Greek architecture and Greek statuary of the classic period. Even much of the best Elizabethan tragedy suffers by comparison. The outraged lover, the unjust king, the avenging son, the suppliant fugitive, the blind seer, the tortured god—the myths "naturally" led the playwright to cast his perception of particulars into such universal molds, giving his "imitations" the *summarizing* quality that adds up to the notion of the "entelechy."

Thus, even though Sartre uses myth perversely, he does contrive to exploit it for its formal, simplifying function. And a play of intrigue can be improved formally by even an artificial imposing of mythic lines upon it. In *The American Scholar,* Winter 1950–51, Malcolm Cowley touches upon this point somewhat when, discussing the possible effect of the "New Criticism" on creative writers, he says:

> It may terrify them; it may stop them from writing at all, or, if they do write, it may cause them to write according to one of the formulas advanced by whichever New Critic is teaching that year at Princeton or wherever it may be—according to a number of formulas, like a beautiful one followed by Frederick Buechner in his first novel, *A Long Day's Dying.* The formula is simply to find classical myth, tell the myth in the shape of a lecture delivered to Princeton boys, and then restate the myth in contemporary terms, always stepping down the intensity of the myth into mild contemporary equivalents.

The observation suggests that the mythic frame might even become a mechanical subterfuge, a device of play-doctoring. But we are suggesting that a formal virtue, however perverted, rests at the roots of such a possible vice.

As we tried to show elsewhere, in our analysis of *Othello,* the concept of "tensions" can also be applied, as a way of re-introducing an equivalent of the entelechy in imitation. For if there is a certain tension in human relations, the artist may exploit it dramatically by analyzing it into parts, "breaking it down" into a set of interrelated roles (a device that permits the tension to be "processed"; for whereas in human relations it just is, the breaking of it into parts permits these parts to act upon one another, in a series of operations that, when followed in exactly the order they have in their particular whole, lead to a "catharsis"). Roles chosen by such a test are likely to be "entelechial" imitations, since they will imitate not particular individuals, but basic human situations and strategies, translated into equivalent terms of personality.

When the "tensions" are too local (as with the tensions of temporary factional disputes), often a sheerly rhetorical motive can be misinterpreted "scientistically." Thus, when looking for evidence that a certain social situation prevails, sociological critics will sometimes cite the prevalence of such a topic in popular literature of the times. But often a rhetorical discount is necessary. For instance, a speaker held that, in his opinion, life in the United States was much more "matriarchal" than "patriarchal." And as proof, he cited the fact that so many motion pictures play up the type of the put-upon husband and father, whose frustrations about the house are humorously amplified, while he mumbles to himself ineffectually, being treated patronizingly by wife, children, servants, tradesmen, and even the family dog, but masochistically and without fail paying the bills with which all the other members of the family blithely saddle him. Maybe yes, maybe no. But before taking this stock character at face value, as evidence of a correspondingly prevalent social type, one should certainly consider the possibility that the role is the sentimentalizing of a situation quite different.

Imagine, for instance, a husband who is unquestionably the head of the family. Each day he goes off to work as to a "mystery," so far as his family at home is concerned. They know only what he chooses to tell them. Everything necessarily centers about him, since he is the

wage-earner. Things must be so arranged that he catches exactly the right train, gets exactly the right food at exactly the right time, sleeps for exactly the right interval [. . .] and insofar as such requirements are not met, he must grumble mightily for his rights. Each day he goes into a world of "adventure," his absence being in essence as unaccountable as the daily disappearance of Cupid was to Psyche. Under such conditions, might not the wife feel herself inferior? Then if, of an afternoon, she goes to a movie temple for her meditations and devotions, would there not be "medicine" for her in the picture of a husband thus lovingly put upon, a lovable old bear essentially as timid as the lion in the *Wizard of Oz?* And so on. In brief, might the part be featured in this popular art precisely because it did not directly reflect the motives in the social situation itself, but was an "idealization" of them? There would, of course, be certain superficial signs about, to give the character plausibility. But the main function of the character would derive not from a corresponding "documentary" reality, but rather from the ingratiating triviality of the distortion.

In the *Poetics* there are several passing references to the appeal of "wonder" in the imitations of tragedy, and we shall revert to the theme when we come to that term. Meanwhile, we should note this "complicating factor": Once the resources of imitation have been systematically exploited by a priesthood, imitations can be endowed with a magical power not present in the things imitated. Hofmannsthal tells of a tribe that fears neither man nor tiger, but the tribesmen are paralyzed with terror when a priest dances before them wearing a tiger pelt. And we know of a child who awoke in the night, shrieking, from the dream of a snake. Yet the next day he placidly bathed in a pool while a water snake lay on a branch nearby. His mother asked him: "Why aren't you worried about this snake, when you were so afraid of the snake you dreamed about last night?" And he answered: "This one is real." There is a magic in imitations, that probably draws in part upon the magic of dreams (which a priesthood can interweave with the magic of class). Such considerations lead us to the "hierarchal" motives that lurk in the entelechy (touching upon it as "enigmatic," containing the mystery and magic, the "wonder," of class relationships).

From our point of view, however, the *Poetics,* beneath its essayistic facade, would in this regard be itself a kind of "dramatic analysis," with the terms of a single tension being so broken apart that they can curatively or cathartically operate upon one another like characters in

a play. Thus the wonder in entelechial imitation is not explicitly said to be a part of it, but is broken off, treated as an independent term, existing in its own right, its secret relation to its partner-term being revealed not by explicit tracing of the relationship between them, but by the fact that they appear in the same context (*apparently* related only by "and": there is imitation *and* there is wonder).

But, just as previously our doubts about the "scientist" grounding of a character led us into rhetoric in the superficial sense, here we touch upon rhetoric in the profoundest sense. Or rather, we come upon the centre, where rhetoric and poetic coalesce, where the *intrinsic radiance* of an aesthetic object has social implications in its very essence. And as we have said before, we are unable to maintain our vision steadily, where this moment is concerned. Here is the point where the divinity of the ultimate ground merges deceptively with the pseudo-divinity of class relationships. We have claimed that "naturalism" but reproduces, more self-protectively (from the standpoint of "scientist" norms), the deceptions of "supernaturalism" (insofar as "supernaturalism" can be a disguise for temporal interests in terms of the eternal, a shift that Hobbes would call "making men see double"). If we are right, then Aristotle's stress upon "nature" as the grounding for men's delight in imitation should secretly contain such a "drama" as we have here caught glimpses of.

Conversely, we can catch glimpses of an entelechial grammar behind the pathos of John, XIX, 30: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished"; *consummatum est; es ist vollbracht;* the Greek text has *Tetelestai,* a verb perfect passive in form, that contains the *telos* of "entelechy," to designate an "end," not just as a dying or desisting, but rather as a purpose, now at last fulfilled.