

Indexing and Dialectical Transcendence:

Kenneth Burke's Critical Method

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ABSTRACT

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Kenneth Burke has been described as arguably the most important rhetorician and critical theorist of the twentieth century, and yet an important part of his scholarship has been generally overlooked by the academic community. The pentad has become the most prominent “Burkean” framework for analyzing texts, yet Kenneth Burke himself preferred “a more direct” way of approaching texts which he named “indexing.” This thesis recreates this method from the pieces found in his scholarly writing, personal correspondence, and the papers his students produced for the class he taught at Bennington College. Kenneth Burke believed indexing could uncover the “pattern of experience” or “motivational structures” a text embodies, and thereby help people become aware of the persuasive power different texts have. The method of indexing has two parts: 1. Finding the implicit equations in a text, and 2. Tracking the hierarchies of terms and God-terms in those equations. Identifying equations in a text starts with finding “key terms” in a text, meaning terms which carry special significance as indicated by their intensity and frequency of usage. One then tracks the context of these terms throughout a text to find which other words frequently occur together with these words. The second step, tracking hierarchies of terms, is done by finding how the terms in the equations relate to each other in a hierarchy. We start with specific and move upward to more general terms. On the top of the pyramid we find the God-term, which is the driving motivation and ground of all possibility in the text. Kenneth Burke hoped his method of indexing could help us understand the power language and motivational structures have to drive human action, and that we could question our own motivational structure as well as that of others and of the communities we operate in.

Keywords: Kenneth Burke, rhetorical criticism, indexing, God-terms, dialectical transcendence, patterns of experience, social analysis, linguistics, hierarchies of terms, motivational structures

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Introduction

The scholarship of Kenneth Burke, according to David Blakesley, has given him the status as “arguably the most important rhetorician and critical theorist of the twentieth century” (vi), and Blakesley calls his influence in some fields, like communication studies and composition, “hegemonic” (vi). Yet, despite his prominence, there is still much debate about his scholarly legacy and specifically about what is perhaps his greatest scholarly contribution: his concept of dramatism. What is dramatism, and what did Burke himself see as the most important elements of it? The concept most clearly identified with dramatism in scholarly literature is the dramatisic pentad. As David Blakesley writes in *The Elements of Dramatism*, “When the elements of dramatism do make an appearance, they are usually in the form of the dramatisic pentad” (vi).

A quick search in the scholarly literature makes it clear that the pentad has eclipsed all other “Burkean” methods of viewing a text, and is frequently used in rhetoric, literature, communication studies, and even organizational behavior. Blakesley goes on to claim that dramatism “has the pentad at its core¹” (vi), that the pentad “is the heart of what is now known as dramatism” (5), and that “Burke used the pentad to conduct textual analysis” (34).

However, when Burke responds to applications of his pentad to writing pedagogy and critical analysis in “Questions and Answers about the Pentad,” he seems rather reluctant to give it the same status awarded to it by scholars. As for his using the method in textual analysis, Burke contends that although the pentad “affords a serviceably over-all structure for the analysis of both literary texts in particular and human relations in general, *I usually begin with more*

¹ Although he does write that “it works in conjunction with other conceptual systems like rhetoric and poetics to comprise a larger system of intellectual and linguistic study” (vi), and indeed makes that claim a primary purpose of his book, Blakesley still claims that the pentad is the most important element of dramatism and its “central theme” (26).

direct ways of sizing up a text” (334, emphasis added). In other words, although Burke concedes that the pentad can be used for those purposes, he prefers a different approach to textual analysis which he sees as “more direct.” The method he then goes on to outline corresponds with the method for dramatistic analysis which he described more closely in “Linguistic Approach to Problems of Education” (hereafter “LAPE”). Unlike the pentad, this method (often referred to as “indexing”) does not look for ratios and circumference, but rather starts by looking for “equations” within a text, charting the relationships between words.

As Jessica Enoch writes in “Becoming Symbol-Wise: Kenneth Burke’s Pedagogy of Critical Reflection,” “Burke names his educational solution ‘dramatistic’. . . But the dramatistic in this essay is not exactly synonymous with the interpretive system that he famously called the pentad: act, scene, agent, purpose, agency” (281). Moreover, when one reads the essay “Curriculum Criticum” where Kenneth Burke evaluates his scholarly work retrospectively in 1953, it seems like the pentad itself was one of the last elements of dramatism that he discovered and used. Burke claims the essay “The Philosophy of Literary Form,” published in 1941, “aims both to give a summarization of the author’s notions about the symbolic function of literary forms and to sketch a technique for the analysis of work in its nature as a structure of organically inter-related terms” (217), with the latter focusing on “the ‘equations’ which it [the text] inevitably embodies in its action as an evolving unity” (217). Kenneth Burke mentions that “the method was illustrated by reference to various works, the analysis of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* being perhaps the fullest instance” (217). So here Kenneth Burke is using a version of ‘indexing’ in the 1930s, long before he even discovered the pentad, and he is still endorsing that same method in “Questions and Answers about the Pentad” which he wrote in 1978. It seems that for Burke

personally ‘indexing’ was at the very core of his scholarly writing and thinking from beginning to end.

It seems strange that a concept so central to the author’s own critical and interpretive practice has become so peripheral to his readers. However, there are some scholars who have advocated that more attention should be paid to indexing. In the foreword to *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives* William Rueckert claims, “Properly understood, Indexing is the key to Burke’s theory of what a literary text is and how it works” (xvi), and Jessica Enoch, referencing indexing, has advocated that “Burke’s theory and practices should become a pedagogical priority because what Burke argued for then is what we must argue for and implement now. Like the students Burke wrote about in LAPE, students today should learn to reflect on the language used to move people to action and war” (291).

So why has the pentad overshadowed indexing to such a degree both as theory and method? A part of the explanation may be that the pentad is thoroughly introduced, applied, and explained in *A Grammar of Motives*, which offers compelling arguments for why the pentad is a fitting concept for analysis. Indexing was supposed to be a main feature of *A Symbolic of Motives*, which Kenneth Burke never completed during his lifetime (Rueckert *Kenneth* 163). Although many of the concepts and essays intended for that book can be found in *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives*, which was published in 2007, there are still many questions remaining about the method and the theory of indexing. There have been attempts to explain the method of indexing and to use it in rhetorical analysis of texts. In 1976 Carol A. Berthold published “Kenneth Burke’s Cluster-Agon Method: Its Development and an Application” where she describes a method of “cluster analysis” based on some of Kenneth Burke’s writings and applies it to the speeches by John F. Kennedy. Richard Weaver expands on Burke’s concept of God-

terms in *The Ethics of Rhetoric* in 1953, and in *The Elements of Dramatism* from 2001 David Blakesley attempts to describe cluster-analysis as a method students can use to analyze texts. However, these attempts so far do not encompass the full scope of Burke's method of indexing as described in "Linguistic Approach to Problems of Education" or indeed as he described it and taught it to his students at Bennington College. William Rueckert gives perhaps the most thorough description of the theory of indexing in *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations*, although the description of the methodology is a bit unwieldy and leaves many questions to be resolved. For example, he does not provide a step-by-step methodology of indexing, nor does he connect it to tracking hierarchies of terms and finding God-terms, although this was something Burke said was a part of the method.

The publication of *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives* is an important contribution to bring back this vital part of Kenneth Burke's legacy, but Kenneth Burke was never able to introduce the passages and essays to show how they fit together. However, there are other sources that can be consulted to help us get a better picture of Burke's theory of indexing. Kenneth Burke taught at Bennington College from 1943 to 1962, and the focus of the courses he taught was the method and theory of indexing. I was able to contact some of his former students in order to illuminate how he explained indexing to them, and how they applied it. Among his former students is actress Suzanne Shepherd, who uses a version of indexing to teach theatre. Several of his students saved the indexes they made in his class, along with an essay discussing their findings. In this essay, I will draw upon Burke's writings on indexing, his correspondence and other communications with students at Bennington College concerning the method, drafts from the Kenneth Burke Archives, interviews I have conducted with Burke's students, and an analysis of the materials they saved from his class. I will use these to explain indexing so

students and teachers alike can have a clear guide as to how they can get the results Burke hoped indexing would achieve. As one of his students noted in a teacher evaluation, “The way in which Mr. Burke thinks and speaks is more instructive than the reading material” (“Instructor Evaluations”), i.e. his teaching was often clearer than his scholarly writing. Kenneth Burke had high expectations for indexing. In one of the drafts for “LAPE” he writes, “The assumption is that only by such a search, instigated regardless of attitudes (‘animus’) can the world hope eventually to become civilized.” The following sections will describe briefly what he believed indexing could achieve, and how Burke taught that the method should be used.

Indexing and the Underlying Pattern of Experience

In *Counter-Statement* Kenneth Burke makes the distinction between “scientific truth” and “aesthetic truth.” He describes scientific truth as “revelation” or the transmission of information, whether it is a belief or fact (168). “Aesthetic truth” is described as “ritual” or the sharing of an experience (168). When something is aesthetically true it means that it conforms to the rules which have been set up by the ritual. As Burke comments, “In so far as the audience, from its acquaintance with the premises, feels the rightness of the conclusion, the work is formal. The arrows of our desires are turned in a certain direction, and the plot follows the direction of the arrows” (124). When a work satisfies the expectations it has aroused in us it is aesthetically true, even though it may be far from scientific truth. In a text it is the author, rather than the laws of science, which establishes the boundaries for what can and cannot happen.

It was Burke’s conviction that “the forms of poetic imitation will be found to reflect the logic of the symbol-systems in terms of which the imitation is conceived” (“Glimpses” 87-88), meaning that the symbol system or “rules” of the text will in some ways reflect the logic of the

author's own symbol-system. In *Counter-Statement*, Kenneth Burke explains that every person forms a "pattern of experience" which is based on their adjustment to their environment or situation: "Any such specific environmental condition calls forth and stresses certain of the universal experiences as being more relevant to it, with a slighting of those less relevant. Such selections are 'patterns of experience'" (151). This 'pattern of experience' influences how each person engages with the world, and a text (what Burke calls 'the Symbol') is "the verbal parallel to a pattern of experience" (152). So although this pattern of experience is often somewhat subdued and submerged in order to communicate more effectively, the text still in some ways "reveals" the author. This is important to notice, because a pattern of experience can be extremely persuasive. As Burke mentions in *Counter-Statement*, "The artist possessed by a certain pattern of experience is an 'expert' in this pattern. He should thus be equipped to make it convincing, for the duration of the fiction at least. By thoroughness he should be able to overwhelm his reader, and thus compel the reader to accept his interpretations. For a pattern of experience is an interpretation of life" (176). In "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" Kenneth Burke notes, for example, how Hitler's experience of "conversion" to nationalism provided him with a powerful tool of persuasion to convince others to adopt the same ideology (199). Burke was concerned about the persuasive power of these patterns of experience:

The thoroughness of an artist's attack can 'wear down' the reader until he accepts the artist's interpretation, the pattern of experience underlying the Symbol. He may, when the book is finished, return to his own contrary patterns of experience forthwith (but during the reading the evidence has been rigorously selected, it 'points' as steadily in one direction as the contentions of a debater). (CS 176-177)

Unlike the contentions of a debater, the pattern of experience in a text is usually hidden and requires a deliberate critical approach to be uncovered. Without this approach, the reader may be convinced by the pattern of experience without being aware of it. Although the reader reads the text in order to be entertained or informed, the writer may be able to convince the reader to accept a different interpretation of life entirely. The aesthetic truth of the work is accepted as the scientific truth about the world.

The uncovering and questioning of these patterns of experience lies at the center of Burke's critical and educational project. In "LAPE" he writes, "Thus we see democracy being threatened by the rise of the enormous 'policy-making' mass media that exert great rhetorical pressure upon their readers without at the same time teaching how to discount such devices; and nothing less than very thorough training in the discounting of rhetorical persuasiveness can make a citizenry truly free" (285). The method that Kenneth Burke claimed could train students to discount rhetorical persuasiveness was 'indexing' and had the express purpose of uncovering patterns of experience in 'specific symbol-structures,' i.e. texts (274). He introduced this method already in *Counter-Statement* where he writes that "the underlying pattern is observable when an apparently arbitrary or illogical association of ideas can be shown to possess an 'emotional' connective" (159), and "the underlying pattern is best observable when words refer to no specific thing – as 'liberty, equality, fraternity' – 'my country' – 'the good of society.' In such cases, the contexts in which the words appear will generally be constants" (159). So, at the very least, Kenneth Burke hoped that indexing would help make a citizenry "truly free" by helping them to discount hidden devices of rhetorical persuasiveness. So how does indexing work?

Methodology

There are two main components to the method of indexing. The first is making the index itself by finding equations, and the second is a practice of what Burke called dialectical transcendence that involves finding the ‘verbal pyramids’ which make up the hierarchy of the symbol system represented in the text, with lower orders leading up to higher orders.

1. Indexing

The premise of what Burke calls “dramatistic analysis” (“LAPE” 264) is that words have more meanings and interpretations than their simple semantic meaning would suggest. As he states in “The Philosophy of Literary Form,” “The ‘symbolism’ of a word consists in the fact that no one quite uses the word in its mere dictionary sense. And the overtones of a usage are revealed ‘by the company it keeps’ in the utterances of a given speaker or writer” (35). It is this potentially idiosyncratic use of language which makes the study of a work’s terminology a useful tool to discover the “underlying pattern” of that work. This construction of a vocabulary does not have to be a conscious effort by the writer. In his essay “Glimpses into a Labyrinth of Interwoven Motives,” Burke comments on an author’s choice of words: “In selecting names, epithets, backgrounds etc. for his characters, all he need ask is whether they ‘sound right’ or ‘feel right’ to him. And if he is sensitive and exacting enough, his choices will naturally embody principles of internal consistency” (85). It is these principles of internal consistency that a dramatistic analysis seeks to find, for they reveal the underlying ‘pattern of experience.’

In “LAPE” Kenneth Burke defines “dramatistic analysis” as a “critical or essayistic analysis of language” (264). Although the method is derived from the study of drama, Burke claims it can be applied to all forms of human communication: “There would thus be no

difference ‘in principle’ between textual analysis and social analysis” (275). In the same essay he gives us some clues as to how such an analysis should be performed: “The study of symbolic action . . . should begin with the charting of ‘equations.’ That is: When you consult a text . . . you begin by asking yourself ‘what equals what in this text?’ And then, next, ‘what follows what in this text?’ (270). This passage describes the two steps of first looking for equations within the text and then looking for chains of consequences, meaning “what word follows as a logical consequence of another word?” These first two steps include arduous reading and re-reading of the text, carefully matching words and sequences together, and they supply the key relationships within the text which will be used as a basis for the next steps. In many ways these are the raw materials of the analysis.

But what does it mean to look for equations? What can be ‘proven’ to be an equation? Without any further guidelines the method could easily become arbitrary, whereas Burke intended it to be rigorous. Perhaps the most thorough explanation of the rules of indexing can be found in the essay “Fact, Inference, and Proof in the Analysis of Literary Symbolism” (which was supposed to be published in *A Symbolic of Motives*). As he writes at the beginning of the essay, “The hope is to make the analysis of literary symbolism as systematic as possible, while allowing for an experimental range required by the subtle and complex nature of the subject matter” (49). He explains how one has to view the words in the text as the basic facts of a text, and the essay addresses “how to operate with these ‘facts,’ how to use them as a means of keeping one’s inferences under control, yet how to go beyond them, for purposes of inference, when seeking to characterize the motives and ‘salient traits’ of the work, in its nature as a total symbolic structure” (50). This is not a methodology which can be twisted and turned to prove almost anything. In one of his responses to a student attempt at indexing *Mrs Dalloway* at

Bennington, he laments that the student took an approach where she wanted to prove a preconceived notion rather than discover what the text had to say, and thus “was prevented from getting the directness of approach which had been a major aim of this assignment” (Letter to Carty). In “Fact, Inference, and Proof,” he goes on to describe how the method would require any practitioner to ground herself in reference to textual facts, “to make clear all elements of inference or interpretation [she] adds to these facts” (51), and to provide rationale for all selections and interpretations. He urges the reader to steer away from normal analogies and symbolic meanings. One example he gives is if we find the word ‘tree’ in two contexts, rather than think in terms of allegory or initially seeing the tree as a symbol of family or parenthood we simply note that the term bridges these two contexts until we have further evidence. In the underlying pattern of experience the tree may actually stand for death or madness, and therefore “traditional” meanings of trees will be a distraction. As he instructed one student at Bennington College: “Don’t begin by ‘appreciating a term’. Begin by merely noting it. Then watch to see what happens to it next. Watch for its other locations (and variations). Then appreciate it afterwards . . . I want us to begin by merely sluggishly noting, and then let the term build up” (Letter to Krosner).

The first step then is to chart the contexts of words throughout the text. Although Burke thinks useful inferences could be made even by charting the use of words like ‘the’ in a text, he does admit that “we must find some principle of selection, since some terms are more likely than others to yield good hermeneutic results” (“Fact” 54). He suggests that the title may at times be instructive, as well as characteristics of central characters and the frequency and intensity of use a term has. Yet, as he goes on to argue, “there must be a certain amount of waste motion here . . . One is threatened with a kind of methodic demoralization – for anything may pay off” (“Fact”

56). His correspondence with students at Bennington bears witness that this methodic demoralization was experienced by many. One of his students, Ruth ‘Cookie’ Liebling Goldstone said, “At first I thought it sounded impossible. ‘Index an entire book?’ how can you do that?” [A description of how she approached the assignment and successfully indexed *Mrs Dalloway* in its entirety an entire book will follow hereafter] (Goldstone). One can note many correlations without being able to fit them into “an over-all scheme of interpretation” (“Fact”

53). At this point the reader simply needs to keep his mind open and focus on terms that seem to recur in important situations: “We must keep on the move, watching both for static interrelationships [equations] and for *principles of transformation* [what follows what] whereby a motive may progress from one combination through another to a third, etc.” (“Fact” 56). This direction from William H. Rueckert’s *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations* may be instructive:

One cannot really say beforehand what the key terms of a work are going to be; they emerge as the work unfolds; sometimes they are persons, places, or things; sometimes they are ideas, acts, attitudes, or relations; and sometimes they are qualities or processes – it does not really matter, for they can be anything which is important and significant. Every symbolic act is a permanent structure of terminal identifications which unfolds in a particular way; as it unfolds various terms are linked with and opposed to each other by a variety of means, and some terms, because they appear in different contexts at different points in a work, undergo transformations as the work progresses. Burke regards these identifications, oppositions, transformations, and progressions as the empirical facts which one

gathers in the course of indexing a work; from these facts inferences can be made about the work's unity and meaning. (180)

In order to make it easier to see these transformations, the index of a term should be chronological. The index would allow for different forms of a word if they seem to be connected in purpose. Burke also allowed what he referred to as 'operational synonyms': "words which are synonyms in this particular text though they would not be so listed in a dictionary" ("Fact" 60), and he allowed for making equations with words that have the effect of 'amplification': "some theme or topic that is restated in many ways, no single one of which could be taken as a sufficient summing up" ("Fact" 61). Thus, the equations we get may contain many words and appear as clusters, like one example Kenneth Burke gives in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'":

In sum, Hitler's inner voice, equals leader-people identification, equals unity, equals Reich, equals the mecca of Munich, equals plow, equals sword, equals work, equals war, equals army as midrib, equals responsibility (the personal responsibility of the absolute ruler), equals sacrifice, equals the theory of 'German democracy' (the free popular choice of the leader, who then accepts the responsibility, and demands of absolute obedience in exchange for his sacrifice), equals love (with the masses as feminine), equals idealism, equals obedience to nature, equals race, nation. (207)

Although these words signify many different concepts, Burke claims that they serve as operational synonyms and as amplifiers of a single idea in Hitler's vocabulary. This of course would have to be proven by showing how they appear together to support the same idea in multiple contexts, and how they at times are used interchangeably. Thus, by indexing, we build up a substantial body of evidence which can support the conclusions we find by our analysis.

As Burke struggled to formulate and teach the method of indexing, his interactions with his students at Bennington College served as valuable chances for “troubleshooting” and polishing his method. Retrospectively, they offer valuable clues about the finer details of the method and its challenges. The single greatest challenge mentioned by the students is the challenge of selecting the key terms of a work. Burke recognizes this in a draft of “LAPE”:

“When studying things in their own terms, one is lost in a welter of particulars, unless one has at least rules of thumb as regards the questions to be featured.” Alexandra, one of his students at Bennington, shared her frustrations in a letter to Kenneth Burke:

I remind myself that according to my own and my instructors evaluations, I am a fairly intelligent, rather quick and responsible student. However, in the face of Emerson I draw a blank. I can't get started. I don't know what to look for. Doing the Joyce index only confuses me further. I can write a paper – two papers – even ten, but I can't do an index. (Letter to Burke)

Regarding her particular challenges with the index, she writes, “My index at the moment is like Alice and the EAT ME cake. I start on one equation and discover I have incorporated nearly the whole essay into an index which is cumbersome to say the least” (Letter to Burke). To another one of his students he answered, “As I have explained to her elsewhere, she should sharpen her gifts at summarization and characterization by a search for the spots in the text itself where things most clearly and succinctly come to a head” (Letter to Mary Lou) meaning that we may find these key terms most clearly if we look carefully at especially significant moments in the text (confrontations, conflicts, resolutions, etc.) where the artist's intentions often become most transparent.

As an example here of what an index should contain, we can use the one made by Ruth Liebling Goldstone on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, of which Burke wrote, "Ruth's paper is a positive marvel of industry, insights, and constructiveness" (Letter to Ruth Goldstone). In order to construct her index, Ruth chose to mark words and themes which occurred often in the text with different colors (the color-coding was her own invention, not taught by Burke). In this way she discovered a list of 15 recurring terms and motives: flowers, knife, bird, plunge, wave, mist, cross, heart, hand, veil, illumination, hat, gloves, sew, and stretch. Along with these terms she also noted varieties of the word (marked with V), and words that radiated from the terms (marked with R). For example, Ruth would mark "smoke" as a variety of "mist," or "roses," "lilac," and "carnations" as varieties of "flowers," whereas she would mark words like "dull," "sharp," "scraped," "cut," and "slice" as radiations from "knife" (Goldstone). Both the varieties and radiations would be accepted as tentative "equations" of the key terms, and if they recur in this pattern throughout the text one could start to mark them as "facts." The assignment Ruth wrote this paper for had two parts: "(1) a preparatory 'indexing' of terms, at which stage all sorts of possibilities or hunches, however outlandish, are permissible; (2) a final article, in which only the claims deemed 'provable' by evidence, are made, along with the evidence" ("Draft of 'LAPE'"). She used her chronological index to write an essay discussing the characters in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and their connections to these key terms and what they tell us about the meaning of the text.

As Ruth's index shows, an index does not need to contain all the key terms a work may have, and, as the Bennington student examples demonstrate, a narrower focus may be just as effective. For example, one student focused her analysis on the spectrum of light and dark, and Kenneth Burke had much praise for her work as well:

Lynd's final paper on Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is very appealingly written. While building her analysis about a single term, she contrives quite skillfully to keep one aware of the other major elements that cluster about it. As a result, she has reduced her material to a unifying principle, without sacrificing variety and thus without being driven into an over-narrow interpretation of the book. (Letter to Fletcher)

Kenneth Burke was not looking for a complete and perfect treatise on all significant symbolic interrelationships in the text. More than anything, he was teaching a method and an attitude towards symbol-systems. Even in his own writing he often followed tentative implications without stating them as proven facts. Here is one example of his attempts after reading a student index:

If insanity equals death, and the old woman is near death, then Clarissa's attachment to the old woman could equal Va. W's temptation to answer the call of insanity? Hence "Clarissa" wd. be a compensatory name? Hence (280btm) the epiphany-like passage ("the old lady had put out her light" – and Cl's need to return to the party) this one can develop" (Letter to Solomon).

Several of his students also emphasized in interviews that indexing is not a rigid mechanical or mathematical method, and should allow for some level of experimentation and interpretation.

In "LAPE," Kenneth Burke admonishes that in doing this the reader has to "let the text say its full say, even beyond what its author may have thought he was saying" (270). This includes seeing "exhortations of terrifying importance being prepared for, even when the writer has no such intentions in mind" (270). A reader may want to take the time to write down exhortations which are becoming clear from the analysis of equations and consequences, for, as

Burke claims in “The Philosophy of Literary Form,” “interrelationships are . . . motives” (20). The structure of how the author puts together values and events reveals attitudes which again are directives for action. For example, when Hitler equates Jews with “racial impurity” and “parasites” there is an implicit directive for a “cleansing” and “extermination.” A less extreme example is Burke’s advice from *Attitudes Towards History* that we see (or categorize) people not as “vicious, but as mistaken” (41). Seeing someone as vicious or evil implies a directive to conquer or kill that individual, but seeing someone as mistaken implies a directive to help that person understand their mistake. As Burke writes in an early draft of “LAPE” we should see “philosophy [or a pattern of experience] as a ‘statement of policy,’ as a reasoned vocabulary for shaping our attitude towards life” or what one might call “Weltanschauung.” To this end one may also want to look for what elements in the text equal “good” and “bad,” or “socially superior” and “socially inferior” (“LAPE” 270-71), since these at the same time indicate to us attitudes and actions implied by the specific interpretation of life given by the text. To state that a pattern of behavior is “good” is at the same time saying that people considering themselves as “good” should do likewise. This is one of the reasons why Kenneth Burke also referred to patterns of experience as “structures of motivation” (“PLF” 18). We are now in the realm of analysis, which is happening concurrently with the indexing, since these insights start guiding our selection of terms to index. Noting what stands for socially superior and socially inferior will also help when we come to the stage of constructing the verbal pyramids of the text.

In the end, then, the index is tentative and preparatory for the final analysis of the text. The selection of key terms and their equations are guided by method, but also demand a certain amount of “reading” with an eye for recurring patterns. In “Kenneth Burke’s Cluster-Agon Method: Its Development and an Application,” Carol A. Berthold seeks to describe as rigorously

as possible what can qualify as an equation. She writes that the words may be linked through verbal connectors like “and,” the author may indicate a cause-effect relationship between them, or tie the terms through imagery. Yet, she also admits, “No apparent limitation exists on the number of ways in which terms may be combined” (303). As Rueckert points out, “the only way in which one can ever find out what a key term and a set of interrelated key terms (a completed symbolic structure) really means is to index the work so that one can find out how the private grammar the author creates deviates from the public grammar all authors use” (190). One uncovers the motivational structure in a text by searching for equations, and they become evident by noting concordances while reading. There are rules of thumb to guide the search, but there will inevitably be some initial “waste motion” where one is simply marking prominent recurring words without seeing how they fit into “an over-all scheme of interpretation.” However, as many of Burke’s students have attested, if one keeps at it there is an almost “revelatory” moment where the text and its structure unfolds to the critic in ways they may never have experienced before. Ruth claims it changed her way of reading and seeing a text for the rest of her life.

2. *Tracking Hierarchies of Terms*

Once we have discovered the horizontal, one-dimensional network of interrelated terms, we start looking for how they relate to each other as a part of vertical structures, or “verbal pyramids” that take the concepts identified horizontally and locate them in hierarchical relationships with each other. For Burke, this hierarchy moves up not only from particular to general, but also from practice to principle towards a final term-of-terms which works as the underlying motivation and cause for all the lower terms in the hierarchy. We uncover these structures by looking for what Kenneth Burke referred to as “dialectical transcendence.”

For Burke, transcendence “viewed as a sheerly terministic or symbolic function” is defined as “the building of a terministic bridge whereby one realm is *transcended* by being viewed *in terms of* a realm ‘beyond’ it” (“Transcendence” 877). For example, a priest can help a dying man “transcend” the fear of death by viewing it “in terms of” eternal life in a better world. Viewed in such terms, death itself becomes simply a passage between two realms rather than an abrupt ending of all existence. It is important to note that Burke considered “transcendence” simply as a symbolic function of language, and not as an actual transcending of the natural world to some supernatural one.

In “I, Eye, Ay: Emerson’s Early Essay on ‘Nature’: Thoughts on the Machinery of Transcendence” Kenneth Burke explains how persuasion by dialectical transcendence works as compared to other methods of persuasion:

You might recommend a cause by tragic dignification (by depicting people of worth who are willing to die for it). Or (along the lines of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*) you might recommend it by showing the advantages to be gained if the cause (or policy) prevails (that is, you might argue in terms of expediency). Or there are the resources of dialectical transcendence (by seeing things in terms of some “higher” dimension, with the spirit of which all becomes infused). (880-81)

This can be done by ascending from “particular to general” (881). As we follow such movement upwards towards greater generalization, the level of abstraction (and therefore of interpretation and ideology) becomes greater, and we create what Burke refers to as “pyramids,” “ladders,” or “orders.” Linguistically the concepts of man, woman, child, capitalist, communist, etc. can be gathered under the concept of “human being.” Human being in turn can be gathered with dogs, cats, and horses under the concept “mammals” and from there to “animals” and finally to “life.”

Here we have followed a biological definition of man. The theological definition would be very different and place man in a hierarchy with “God” as the ultimate top of the pyramid. Viewing man “in terms of” God provides the motivation for very different actions towards humans than viewing man “in terms of” biological life. One example could be the death sentence. If we view a murderer in terms of life then the death sentence could simply mean two unnatural deaths rather than one. Viewed in the terms of “God” this sentence could be seen as speeding up the inevitable process of judgment.

In the same way, hierarchies of terms can be found in any description of human action, whether it is written or thought. For example, ‘sweeping the floor’ can be generalized to ‘menial chores’ which again (depending on the context) can be generalized to ‘blood, sweat, and tears’ which are particular manifestations of ‘diligence’, ‘unfailing dedication to the cause’, or ‘service to God’. Burke claims, “When we arrive at this stage, the over-all term-of-terms or title-of-titles is so comprehensive it is simultaneously nowhere and everywhere” (881). If we see ‘service to God’ as this term-of-terms, all the lower levels of ‘blood, sweat, and tears’, ‘menial chores’, and ‘sweeping the floor’ are suddenly inspirited with a divine touch. This may not change the nature of the physical act itself, but it changes the meaning of the act. This Upward and Downward way form what Kenneth Burke calls “dialectical pyramids” (“Rhetoric – Old and New” 204), with specific terms being gathered under higher terms of generalization until we arrive at the term-of-terms, or “God-term.” Just as “God” is both the creator and the goal of the saint in religious vocabulary, “God-terms” are the moving cause and unifying principle for all the “lower terms” situated in their hierarchy.

These journeys of dialectical transcendence can be found almost anywhere in human communication. In “Rhetoric – Old and New” Kenneth Burke claims that “we are continually

encountering fragmentary variants of them” (204). This is because “the machinery of language is so made that things are necessarily placed in terms of a range broader than the terms for those things themselves. And thereby, even in the toughest or tiniest of terminologies . . . we consider things in terms of a broader scope than the terms for those particular things themselves.” The human mind or the instruments for communication are so constructed that they seek for meaning beyond the simple term. It is Burke’s claim that “wherever there are traces of that process, there are the makings of Transcendence” (“Transcendence” 895). It therefore follows that some version of dialectical transcendence and hierarchies of terms, however undeveloped, will be found in any writer’s terminology, and it is often this step of the process which most clearly shows the ideology or interpretation of life hidden in the text.

It is worth mentioning here that most descriptions of indexing do not include the tracking of hierarchies of terms as a part of the method. Berthold limits her description and analysis to a horizontal network of equations, and simply finds the “God-term” by looking at frequency and intensity of use as well as the relationship between key terms with the most connected one being the God-term (Berthold 303). Blakesley’s approach with his cluster analysis is similar, with clusters of association which may highlight a “term of terms” which stands out as a rock in the ocean (Blakesley 104). Rueckert describes Burke’s dialectical transcendence, but does not connect that to his method of indexing or provide a methodology for constructing verbal pyramids.

However, it is abundantly clear from the essays in *Essays Toward A Symbolic of Motives*, as well as Kenneth Burke’s indexes of Emerson’s “Nature” and the classes Burke taught at Bennington that he saw indexing as linked with dialectical transcendence and as a method of discovering dialectical devices. He commended one student’s index for “its attention to the

hierarchical strand in the texture of the motivation” (Letter to Bednerik), another for serving “well to help trace the ways in which the author’s sensibility ties in with the motives of hierarchy” (Letter to John), and praises a third for being “particularly enterprising in her efforts to locate the “hierarchical” strand of motivation that runs through this text, and to place it with regard to other motives” (Letter to Morgan). He stated that discovering dialectical tactics had been “a major aim of this course to inculcate” (Letter to Hutton), and scolded one student, stating, “Her one great error, however, is in slighting ways that would point up the dialectical tactics of the writer’s statements . . . As a result, she did not get the final sharpening of perception that the indexing of a book is designed to stimulate” (Letter to Pattison).

It seems clear that Kenneth Burke saw this training in “dialectical tactics,” or tracking hierarchies of terms, as a significant purpose and goal of indexing. One student even “added a diagram showing ‘Emerson’s Hierarchy of Values’” to her final paper” (Letter to Megnin). Although Kenneth Burke did not always focus as much on dialectical transcendence in every course he taught (for example, the class indexing ‘Nature’ seems to have had greater emphasis on it than the class indexing *Mrs Dalloway*, explaining why Ruth had no hierarchy of values in her index) this seems to have been more because of time constraints than a change of opinion. If anything, *The Rhetoric of Religion* (published in 1961) shows an increased focus on verbal pyramids and the practice of dialectical transcendence they instantiate compared to 1956. As he wrote about religious vocabularies in the introduction to *The Rhetoric of Religion*, “In being words about so ‘ultimate’ or ‘radical’ a subject, it almost necessarily becomes an example of words used with thoroughness” (vi). He also mentions in the introduction that much of the material for that book was developed “with the help of my classes at Bennington College” (vi).

How then do we find the verbal pyramids in any given symbol-structure? We start with the pattern of equations we have already uncovered in the former steps. In his notes on his own index of Emerson's 'Nature' Kenneth Burke writes, "Terms normally allow for 'high orders of generalization' whereby quite disparate realms can be brought under a single head, particularly as aided by resources of analogy." If we have been exacting with our index, there should be terms at several levels of generalization within the clusters of equations. By starting at the level of least abstraction and continuing to levels of higher abstraction or generalization, we find the first rungs of the verbal ladders or pyramids ("LAPE" 288). These pyramids may not be perfectly developed, but fragments of them will be found in all terminologies. In a draft of "LAPE" Kenneth Burke describes the four main types of pyramids one will find in texts:

There are four primary ladders, or pyramids, or orders . . . [1]There are social ups-and-downs; [2]there is the linguistic Upward Way and Downward Way, as most perfectly embodied in Platonist and Neo-Platonist dialectic; [3]there is the natural chain of beings, whether conceived in post-Aristotelian or in Darwinian fashion; and [4]there is the supernatural hierarchy, the heavenly order, about which some human persons have reported, though they necessarily used the terms of the prevailing social order, since they were necessarily communicating their vision in terms of language, and language necessarily has no super-mundane terms – for however truly in its formal resourcefulness it transcends our animality, it necessarily uses the material world as its matter, and so usually talks of heaven in terms of feudal social orders that prevailed at the time when the great surviving texts were first put forward. ("Draft of 'LAPE'")

So we have the linguistic, social, natural, and supernatural pyramids. The supernatural pyramid is what Kenneth Burke refers to when he talks about the metaphysics of a text. It is at the top of this pyramid that we will usually find the “God-term” for the text, the term of terms whose spirit infuses the rest of the terms in the text. Kenneth Burke claimed the best examples of fully developed or “thorough” verbal pyramids could be found in religion, and this was the inspiration for the term, but God-terms need not necessarily be religious or anti-religious:

Though “God” is but a word in a secular vocabulary, hence subject to the dialectical manipulations available to words generally, we still must recognize that there is a “ground of all possibility” beyond our knowledge. And in this respect, the reduction of theology to sheer verbal manipulations does not rule out a point of reference beyond them . . . Whether we believe in God or not, it remains a linguistic fact that writers terms of highest generalization might technically be called their “god-terms.” (“Notes on ‘Nature’”)

For example, Kenneth Burke claimed that “even so ‘tough-minded’ a nomenclature as that of Karl Marx inevitably retained transcendental traces (as when conditions of *here* and *now* are seen in terms of a broad historic sweep that quite transcends them, and thus imparts to them a kind of ‘ulterior’ meaning)” (“Transcendence” 877). When we construct these verbal pyramids of dialectical transcendence (or rather uncover the ones implicit in the terminology of a text) we at the same time discover the greater ideological motivations and goads which work as implicit commands, or incipient actions at a less abstract level. Hopefully, this will confront us with the power of language systems and nurture a sense of humility and what Burke calls “the secular equivalent to the fear of God,” namely “fear of symbol-using.” Having now discovered this method to be effective in one text, we can move on to greater projects:

Analysis begins by systematically considering the ways in which principles of symbolic consistency affect our perceptions and our modes of placement, even in such rudimentary cases. Whereat we have all the greater cause to tremble, when we consider the more complicated and remote kinds of placement we encounter in historiography, psychology, politics, ethics, metaphysics, religion, and the like.

(“Draft of ‘LAPE’”)

In order to show an application of dialectical transcendence and tracking hierarchies of terms, let us construct a verbal pyramid from the equations Kenneth Burke himself found in *Mein Kampf*, which were mentioned earlier in this text². It must be mentioned here that we do not have Burke’s full index of this work or the listed contexts in which the terms appear. Without this, the hierarchy of terms will not be as complete and supported by evidence as it could be otherwise. This example is simply set up to show how hierarchies of terms can be tracked by finding levels of abstraction and verbal cues of subordination and order.

We start by finding the most specific or least abstract terms in the cluster of equations: “plow” and “sword” stand out as very down-to-earth elements. Yet they may be used metaphorically to stand for “work” and “war.” It does not really matter which of these terms transcends the other since we are still at the bottom of the pyramid and further from the significant God-term. These terms are in turn “transcended” by the more abstract concepts of the “idealism” and “sacrifice” of the people (the latter term has become almost synonymous with ‘military service’ in political vocabulary). The idealism and Aryan heroism or sacrifice in turn is transcended by the concept of “unity” through “leader-people identification,” and the

² On page 12.

“responsibility” and “love” of the ruler³. These concepts are a part of the “Theory of ‘German democracy’ (the free popular choice of the leader, who then accepts the responsibility, and demands of absolute obedience in exchange for his sacrifice),” and together the leader and the people are a “nation.” However, even the concept of nation is transcended by the concept of “Reich” and “race” which transcended the borders of Germany to Austria, Czechoslovakia, and, eventually, to Denmark, Norway, and beyond. As Burke notes, in Hitler’s pattern of thought “race” is seen as the “true cause” for social and economic ills, thereby placing it very high in the hierarchy of terms (204). These concepts are all a part of “Hitler’s inner voice” (“the wrangle of the parliament to be stilled by the giving of *one* voice to the whole people” [207]), which is simply one example of “Obedience to nature”; the over-arching term of terms, or God-term, which infuses the rest of the verbal pyramid with meaning. We can see this by Hitler’s insistence that Germany’s defeat in World War I was “not an undeserved catastrophe, but rather a deserved punishment by eternal retribution” (204), with the source of this retribution being nature, punishing disobedience, or “a sin against the blood and the degradation of the race” (205). Thus we have a verbal pyramid which looks roughly like this:

³ Burke mentions that Aryan “heroism and sacrifice” and Jewish “cunning and arrogance” are “keystones” in the opposite equations (208); however, the further discussion makes it clear that, although important, these are not God-terms (208-09).

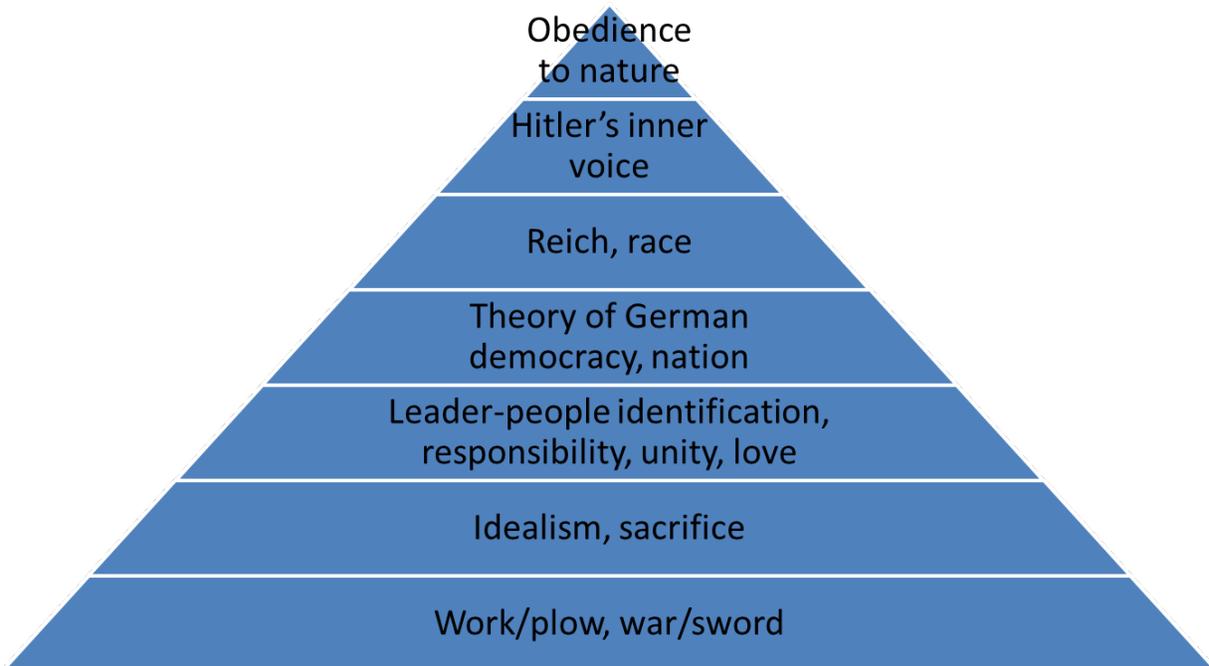


Fig. 1. Hierarchy of Terms

All the lower terms of race, nation, unity, love, idealism, sacrifice, war, and work are subordinated to “obedience to nature” which is communicated and enacted by “Hitler’s inner voice.” Here we see why Kenneth Burke referred to “the patterns of Hitler’s thought” as a “bastardized or caricatured version of religious thought” (“Rhetoric” 199)⁴. He recognized in Hitler’s ideology the same dialectical tools which were at work in the religious vocabulary of the Catholic Church. Instead of “Obedience to God” we have “Obedience to nature,” and in the place of “prophetic revelation” or “the Pope” we have “Hitler’s inner voice.” Further down we can see how abstract terms such as responsibility, unity, love, idealism, and sacrifice are all infused with a different meaning than one would find in a dictionary by being subordinate to “obedience to nature.”

Kenneth Burke described this stage of analysis in his notes on Emerson’s ‘Nature’:

⁴ We also see how individual efforts and attributes in the people (sword, sacrifice) are gathered as a nation through leader-people identification, and then into almost mythic Reich through the concept of race, which embodies obedience to nature and is the synthesis of individual attributes and the collective power of nation.

In the next two sections of the essay we shall have crossed to the other shore – and whereas before we were among varied worldly uses looking towards a single purpose, we are now in the realm of supernatural purpose looking down upon worldly multiplicity and seeing in it still more strongly the unitary principle of the new starting point at which we have arrived, in preparation for our journey back.

(“Notes on ‘Nature’”)

This is also a good example to show what terrifying consequences a motivational structure can have. Viewing war and the work of destruction in terms of race and obedience to nature (as mediated through Hitler) can replace compassion and resistance with indifference and resignation; observing the destruction of lives with the detachment of a marine biologist observing orcas hunting and killing seals. The will of nature will eventually conquer, and resistance is as futile as trying to stop the seasons. As Burke writes, “the Aryan doctrine is a doctrine of resignation . . . it is in accordance with the laws of nature that the ‘Aryan blood’ is superior to all other bloods. Also, the ‘law of the survival of the fittest’ is God’s law, working through natural law” (“Rhetoric” 208).

God-terms are expressions of the perfection of an ideal, towards which (according to Kenneth Burke) we are incessantly drawn, and there is no realm or ideology which does not have God-terms. As Burke wrote in a draft of “LAPE,” “the ‘logic of linguistic action’ compels us to recognize that, as there are acts, so there must be scenes for those acts, and so there must be an ultimate scene, a ground of all possibility, whereupon, lo! We glimpse the fact that there must be some bond whereby even the most time-serving of acts in some way relates to an ultimate scene” (“Draft of ‘LAPE’”).

Equipped with such insights and tools, it was Kenneth Burke's hope that mankind could learn to become "civilized," meaning that we could learn to question not only other people's motivational structures, but also our own, thereby recognizing how we, as well as the people around us, are "necessarily mistaken" (*History* 41). It is in this context that Burke writes, "May we have an educational lore, graduated for all degrees of intelligence, to help us watch time-serving shrewdly and incessantly – and may this lore have the forms that do not merely allow us, but compel us, to wonder about a scene of scenes, the pure scene, that is also pure agent and pure act. Anything less is not education, but 'conditioning'" ("Draft of 'LAPE'"). An education which simply reinforces one hierarchy of terms (or system of thinking) without questioning its structure and ultimate purpose is, according to Burke, not education at all.

Purposes of Indexing

At the end of *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke sets forth his vision of what each book in his *Motivorium Trilogy* should accomplish, working together "in this project 'towards the purification of war'" (442). To this end the *Grammar* "should assist . . . through encouraging tolerance by speculation," the *Rhetoric* should help us transcend worry about human competitiveness by appreciation, leaving this final task to *A Symbolic of Motives*:

And the Symbolic, studying the implicit equations which have so much to do with the shaping of our acts, should enable us to see our own lives as a kind of rough first draft that lends itself at least somewhat to revision, as we may hope at least to temper the extreme rawness of our ambitions, once we become aware of the ways in which we are the victims of our own and one another's magic. (442)

Kenneth Burke saw the actions of the German Nazi Party as “the chartings of Hitler’s private mind translated into the vocabulary of nationalistic events” (“Rhetoric” 210), but he also wanted us to see how our own actions and motivations are based on “implicit equations” in our pattern of experience of which we may not be aware. By indexing our personal texts, such as journals or letters, we may discover these equations and hierarchies of terms in our own lives. For example, what do we equate success with? And what ‘final scene’ or purpose does such success bring us closer to?

This motivational structure is a result of our own adjustment to the world and countless rhetorical acts and experiences throughout all our lives, and is thus “our own and one another’s magic.” When we by this process discover how we are “victims,” or controlled by, this “magic” of symbol-systems, Burke hopes that this knowledge will humble us and help us “temper the extreme rawness of our ambitions.” We will realize that we may be fundamentally wrong about the world, and thus be willing at least to listen to other interpretations of life. We will also see that this motivational structure is not set in stone, but rather it is “a rough first draft that lends itself at least somewhat to revision.”

On an individual level then, indexing provides us (1) a method to discover the equations and hierarchies of terms which drive our actions and are at the core of our motivation, and (2) a terminology by which we can assess and question this motivational structure, find its consequences, and give us the basic knowledge we need to revise or change that motivational structure. This could be used to treat personal problems or facilitate conflict resolution. Riva M. Poor⁵, one of Kenneth Burke’s students at Bennington, went on to become a professional problem-solver and credits Kenneth Burke with having taught her how to understand people’s world in their own terms. At the beginning of each professional assignment she would always

⁵ Author of *4 Days, 40 Hours*

ask her clients to give her a problem statement in their own terms, because she understood that “their problems are defined by the terms they use” (Poor 2012). Riva says, “This was one of the things that made me a terrific problem solver, because I solved the problem in their world rather than translating it into my terms and then trying to translate my solution back into their terms, since the other approach would cause a loss of meaning” (Poor 2012).

However, Kenneth Burke never intended indexing to only be for personal use. The intention of his educational project was always that students may be able to identify and question similar motivational structures in interactions in human society. Literary texts were chosen as initial “case studies” of symbolic structures because they provided a completed system where these structures are “least obscure” (“LAPE” 275), yet Kenneth Burke acknowledges in “LAPE” that recent progress in recording technology (this was in 1955) could make the same study possible in any human communication as long as it is possible to read and reread the text produced from it: “There would thus be no difference ‘in principle’ between textual analysis and social analysis” (275). Burke even advocates that other fields can and should adapt this method of indexing to their own fields of study. Indexing could be applied to “historiography, psychology, politics, ethics, metaphysics, religion, and the like,” studying discourses and the terminologies shared by academic, political, religious, and other communities.

A study like this could be used as a kind of “culture audit” or “social analysis” to unveil motivational structures and tensions within a community. Kenneth Burke already took the first steps in this direction when he instructed that students who are indexing should look for “the ways in which the ‘personality’ of the work relates to the personality of a social order . . . we look for ways whereby the work embodies, however assertively, even militantly, the *malaise* [malady] of a given property structure” (275). Kenneth Burke claimed we could see every claim

of ownership and attachment, even human relationships, as property, and thus a property structure can be any kind of community (*Rhetoric* 24). An analysis of this structure could reveal the malady, or problems and tensions, of a community and thereby provide insights into how these problems can be resolved or cured.

There is a more sobering point to be made, which involves the way human beings are driven by what Kenneth Burke calls “literary form”: “the arousing and fulfilling of expectations” (*CS* 124). When the basic vocabulary and expectations of a literary text have been set up, the author has demands placed upon him, and violates them at his peril. As Burke observes, “The principle of unity implies the fulfilling of expectations, for if a work violated expectations it would not be considered consistent” (“Watchful” 47). The author has set up the rules of the work within the terminology and must follow them, or as Burke says it, “each individual work could be viewed as setting up and obeying its own particular body of laws” (“Glimpses” 96). The same principle of form operates to a certain extent in human communication outside the world of fiction. Human communication and thought has set up motivational structures within human discourse, and these motivational structures in turn direct human communication and thought. Tendencies and motives have been inserted into public discourse by human beings who lived many hundred years ago. They set up the rules of the text or planted the seed, but it is we or future generations who will live to see those rules followed to their completion or bloom. Kenneth Burke calls this final stage “consummation.”

In his book *Kenneth Burke and the Conversation after Philosophy*, Timothy W. Crusius defines Burke’s term “consummation” as a certain thoroughness or desire for perfection. Consummation is “the drive to unfold to the last implication the meanings inherent in a given vocabulary. Burke explores this motive in a spirit of ironic ambivalence, with a mixture of

admiration and suspicion, since consummation both partly drives human achievement and makes human bondage all but ineluctable” (Crusius 73). An example of this ironic ambivalence can be found in Burke’s essay “Watchful of Hermetics to Be Strong in Hermeneutics”:

The various scientific specialties are to be viewed as carrying out the implications of their terminologies, and thereby seeking technological consummation for its own sake, however deceptively their efforts might be justified. For instance, whether or not it is possible to develop “clean” thermonuclear bombs, some men might well want to go on experimenting with these dismal weapons. For they have brought their calculations to the point where further experimental steps are in order, steps suggested by the present state of their terminologies. And the “principle of consummatory self-consistency” would provide an incentive, or almost a compulsion, to continue in this same direction. (49)

Here Burke gives us a key to one important purpose of indexing: by studying the terminology and motivational structure in a given text, the critic may be able to unmask the future implications of the ideas and attitudes put forth in the text. In a way the critic looks at the potential of a text and predicts the consummation of an idea before it has been consummated. For example, from the motivational structure of *Mein Kampf* Burke could predict the logic by which much of World War II would be initiated and led by Hitler. “As regards the principle of expectancy. . . it is good to sharpen our perception of form by asking ourselves how, at the end of each step, some further potential is built up” (“Watchful” 62).

Burke refers to this practice of reading a text while looking for its potential as looking at its “portentousness”. A portent is a sign or warning that something of great significance, either for good or bad, is about to happen. A critic should be able to acknowledge and interpret the

portent of a text. In his *Kenneth Burke and the Conversation after Philosophy*, Crusius says, “Consummation refers, as Burke puts it, to the tracking down of the implications of a terminology” (Crusius 144).

For a literary critic, these principles may be used to make an evaluation of form, or the lack thereof, and thereby have a vocabulary to describe why a certain book or story does or does not manage to arouse and fulfill the reader’s expectations. But, as we see in the example about the nuclear weapons, Burke does not hesitate to extend these principles to terminologies outside of the arts. So another interesting use of these principles may be found in the indexing of texts or discourses which have not yet reached the stage of consummation, such as public discourse, political programs and speeches, scientific discovery etc. By studying the terminology and hierarchy of terms in the “unending conversation” referred to by Burke (“PLF” 110), one may be able to interpret, to a certain extent, the direction and future implications of the conversation.

Thus we see how indexing can be applied to “the personal vocabulary of an author” (as mentioned by Rueckert), as well as “the social vocabulary of a group” and the “unending conversation” of human kind. The possibility of accuracy may become lesser as we move from individual texts to large unmanageable discourses, but we may be able to make at least some inferences on the basis of a large corpus of language. This global vision is not far from what Burke hoped for, as he mentioned in a draft of “LAPE,” “Thus, in accordance with this view . . . we would so conduct our investigations that we might glimpse, brooding over the lot, a lore of the universal pageantry in which all men necessarily and somewhat somnambulistically take part, by reason of their symbol-using natures.”

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