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The Public Research University in the Next Century:
The Role of the Department of Communication

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As an economist I'm suspicious of futurology. If the futurologists are so smart, I ask, why ain't they rich? If they in fact knew the future of the research university over the next ten years, or the next hundred, they could buy futures contracts on the forecast that would earn them unlimited fame or money. As a historian I have a parallel doubt: if the futurologists are so smart, why ain't they wise? Some of the visions of the future in American universities seem unwisely ignorant of the past.

But both economists and historians make the point that some theory of the future is necessary, whether rational expectations or manifest destiny. We have to decide now about tomorrow in order to act today. It's better to have a theory of the future that's economically sensible and historically accurate. In any case, it has been a central theme of wordcraft since the Greeks that the way we speak about the future is what in part determines it, whether we like it or not. It's a point they make in the Department of Communication.

One thing we know: in a hundred years the fields will not be the same. It is not God's plan for the American university that the fields of 1965 or 1895 should persist until the Second Coming of Christ. The administrative job will be to get from now to 2095 wisely. The universities that get there first will do best for their alumni/ae,

riasing the value of an Ohio State or a Clark University degree. The value of degrees outstanding is like the value of common stock outstanding: it measures how wise an institution has been. The universities that stick to 1965 will not disappear, merely slide down the rankings, becoming museums of educational history and cheating the holders of their degrees.

The forecasts that underlie much of academic planning these days are mistaken and shortsighted, museum curatorship rather than strategic planning. In particular the establishment's forecast that we will become more and more "scientific" in the style of 1965 ignores the history and sociology of science and much of the science itself written since then. The graduate students ^{of} 1965 are coming to positions of influence in universities. If they have not read philosophy of science since graduate school, and have not kept up with sciences such as nonlinear dynamics, cognitive psychology, and statistical theory, they hold still the philosophy of 1965. An economist of 1965, for example, believed he could "fine-tune" the economy, scientifically. Vietnam and the failure of urban renewal showed what to make of such claims.

We have learned since 1965 that the dichotomy of science from the humanities that seemed so persuasive in English for a century was mistaken. An administrator from the University of Missouri came through Iowa City a few years ago for a job interview, and in her public speech talked about how she saw the three, the sciences (in the English definition), social sciences, and humanities. She saw them in a hierarchy. What we really know, she claimed, we find out from science. If there is anything left over the social sciences get a crack at it.

The humanities are for what's left, if anything, for the ineffability of the spirit.

Her view, widely shared in administrative circles educated in 1965, is philosophically and rhetorically mistaken. It is part of the two cultures talk that had^s plagued the English-speaking academy--and no other--for a hundred years. English is the only language that uses the word "science" to mean "lab-coated and quantitative, like a layman's understanding of nineteenth-century physics." Thus Lord Kelvin in 1883: "When you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind. It may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely in your thoughts advanced to the state of science" (1883, p. 1; italics his). English before about 1900, and present-day French, German, Italian, Swedish, Turkish, Hindi, Tamil, Japanese, use the "science" word to mean "systematic inquiry, as distinct from a careless glance." Thus Samuel Johnson in 1775: "Of Fort George I shall not attempt to give any account. I cannot delineate it scientifically, and a loose and popular description is of use only when the imagination is to be amused" (Johnson 1775 [1984], p. 50; italics supplied). Or an Italian mother boasting of her studious 10-year old boy, mio scienziato, my learned one. The English word "science" is an accident of English academic politics in the late nineteenth century.

The truth is, when you look at science philosophically and rhetorically, as for example Mary Hesse or Mary Cartwright do, or Charles Bazerman and Katherine Hayles, you find the scientists using humanistic tropes right in the middle of their sciences. I'm fond of startling my chemist friends by pointing out that their notion of "equilibrium" is the same trope used in economics, massively, and in drama criticism, or a

poem's sense of an ending. This is one among many points in a "rhetoric of science," which exhibits science as metaphors and stories, facts and logic, together. It's the sort of thing they study in the Department of Communication.

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All right. Suppose a university wanted to break out of the formulas of 1965? Sites for improving the conversation across fields will be crucial, as they have been so often in the past. "Crossing boundaries in pursuit of excellence" and "facilitating collaboration across academic units" is how Richard Sisson puts it. The sub-cellular revolution in biology would not have happened if the postwar labs had not provided sites where biologists could work with chemists and converted physicists. Oceanographers and seismologists worked together on plate tectonics, itself first proposed in 1912 by a meteorologist trained as an astronomer. (I remember being taught in 1963 by geologists in one of the most conservative major departments that plate tectonics was wrong.) Another meteorologist, Edward Lorenz, was the first to see chaos theory. Without the interdisciplinary atmosphere of schools of engineering the mathematicians would not have been drawn in. The revolutions in literary studies that came out of departments of comparative literature would not have come if the separate languages were left in unchallenged possession of their literatures. The fields of law and economics and, earlier, historical economics required conversation across the disciplines.

Normal science is what 95 percent of us do 99 percent of the time. Normal science can be seen in terms of the metaphor of

conversation. The most specialized conversations in exactly the same field among economists or among historians, the two on which I can report professionally, are doing fine. But considering the loving care they are given, their productivity is surprisingly low. The eminent Japanese economist Michio Morishima complains about one of them that "economist^c theorists randomly modify those parts of the original model which they themselves happen to consider inapplicable, . . . with no sense of proportion, and they have ended up with a whole pile of models which are even more difficult to deal with than the original" (1984, p. 58). It's what's wrong with cloistered talk. The talk across fields brings the real world in, or at least a contrasting style of monasticism.

The low productivity of specialized conversation is not so astonishing, in view of the economics. Economists are fond of pointing out that the gains from trade are greater the further apart the two parties are in tastes and resources. If I spend my days talking to Chicago-School economists with quantitative interests in British economic history I will make progress, I have no doubt. Some of my best friends are like me Chicago-School economists with quantitative interests in British economic history. But I'm going to learn more per hour if I talk to someone who knows, say, Swedish demographic history, or the phenomenological foundations of communication.

The high productivity of talk across the fields is economics — real economics, not the ersatz economics spoken in the deans' offices of American universities. The deans say "specialize," which sounds finely economic and hard-nosed until you reflect that the point of specialization is trade. The shoemaker sticks to his last but without trade he will merely get a pile of unsold shoes in his back yard,

Morishima's pile. The decanal economics is bad, a Ricardian economics that overemphasizes production and ignores values, the economic value in the minds of consumers of what is produced. Department of history are odd in this, as are some other departments, such as communication. A history department is already ~~an~~ conversation with other fields. Historians read each other's work, which is to say the work of their colleagues down the hall, and even an economist or sociologist or literary critic or two.¹ The result is scientific progress, not the piling of "results" that no one believes in five years.

The progress depends, though, on refraining from sneering at those who have not read exactly the same books and have not had exactly the same thoughts that I have had. The scope for sneering in the modern university is wide. The political philosopher the late Judith Shklar said that snobbery is the art of making inequality hurt. Academics have refined it: they make equality hurt. The Law of Academic Prestige is that the more useful is a field, the lower will be its prestige, and the more will the ignorant in other fields sneer at it. Thus the college of

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History departments have therefore not fallen into the foolishness of making tenure decisions by the weight of letters of recommendation--letters that amount to public opinion polls with bad statistical properties. (Of course, the deans complain, because they want the appearance of administrative uniformity: it is another part of the faith of 1965 that science is a matter of filling out forms.)

education and the freshman English course, which everyone agrees are among the most important things we do, are in academic prestige many steps below the most monastic parts of medieval history or algebraic topology. A department of communication that studies what makes us humans, Homo loquans, will be disfavored relative to pseudo-science in the style of 1965.

The invisible college with its sneering runs the modern university to an astonishing degree. It is one's reputation in Oxford or Berkeley, not at home, that determines one's salary. The visible college is correspondingly neglected. University administrators increasingly think of themselves not as leaders of a conversation among people at Ohio State or Princeton but as facilitators for the invisible college, and at home mere managers of the heating plant and the parking privileges.

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The best universities take the chances in trade across fields that matter. When Daniel Coit Gilman of Johns Hopkins was asked why the place was so vigorous in the 1880s he replied, "We go to each other's classes." It's still that way. The best places are. The University of California at Berkeley has a whole Department of Rhetoric containing some of the most interesting minds in academic life.

It is the second-rate universities, looking East, and anxious about their subscription to the New York Times, that have the most problem with innovation. They look around to see if other universities are doing the same thing, and therefore are never the entrepreneurs. When is the last time that a major intellectual or instructional

innovation came out of the once-luminous state universities of the Midwest? When is the last time they dared to be first, instead of following the coasties twenty years behind?

When in the past the Midwest universities have broken out of mere followership the results have been astonishing. I report to you the achievements of my own university between the Wars, when a dean of the Graduate College named Carl Seashore was the guiding spirit. Seashore was a psychologist in two senses, academically and administratively. In his time the University of Iowa was among the handful of most innovative universities in the world. It invented the Master of Fine Arts for creation and performance, the pencil-and-paper test for school children (it's the "Iowa Test of Basic Skills" that your kids take in school), the Department of Theatre Arts, the public opinion poll, the Department of Speech ~~Pathology~~ (that is, Communication), the Department of Speech Pathology, Audiology, the first state-financed school of religion, the Writers' Workshop (at Iowa we always call it "The Famous" Writers' Workshop).

The "new land grant universities" can be created in Columbus (Ohio) or Manhattan (Kansas), the new Midwestern state universities in Iowa City or Minneapolis, the new privates in Worcester, Massachusetts or Dallas, Texas if they will stop following and start leading.

But where, oh wise futurologist, where?

Three pieces of economics and economic history give an answer of sorts, which has merit at least compared to the Master Plan of 1965.

For one thing, we are again more a nation of immigrants, after a long turning inward that culminated in the academy of 1965. A nation of minorities needs communication, not more significance testing à

la 1965. It needs an inquiry into community, not more models of monads à la 1965. There is no need to cast away the gains from the older program. Occasionally (though not very often) significance testing is relevant to something of import. But we need discussion in the academy about virtues as well as behavior; about politics in words as well as politics in voting booths. It is the sort of discussion they have in the Department of Communication.

For another, we are living in a communications revolution comparable to the invention of printing, or perhaps even the Greek alphabet. On this matter we should all read Richard Lanham's stunning book, *The Electronic Word* (1994). The behaviorist "revolution" c. 1965 in the social sciences (in which I participated with gusto) was more than anything a retreat from language. Don't tell me what the people say, said the behaviorist economist or political scientist; tell me what they do. The extreme and the model was of course the older style of behaviorism in psychology. Jerome Bruner remarks in his autobiography that in the 1940s you had to express every psychological idea in terms of a rat experiment, whether or not it made any sense. Yet in the midst of computers, 500-channel TVs, Dick Tracy telephones, and Lord knows what else it would seem idiotic--the sort of idiocy that universities practice with some regularity--to continue the flight from language and the department of communication.

Third, and for me as an economic historian most interesting, we are all bourgeois now. The bourgeoisie earns its living from talk. I will walk with you, talk with you. What news on the Rialto?

Economists in the 1965 style view talk as cheap and culture as insignificant. Yet humans are talking animals, and the animals talk a

great deal in their marketplaces. Of course the economist does not have to pay attention to everything that happens in an economy. That farmers chew tobacco or paint traditional designs on their barns while dealing in corn does not necessarily have to appear in the econometrics. What would have to appear is a large expenditure, since expenditure is the economist's measuring rod.

Talk is big. For example, two economic historians, John Wallis and the new Nobel laureate Douglass North, have argued that transactions costs--that is, expenditures to negotiate and enforce contracts--rose from a quarter of national income in 1870 to over half of national income in 1970 (Wallis and North 1986, Table 3.13).

Transactions costs include, for example, "protective services," such as police and prisons, which "talk" only in an extended sense. Literal talk is special--in particular it is cheap, as police and prisons are not--in a way that makes it analytically separate from the rest of transaction costs.

Information is one part of the talk; issuing orders is another. The conveying of information and orders is well understood by economics. Much of game theory is concerned one way or another with information; and production theory might be construed as the theory of one mind issuing orders. The third part of economic talk is persuasion, sweet talk. It is not well understood, yet appears necessary to knowledge useful in an economy. The political philosopher Michael Oakeshott argued that knowledge is information plus judgment. The program of 1965 can be viewed as suppressing judgment, a reduction to to information, like phone numbers. Telephone numbers are useful, and so

are models of humans as telephone operators. But they sidestep the judgment that selects from the information.

The persuasion is startlingly big. Take the categories of employment and make an educated guess as to the percentage of the time in each category spent on persuasion (the calculation could be improved with more factual and economic detail; for instance, the workers could be weighted by salaries; the marginal product of persuasion could be considered in more detail; the occupational categories could be subdivided: I intend here only to raise the scientific issue, not to settle it). The preliminary result is surprising:

[Table 1]

Table 1:

Persuasion is a Quarter of Employment:

Guesses about the Share of Marginal Product Attributable to Persuasion

100%	75%	50%	25%
	Executive, administrative, & managerial <u>(14.2 million)</u>		Natural scientists (0.395 m)
	Construction trades, supervisors (0.617m)	Health assessment and treating (2.15m)	
	Teachers <u>(4.77m)</u>		
Social, recreational, and religious workers (1.05m)	Counselors (0.206m) Clerical supervisors (0.174m)	Social scientists & Urban planners (0.343m)	
Actors & directors (0.100m)		Teachers' aides (0.423m)	
Lawyers & judges (0.757m)	Editors & reporters (0.117m)	Authors & technical writers (0.140m)	Legal assistants (0.203m)
Public relations specialists (0.260m)	Sales occupations, <u>less</u> cashiers <u>(11.4m)</u>	Adjusters & investigators (0.949m)	
		Police and detectives (0.755m)	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States 1990 (110th ed.), GPO: Washington, D.C., 1990, Series 645.

Weighted sums yield 28.2 million out of 115 million civilian employment, or about a quarter of the labor force, devoted to persuasion.

The result can be confirmed in other measures. Wallis and North's fifty percent of national income contains negotiation costs. Similarly, over half of American workers are white-collar. Some do not talk for a living, but in an extended sense many do, as for that matter do many bluecollar workers and especially pink collar workers. And of the talkers a good percentage are persuaders. The secretary shepherding a document through the company bureaucracy is often called on to exercise sweet talk and veiled threats. Or notice the persuasion exercised the next time you buy a suit. Specialty clothing stores charge more than discount stores not staffed with rhetoricians. The differential pays for the persuasion: "It's you, my dear" or "The fish tie makes a statement." As Smith says [Lectures On Jurisprudence 1763 [1762], "Report of 1762-63," vi.56, p. 352, spelling modernized here and later], "everyone is practising oratory . . . [and therefore] they acquire a certain dexterity and address in managing their affairs, or in other words in managing of men; and this is altogether the practise of every man in most ordinary affairs. . . , the constant employment or trade of every man. . . ." Not constant, perhaps, but in Smith's time a substantial percentage and in modern times fully twenty-five percent.

Is the persuasive talk then "empty," mere comforting chatter with no further economic significance? If that was all it was then the economy would be engaging in an expensive activity to no purpose. A quarter of national income is a lot to pay for economically functionless warm and fuzzies. The fact would not square with economics. The businesspeople circling La Guardia on a rainy Monday night could have

stayed home. The crisis meeting in the plant cafeteria between the managers and the workers would lack point. Wasteful motion, or empty words, sit poorly with conventional economics. By shutting up we could pick up a \$20 bill (or more exactly a \$1,500,000,000,000 bill). That cannot be. A quarter of our working time in the marketplace is spent in persuasive converse. The conversational metaphor acknowledges the fact.

The view of 1965 is summarized by Don Lavoie: "economists seem to agree that the scientific discourse of economics should dissociate itself from the everyday discourse of the economy" (Lavoie 1990d, p. 170). He observes dryly, "Economists are not so clear why they think this" (p. 169).

Economics is rediscovering the important of words. Joseph Farrell at San Diego, Robert Shiller at Yale, Robert Frank at Cornell, Arjo Klamer at George Washington, and many others are discovering the wordiness of modern life, left out of ⁹1965 economics. Experimental economics, which was formed to carry out 1965-style Science come hell or high water, has discovered recently what a department of communication with a small-group field could have told it, that people cooperate more when they talk. Earlier, the advocates in macroeconomics of rational expectations had concluded what a department of communication with a rhetorical field could have told it, that people listen to governments as an audience.

The economics is trickier than the formulas of 1965. A limit on calculability is a feature of any speaking. If anyone could get their way by shouting, for example, then everyone would shout, as at a cocktail party, arriving by the end of the party hoarse but without having gotten their way. The philosopher H. P. Grice affixed an economic tag to the

trumping of speech conventions, "exploitation." The linguist Stephen Levinson puts his finger on the limits of formalization when language is involved: "[T]here is a fundamental way in which a full account of the communicative power of language can never be reduced to a set of conventions for the use of language. The reason is that wherever some convention or expectation about the use of language arises, there will also therewith arise the possibility of the non-conventional exploitation of that convention or expectation. It follows that a purely . . . rule-based account of natural language usage can never be complete. . . ." (Levinson 1983, p. 112).

A joke among linguists makes the point (the story is said to be true). A pompous linguist was giving a seminar in which he claimed that while there were languages in which two negatives made a positive (as in Received Standard English: "I did not see nobody" = "I saw somebody") or two negatives made a negative (standard Italian: "Non ho visto nessuno" = "I did not see anybody"), there are no languages in which two positives made a negative. To which a smart aleck in the front row replied sarcastically: "Yeah, yeah." Any rule of language can be trumped cheaply for effect.

Joseph Farrell has made a similar point in a paper of his called "Meaning and Credibility in Cheap-Talk Games" (1988). What I call "trumping" he calls "neologism," and finds that games are sensitive to its use. "We could conclude that we have no satisfactory positive theory in a one-shot game [a conclusion which may explain the unpopularity of the paper with referees]. . . . Games should be taken in context, especially when analyzing the effects of communication. Language that could not survive in equilibrium if the world were nothing but a

particular game, can nevertheless affect the outcome of the game"
(Farrell p. 19).

Adam Smith, as usual, put the issue well. The division of labor is the "consequence of a certain propensity . . . to truck, barter, and exchange. . . [W]hether this propensity be one of those original principles in human nature, of which no further account can be given; or whether, as seems more probable, it be the necessary consequence of the faculties of reason and speech" (1776 [1981], I, ii, p. 25, italics supplied). The Wealth of Nations does not again mention the faculty of speech in a foundational role, though Smith, who began his career as a teacher of rhetoric, did remark frequently on how business people and politicians talked together. Half of his foundational formula, the faculty of reason, became in time the characteristic obsession of economists. Smith himself did not much pursue it. Economic Man, whether speaking or seeking, is not a Smithian character. It was later economists, especially Paul Samuelson, who reduced economics to the reasoning of a constrained maximizer, Seeking Man.

By contrast, Speaking Man has not yet figured much in economics, even among institutionalist economists. A man acts, by and for himself. That is what utility functions or institutions or social classes or property rights are about. No need to speak. Walk rather than talk. Smith would have disagreed. Towards the end of The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1790 [1982], VII, iv, 24, p. 336) he dug behind the faculty of speech (which led to the propensity to exchange, which led to the division of labor, which led to the wealth of nations). He connected it to persuasion, which is to say, speech meant to influence others: "The desire of being believed, the desire of persuading, of leading and

directing other people, seems to be one of the strongest of all our natural desires. It is, perhaps, the instinct on which is founded the faculty of speech [Smith was the sort of writer would have been well aware that he was using the same phrase here as he used in The Wealth of Nations], the characteristical faculty of human nature" (1790 [1982], VII.iv.25, p. 336). Compare his Lectures on Jurisprudence, in the passage quoted: "Men always endeavour to persuade others . . . [and] in this manner every one is practising oratory through the whole of his life."

Economists have come to recognize over the past couple of decades that transactions costs are high--that an employee can indulge in opportunistic behavior, shirking on the job; that a sharecropper can malingering and the landowner can cheat; that governments cannot be bound to their undertakings, since they decide the bounds. The talk that makes for friendship, contracts, or political culture is not cheap and dispensable. It is expensive, and essential to the work of a complex society.

In other words, economists are beginning to explore the economics of talk, just as econowannabe fields are discarding it in favor of voting studies and rational choice models, done amateurishly. (I continue parenthetically: from the point of view of statistical theory the significance tests on which most econowannabe science is based are nonsense. They are what Richard Feynman called Cargo Cult Science, imitating the procedures of science without the substance.) The old-style theory concerns walking, but the economy does a great deal of talking. No English professor or sociologists or professor of rhetoric would doubt the fact. An economics confined to the Faculty of Reason,

and ignoring the Faculty of Speech, creates paradoxes, as in the theory of rational expectations or the theory of games. The Faculty of Speech deserves some analytic attention, even from economists, and in the university of the 21st century will ~~create~~^{get} it.

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So that ^{is} why communication is central to the university in the 21st century: communication is a large and growing sector of the economy, the sector being transformed by electronics; the front line of researchers are beginning to realize it, and beginning to cross borders into linguistics, sociology, and communication in pursuit of the new science of ^{communication}. A department of communication fits better than most departments with the conservative function of universities, since it studies the wordcraft that was the basis of Western education for two millenia. ~~So~~^{therefore} one can make a good case on grounds of tradition for the department of communication. But the main argument is radical, not conservative, aimed at producing a laboratory and workshop for the 21st century, not a museum or a cenotaph.

Fortunately, the Midwest has stolen a march on the coasties, although the new Europeans have leapt over the dogma of 1965 in studying communication, too. In academic life the American coasties are wedded to 1965, as in William Bowen and Neil Rudenstine's *In Pursuit of the Ph.D.*

The Departments of Communications are a unique product of the great Midwestern universities in the 20th century. They are not late comers. The breakoff from English occurred before the First World War,

and departments of communication are some of the oldest in their universities.

The department came into existence in the Midwest. If you plot the affiliations of all the past presidents of the Speech Communications Association since its founding in the early 1920s you will draw a map of the Mississippi watershed, with eastern extension to Cornell and western to Berkeley.

The department of communication is peculiarly American (although I mention again that European universities have imitated it, as at the University of Amsterdam), and does not look to the 19th-century German university for inspiration. This creates difficulties when people trained in the German tradition on the coasts meet up with the department of communication. You will hear political scientists especially puzzled: "Why isn't this just like it was back at Yale? How can a subject that was not taught at Mount Holyoke be a Real Science?"

The department of communication is concerned in its rhetoric programs with the tradition of American public address that flourished in the Midwest--and still does. High-school debate programs are still what bright kids in the Midwest do, though moribund on the East Coast. You cannot imagine our pleasure at Iowa a couple of years ago when our college debating team beat Harvard--although it should be noted that most of Harvard's team came from the Midwest, too.

And to make a broader point, the department of communication is a symptom of the democratic traditions of the Midwest, away from the machine politics of the East, the America of small towns and small farms. I speak historically. The modern department of communication has kept up with the urbanization of the nation, in a way that few departments have.

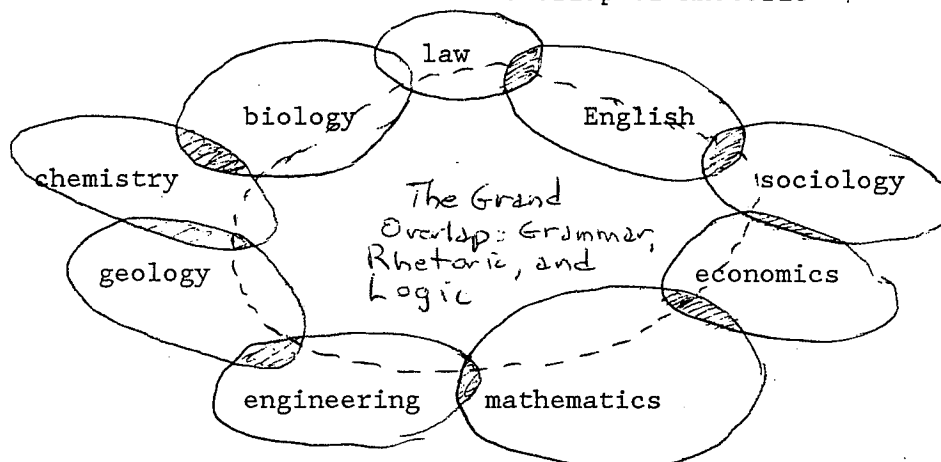
Yet it has continued to reflect on democratic politics, as no other department has.

One might say (some do), "But why a department of communication? Why not carry on these traditions and explore these novelties with other departments, such as the splendid departments I knew in 1965 at Harvard?" The answer is that we need a place in the modern university that studies the whole elephant of communication, not the tail or the trunk. Sociology looks at audiences, but more as populations than as listeners. The English department looks at texts, but only as texts. Psychology looks at talking, but not as meaning. Linguistics looks at language, but not as pragmatics. Political science looks at voting, but not at the language of politics. No one of the blind men studies the elephant whole.

Draw a chain of overlapping circles, showing biology overlapping with chemistry, chemistry with geology, geology with engineering, engineering with mathematics, mathematics with economics, economics with sociology, sociology with English, English with law, law with biology. The overlaps are where the fields meet and converse. But there is a grand central overlap, the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, which overlaps all the conversations. The grand overlap is the set of common tropes, good or bad but dangerous if unexamined. A law professor uses precedent, as does a professor of mathematics. A computer engineer uses metaphors as much as does a psychologist. Stories figure in the rhetoric of paleontology and of history.

Figure 1

The Grand Overlap of Rhetoric



Various modern methods have claimed to eliminate the grand overlap, offering instead a 3" x 5" card of constrained maximization, say, or experimental control as all you need to know about persuasion in scholarship. Like the old Johnny Carson show: All you need to know; everything; right here on this pocket-sized card. It is a false promise, which merely conceals how we actually persuade in economics or in astronomy underneath an appeal to Method. The only method is honest persuasion, whose study is called "rhetoric."

Some years ago Simon Blackburn, the editor of the philosophical journal *Mind*, gave a speech at the University of Iowa in praise of philosophy. Using a figure of argument that dates to Socrates he argued that you cannot do without a philosophy. Whether you are aware of it or not, anything you say has philosophical premises. It is better, Blackburn concluded, to be aware of the premises. His argument was persuasive, as it has been since fourth-century Athens.

In the question period I asked him if he realized that he had just used a figure of argument, and was therefore committed to a

rhetorical premise. I asked if he therefore accorded rhetoric the same central position in our culture as philosophy, an art and argument entailed in all other arts and arguments. Blackburn was flustered by the question, as philosophers tend to be, and could answer only with the usual Platonic calumnies against advertising, law courts, democratic assemblies, and free speech. Most of what philosophers know about rhetoric and communication they learned from Plato's dialogues; they have not refreshed their learning since. They learned from Plato that there is something evil about trying to persuade someone, that we do not need a democratic assembly but an aristocratic Proof. They learned from Francis Bacon, sounding the bell that gathered the wits, that "the mind itself [should] be from the very outset not left to take its own course, but guided at every step, and the business be done as if by machinery" (Bacon 1620, p. 327). Or Newton in saying hypotheses non fingo, I do not express mere hypotheses, "For what I tell . . . is not Hypothesis but the most rigid consequence, not conjectured . . . but evinced by the meditation of experiments concluded directly and without any suspicion of doubt."²

The philosophical vision of certitude is a fine thing, though of course unattainable even in arithmetic (David Hilbert, on the eve of a conclusive proof by Gödel, asked, "If mathematical thinking is defective, where are we to find truth and certitude?") But without supplement, in what Aristotle called the rhetorical syllogism, or "enthymeme," the information that X is certain leaves the judgment out.

Philosophers are accustomed to defending their subject in absolutist terms: No university worthy of the name would lack a

department of philosophy. The case, Professor Blackburn, is symmetrical. No university worthy of the name in the 21st century, as in the 4th or 13th, would lack a department of communication.

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