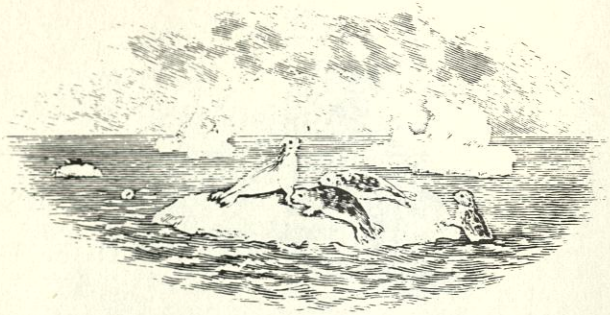

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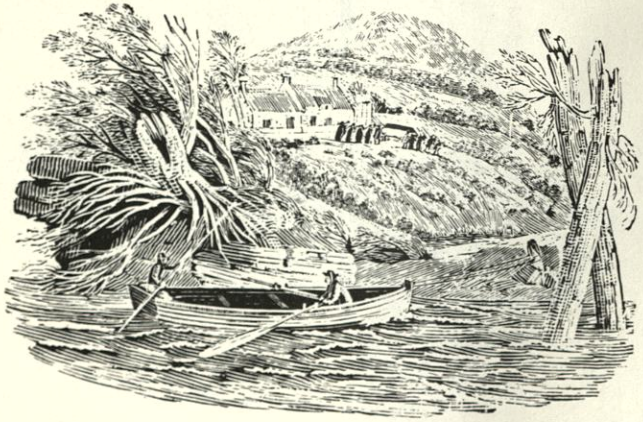

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16

Political Rhetoric in the German Enlightenment

FRANZ HUBERT ROBLING

It is one of the peculiarities of German history that at the very time when political emancipation became a current issue for the German middle classes, the art of rhetoric as a means of effective public speaking was subjected to a devastating critique. In his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of Judgement), which appeared in 1790, one year after the French Revolution, Kant described rhetoric as a morally reprehensible art 'which borrows from poetry only as much as is necessary to win over men's minds to the orator's advantage before they have made a judgement, and to deprive that judgement of its freedom'. The 'art of oratory' for Kant meant the skill 'to exploit men's weaknesses for one's own purposes', and was therefore 'unworthy of any respect'.[1] Kant's verdict, which sees rhetoric not as an art of speech originally devised for public success, but from the point of view of an aesthetic that does not concern itself with practical effect,[2] is regarded today, not without some justification, as expressing the unworldliness and the political reticence of the German middle classes of his time.[3] These reservations towards rhetoric, to which we could add further critical pronouncements by Goethe or Hegel, fit the image of Germany as 'a nation behind the times' (Helmut Plessner). The political emancipation of the middle class in

Translated by Dr John R. Williams.

[1] I. Kant, 'Kritik der Urteilskraft', B 216 and B 218 footnote, in id., *Werke*, viii, ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt, 1968), 430, 431.

[2] Cf. B. J. Warneken, 'Autonomie und Indienstnahme: Zu ihrer Beziehung in der Literatur der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft', in id., *Rhetorik, Ästhetik, Ideologie: Aspekte einer kritischen Kulturwissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1973), 83 f.

[3] Cf. W. Jens, 'Rhetorik', in P. Merker and W. Stammler (eds.), *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*[2] (Berlin and New York, 1977), iii. 433.

eighteenth-century Germany was a slow process compared with that of her European neighbours; and only in the nineteenth century was any revolutionary attempt made to solve its problems.

And yet it would be wrong to conclude from Kant's pejorative judgement that there was no political rhetoric in Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century. Certainly, this politically backward empire without any metropolitan cultural centre had no rhetoric of parliamentary debate as England did; and a revolutionary rhetoric like that of Paris in revolt had been forgotten in Germany since the Peasants' War. The urge of the middle class for independence expressed itself initially in the effort to make the exercise of power and the organization of national life the business of each and every responsible citizen by means of public discussion. An important instance of this was the struggle for the freedom of the press, which was directed against the privy politics of the ruler and his Cabinet.[4] The forum for this public discussion was the ever-increasing number of books and periodicals, the activities of debating and reading societies, and the theatre.[5] They provided the conditions for the emergence of political rhetoric, which goes back to the republican origins of oratory in ancient Greece and Rome: the attempt to gain the support of the governed for a national order and government.[6]

The Enlightenment movement became the medium of German political rhetoric. To the citizen of the eighteenth century, to be enlightened meant above all to act according to the principle of 'always thinking for oneself', that is, 'of using one's *own* reason' (Kant),[7] instead of allowing others to think for one. Moreover, the concept of enlightenment contained an element of propaganda, as its imagery of light shows. 'As soon

[4] Cf. F. Schneider, *Pressefreiheit und politische Öffentlichkeit: Studien zur politischen Geschichte Deutschlands bis 1848* (Neuwied and Berlin, 1966), esp. ch. 2.

[5] L. Hölscher, 'Öffentlichkeit', in O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, iv (Stuttgart, 1978), 431 ff.

[6] Cf. M. Fuhrmann, *Rhetorik und öffentliche Rede: Über die Ursachen des Verfalls der Rhetorik im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert* (Konstanz, 1983), 10 f.

[7] I. Kant, 'Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?', A 330 footnote, in id., *Werke*, v. ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt, 1975), 283.

as there is light, things are clarified, they become visible and can be distinguished', was Wieland's answer to the question of the nature of the Enlightenment.[8] He thus interpreted enlightenment quite clearly as the ability to see, and his explanation was based on the act of bringing light to bear. Wieland's answer characterized the determination of enlightened thinkers to lighten the darkness of ignorance among their contemporaries by publicizing their own views; and the educational system of the time provided the men of the Enlightenment with rhetoric as a weapon in their public struggle to promote their cause. The educated classes were familiar with rhetoric from their youth, for in the eighteenth century the teaching of language in higher education was still dominated by the reading of classical authors, and in particular by training in the art of speech. The aims of rhetoric were determined by the fundamentally rationalistic assumptions of the age, as can be seen from the definitive textbook of the time, Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Ausführliche Redekunst: Nach Anleitung der alten Griechen und Römer* . . . (Comprehensive Rhetoric on the Model of the Ancient Greeks and Romans) of 1736.[9] According to Gottsched, the most important object of rhetoric was to convince the listener by means of rational arguments, and in addition to persuade him by probable, that is by not conclusively proven arguments, and by arousing his emotions.[10]

It is true that in the second half of the eighteenth century the school-rhetoric represented by Gottsched began to lose its influence among the educated classes. Under the influence of the cult of genius and the new sentimental culture, aesthetics—as Kant's verdict demonstrates—turned away from the prescriptive poetics of rhetoric.[11] But while this attack

[8] C. M. Wieland, 'Sechs Fragen zur Aufklärung', in E. Bahr (ed.), *Was ist Aufklärung? Thesen und Definitionen* (Stuttgart, 1974), 23.

[9] G. Ueding and B. Steinbrink, *Grundriß der Rhetorik: Geschichte, Technik, Methode* (Stuttgart, 1986), 104.

[10] J. C. Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst: Nach Anleitung der alten Griechen und Römer, wie auch der neuern Ausländer; Geistlichen und weltlichen Rednern zu gut, in zweenen Theilen verfasset und mit Exempeln erläutert* (Leipzig, 1736; repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1973), 31 ff., 36 ff., 106 ff. While Gottsched uses only the term 'persuasion', he does draw a clear distinction in sense between 'conviction' and 'persuasion' consistent with the double meaning of the Latin 'persuadere'.

[11] Ueding and Steinbrink, *Grundriß der Rhetorik*, 106–8.

eventually displaced rhetoric from its traditionally central position to the margins of the educational system, it did not prejudice its public effectiveness as a force in the political development of the Enlightenment. It was precisely the emancipatory impulse of enlightened thought that revived rhetoric. Even in the age of the baroque the desire of the middle class for social emancipation had contributed to the renewal of rhetoric, for until then the rules of the art of effective public speaking had merely been transmitted through the rigid system of the humanist school tradition. Reflecting the desires of the private tutors who taught aristocratic families and the court officials who aspired to better positions, Christian Weise in his *Politischer Redner* (Political Speaker) of 1677 advised his readers how they could advance themselves by the art of flattery and by proper speech on all occasions.[12] The aim of courting the favour of high-ranking persons, and thereby achieving success, by careful deference to their rank and their wishes, was still evident in Gottsched's *Ausführliche Redekunst* when he placed 'encomia . . . to great men, to heroes, statesmen, great scholars, and so on' at the core of an education in rhetoric.[13] However, as the process of middle-class emancipation in the eighteenth century took a less individualistic form, and became a public demand for the social and political transformation of feudal society, so the form of political rhetoric also changed. Whereas it had hitherto been directed at the ruler or his representatives, it now had to prove itself in public to the individual private citizen who wished to form an educated opinion on social and political questions.[14] Public speech no longer concerned itself with praise of the ruler and of his political decisions but with considered debate of the issues, and even with sharp criticism. In terms of the Aristotelian categories of rhetoric, this meant that the *genus deliberativum* and the *genus judiciale* took precedence over the *genus demonstrativum*.[15] Political rhetoric now had to

[12] W. Barner, *Barockrhetorik* (Tübingen, 1970), 165 ff.

[13] Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 372 f.

[14] On the distinction between a representative and a reasoning public, see J. Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*[5] (Neuwied and Berlin, 1971), 19 ff., 42 ff.

[15] In response to critical reservations in the discussion of this thesis in my paper, it should be stressed that the cause of the formal change in political rhetoric is the transition from a representative public to a reasoning public. Certainly, elements of the deliberative and judicial types of rhetoric used for contentious matters can be found in the everyday political business of charges and petitions, or negotiations between the Estates and the rulers. But these are not the chief features of the rhetoric of the representative public. See Barner's remarks on Chancellor Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff, *Barockrhetorik*, 154–5.

address itself not so much to the monarch, but rather to the middle-class public (or, towards the end of the eighteenth century, to the broad mass of the people) as the true sovereign or judge of public affairs. The public of individual middle-class citizens could claim for itself a more informed opinion than that of the ruler or the advisers who served him; for public opinion was formed from the agreed views of the majority of its members who—at least as they saw it—discussed matters independently and solely in the interests of truth.[16]

Enlightened criticism was not, however, allowed to develop in complete freedom in the eighteenth century. Since censorship imposed restraints in political matters, enlightened critics were forced to come to terms with state control by subterfuge or compromise. Initially, therefore, political issues were treated indirectly by way of literature. But it was in this field that rhetoric offered excellent opportunities, for rhetoric had always influenced literature through the theory of the effective modes of speech: instruction, entertainment, and passionate arousal.[17] The animal fable is a good example of the interdependence of instruction and entertainment in literature. By representing the high-handedness of the powerful and the timidity of the underling in terms of the hierarchy of the animal kingdom, the writer of the Enlightenment was able to criticize social abuses. 'If we relate a general moral precept to a particular case,' Lessing wrote in his *Abhandlungen über die Fabel* (Treatises on the Fable) of 1759, in which he explained his own practice, 'if we give reality to that particular case and create a story from it in which the general precept can be clearly discerned, then this fiction is called a fable.'[18]

A further instance of the combined effect of instruction and

[16] Hölscher, 'Öffentlichkeit', 444.

[17] Cf. Ueding and Steinbrink, *Grundriß der Rhetorik*, 84 f., 91 f., 111 f.

[18] G. E. Lessing, *Werke*, ii: *Schriften zur Poetik, Dramaturgie, Literaturkritik* ed. K. Wölftel (Frankfurt-on-Main, 1967), 34.

entertainment in literature is the dialogue modelled on the classical didactic conversation. Wieland, for example, used this rhetorical genre on the model of the late Greek poet Lucian, whose conversations between gods, hetaerae, or the dead, with their topical and satirical tone, were very popular in classical times. In his treatment of political issues, Wieland went beyond Lessing's morally inspired social criticism. His dialogue 'Stilpon' of 1774, for example, was subtitled 'A patriotic conversation on the election of a Guild Master of Megara. Dedicated with the best intentions to all aristocratic states that choose their rulers themselves.'[19] While depicting the ostensibly remote world of ancient Greece, Wieland's intention was to deal with directly topical problems—in this case, the 'democratic' legitimation of the sovereign. Moreover, the reference to the republican era of Greece—and of Rome—itself became a favourite topos of political rhetoric which the Enlightenment used to indicate an earlier exemplary age of political freedom.[20]

Not only publications such as the *Teutscher Merkur*, which Wieland edited and used to publish his own writings, but also the theatre employed rhetorical means to articulate political issues. Here writers with enlightened views could address their audience directly. Schiller, for example, saw the stage as 'a moral institution' that brought all the failings of private as well as public, and therefore political, life under critical scrutiny.[21] In his own plays, Schiller frequently combined didactic and emotional elements[22]—in particular, in his drama of ideas *Don Carlos* of 1787. Don Carlos and the Marquis of Posa as advocates of a new and freer age confront the representatives of absolutism at the Spanish Court. In the central scene of the play Posa, in the name of 'the eloquence of all those thousands who are part of this great hour', implores

[19] See C. M. Wieland, *Sämtliche Werke* (repr. Hamburg, 1984), xv. 67.

[20] I. Stephan, *Literarischer Jakobinismus in Deutschland, 1789–1806* (Stuttgart, 1976), 53 f.

[21] Friedrich Schiller, 'Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?' (Lecture delivered at Mannheim in 1784, later published under the title: 'Die Schaubühne als moralische Anstalt betrachtet'.) See F. Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*[4], v. *Erzählungen, theoretische Schriften*, ed. G. Fricke and H. G. Göpfert (Munich, 1967), 826 f., 829.

[22] Cf. G. Ueding, *Schillers Rhetorik: Idealistische Wirkungsästhetik und rhetorische Tradition* (Tübingen, 1971), 144 ff.

King Philip II: 'Show the way to the kings of Europe. One stroke of the pen from this hand, and the world is created anew. Sire, grant freedom of thought!'[23] Posa gives voice to the cry of the oppressed; he personifies the desire for political change in the name of human dignity. With this rhetorical device, Schiller combined criticism of the conditions in the absolutist sovereign state expressed in his drama with the call to action. And this appeal, though made publicly before an assembled audience, was still addressed to the rulers.

This changed with the outbreak of the French Revolution and its influence on the political climate in Germany. The German supporters of the Revolution, the Jacobins, no longer addressed the rulers, who rejected the Revolution, but the people, in the shape of the radical bourgeoisie and the plebeian lower orders, who, they hoped, would end absolutism in Germany as they had in France. Political criticism now became more open, enlightenment was harnessed to the direct appeal for the transformation of the national and social order. Unlike the authors who had addressed themselves primarily to the educated middle classes, the Jacobins preferred a rhetoric that was effective as propaganda,[24] that is, a simplified and highly emotional rhetoric; and this was also reflected in the Jacobins' preference for the language of the people and for a highly metaphorical style. Hence they often drew on the popular religious literary traditions in order to exploit familiar forms of public communication and to escape censorship under a harmless guise.[25] Warned by the example of the Swabian poet and political writer Schubart, who spent ten years in prison for his fearlessness, many Jacobins expressed their views in anonymous pamphlets. A 'Republican Prayer' of 1794 from Nuremberg, for example, attacked the unlimited power of the German princes; the 'Political Confession of an Honest Bavarian concerning the Fate of his Fatherland' from Munich in 1801 demanded representation of the people.[26] Apart from these religious genres, the Jacobins

[23] F. Schiller, *Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien: Ein dramatisches Gedicht*, Act III, scene 10, in id., *Sämtliche Werke*[4], ii, ed. G. Fricke and H. Göpfert (Munich, 1965).

[24] On the concept of propaganda, cf. Fuhrmann, *Rhetorik und öffentliche Rede*, 24.

[25] Stephan, *Literarischer Jakobinismus*, 142ff., 150, 182.

[26] H. Scheel (ed.), *Jakobinische Flugschriften aus dem deutschen Süden Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin/GDR, 1965), 105–6, 451 ff.

also introduced popular secular literary forms such as satirical sketches, fictive dialogues, politically coloured travel descriptions, ironical messages of gratitude to rulers ostensibly concerned for their subjects' welfare, or lyric poetry in the style of well-known authors such as Lessing, Bürger, or Schiller. Appeals like the pamphlet 'To the Youth of Germany' from Wetzlar in 1795 called on the people in the revolutionary rhetorical style of Paris to support the French troops in the struggle against the powers of the European coalition.[27]

Those Jacobins who were themselves well-known authors also used a similar rhetoric to that of their anonymous fellow-revolutionaries—for example, Knigge's book *Josef Wurmbrand's Political Confession* (1792), Rebmann's *Travels and Crusades through a Part of Germany* (1795), or Erhard's satire *The Devil's Apologia* (also 1795). Some of these authors even adapted the catechism or the sermon for political purposes. In 1793 Heinrich Würzer published a 'Catechism of Revolution'; Eulogius Schneider, once a Franciscan monk, then a university professor, and later a Jacobin activist in Strasbourg, spoke and wrote in 1792 on 'Jesus, the People's Friend'.[28] The sermon, which from late Antiquity was accepted as the fourth type of rhetoric after the demonstrative, the deliberative, and the judicial, had been used in particular during the Peasants' War for political purposes, and now was given the same status and function by the Jacobins. Also of interest to the importance of rhetoric for the political emancipation of Germany at the time is what is actually a pre-revolutionary work of the future Jacobin Knigge: his book *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (On Social Manners) of 1788. In this work, Knigge formulated an ethic of human social conduct based not on rank or privilege but on the merits of the individual. The model for such conduct was Cicero's and Quintilian's rhetorical ideal of the 'vir bonus'. The 'vir bonus dicendi peritus', a person of moral integrity, owed his public influence to his command of 'apte dicere', the appropriateness of his

[27] Stephan, *Literarischer Jakobinismus*, ch. 9; Scheel, *Jakobinische Flugschriften*, 104 ff., 288 ff., 332 ff.

[28] On the catechism and the sermon, cf. Stephan, *Literarischer Jakobinismus*, 71 f., 160 ff.; also K. M. Michel, introduction to id. (ed.), *Politische Katechismen: Volney, Kleist, Heß* (Frankfurt-on-Main, 1966).

speech to the situation and the topic that led him to treat people in a befitting manner.[29]

Of course, the emancipatory writings of Knigge and of other Jacobins did not escape attack in Germany. Conservative and reactionary forces, perceiving a threat to the established order, engaged the Jacobins in violent polemics. What is also of significance to the development of political rhetoric is that these attacks were inspired by the critiques of the French Revolution by the English parliamentarian Edmund Burke. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* had appeared in 1793 in a translation by the Austrian Civil Servant and political writer Friedrich Gentz, who was himself a master in the use of rhetoric. The great impact of this book is attested by its appearance in several editions within a very short time.[30] It certainly had a great influence on the rhetoric of conservatism in Germany; how far this influence went in particular cases is a matter for further research.

In their use of political rhetoric in the effort to gain the support of the governed for a national order and government, the Jacobins, like the orators of the French Revolution, used pathos for the purpose of propaganda. Impassioned pathos, as one of the three factors of effectiveness in speech, should arouse the feelings of the listeners in order to win the audience over to the speaker's side. An example of this is the pamphlet 'Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit von den Fürsten Europens, die sie bisher unterdrückten' ('A Demand for the Restitution of Freedom of Thought by the Rulers of Europe'), published anonymously by the young Fichte in 1793 when he was strongly in sympathy with Jacobin thinking.[31] This work, a contribution to the debate on the freedom of the press,[32] even uses the light imagery of the Enlightenment on its title-page—but, unlike Wieland, with concrete political references. 'Heliopolis, in the last year of the old darkness' is how Fichte ironically indicates the place of publication,

[29] Ueding and Steinbrink, *Grundriß der Rhetorik*, 117 ff.

[30] F. Braune, *Edmund Burke in Deutschland: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des historisch-politischen Denkens* (Heidelberg, 1917).

[31] C. Träger, 'Fichte als jakobinischer Agitator', in B. Willms (ed.), *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: Schriften zur Revolution* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, 1973), 364 ff.

[32] Cf. W. G. Jacobs, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1984), 36.

alluding to the conditions in feudal Germany.[33] The rhetorical force of the text lies in the fact that it is written in direct speech. Fichte implores his readers: 'No, ye nations, you may relinquish all—all but the freedom of thought.'[34] In his imagination, the author sees his audience as the assembly of the European nations to whom he is speaking directly. This rhetorical fiction recalls the dialogue between the Marquis of Posa and Philip II from Schiller's *Don Carlos*, where Posa demands freedom of thought in the name of the nations; moreover, Fichte also alludes to that drama.[35] The vast dimensions of the audience imagined by Fichte and the momentous theme of his speech—the political freedom of the nations—give his text a note of sublimity. The sublime as an expressive form of pathos was first discussed in the late classical treatise *Vom Erhabenen* (On the Sublime), which was highly regarded in eighteenth-century aesthetics.[36] The author of this treatise, who is still unknown, defined loftiness of theme and of imaginative expression as the salient characteristics of the sublime.[37] This note of sublimity charged with pathos is reinforced by the figures and metaphors of Fichte's language: the reconstruction of the national edifice is described in terms of 'new wings and extensions' as opposed to the 'old castles of the robber barons', and freedom is hailed as 'a Palladium of mankind descended from heaven'.[38] Fichte then directs a specific rhetorical shaft at the rulers as he shifts from pathos to irony; in parts, his text apes the flattering formulae of courtiers' rhetoric as it can be found ready-made in Gottsched's model forms of address.[39] 'You princes,' Fichte writes for example, 'we will allow you everything . . . if you

[33] J. G. Fichte, 'Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit von den Fürsten Europens, die sie bisher unterdrückten', in id., *Schriften zur Revolution*, 53. [34] Ibid. 56.

[35] Ibid. 58 n.

[36] Ueding and Steinbrink, *Grundriß der Rhetorik*, 107.

[37] Pseudo-Longinos, *Vom Erhabenen* (Greek and German), ed. R. Brandt (Darmstadt, 1983), 43 f.

[38] Fichte, 'Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit,' 55–6; cf. Pseudo-Longinos, *Vom Erhabenen*, 69 f., 87 f.

[39] See Gottsched's model 'Panegyric', which gives many variations on terms of self-abasement such as Fichte's 'most respectful' (for example 'faithfully devoted', 'insignificant'), and on modes of address ('praiseworthy head', 'exalted quality'). Cf. J. C. Gottsched, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ix: 2, *Gesammelte Reden*, ed. R. Scholl (Berlin and New York, 1976), 368–73.

will but grant us an answer to one last respectful question.'[40] And he goes on to expose the 'salus publica suprema lex' as a principle of government which is in fact a pretence used against the welfare of the people. Adopting the admonitory role of the philosopher, Fichte even uses the revolutionary 'du' form of address, and demands from the rulers 'protection and restitution of our rights, which you surely only took from us in error'.[41]

By and large, a balance is maintained in Fichte's treatise between argument and propaganda. The one reinforces the other, and they do not impede, or clash with, each other. This is not the case, however, with Georg Forster. Unlike Fichte, Forster was forced to realize his political and enlightened ideas in practice by the revolution in Mainz, which transformed the ecclesiastical principality for six months into a republican state; and—also unlike Fichte[42]—he supported this development.[43] On the one hand, in his speeches to the Jacobin Club in Mainz, Forster invokes Enlightenment ideals such as unswerving truthfulness: 'Any man who proclaims a truth that should hold despotic sway, to which we should submit blindly, which no one should put to the test, nay, which should reduce all reason to silence,' he says in 1793, 'to that man we cannot merely remain indifferent; he is an enemy of truth, of reason, of freedom, of equality . . . and between him and the Jacobin there must be irreconcilable vendetta!' He goes on to assign to the Jacobin the role of 'teacher of mankind', who by example and persuasion should make 'the seed of knowledge grow and flourish' among the uneducated.[44] Rhetorical devices such as accumulation, intensification, and metaphor lend high pathos and great urgency to such passages. On the other hand, however, the political pressures

[40] Fichte, 'Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit', 72–3. [41] Ibid. 74.

[42] Cf. J. G. Fichte, 'Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urteile des Publikums über die französische Revolution', in id., *Schriften zur Revolution*, 82 f. See also Träger, 'Fichte als jakobinischer Agitator', 373.

[43] R. R. Wuthenow, afterword, in id. (ed.), *Georg Forster, Im Anblick des großen Rades: Schriften zur Revolution* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1981), 224 ff.

[44] The passages quoted are from two speeches by Forster. The first is entitled 'Brüder' in G. Forster, *Werke*, ed. G. Steiner (Frankfurt-on-Main, 1970), iii. 620. The second speech is entitled 'Anrede an die Gesellschaft der Freunde der Freiheit und Gleichheit am Neujahrstag 1793', in Wuthenow (ed.), *Im Anblick des großen Rades*, 62, 65.

on the young and insecure republic compelled Forster to gloss over the true picture of conditions in Mainz, in order to shore up the position of this town between two fronts. He places Mainz on the same level as Paris, the capital of a revolutionary nation;[45] he portrays the French conquerors in glowing colours as liberators—a view that was not shared by all inhabitants of the town in view of the burden of taxation;[46] and he claims to discern the miraculous hand of destiny and the workings of providence in what he sees as the certain victory of the republican cause.[47]

There is now no political truth beyond that of party. Forster had to see political facts from a single perspective—his own—because he was committed to the survival of the Republic and because he also wished to motivate others to action in that cause. In the face of the political immaturity of the population of Mainz, and in the conviction that the time had come for a revolutionary change in feudal conditions, he backed an alliance with the French. All this explains the ambivalence of his political rhetoric,[48] though it does not justify it when we remember the often enigmatic role of the French army in Mainz, or the dubious irrationalism of his invocation of destiny. Whenever his political position lacked credibility in the light of reality, Forster was compelled to resort to particularly powerful devices of emotional pathos—the invocation of a great example, the forceful boosting of his own side, and the use of rhetorical questions coupled with exclamations. Moreover, his friends in the Jacobin Club of Mainz had the same experience when their efforts towards the political enlightenment and the mobilization of the people failed. Hence Georg Wedekind, one of the most active members of the Club, concluded in his advice 'To Young Orators of the People': 'By reason alone you will achieve as

[45] Forster, 'Über das Verhältnis der Mainzer gegen die Franken', 1792, in Wuthenow (ed.), *Im Anblick des großen Rades*, 42. His words are: 'The truth is the truth, in Mainz as much as in Paris, wherever it is spoken and in whatever language it is spoken.' But the situation was not as simple as that. Cf. W. Grab, *Ein Volk muß seine Freiheit selbst erobern: Zur Geschichte der deutschen Jakobiner* (Frankfurt, Olten, Vienna, 1984), 192 ff.

[46] Forster, 'Über das Verhältnis der Mainzer gegen die Franken', 40 ff. Cf. Grab, *Ein Volk muß seine Freiheit selbst erobern*, 196–7.

[47] Ibid. 48.

[48] Cf. S. Padberg, 'Georg Forsters Position im Mainzer Jakobinismus', in G. Pickerodt (ed.), *Georg Forster in seiner Epoche* (Berlin, 1982), esp. 59 ff.

little with the general public as you will with the individual unless you can bring to the surface some other feeling that lies in men's consciousness.'[49] If other means failed to arouse the will to act, then only the arousal of feelings through pathos could overcome the scepticism or the resistance of the listeners.

The arousal of feelings as the guarantee of success in oratory—this, it seems, is a basic formula of political rhetoric already devised by Cicero, a speaker accustomed to success in the public forum and in the lawcourts.[50] In adopting this principle, the Jacobins of the late eighteenth century dissociated themselves from the rationalistic goal of conviction by means of rhetoric, which Gottsched had placed higher than the goal of persuasion. To be sure, their rhetoric thereby assumed an ambivalence which would subsequently become a characteristic feature of nineteenth and twentieth-century political rhetoric, and which represents a constant danger in the use of public speech as a force for political enlightenment.

[49] G. Wedekind, 'An junge Volksredner', 'Patriot' C, sect. 3 (1792), 32 (rep. by Kraus Reprint, Nendeln, 1972). Forster took a cautious attitude towards views such as those of Wedekind and his friends; cf. Grab, *Ein Volk muß seine Freiheit selbst erobern*, 198. It is interesting that in his treatise Fichte also valued 'the barren and arid conclusion of reason' less highly than 'sentiment'. He expressly has recourse to the former only when feeling alone fails to achieve its purpose, Fichte, 'Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit' 64.

[50] Cicero, *Orator*, xxi. 69: 'Proof is essential, entertainment pleasing; but victory is won only by stirring the heart.'