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Commedia: Rhetoric And Technology In The Media Commons

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COMMEDIA: RHETORIC AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MEDIA COMMONS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Beth Shaw-Draves, without whom I would have never found my path.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 "COMMEDIA"

A common question that arises in discussions of new media technology is whether networked media bring us closer together as individuals or whether they establish distance between us. Social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, open up pathways for us to reconnect with friends and family who may live far away or to keep up with the accomplishments and successes (or failures) of our friends, even though we live increasingly busy lives. Business-oriented networking sites such as LinkedIn provide easily accessible platforms for developing professional networks and for housing portfolios, resumes, and other professional development materials. And of course online dating sites like eHarmony and OkCupid allow busy individuals to leverage social media to find romance. All of these examples support the argument that digital networks bring individuals closer together and assist in the establishment of communities. However, the darker side of networks, that which drives us farther apart, can be seen in how people make use of social media applications and networked devices. People "live Tweet" events rather than experiencing them firsthand, gamers play with each other inline rather than in the presence of others, and games such as "Phone Stacking"[1] have been developed to force people's hands into actually interacting with each other rather than their smart phones. Each of these examples, of course, lend credibility to the accusations

[1] Phone Stacking typically takes place in restaurants or bars and requires all members of a group to stack their phones in the middle of the table and leaving them there until everyone is ready to leave, thus forcing interpersonal interactions rather than interactions mediated through the participants' phones. The rules usually include some variation of the stipulation that if anyone picks up their phone during the meal or gathering, they are responsible for paying the tab for the entire party.

that networked media push us apart and cause us to isolate rather than engage in community activities, valuing face-to-face interaction over socializing over networks.

The reality, however, is something more in the middle. Social networking is not simply the bringing together of individuals into a McLuhan-esque Global Village, nor is it the destruction and disorientation of our youth as Stiegler argues in works such as *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*. It is instead a complex source of community building and alienation. The question, then, should not necessarily be directed only at the issue of whether or not media bring us together or tear us apart, but should instead be directed at the fact that since media is doing both, we need to theorize ways with which we can reorient ourselves and better navigate the constantly shifting media environment. This project is my attempt to do just that. By looking back to the Aristotelian concept of the commonplaces and relating them to our use of networked media today, I propose that communities in networked environments become part of a Media Commons that is grounded in both traditional community and the push-pull of online interaction.

A Return to the Commons

While the crucial theoretical category for the humanities and social sciences of the1980s and 90s was "the subject," more recent work in critical theory has turned its focus to the related but broader mission of retheorizing the nature of groups, publics, and communal networks of various types. In other words, if the most pressing political and ethical questions used to be ones that interrogated the "(im)possibility" of the subject or of subjective agency (Can there be a subject? How does the subject construct meaning? How is the subject constructed by regimes of power?), more recent work in the field has pursued similar questions through a renewed investigation into sociality and collectivity.

Indeed, this concern seems to subtend three of the most prominent directions of contemporary critical theory: a return to ontology as a method for analyzing community and collectivity[2], theorizations of contemporary social realms as interlinked spaces ("the network society," "control society," "contribution societies")[3], and, more generally, a broader turn within politically-minded theory toward fundamentally rethinking the categories of democracy, governmental deliberation, and sovereignty[4]. These questions

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[2] Since Jean-Luc Nancy's publication of "Being Singular Plural" in 1996, we have seen a reexamination or "re-ontoligization" of philosophy in terms of the group, or as Nancy says "an ontology of being-with-one-another" necessitating a rethinking of contemporary political theory (53). Following Nancy's lead, other theorists such as Agamben (*The Coming Community, Homo Sacer*), White (*Sustaining Affirmation*), and Ranciere (*Dissensus*) have undertaken a joint investigation of what Carsten Strathausen calls a "neo-left" ontology—an ontology that "no longer describes the ancient philosophical attempt to define the 'essence' or 'nature of being' … [or] to provide an absolute perspective guided by pure thought," but rather that "begins to function as a heuristic device for the historically contingent construction of a different 'nature' from the one we presently inhabit" (paragraph 23).

[3] The second trend has been most prominent in post-Foucauldian attempts to analyze the impact of globalization and new technologies on structures of social power. From Deleuze's influential concept of the control society and Castells' Network Society to what Alexander Galloway calls a protocological structure or what Hardt and Negri or Virno call the "multitude," participants in this area of contemporary critical thought have emphasized the ways that new forms of collectivity and communication have significantly changed the shape of global political economy.

[4] The third trend deals with the future possibility of collective involvement in democracy and deliberative politics via a rethinking of the basic structures of sovereignty, democracy and related terms. Buoyed by a renewed interest in theories of sovereignty stemming from the renaissance of interest in the writings of Carl Schmitt, the works of theorists such as Laclau, Mouffe, Badiou, and Brown all argue for the importance of the impact of globalization and technologization on contemporary possibilities for participation in democratic politics. From a different perspective, new media theorists, such as Diana Saco, emphasize how the diffuse, global environment caused by new media and networked technology has had the same effect. According to Saco, in participatory democracy there is an issue of scale, as "participatory democracy [depends], according to common wisdom, on citizens being able to communicate with each other in the flesh" (70-71). The current upsurge of networkable technologies and 24/7 access

are all important in the development of this project, as my reading of the commons in Aristotle, specifically, and in other philosophy more generally, points to the commons as necessary for communities to exist (an example of this would be Aristotle's concept of private property as benefitting the community, which I will discuss later in this chapter). However, what I intend to add to these lines of inquiry is a concern for technology (and specifically media technologies) in that our relationship with technology is not necessarily just that of user and tool (although this is an important part), but are more significantly between ourselves and other uses in a network. These extended relationships between users form into communities, many of which defy the hierarchical nature of governance within the nation-state (such as the community of editors and developers that formed within the website, Wikipedia, and artist collectives such as Red Rag to a Bull), thus requiring a different lens through which we can analyze the formation and governance of these communities. The organization of these communities also brings into question their purpose, i.e. what it is they produce—for example, is the purpose of the Wikipedian community really to produce and police articles on Wikipedia, or is the purpose of this community to define and establish the relationship itself between the Wikipedians.

This project proposes rhetorical theory, and specifically the concept of the commons (here interpreted as both the *koinoi topoi* of Aristotelian rhetoric and political theory and the place, whether physical or ethereal, in which communities develop), as a method for theorizing the impact of media technologies on issues of collectivity and communication. Based in Aristotle's concept of the commonplaces, this dissertation will

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disrupts this traditional democratic process insofar as it serves to further divorce physical beings from "in the flesh" interactions.

assert a tripartite division of the commons into Common Places, Common Spaces, and Common Goods, as means through which collectivity and communication can be read through specific media technologies. It is my intent that this dissertation will make a contribution to three separate fields of study. First, through a theorization of the Media Commons, I intend to contribute to the field of rhetorical theory, particularly to publics and public-sphere theory. Second, taking up the Internet as an instantiation of the commons, this project will contribute to New Media Studies and Science and Technology Studies. Third, by envisioning the classroom as one crucial scene in the history of the Media Commons, this project will make a pedagogical contribution to composition pedagogy.

Because it is deeply rooted in concerns of culture, politics, economics, and rhetoric, public-sphere theory is an essential starting point for theorizing this model. The key questions of public-sphere theory can be traced back to the work of Habermas, but even more generally back to Arendt and a tradition that goes back to Plato's *Republic*. The theory allows us to analyze the drive to congregate around specific ideologies or cultural milieus, and how the collective that is formed serves to either normalize bourgeois ideals or contradict them. However, public-sphere theory is too deeply rooted in the idea of a physical manifestation of people in a space for face-to-face contact (whether it's Habermas' French salons or Warner's gathering of transvestite men in a suburban household) as well as a fairly specific form of subjectivity, based on normativity, or in rare cases the subversion of normativity, that is assumed by the members of the public/counterpublic. Concomitant to these assumptions, public-sphere

theory has often, and problematically, underemphasized the role of post-print technologies in shaping collectivity and the economics of deliberation and persuasion.

In her analysis of Habermas, Diana Saco touches on this problem of underemphasis in identifying print media as critical to the development of Habermas' critical-debating public "in two respects: they contributed to the formation of a particular kind of critical practice, and they helped engender and sustain the identity of 'the public'" (Saco 63). In other words, the hallmark practice of the rational bourgeois public sphere is intrinsically tied to the type of critical thinking and discussion that printed media made possible. Therefore, in order to engage in the private debate of public issues, one has to draw upon this device of print-mediated criticism, thus leaving little possibility of viewing other communication technologies (such as the Internet or SMS) as anything but different interfaces for print materials. Habermas also discusses how the emergence of broadcast media threatened this critical stance and thus threatened the use of reason in the public sphere: "Radio, film and television by degrees reduced to a minimum the distance that a reader is forced to maintain toward the printed letter—a distance that that required the privacy of the appropriation as much as it made possible the publicity of a rational-critical exchange about what had been read" (170). Broadcast media, then, by reducing this necessary critical distance, makes it impossible for this "rational-critical exchange" to happen. Any notion of the bourgeois public sphere must be rooted in the medium that makes rational exchange possible—namely, print. Michael Warner problematizes the relationship between print and digital media in the formation of Habermasian publics, and theorizes it as a problem of temporality, stating that "Highly mediated and highly capitalized forms of circulation are increasingly organized as continuous ('24/7 instant

access') rather than punctual … If the change in infrastructure continues at this pace, and if modes of apprehension change accordingly, the absence of punctual rhythms may make it very difficult to connect localized acts of reading to the modes of agency in the social imaginary of modernity" (Warner 97 – 98). Again, because the issue is the separation of the print medium from the moment (or location) of the formation of the publics, public-sphere theory falls short of accounting for how post-print technologies impact issues of collectivity.

Although some theorists, including Saco and Jodi Dean, have addressed the role of post-print technology in relationship to the creation of publics, more needs to be done in terms of rhetorical theory to address this issue or think beyond the difficulty of connecting "localized acts of reading." Saco uses Henri Lefebvre's "conceptual triad" of spatiality—the physical, mental, and social—as well as Arendt's and Habermas' theorization of the public, private, and social to challenge the notion that it is essential for participatory democracy[5] to have face-to-face contact. Saco begins to separate the physical body as a necessary element for the proper functioning of democracy, thus making it possible to reconceive issues of public interaction and discourse in cyberspace. Similarly, Dean takes issue with the normative tendencies of the public sphere as theorized by Arendt and Habermas, as well as Seyla Benhabib, to propose, instead, that "critical and democratic theorists jettison the idea of the public sphere and adopt a more complex model of civil society" (247). As opposed to the public sphere, which "relies on abstracting norms of equality, inclusivity, publicity, rationality, and authenticity from a

[5] The distinction here is between participatory democracy as in "one person, one vote" rather than representative democracy in which voters within certain districts elect representatives to government. Participatory democracy, then, depends much more on the direct participation of individuals in government.

few, usually elite, social locations," the concept of a civil society "embeds interaction in the media, associations, institutions, and practices that configure temporary politics" (ibid.). For Dean, the model of civil society better accounts for discourse and the exchange of information in a networked environment. Both Saco's and Dean's studies take important steps in envisioning something other than traditional theories of the public sphere and by addressing issues such as the overemphasis on face-to-face contact and the difficulties of separating publics from print technologies. However, if, as stated above, studies of ontology and sovereignty tend to ignore the impact of technology, studies of the public sphere, if inclusive of technology, omit the concern for ontology. Rather than seen as a universal principle for collective organization that needs no concern for time or space, the public sphere is almost too contingent, too dependent on specific times or places—publics organize around some "thing" (artifact, ideology, counterculture) as a way for a public of private citizens to intervene in the governance of the nation-state.

I propose, instead, a turn to the concept of the commons as an alternative to public sphere theory and more traditionally ontology-based theories of collectivity. This approach emphasizes how the commonplaces, as they have appeared in ancient rhetorical and political theory, form an essential and overlooked element in how communities form around particular technologies—whether that technology is the *techne* of rhetoric or the World-Wide Web. By turning to this minor discourse of the commons, viewed through the lens of technology, I will develop the concept of the "Media Commons" as a more robust conceptual model for theorizing the ways in which new forms of media and technology influence how we look at the formation(s) and function(s) of what we have historically viewed as publics but can, in the present, view as instantiations of the

commons. The Media Commons will allow for the theorization of the impact of technology in the public sphere (that which is foreclosed by public-sphere theory) without entirely abandoning a model of deliberative/communicative sociality. Before developing the more modern concept of the Media Commons, however, I would like to turn first to the historical and philosophical underpinnings of the commons to ground my argument and develop a conceptual vocabulary for the division of the commons into Common Places, Common Spaces, and Common Goods that I propose in this chapter.

Common Origins

It is essential that any approach to a study of the commons begin from Aristotelian roots. Although Plato touched upon issues of common property in *The Republic*, Aristotle's political and philosophical writings were among the first to both involve an idea of the commons in rhetorical theory, but also to bring the commons in line with issues of politics and the public good. As theorized by Aristotle, the "common places" served as an effective rhetorical device (arguments that were "guaranteed" to work in any situation for any audience), but also as a theory that ancient Athenians shared enough common experience for such arguments to be formulated and used in the agora or the assembly. Looking at the common places conceptually as loci for connection between members of a community, and at the art (*techne*) of rhetoric as the means through which these loci are developed, opens up the necessary space for envisioning the role of technology that is foreclosed by the Habermasian public sphere and its concomitant fetishization of shared physical spaces and print technology. More specifically, this text will focus on particular technologies that provide robust examples of the "Media

Commons," or the unfolding of media technologies as the means for organization and communication within global, networked public spaces.

In order to tease out the development of the Media Commons within each of these specific scenes, I look at the commons from three different perspectives: as Common Places, Common Spaces, and Common Goods. "Common Places" represent both the Aristotelian conception of the commonplaces as a rhetorical device for argumentation and as the shared knowledge and collective experience that finds its prototypical form in the Athenian agora and assembly. The concept of "Common Spaces" addresses the same questions as public-sphere theory's concentration on the role of communicative environments, but with a greater emphasis on the nonphysical organization of networked culture as well as how individuals can connect with physical spaces and communities through networked technologies. And, finally, "Common Goods" traditionally represents physical goods and resources that, rather than benefitting individuals as commodities, benefit communities that are built up around these goods and resources (such as ocean fisheries or common pasture land). However, this traditional conception becomes problematic when the Common Goods become "virtual" (i.e. immaterial) in a networked environment.

The development of the Media Commons is intended to include what traditional theories of the public sphere have tended to leave out—most notably the role(s) of technology and the ability to organize and communicate with no concern for physical space or physical presence. This conceptual model, then, can be useful in developing a better understanding of how rhetorical principles of persuasion and communication function in technological, global networked environments—such as how persuasion

works (or doesn't work) in a global, diffuse democracy, or how information that circulates in a networked environment gains value as well as communicative capability—and in turn, how to better incorporate this understanding into classroom praxis. To this end, I focus here on three primary areas of research: (1) Rhetorical Theory (specifically that which takes up the discourse of collectivity), (2) public-sphere theory, and (3) New Media and Technology Studies. This research establishes intersections between the three areas as well as highlights moments at these intersections where the minoritarian discourse of the commons emerges (especially moments in which technology is shown to be essential to the actualization of the commons). Out of this emergence, then, the concept of the "Media Commons" is drawn. My reference to minoritarian discourse, here, draws from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who I will quote at length:

> The notion of minority is very complex … Majority implies a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it … Majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around. It assumes the standard measure, not the other way around. A determination different from that of the constant will therefore be considered minoritarian, by nature and regardless of number, in other words, a subsystem or an outsystem. (105–106)

Thus, analyzing critical thought about the commons as a minoritarian discourse, this model poses public-sphere theory as the majority "constant," the measure by which the theorization of collectivity is measured (at least in contemporary liberalism). It also, then, poses the commons as not a nonexistent body of theory, or even one that exists as a small fraction of theories of collectivity, but as a subsystem—one that may even outnumber the majority—that deviates from the model. It is the intent of this research to show the subsystem of the commons that runs underneath the majoritarian discourse of rhetorical theory, public-sphere theory, and new media and technology studies.

As this study will be rooted in the Aristotelian conception of the commons as the "commonplaces," or *koinoi topoi*, (as outlined in the *Rhetoric* and the *Topics*)—arguments "that apply equally to questions of right conduct, natural science, politics, and many other things that have nothing to do with one another" (*Rhetoric* 1358a12 – 1358a13)—the pursuit of the minoritarian discourse of the commons throughout different disciplines and school of thought will inevitably begin to manifest in overlaps and blurring. Opposite the special topics, which are specific to a particular field or scenario, the common topics are designed to work equally across any field of inquiry (politics, ethic, natural sciences, etc.). This opens up a space for rhetorical engagement that assumes a shared, common experience within a given population if the common arguments are to work effectively.

Beginning with Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (the *Topics* deals more specifically with syllogistic logic than with communication), in the Athenian agora/assembly, the *koinoi topoi* served as part of the *techne* of rhetoric, defined by Aristotle as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (1355b27–1355b28). Aristotle's description of the commonplaces evokes three facets of the "common": arguments that have a commonality across different sciences and schools of thought, as defined in the *Rhetoric*; a common "place" (memory location) in which these arguments can be stored; and the common space where these arguments are effective, assuming, originally, the shared experience of collectivity in the Athenian agora and assembly.

From Aristotle, the *techne* of rhetoric moved through the Aristotle-influenced Cicero and Quintilian, Augustinian rhetoric (in which Biblical "Truths" replace First Principles and Ideal Forms), into the empirically based scientistic rhetoric of

Bacon/Descartes, and the Ramian split of rhetoric into elocution (the canons of delivery and style) and logic (the canons of invention and arrangement) (Herrick; Kennedy). By the time Ramus made the rhetoric/logic split, the commonplaces lost the sense of collectivity and became a mnemonic device, a "place" in the memory where templates for common argument could be stored. This division of rhetoric into logic and elocution also diminished rhetoric's power as a social force of collectivity that could intervene in issues of the polis.

Rhetoricians such as Blair, Campbell, and Whately in the mid 18th to early 19th century began to erode this distinction, opening the scope of rhetorical theory to include "relationships between rhetoric and literature, theology, psychology, philosophy, history, language, and natural science" (Golden and Corbett 17). This expansion allowed for a reconsideration of collectivity, and at the beginning of the 20th century, progressives, such as Dewey, expanded the scope of rhetorical education to include external issues—family, home, work, and church, etc.—in educating students to become active members of the democratic process. By midcentury, Kenneth Burke's reformulation of rhetoric, which changed the focus from persuasion to identification, reestablished a sense of collectivity (in this case the necessary reversal of the divisions that inherently happen between people) and turns to Aristotle for justification: "The *Rhetoric* deals with the possibilities of classification in its *partisan* aspects; it considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another" (Burke 22). Thus, the individuals at odds with one another make use of the commonplaces of rhetoric to find points of identification between themselves, their groups, and the groups with which they are at odds. In my

dissertation, I will also turn to this Aristotelian framework to investigate how these rhetorical commonplaces can be used to find these points of identification within groups in a technological, globally networked environment.

One important question that needs to be explored, then, is how rhetoric—which in the Aristotelian and Burkean sense discussed above concerns itself with mainly with individuals/communities and communication/identification—intersects with technology. It is easy enough to dismiss technology as simply a tool for communication (i.e. the medium over which information is transmitted), however in developing the concept of the Media Commons, the relationship between man and technology needs to be much deeper—technology is in a reciprocal relationship with man and is essential to the evolution of man individually and collectively. The theoretical underpinning for this relationship is informed by the anthropological work of André Leroi-Gourhan and the media theory of Marshall McLuhan. Leroi-Gourhan argues that the evolution of mankind is a constant process of externalization: "The whole of our evolution has been oriented toward placing outside ourselves what in the rest of the animal world is achieved inside by species adaptation. The most striking material fact is certainly the "freeing" of tools [technology], but the fundamental fact is really the freeing of the word [rhetoric and communication] and our unique ability to transfer our memory to a social organism outside ourselves" (235). This ability to transfer memory to the social organism evokes the Aristotelian sense of the commons, and establishes how tools are key in this process of externalization. Similarly, McLuhan's work redefines man's relationship with technology as not humans using technology as a tool, but, again, as a reciprocal relationship between man and technology. Man extends himself through technological

prostheses, and these technological prostheses allow man to extend his "nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned" (3). McLuhan's incorporation of specific communication media (television, radio, etc.) and our relationship to them sets the stage for further investigation into how rhetoric comes to bear in this relationship between man and technology.

Contemporary media theory continues the lines of investigation initially theorized by Leroi-Gourhan and McLuhan, and although not all cite Leroi-Gourhan or McLuhan directly, it is evident that their conception of the relationship be between man and technology as one of reciprocation or co-evolution remains strong. Relying heavily on Leroi-Gourhan, Bernard Stiegler takes a traditional philosophic approach to explore the becoming of humanity through humankind's relationship with, and use of, technology, and coming to the same conclusion— technology is essential to the becoming is humankind. Brian Rotman and Merlin Donald reach the same end, but from different perspectives, both arguing that the development of language and writing as technologies are crucial to the evolution of the human as human. Each of these theorists works to unravel the intricacies of the human/technology relationship and supports a co-evolutionary model of how humans and technologies interact to organize and communicate within networks, but even though some (especially Rotman and Donald) call out the influence of rhetoric and language on this relationship, this influence is a smaller part of a much larger argument that is usually steeped in traditional philosophy or media theory. In this dissertation, I intend to analyze specifically how rhetoric influences and enhances this relationship especially in terms of collectivity, communication, and the exchange of information. This theoretical foundation and co-evolutionary model will also

support my argument to look past traditional notions of the public sphere and instead look toward the commons as the organizing principle for how man and technology coexist in a networked environment.

The Commons and the Public Sphere

Public-sphere theory can, perhaps, be traced back to Plato's *Republic* with its concern for the ideal conditions for political life. Although the *Republic* does provide an early political model for communal life, it differs from the modern public sphere, as theorized by Arendt and Habermas, in two important ways: 1) the sharing of such things as wives and children it overlooks the private as a necessary opposite of the public (Arendt), and 2) this community is a construct of the state rather than an assemblage of citizens that gathers together to use rational debate to influence the state. For Arendt, the public constitutes the space of the real, in that "our feelings for reality depend utterly upon appearance and therefore upon the existence of a public realm into which things can appear outside the darkness of sheltered existence, even the twilight which illuminates our private and intimate lives is ultimately derived from the much harsher light of the public realm" (51). Although the public sphere is constitutive of reality, the private is necessary for the development of things that cannot withstand the "harsh light" of the public. Habermas blurs this distinction between the necessarily private and the necessarily public by proposing that the "bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above as the sphere of private people come together as a public" (27). This public of private people, then, assembles to utilize rational debate as a way to discuss and then influence political matters.

Contemporary public-sphere theory further complicates these notions of public and private as the boundaries of nation-states begin to dissolve as the result of modern technology and globalization. Michael Warner introduces the concept of counterpublics in which subaltern groups organize around the same principle as Habermas's bourgeois salons, but exercise their publicness in a different way than the normatizing of bourgeois ideals. These counterpublics continue to blur the lines between public life and private life and further exemplify private publics. Nancy Fraser also problematizes Habermas's theories by faulting him for not "developing a new post-bourgeois model of the public sphere" or "explicitly problematiz[ing] some dubious assumptions that underlie the bourgeois model" (58). Fraser then theorizes a new model of the public sphere that corrects the "masculinist bourgeois ideology" of Habermas's public sphere and poses a new theory that is adequate for the "critique of the limits of actually existing democracy in late capitalist societies" (77). However, no matter how much issue Warner or Fraser make take with the Habermasian public sphere, their theories still necessitate a relationship between publics/counterpublics and the nation-state and a concept of democratic government. The stability required for the public sphere is questionable in light of increasing globalization and the ubiquity of networked technologies.

As one way to address this issues, theorists such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Giorgio Agamben, and Paolo Virno begin to lose faith in the stability of the "civil society" that is necessary for the formation of a Habermasian public sphere. As traditional notions of sovereignty and nation-states collapse in the wake of technologization and globalization, "civil society" becomes less valid as a description for contemporary society. Hardt writes of the withering of civil society as the result of the

shift from a society organized around institutionalized discipline to one of a more dispersed form of decentralized control. Hardt and Negri also write in *Commonwealth* of the disintegration of the mode of power they call Empire and the rise of the "Becoming-Prince," or self-rule, of the multitude. Because the boundaries of the sovereign nation-state no longer determine economic, political, or societal relationships, the Hobbesian concept of "the people" who constitute a civil society is also replaced by "the multitude." The multitude is defined alternately by each theorist: Hardt and Negri define the multitude as the result of a political process that is "formed through articulations on the plane of immanence without hegemony" (169), whereas the "people" is formed by a hegemonic power; Virno defines the multitude, via Spinoza, as "a *plurality which persists as such in the public scene*, in collective action, in the handling of communal affairs, without converging into a One" (21); and finally, Agamben, without using the term "multitude," refers to the "whatever singularity," or a singularity that cannot be reduced to being-such (being-American, being-Muslim, etc.), which is also an irreducibility to a particular sovereign or centralized power. In each case, the multitude or singularity cannot be reduced to the "people," which is necessary for a civil society, which is necessary for a public sphere, thus opening up to the idea of the Aristotelian commons as an organizing principle. Virno makes a direct relation between the multitude and Aristotle's *koinoi topoi*:

> [T]he "special places" of discourse and of argumentation are perishing and dissolving, while immediate visibility is being gained by the "common places," or by generic logical-linguistic forms which establish the pattern for all forms of discourse. This means that in order to get a sense of orientation in the world and to protect ourselves from its dangers, we cannot rely on those forms of thought, of reasoning, or of discourse which have their niche in one particular context or another … These "common places," and these alone, are what exist in terms of

> offering us a standard of orientation, and thus, some sort of refuge from the direction in which the world is going. (35–36)

In other words, the public sphere can no longer function as the organizing principle for "the people" and "civil society" as these no longer exist. The commonplaces of Aristotelian rhetoric, for Virno, now serve this purpose and provide the multitude of singularities some footing in the increasing dissolution of the centrality of the nation-state and sovereign power.

It is in this space opened by theorists such as Virno and Hardt and Negri that the minoritarian discourse of the commons begins to become more apparent. Paired with the technologically influenced work of Deleuze, Galloway, and Fuller, and the attempts at a technological rhetoric by Brooke, Ulmer, and Welch, this open space sets the stage for the primary questions I investigate here: How does the minoritarian discourse of the commons manifest throughout history? 2) What are the intersections between this discourse and the use/growth of technology? 3.) How can these intersections help us better theorize technology in regard to rhetorical theory and pedagogy?

Although notions of the public have long been a concern of rhetorical theory, the rapid increase in the availability of new media technologies and the anytime, anywhere availability of network access have significantly changed how we communicate and persuade. In forwarding the concept of the Media Commons, I hope to generate a practical and theoretical framework of the Media Commons that can be applied to study the ways in which new technologies have significantly changed the operation of persuasion in our increasingly networked world. Similarly, while new media theory in the social sciences and the humanities continues to be an active and growing field, there are few sustained studies that approach the questions of the commons and new media

technology from the vantage point of rhetorical theory. This work joins a relatively small number of texts that take up New Media rhetorics, such as Welch (*Electric Rhetoric*), Brooke (*Lingua Fracta*), Bogost (*Persuasive Games*), and Rice (*The Rhetoric of Cool*), and would be the first to do so through a historically informed study of the commons. Finally, composition scholarship consistently emphasizes the urgency of incorporating technology into the writing classroom. My dissertation responds to this same call, but does so through the unique perspective of the commons as a centuries-long tradition of inquiry. By looking at the classroom itself as a space within the Media Commons and by giving careful attention to the role(s) of technology within this common space, it is my hope to contribute a more practical and useful pedagogical approach to using technology in the classroom.

The Media Commons

Commonplaces

Because of the theoretical weight I will be placing on the term "the commons," I will take the opportunity here to deepen my explanation of my use of this concept. Aristotle discusses these commonplace arguments as not only the essential part of the enthymeme—as ways of structuring an argument—but also as the core principal of what defines rhetoric as an art, arguments "that apply equally to questions of right conduct, natural science, politics, and many other things that have nothing to do with one another" (*Rhetoric* 1358a10–1358a13). Thus, the commonplaces are what allow the art of rhetoric to encompass and have an effect on all other arts, that which Socrates took such an issue with in the *Gorgias*—rhetoric, the art with no subject matter. Aristotle's identification of these arguments, however, is what gives rhetoric its power. Sure, there are the special

topics, those arguments that would be specific to the natural sciences and not politics or vice versa, but the commonplaces serve as a factor that unites these other arts, draws them together and opens them up to the forces of persuasion, communication, argument. Aristotle's insight into these common arguments developed the core conceptualization of arguments that do expand to all forms of argument or oratory—whether judicial, legislative, or epideictic, the greater *is* always greater than the lesser, and the possible *is* possible while the impossible is not.

This system does break down a bit, however, because of the relative isolation in which the *Rhetoric* was written. Although the structure of arguments stands today (greater vs. lesser, etc.), the ethical, moral, and political parameters have changed. Aristotle's works focus on the pursuit of the greater good, that which is the best of its kind (i.e. the best life, or the best political configuration), but what is considered good in his works is what was considered good in the Athenian *polis*—good for the landowning, free citizens of Athens. Therefore, although the relationship of greater to lesser or of possible to impossible remains the same, the content of these arguments has shifted considerably, especially since globalization has opened the borders of nation-states, thus destabilizing the notion of what can be considered the greatest of goods within any given *polis*.

Common Places

So the question remains, then, if there is such a difference in the structure and content of the *polis* between ancient Athens and today—that is, the contrast between the small, bordered Athenian *polis* and the global, borderlessness of today—why look to Aristotle? Jill Frank confronts this question head on in arguing that Aristotle's "endoxic"

methodology, or finding the Aristotelian mean between opposing sides, can play an important role in understanding current issues of ethics or politics. In other words, separating the content of Aristotelian thought from the methodology can illuminate current issues in political and/or ethical thought without getting bogged down in the particulars of life in the Athenian *polis* (e.g. Aristotle's anti-democratic stance or his exclusion of women, slaves, and non-freemen from Athenian citizenship). Thus, argues Frank, it "is not whether Aristotle's politics is democratic or aristocratic. It is, rather, what his philosophical theory and practice may teach us about ethics and politics" (6). And to Frank, Aristotle's key methodological contribution is, again, the endoxic method of "bringing together to produce something new ideas and practices that are usually set in opposition," that "[draw] on both sets of opinions but [represent] neither" (7).

Frank then, importantly, illustrates how Aristotle uses this endoxic method, in his discussion of property, to pave the way for my conception of the commons in this dissertation. Aristotle finds a middle path between the public and the private in terms of property by saying in the *Politics* that although it is better for property to be private, its use should be common (1263a21–1263b14). Citizens can and should have property, but should make that property available for their friends' use, thus organizing friendship around a common use of goods, land, etc.—the commodification, or transformation of a good into something that benefits an individual, becomes a commonification, or a benefit to the community (commons) opened up within the friendship. This sense of community building between individuals and shared goods/resources is crucial to my understanding of the questions of collectivity and communication, not as Plato's government-mandated

"community" of the *Republic*, but as Aristotle's citizens willingly and ideally "commonifying" their private goods and resources.

Rereading the rhetorical commonplaces, then, in light of Aristotle's endoxic approach and ideal of common use of property, it is more apparent how the commonplaces can serve to unite opposing voices and open up a common space for communication that does not collapse any specific discipline into another. First, the commonplace arguments, for Aristotle, served to unite all of the disparate arts and sciences under one umbrella (ethics, natural sciences, politics, etc.). In opposition to the special topics, the commonplaces could be used to address questions, rhetorically, within any of these disciplines—drawing together "things that have nothing to do with one another." The special topics, on the other hand, "are based on such propositions as apply only to particular groups or classes of things. Thus there are propositions about natural science on which it is impossible to base any enthymeme or deduction about ethics, and other propositions about ethics on which nothing can be based about natural science" (*Rhetoric* 1358a16–1358a21). Where the special topics serve to foreclose and alienate, the commonplaces open up a common space for dialogue between the different disciplines.

This common space, then, brings me to the second point of importance for the commonplaces now: within this common space are the relationships that allow for communication. As I discussed above, one of the "problems" with the Aristotelian commonplaces today is that the *content* of the common arguments was normed on the experience and understanding of the free citizens of Athens, which was more than likely different than the experience and understanding of the women, slaves, foreigners, etc., of

Athens at the same time. However, the commonplaces provided an opening in which these things could be discussed—the uniting of the disciplines by the common arguments also united the people who were involved in the development of these disciplines in the common space. Basic assumptions in legislation, politics, ethics, and natural sciences that fit into the structures of the commonplaces could be discussed to some extent by many different people in the common space of the Athenian agora, thus giving them all something *in common*. This is an essential characteristic of the art of rhetoric: the ability of the rhetor to make arguments or orate about any subject (another of Plato's objections in the *Gorgias*), and know that all people in the audience will understand, at least at some level, the subject being discussed. The commonplaces provide the structure for argument, and the common spaces provide an area of common knowledge and location in which the people can be addressed and assumed to understand.

Common Goods

In the creation of the commons in the convergence of the commonplaces and the common spaces, a third category emerges: common goods. If it is assumed that common arguments and a common location spawn a further commonality of understanding and openness of communication, the goods that are exchanged in this environment cannot be ignored as having some capacity for communicative exchange as well as commodity exchange—information circulates with these goods as well as the same type of commonness that is opened up by any other type of communicative exchange. Because they have some exchange value in circulation, the instinct is to refer to the common goods as "commodities," but this is problematic. Per the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "commodity" usually refers to something that has value or benefit to an individual rather

than to a community (the implication being that the individual benefits *as* opposed to the community). Instead, I will refer to these common goods that open up a space of commonness for the common benefit as "commonities." A commonity, then, refers to the value of a good in reference to its benefit to a community. For example, the fish that populate a specific area and support a fishing community could be considered a commonity. Of course once an individual fish is caught and sold, it is commodified, but the fish as they exist in the waters act to support and organize the community as a whole. The community sets rules as to who can fish where and when, and how much fish should be caught, and the proceeds earned from the sale of the fish go back to support the community as well. If the fishery is overly commodified (too many fish are caught, depleting the resource), the community is in danger, thus the commonification of the fish is crucial to the existence of the community.

Media Commons in the *Phaedrus*

This is important, particularly, in the increased importance of writing and the exchange of information using written texts in the ancient Greek world. For example, in the *Phaedrus*, Phaedrus spends his morning listening to Lysias speak—listening to a speech composed with many commonplace arguments, in a common space (the house of Epicrates, near another common space, the temple of the Olympian Zeus) in which citizens gathered to listen to such speeches—and he also leaves with a commonification of that speech, a scroll containing a transcription of Lysias' speech that Phaedrus has hidden under his robes. This tangible artifact, the written transcription of Lysias' speech, allows Lysias' words to be circulated farther, which in turn allows for the greater dissemination of the information within the speech and for Lysias himself. The

commonification of the speech, turning it into a tangible good, give it much greater presence in the commons—Socrates would never have heard the speech, not being present in the house of Epicrates, and therefore not share in the knowledge possessed by all those present. However, because of the common good of the written transcript, Socrates was looped in to the common space opened up by Lysias' speech.

There are several exchanges at the beginning of the dialogue that support the written artifact of Lysias' speech as factor in opening up a common space in which Socrates becomes a part of the community that surrounds the original presentation of the speech. For example (and not to step too deeply into the myriad philosophical arguments surrounding the issue of the presence and/or non-presence of an "author"), Socrates considers, because of the scroll Phaedrus possesses, Lysias to be present with them on their walk outside of the city: "I strongly suspect you have the speech itself. And if I'm right, you can be sure that, though I love you dearly, I'll never, as long as Lysias himself is present, allow you to practice your own speechmaking on me" (228d–e). In direct contrast to his later statements about the falsity of the technology of writing—that it can only "remind those who already know what the writing is about" (275d)—Socrates also shows his hand by admitting that the pages of a written speech hold enough knowledge to replace contact with people in the city and actually get Socrates to venture away from the *polis*: "I am devoted to learning; landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me—only people in the city can do that. But you … you can lead me all over Attica or anywhere

else you like by simply waving in front of me the leaves of a book containing a speech[6]" (230d–e).

Even more indicative than the issue of presence of Socrates' connection to Lysias and the original audience of the speech is a later passage in which Socrates inverts the relationship and becomes a presence to Lysias by making an intercession on Lysias' behalf. Socrates, once realizing that he and Lysias both have crafted speeches against Love (the son of Aphrodite and thus one of the gods), gives advice to Lysias to "write as soon as possible a speech urging one to give similar favors to a lover rather than to a non-lover" (243d–e). What is also interesting about this passage is that although Phaedrus volunteers to take this advice to Lysias, Socrates does not give the advice to Phaedrus to give to Lysias (as in "tell Lysias to write a new speech"), he gives it to Lysias himself, as if he was present ("My advice to Lysias, too, is to write as soon as possible"). The technology of writing and the common good of the scroll, again, not only opened up a common space in which Socrates could learn from Lysias and his speech as if he was in the audience, it also allowed Socrates to intercede on Lysias' behalf to avoid the wrath of the gods—a dialogue between Lysias and Socrates without concern for time or place.

With the argument structure of the commonplaces, the shared physical and informational space of the common spaces, and the possibility of the dissemination of knowledge through common goods, the idea of the commons begins to emerge, not only as a pathway for the transmission of information, but also as a means by which

[6] There is, of course, the more sexual reading of this passage—that Socrates was following Phaedrus out of the city to discuss other matters of love. However, the context of this section of the dialogue, I feel, justifies a reading that also includes Socrates' desire to hear Lysias' speech and his overall drive to learn.

communities form around communication and communication technologies. As mentioned above, this tripartite division of the commons is a move to address the gaps in the analysis of how media technologies and the interconnectivity they foster provide the basis for networked communities to develop. Examining the ways in which the structures of rhetorical arguments, communities of knowledge, and commodities/artifacts combine and circulate within the commons, makes it much more clear how to break free from the text-based, face-to-face restrictions of public-sphere theory and explore the possibilities of communicative interaction through the commons in networked environments.

It could be argued that the "minoritarian" status of discourse on the commons comes from the possibility that it is entirely new, that prior to the dissolution of the nation-state as the predominant symbol of governance, public-sphere theory was completely adequate in accounting for the organization of people and communication because the technologies that allowed for "networks" had not come into play yet. However, public-sphere theory overemphasizes "the people" at the expense of the impact of technology. For example, it could be argued that the Habermasian idea of a public sphere and its impact on society and community would have stopped at the house of Epicrates. Lysias's speech about the lover and the non-lover would have been heard by, and changed the minds of, those present, and presumably affecting some normativity of opinion after some debate over the issue(s) at hand. This public, constructed of private citizens, would then depart to affect some change in the *polis* based on this experience. This model, though, would omit the effect of the commons, the broader reach of communication that spans beyond "the people" assembled and includes "the multitude" of others not present. Phaedrus, using a specific technology (in this case the technology

of writing), expands the scope of Lysias's speech to include Socrates, an experience that is then recorded by Plato, which reaches across millennia to the present time—a common space opened up by the use of a common good that has no restrictions of time, space, or statehood.

My read of the *Phaedrus*, here¸ highlights the central role of this dialogue in the discussion of the importance of media in regard to the dissemination of information and social organization in ancient Athens—Plato devotes a significant section of the dialogue to a discussion of the pitfalls of the technology and the possibility for its ideal use. Plato's critique of writing, and his eventual description of the Ideal form, has informed theoretical inquiry into language and the technology of writing far beyond the confines of Greek antiquity, perhaps most famously in Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy." However, as much as my use of the *Phaedrus* may align with other modern theoretical accounts, I argue that such accounts tend to place too much emphasis on an idealized version of the medium, thus ignoring the impact of the medium itself. In other words, although for Plato and Derrida, the medium of writing is the basis for their arguments on Ideal forms or the loss of origins, the medium of writing could really be replaced with any other medium as another "form" of writing.

Derrida's detailed read of the role of the word and presence in the *Phaedrus* in "Plato's Pharmacy" indeed begins with much the same argument as I outline above: Phaedrus has a script, a written copy of Lysias's speech, and this is key to the interaction. It is the power of specifically the written version of the speech that brings Phaedrus and Socrates together. A spoken version of the speech

> would not have had the same effect. Only the *logoi en bibliois*, only words that are deferred, reserved, enveloped, rolled up, words that force one to wait for them

> in the form and under cover of a solid object, letting themselves be desired for the space of a walk, only hidden letter can thus get Socrates moving. If a speech could be purely present, unveiled, naked, offered up in person in its truth, without the detours of a signifier foreign to it, if at the limit an undeferred *logos* were possible, it would not seduce anyone. It would not draw Socrates, as if under the effects of a *pharmakon*, out of his way. (71)

Thus the pharmakological nature of the script (writing as drug) is where the power of the written speech lies.

Once this power relationship is established, however, Derrida quickly abstracts writing as *logos* and begins an ontological discussion about how writing confuses the issue of progenitor/progeny. Using Socrates' myth of Theuth, the argument at hand becomes more focused on issues of origin and presence rather than on the technology of writing as such. It could then be assumed that if the word is abstracted as *logos* to question these issues of origin and presence, this abstraction could be applied to any technology that uses "the word," whether that is hieroglyph on papyrus or a networked computer, thereby ignoring the specific impact of each different type of technology.

This neutrality of medium is problematic in that it virtually ignores that different forms of media carry with them different affordances and thus impact the formation of the commons in very specific ways, i.e. the technology of the written word provides for a different type of organization than tele-technologies or networked technologies, even though all three function as a type of a Media Commons. We can look again to the *Phaedrus* to illustrate how public-sphere theory in the Habermasian sense, also fails to account for the specific impacts of specific media technologies. To return to the example mentioned above, that the Habermasian idea of a public sphere and its impact on society and community might have stopped at the house of Epicrates. Although Habermas, himself, doesn't directly reference the *Phaedrus* as does Derrida, there is some evidence

that the Habermasian argument doesn't stray that far from the original Socratic argument made in the dialogue. According to political theorist Richard Bernstein, "Habermas's argument exhibits some striking parallels with the one that Socrates develops in the *Phaedrus* ... just as Habermas's line of argument leads him to recognize the reciprocal relation between ideal speech ... and an ideal form of life, so the primary practical problem for Socrates becomes one of constructing or reconstructing a polis in which such ideal speech can be realized" (262). In other words, achieving Ideal speech is essential for the evolution of the ideal society, but "speech" here can be broadly defined as any communication, and thus, any communication technology. The Ideal society can be reached the same way via Ideal speech through print, radio, or the Internet.

The focus, then, for Habermas, Derrida, and Plato is on the (im)possibility of an Ideal that is arrived at via the springboard of writing and/or print technology. For Plato and Habermas both, it is a quest for the Ideal polis that is brought about by an Ideal act of speech/communication, and for Derrida, the impossibility of any Ideal that is rediscovered in our quest for an origin. Yet all three, although leveraging the technology of writing/print to reach their goal or formulate their question, quickly drop the technology itself as no longer important in its specificity.

This example illustrates the importance of technology in this theoretical model. Indeed, whether one is drawing from Stieglerian technogenesis, Donald's evolutionary biology, or McLuhan's media theories of technological prostheses, technology is absolutely essential to the evolution and growth of humanity. Therefore, exploring any theory of the organization and communication of humanity without an emphasis on the impact(s) of technology is leaving out a crucial part of what makes us human. In other

words, the technology cannot be ignored once the goal is achieved or the question is reached, because the technology cannot be separated. Because of this, I am attaching the term "media" to this particular theory of the commons in order to make this emphasis more clear. The commons itself cannot be realized without the use of specific media technologies.

My dissertation will continue to develop the concept of the Media Commons by examining particular technologies through the specific lenses of the Common Places, the Common Spaces, and the Common Goods. Each chapter will first outline the historical and theoretical bases for each division of the media commons (common places, common spaces, and common goods), and will then provide an example of how the historical and theoretical foundation manifests in a networked environment. I will end each chapter with a turn to pedagogy, detailing an assignment that uses these particular divisions of the media commons to think through writing in a networked or technology-based environment.

In Chapter Two, "Common Places," I argue that a turn to the commonplaces is essential understanding of how mediated writing processes develop in networked environments. Through a close read of the Aristotelian commonplaces, rather than looking at the commonplaces as they are commonly theorized as simply aids for memory or invention, I will focus on the commonplaces as apparatuses, as techniques and strategies that are represented by the parallel structure of the Internet, and that are developed by the community of users that in turn make use of them. I use the website, Wikipedia, as an example of how the commonplaces are used to create and govern communities online, and I end the chapter with the description of a writing assignment

that uses Wikipedia's commonplaces to engage students in writing within these online communities.

In Chapter 3, "Common Spaces," I take Google Maps as my primary example to illustrate the concept of finding one's bearings in both cyberspace and in physical space. I argue that this orientation is crucial to understanding the function of the commonplaces in our networked world, not only in terms of how we use them to communicate, but also how they work to build communities within the commons of the Internet, and that these communities are not "less than" their physical, face-to-face counterparts. This chapter will end with the description of an assignment that draws on the radical geographic work of William Bunge and utilizes Google Maps (as well as similar mapping technologies) to create interactive maps using data gathered from the communities in which the students live, enhancing the students' relationships with their communities as well as creating visuals that show relationships in a virtual milieu.

In Chapter 4, "Common Goods," I analyze the newsfeed on Facebook as a particularly robust example of how the Internet functions as a Limited Common Property Regime (LCP). I argue that rather than being only a space or a place, the Internet is also a common good—a product that takes shape from the activities of the community of participants and increases in value as more members contribute to the common good. By demonstrating how the newsfeed functions as a Limited Common Property regime to produce a common good, I discuss how viewing the Internet through the lens of LCP can provide us the foundation for a more robust pedagogical model for teaching in a networked environment. Using the example of the feud between the artists Damien Hirst and Cartrain, and drawing from Arendt's distinction between products of action and

work, I end the chapter with a meme analysis assignment that shifts the emphasis of writing from generating a product to engaging in a community of users.

CHAPTER 2 "COMMON PLACES"

Recently late-night TV host, Jimmy Kimmel, played a prank on popular culture in which he and a stuntwoman named Daphne Avalon posted a "twerking disaster" video on YouTube under the fake account name Caitlin Heller. In this video, Heller/Avalon "attempts" to make a sexy video for her boyfriend by lighting some candles and twerking up against a closed door. Her roommate opens the door unknowingly and knocks Avalon through a glass-topped table, and Avalon's yoga pants then catch on fire. The original video was posted with no fanfare, and no clues were given that this video was anything other than a spectacular example of the endless "twerking fail" videos available on YouTube. For whatever reason, though, this particular video caught the public's imagination by storm, and within a week, the video had over 9 million views (it is currently near 13.5 million). It was later revealed on Kimmel's show that it was a prank, and he chuckled smugly to himself that hundreds of news outlets covered the video as newsworthy while a civil war raged on in Syria. Now, this could be a representative example of many things: viral transmission, cultural infatuation with sex or failure or the failure of sexiness, the inner workings of an attention economy, each of these (and myriad others) is a reasonable lens through which to view this particular prank. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I want to highlight the more general and mundane fact that I watched it. I was pulled into, and fooled by, the prank itself.

Because I was fooled, of course my initial reaction was to smack my forehead and wonder how I was so naïve. However, as I really dug into the process through which I was drawn in, my focus turned more toward how I came across the video in the first place. Out of the innumerable videos on YouTube, how was it that my attention was

turned toward this particular one? Some quick history browsing revealed that I discovered the video from a Facebook "friend's" post on my newsfeed, and that friend shared the video from another friend's newsfeed, who shared it from another, and so on. My interaction with the video, then, was primarily driven by my participation in a particular network of individuals that connected me with yet another network of individuals (the friends of friends) and, again, so on. What also became apparent was that, in my reflection to myself about my participation in these networks, is that I am engaging the networks as what Brian Rotman describes as a "parallel self." Rather than functioning as a "lettered self," in which I have a "privately enclosed mind, serially structured by the linear protocols reading and writing demand," the parallel self multi-tasks in accordance with the protocols and apparatuses of parallel computing. Instead of the private enclosure of the lettered mind, the parallel mind opens to distributed bio-social phenomena and functions, therefore, in a network (Rotman 92). At this moment, six documents are open on my computer representing three different projects, as well as two web browsers with a combined total of eight tabs representing everything from database research to social media. Many of these screens are actively and continuously feeding me information, sounding off bells and beeps to alert me of new and interesting things. My parallel self is multi-tasking according to the affordances of the parallel computing it mirrors.

As I will argue later in this chapter, this parallel idea of the self predates our interactions with parallel computing. According to Rotman, "this technical porting of parallelism into thought and selfhood encounters a parallelism already present, long before any engagement with machine computation, consisting of many layers of

simultaneous activity of the body from the cellular level to the organization of the central nervous system" (92). There seems to be, then, a biological predisposition that allows for this parallelism to develop. This is key in understanding that the recent shift to the decentralized network of the Internet is not something new that is made possible by the newest technologies, but is rather an evolution of an already established phenomenon.

Therefore, the seemingly random assortment of information on my desktop is not random at all. It represents the functioning of a parallel self, processing individual streams of information more or less simultaneously through the technology of the network. Each page has its own purpose (one for drafting new text, one for grading, one for note taking, etc.) and each open browser tab functions as a repository of specific information, whether it is germane to the task at hand (a library database search) or functioning only as a distraction (my Facebook newsfeed). The flood of information is thus divided into specific repositories of information that are accessed when the time and occasion call for them, and in a more or less systematic way—emails are checked and responded to, pages are typed or graded, and videos are surfed to distract or inform.

This reflection on my technologically mediated writing process raises the question of the first division of the media commons, the common places, and more specifically of how this concept relates to Aristotle's conception of the commonplaces in the *Rhetoric*. In this chapter, I argue that a turn to the commonplaces is essential to our understanding of not only my own mediated writing process, but of how these types of processes manifest in and influence student writing. However, rather than looking at the commonplaces as they are commonly theorized as simply aids for memory or invention, I will focus on the commonplaces as apparatuses, as techniques and strategies that are

represented by this parallel structure of the Internet, and that are developed by the community of users that in turn make use of them. The structure of the remainder of chapter will also establish a general structure that I will continue in Chapters 3 and 4. In the following sections, I will first outline the historical and theoretical bases for each division of the media commons (common places, common spaces, and common goods), and will then provide an example of how the historical and theoretical foundation manifests in a networked environment. I will end each chapter with a turn to pedagogy, detailing an assignment that uses these particular divisions of the media commons to think through writing in a networked or technology-based environment.

Old Rhetoric/New Media

First, before turning to a more strictly historical approach, I would like to situate my analysis within an established line of inquiry developed by such scholars as Kathleen Welch, Collin Brooke, and Gregory Ulmer, who have all written extensively about the intersections of new media technologies and ancient rhetorical practices. In *Electric Rhetoric*, Welch digs into pre-Aristotelian rhetoric, and specifically the rhetorical theories of Isocrates, as a way to both stimulate an interest in the study of screens (particularly in terms of video) in the humanities, but also to shift composition theory's focus on the page to incorporate other forms of new media writing. In her analysis of the commonplaces (in her text, referred to as the *koinoi topoi*), Welch calls for a retheorization and redeployment of the commonplaces as they had been forgotten in the regime of print dominance, because these more permanent forms of memory and storage reduced the need for the "repeatability" of the commonplaces. This call for retheorization, Welch argues, necessitates a foregrounding of the spatial aspect of the commonplaces over the

commonly theorized aspect of content within current-traditional rhetoric (the *topoi* as "topic sentences"). The electronic/digital world harkens back to a more oral tradition, thus reestablishing the oral/repeatable aspect of the *topoi*.

Welch's "retheorization" of the commonplaces, however, amounts to a redeployment of the original Aristotelian categorizations as analytical tools for visual media, e.g. her analysis of television news with the commonplace of the comparison of opposites. As valuable as the turn to Aristotelian rhetoric is in this case, without being able to foresee the ubiquity of 24/7 network access (*Electric Rhetoric* was published in 1999), this retheorization does not go far enough into the digitally networked manifestation of the *koinoi topoi*. Of course Welch cannot be blamed for an inability to predict the future of networked media, and her resurrection of the commonplaces as means by which we can better understand rhetoric in a digital age is of great value to the argument undertaken in this chapter, especially her acknowledgement of the community-building nature of the commonplaces: "After they [the commonplaces] have been learned and practiced, the encoder can turn to them to devise written or spoken texts; in addition, trained audiences will be able to understand them and to follow the text" (116). It is not enough for the orators to simply memorize the commonplaces, there also needs to be a reciprocal relationship with their community of listeners/readers.

In a similar tradition of resurrecting ancient rhetorical concepts to analyze rhetoric in new media, Greg Ulmer looks to Plato's *Timaeus* to juxtapose the rhetorical concepts of *topos* and *chora* to develop a theory of writing that makes use of new media technologies. Drawing from the work of both Welch and Ulmer, Brooke takes up the rhetorical canons (invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery) and

updates/renames them to develop a new rhetorical theory that takes into account the differences and challenges posed by technologically mediated, networked writing.

Welch, Ulmer, and Brooke each offer constructive means through which to analyze, critique, and theorize the intersections of rhetoric and technology, but if the commonplaces are invoked, they tend to lean, again, toward either invention or memory. Jeff Rice, whose *The Rhetoric of Cool* could be read as a performance of Ulmerian *chorography*, mirrors Ulmer's use of *chora* (at the expense of the *topoi*) as a trigger for rhetorical invention, and a recent article by Jeff Pruchnic and Kim Lacey places the special topics in the same category as the concept of *loci* as methods of memory storage that are "higher in content, rather than system" (477). It is this last point that I intend to interrogate during the course of this chapter.

Pruchnic and Lacey argue for the revitalization of the rhetorical canon of memory in an effort to understand "the interactions of subjectivity, sociality, and persuasion today" and in particular the impact that information technology and modern networked media have had on this particular canon (474). In rethinking rhetorical memory, they draw a line of distinction between what they call the "content" of memory, as in "the particular image or experience that is formed or recollected," and the "program" of memory, or how these "past experiences and associations are captured and/or strategically leveraged for persuasive effects" (474–475). As examples of either primarily content-oriented or primarily program-oriented rhetorical structures, Pruchnic and Lacey utilize the ancient rhetorical concepts of tropes, *loci*, and the special topics (*idioi topoi*). They look to tropes as the "zero point" of this dichotomy, as the simplest structures that function primarily as program until they become clichéd (such as their example of the use

of *synecdoche* in the term, "hired hand"). However in broadening their scope, they contrast *loci*, in terms of the "memory palace" as primarily programmatic, with the *idioi topoi* (and one could assume then, the *koinoi topoi*) as wholly content based. Although I agree with their larger argument that internal/external aspects of memory need to be rethought in an era of digital storage and transmission, and find both their turn to ancient rhetorical concepts and their distinction between the content and the program of rhetorical structures to be extremely useful, I disagree that the *topoi* stand in contrast to the *loci* as content-oriented, but rather fit into their initial definition of programmatic in their ability to be captured and leveraged strategically for persuasive effect.

Although it is undeniable that the commonplace arguments, both in their ancient usage and in modern theorization, are effective methods of memory retrieval and/or invention, I dispute the claim that they are higher in content than in system. Rather, the commonplaces, especially in networked environments, are just that—systems. I argue that these commonplaces are a form of network information technologies—apparatuses—that are developed in media communities and function as technologies that unite these communities with the media commons. I also argue that they functioned in this manner for Aristotle as well as for pre-Aristotelian thinkers, and will now return to Aristotle, as well as the *Phaedrus* to begin drawing this timeline.

Aristotle defines the commonplaces in the *Rhetoric* as the "stuff" that makes up dialectical and rhetorical enthymemes, and he divides these commonplaces into two categories: the "general" commonplaces and the "special" commonplaces. The general commonplaces are "those that apply equally to questions of right conduct, natural science, politics, and many other things that have nothing to do with one another …

[where] it is equally easy to base a deduction or enthymeme about any of what nevertheless are essentially disconnected subjects—right conduct, natural science or anything else whatever" (10). The special subjects, on the other hand, are those that deal more specifically with a particular discipline, in which enthymemes about natural science have nothing to do with ethics and vice versa. The general commonplaces function more broadly and to larger audiences, whereas the special commonplaces are much more specific in content or subject matter, and thus are designed for a very specific audience or discipline.

Not to create an excessively vulgar comparison, but these divisions could be comparable to, at the level of my desktop, an open browser window to a library database (general) and an open document with notes from a specific text (special)—the one creating a portal to generally relatable information and the other holding the content of a specific argument. Of course it could be stated as obvious that an ancient rhetorical form of argumentation and a Firefox browser window are two completely different things, but my comparison here draws more on the function of the commonplaces than their form. As Aristotle describes them, the rhetorical commonplaces, in form, are basic comparisons that are easily understood by any audience. For example, according to Aristotle, "All orators are bound to use the topic of the possible and impossible; and to try to show that a thing has happened, or will happen in the future. Again, the topic of size is common to all oratory; all of us have to argue that things are bigger or smaller than they seem" (81). So we have an orator proving to the audience that something can or cannot happen or that one thing is obviously bigger than the other. These were referred to as "commonplaces" because the arguments are common place—"All orators are bound" to use them either

within a general audience or within a very specific discipline. Thus, possessing knowledge of these comparisons made a rhetor more well-rounded and more successful.

When Aristotle discusses the use of these commonplaces in detail, however, the emphasis is not necessarily placed on the content of *what* to put in them, but more so on *how* and *when* to deploy them. For instance, using commonplaces to put listeners in a specific frame of mind: "It is now plain that when you wish to calm others you must draw upon these commonplaces; you must put your hearers into the corresponding frame of mind, and represent those with whom they are angry as formidable, or as worthy of reverence, or as benefactors, or as involuntary agents, or as much distressed at what they have done" (60). Or perhaps a more prescriptive suggestion for matching the type of commonplace to the appropriate argument, such as this statement: "Of the above-mentioned commonplaces, that concerned with amplification is—as has been already said—most appropriate to epideictic speeches; that concerned with the past, to forensic speeches, where the required decision is always about the past; that concerned with possibility and the future, to deliberative speeches" (81). Based on the type of argument and the desired result, the rhetor pulls from the appropriate list of commonplaces and plugs them in. Again, the emphasis is on the "how" and "when" and not the "what"—the content of the commonplace is secondary to its function in the argument itself. One could put any information into a comparison of larger to smaller and the comparison itself remains unaffected.

To return to my previous, albeit vulgar, comparison between the commonplace and a browser window or word document, based on the above examples of Aristotle's prescriptions, we can now see how the emphasis on the function of the commonplaces

creates a greater likeness between the two. The statement, "If I want to put my listeners into a specific mindset, I can use X commonplace," relates to the statement, "If I want to access a specific piece of information, I go to X website." The commonplace is the technology used to obtain and utilize a specific argumentative strategy the same way a browser window or word document are the technologies used to access and utilize specific pieces of information. To further the comparison, I know that to, say, be more convincing to an audience of fellow academics, I need to draw evidence from scholarly sources rather than from popular culture, thus accessing a library database of peer reviewed articles through a browser. However, to make myself more convincing to a group of my students, I need to do the opposite, accessing popular culture through the browser instead of academic journals. Thus, the commonplaces manifest themselves through these particular technologies. Instead of simply deploying the technique of comparing the larger to the smaller for a specific effect, in constructing an argument, a rhetor needs to deploy the technique of proper web browsing.

This particular relationship can be reversed as well, in terms of not the construction, but in the delivery of arguments, and this is where the aforementioned connection to the commons becomes apparent. Aristotle emphasized the systematic nature of the commonplaces, and within this systematic approach is the necessary attention to specific audiences situated within specific communities, especially in terms of the special commonplaces—those that are based on propositions particular to a certain groups or classes of things. So within relating the commonplaces to specific types of arguments or to elicit specific responses, there is the need to focus on the community to which the argument is directed. Is the community general, necessitating use of general

commonplaces, or is the community specific, necessitating a turn to the special commonplaces? Is the community inclined to epidiectic or legislative oratory? And this relationship is reciprocal: particular commonplaces are persuasive in particular communities, which then calls for further use of these commonplaces or adaptations thereof. Aristotle speaks at length of tailoring arguments to particular communities in the Hellenic world, and passages such as "the Lacedaemonians actually made Chilon a member of their senate, though they are the least literary of men" (94) and "If the audience esteems a given quality, we must say that our hero has that quality, no matter whether we are addressing Scythians or Spartans or philosophers" (31) give insight to how the cultural and communal differences between cities in the Hellenic world necessitated the use of different commonplace arguments—don't make them too literary for the Lacedaemonians and make sure you know what constitutes heroism for the Scythians. This raises, again, the idea of structure versus content: the content is ephemeral and secondary to the structure and deployment of the commonplaces as techniques developed within community networks.

But where does this network come from? Imagine an orator, such as Gorgias, who has toured the Hellenic world and spoken before numbers of assemblies in different cities, and who has developed a keen sense of what types of commonplaces and argument structures work best in certain locations and before certain assemblies[7]. He then teaches his students about these differences and teaches them the techniques that work best in specific situations (and in Aristotelian terms, this instruction includes a familiarity with

[7] Based on the historic record, Gorgias was born in the Sicilian city of Leontini, and his travels as a Sophist and ambassador included trips to Syracuse, Athens, Thessaly, Larisa, and Pherae (Dillon and Gergel).

the commonplaces). These rhetors then speak in public, deploying these techniques, and further cementing the effectiveness of the commonplaces in each particular situation (or adapting them as necessary, perhaps, based on the audience's reaction). The effectiveness of the arguments then carries on to another generation of rhetors, thus developing a network of techniques that are widely distributed, but are tied directly into the interests and desires of the communities and audiences for whom they are developed.

In further developing this theory of the commonplaces as technologies for use within networked environments—considering the relationships that develop between individuals or communities, and how this constant exchange of information over networked technologies works to build and disseminate these new commonplace technologies—I will turn to the Foucaultian concept of the apparatus, which then connects to theories of human/technology evolution developed by theorists such as Bernard Stiegler and Merlin Donald. Looking at the commonplaces as an apparatus (or as a prosthesis), supports my theorization of the commonplaces as inherently technological and that they are a necessary part of the continued evolution of human communication through media technologies. As I will show, this process of evolution is not only important in the context of human consciousness in terms of technology, it is also directly related to how we teach in technologically mediated environments.

This turn to Foucault is by no means an attempt to "replace" or "reconfigure" the commonplaces based on the concept of the apparatus (e.g. Ulmer's replacement of the concept of the *topoi* with the concept of *chora*, or Brooke's renaming of the rhetorical canons) but it is, rather, to support my argument that the commonplaces cannot be reduced to merely rhetorical tricks for memory or invention, but that they are an integral

part of a much larger network. To interpret Aristotle's use of the commonplaces in the *Rhetoric* as merely applicable to oratory is to ignore their larger significance in terms of philosophy, politics, and networking in the Hellenic world.

The Commonplace Apparatus

In order to understand the link between the commonplaces, technology, and the Foucaultian apparatus, I must first quote at length from Foucault himself and his explanation of the use of *dispositif* (apparatus) in his own works:

> What I am trying to single out with this term is, first and foremost, a thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus is the network that can be established between these elements.[8]

The Foucaultian apparatus, then, is a network that ties together the linguistic, physical, technological, ideological underpinnings of a community or organization; the ways in which members can begin to understand their subject positions within these communities/organizations and thus their relationship to power and/or knowledge. Along with this identification of the apparatus as a network, Agamben, in his analysis of Foucault's description of the apparatus, highlights two other important points: 1) The apparatus "always has a concrete strategic function and is always located in a power

[8] This quote is part of an interview taken from *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972 – 1977*, but is also quoted at length in Agamben's essay "What is an Apparatus?" The secondary nature of the use of this quote is important because of Agamben's analysis of the *dispositif* in Foucault's works.

relation," and 2) the apparatus "appears at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge" (Agamben 14). Looking at the commonplaces as a particular type of apparatus, then, can be very powerful in illustrating their technological nature. Here, I use the term "technological" as representative of what Aristotle would have referred to as *techne*, representing something more of a man-made art or device rather than something more strictly machinic—that is an apparatus is not a machine, as such, but is devised by man rather than nature. Based on Aristotle's descriptions of their use and importance, the commonplaces and their relationship to orating in judicial, political, and epideictic contexts fit Foucault's definition: strategic in function, seated in relationships of power and knowledge, and as Welch identified, forged networks between individuals and these other structures (orators and audiences must be "trained" in the commonplaces to understand and follow).

Aside from the conception of the apparatus as a network, however, there is still the question of how does it illustrate the technological nature of the commonplaces? Agamben addresses this in his essay, "What is an Apparatus?," by further extending the scope of the apparatus beyond Foucault's concern with the larger aspects of the network (institutions, laws, discourses, regulatory bodies, etc.) to include "literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings." This, according to Agamben, does not exclude these larger institutions and discourses, such as schools, factories, the panopticon, but also includes "the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones, and—why not—language itself" (14). The inclusion of these technological elements is crucial to this

vision of the relationship between the commonplaces (as part of the larger conception of the apparatus) and technology. Agamben adds these more granular aspects of apparatuses to further establish their role in shaping our world and our subjectivities, claiming that "ever since Homo sapiens first appeared, there have been apparatuses … we could say that today there is not even a single instant in which the life of individuals is not modeled, contaminated, or controlled by some apparatus" (15). In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between the commonplaces and apparatuses—the commonplaces are apparatuses, and the apparatuses are commonplace, all working within networks to influence and mold communities and communication.

Agamben uses the example of the cellular phone to illustrate the effect these types of technologies have on molding subjectivities. Much to his dismay, "the gestures and behaviors of individuals have been reshaped from top to toe" by the ubiquity of cell phones, thus rendering "the relationship between people all the more abstract" (15 – 16). However, rather than reversing the course of technological development (although Agamben does admit wanting to imprison cell phone users), or trying to prescribe "proper use" of such technologies, Agamben situates the ubiquity and transformative power of the cellular phone within the development of humankind itself, saying "apparatuses are not a mere accident in which humans are caught by chance, but rather are rooted in the very process of "humanization" that made "humans" out of the animals we classify under the rubric Homo sapiens" (16). This "process of humanization" is linked to the development of subjectivity as the result of a living organism (substance) being subjected to the transformative force of the apparatus. So Homo sapiens, when brought into connection with an apparatus, yields human subjectivity. What is interesting

about Agamben's calculus here is that the substance (here Homo sapiens) overlaps with the subject, thus creating the possibility of one individual being the locus of multiple subjectivities: "the user of cellular phones, the web surfer, the writer of stories, the tango aficionado, the anti-globalization activist, and so on and so forth" (14 – 15). This idea of multiple subjectivities connects back to my previous discussion of Rotman's concept of the parallel self, multi-tasking with the protocols and apparatuses of parallel computing and open to the distributed bio-social phenomena and function of a network.

Key to the relationship between the commonplaces, apparatuses, and technology, as well, is the idea, voiced by both Rotman and Agamben, that this relationship is nothing new. Rotman argues that the parallel self is also the result of a biological predisposition housed in the very structure of our nervous systems, and Agamben claims apparatuses are crucial to our very "humanization,"—in both cases, the ways we use technology now are the result of a linear progression of human evolution and technological development. This theory is also supported by the philosophy of Bernard Stiegler, and the evolutionary biology/psychology of Merlin Donald, both of whom also add the concept of the "prosthesis." Stiegler, drawing heavily from the anthropological work of Leroi-Gouran, argues that not only is technology essential to the definition of the human as human, but also that the technological exceeds the biological in this development: "The evolution of the 'prosthesis,' not itself living, by which the human is nonetheless defined as a living being, constitutes the reality of the human's evolution" (50). Humans cannot even become humans without the addition of the technological prostheses, or tools, that define the essence of man. For Donald, the process of human evolution via technology is rooted in the development of methods of representation. This

first appears with apes and australopithecines to *Homo erectus* with the development of mimetics, and then in the development of the capacity for speech between *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens*. Most importantly, however, is the final phase of development, which according to Donald is actually a technological development rather than a biological development (again, technology trumps biology) in the development of externalized memory in the form of symbolic writing—a prosthetic device for the recording and transmission of human knowledge and culture.

Now to begin assembling a more coherent picture from the various theories of human relationships with technology out of these discourses on power, ontology, biology, evolution, and rhetorical theory. What begins to appear is the continuous pattern of humans developing technologies that influence humans that develop new technologies, and so on, and out of this pattern important relationships and communities emerge in which these technologies are developed and shared. Whatever the label—apparatuses, prostheses, etc.—these externalized technological devices are essential to our development, and as Donald contends, the crowning achievement of this development in terms of our present relationship with technology, is the development of rhetoric in the Hellenic world. In a combination of the development of the alphabet and philosophy (speculation for speculation's sake), as well as rhetoric as the structure of these new linguistic capabilities, "In effect, the Greeks were the first to fully exploit the new cognitive architecture that have been made possible by visual symbolism" (342). And within this structure of rhetoric is the essential element of the commonplaces, the Ur-apparatus, a technology in which this new cognitive architecture could be deployed to build relationships and communities.

The commonplaces, then, are representative of a technology through which knowledge, community, power, etc., are mediated. They are indeed technological as they are rooted in language as the manipulation of symbols and the exteriorization of memory, knowledge, and culture, all of which are part of this technological evolution and essential nature of the human. And they function as an apparatus, situated at the intersection of knowledge and power, with the strategic purpose of organizing forms of argumentation that are then deployed by an educated rhetor to an educated audience. Because of the continued evolution of technology (and man's relationship with technology), the simple structure of the commonplaces as articulated by Aristotle (the relationships between such things as larger and smaller or the likely and unlikely), misses the more expansive structures of the Internet and other networks. Looking at the above definition of the commonplaces as apparatuses, and as I argue earlier in this chapter, specific forms of web/technological communication fit this mold. For example, writing a formal email or sending a tweet carry different impacts with different audiences, or sending a Word document rather than a PDF can have a specific effect, and different audiences (as well as different rhetors) have different relationships and educational levels with various technologies. There are more broadly understood forms of information exchange (the *koinoi topoi*) and forms that are more specific to niche audiences (the *idioi topoi*).

In this next section, I will look at the website/knowledge project Wikipedia as a specific example to illustrate how a community of users self-governs and develops knowledge based on my conception of the commonplaces. Within the structures of Wikipedia, the commonplaces take the form of rules and regulations that carry rhetorical

weight, as they are not used to simply regulate the creation of articles, but are also used in the exchange of power within the organization (to give or take away power, to settle disputes, and to change the very nature of Wikipedia itself). I will follow this discussion of Wikipedia with a turn to pedagogy, describing an assignment in which students not only write content for Wikipedia, but also engage with the rhetorical nature of these rules and regulations.

Wikipedia

Emerging from the primordial Internet of the mid-to-late 1990s, Wikipedia was developed based on a "bottom-up" or "peer-to-peer" model, rather than a more "top-down," hierarchical model, such as Yahoo![9] Jimmy Wales, the idea man and financial backer of the project developed an interest in this bottom-up model of web development based on his experience in Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs), chat rooms, and web rings (in which Internet users would create archives of particular websites devoted to a common idea, such as a "Pamela Anderson" web ring or a "NASCAR" web ring). His engagement with these communities of users and developers taught Wales that "given the right technology, large groups of self-interested individuals [would] unite to create something they could not produce by themselves … He saw the power of what we now call "peer-to-peer," or "distributed," content production" (Poe). Armed with this knowledge, Wales' entrepreneurial spirit prompted the genesis of several alternative projects to more hierarchical organizations like Yahoo!, first in a wed directory called "Bomis" (built on the web ring model of volunteer-generated content) and then a foray

[9] Historical information for Wikipedia is taken primarily from Marshall Poe's article, "The Hive," from *The Atlantic* online. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/09/the-hive/305118/>

into a free, user-generated online encyclopedia, initially called "Nupedia." The philosophical basis for this type of project came from Eric Raymond's book *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, which looked at source code in two different ways: either as a carefully protected entity (the cathedral) or as open source where anyone was allowed to work on its development (the bazaar). Nupedia was intended to be a bazaar, a space in which anyone could contribute and was free for all to access. Under the management of Larry Sanger, a student of philosophy at Ohio State, Nupedia called upon experts to contribute articles and developed a strict editorial process similar to peer-reviewed journals. This model, because of the cumbersome editorial process and small cadre of contributors, became a slow-moving cathedral rather than the bazaar Wales had envisioned. This all changed, however, when Sanger introduced the technology of the wiki.

Developed by Ward Cunningham, a wiki is a web page that can be created and edited by multiple users. All changes made to a wiki are tracked, all versions of the page are stored, and the wiki can be restored to an earlier version at any time. In an effort to generate quicker, more user-based content, Sanger started a wiki page called WikiPedia, posting a thread on the Nupedia discussion list that said, simply, "Humor me … Go there and add a little article. It will take all of five or ten minutes." Within days, the content of WikiPedia had surpassed that of Nupedia, and a community of contributors developed. Within a year, Wikipedia had over 15,000 articles, and 350 "Wikipedians" in the community. This sudden rush of participation took Wales and Sanger off guard, and in an attempt to stop Wikipedia's inevitable slide into user-generated nonsense, they began to institute rules and regulations, such as a page detailing what Wikipedia "was not," as

well as an anti-bias policy called the "Neutral Point of View" (NPOV). Sanger attempted to remain at the head of the organization, but it quickly became apparent that the organization needed no head, and Sanger was eventually forced out.

It is in the success of Wikipedia after this beheading that the function of the commonplaces becomes apparent. Without a hierarchical governing structure, Wikipedia's contributors (Wikipedians) are left to self-govern, and although self-governance on the Internet seems like it would be susceptible to abuse and a likely descent into chaos, the transparency and functionality of the wiki technology created a platform in which self-governance has worked relatively effectively. All edits are tracked, all versions are stored, and there is a constant discussion forum that accompanies all entries, creating an atmosphere in which the community can police itself and block out vandals or "trolls" (those who cause problems simply to cause problems). The exact manner in which Wikipedians are organized is far too complex to detail here, but what is important is how these rules and regulations are established, and how they become rhetorical tools.

A study done on self-governance in Wikipedia by Andrea Forte, Vanessa Larco, and Amy Bruckman conducts a deep analysis of the community of Wikipedians and the development of these rules and regulations. What they found was a heavy emphasis on community and consensus in the establishment of self-governance, quite the opposite of the initial structure established by Sanger, where rules were more enforced from the top down. As a result of their in-depth analysis of these governing structures, Forte et al. claim, "there is no one way Wikipedia policy gets made. Wikipedia policymaking was not part of a planned system of governance; each policy arose from a unique set of

circumstances and pressures from different stakeholders and regulating influences at different points in the site's history" (58). The community itself develops the social norms and these are recorded as policies the community then uses to govern the submission and editing of articles. Thus anything from the promotion of editors to administrators, the policy on reversing an editor's revisions or additions to an article, and what constitutes an "acceptable" article are all determined by consensus within the community, and these are all subject to change as the community itself changes and comes to a different consensus on any particular issue.

What is important here is this idea of community consensus and governance, the community decides, as a whole, what works in any given situation, and "what works" changes as the community itself becomes different. The connection here between the Wikipedia policies and the commonplaces is explicit: the commonplaces became such because they were what worked in given situations and under specific circumstances between the community of speakers and audience members, i.e. the initiated and educated. And much like the commonplaces as apparatuses these policies are integral in the ebb and flow of what constitutes power and knowledge. The policies, like the commonplaces, provide a means through which knowledge is created as well as pathways for dissent and political maneuvering.

To give a specific example, in "The Hive," Marshall Poe, in discussing the epistemological power of the Wikipedians, states the problem with collecting knowledge at this scale, historically, has been a problem of equivocation. "Can we all agree on what an apple is exactly, or the shades of the color green? Not easily. The wiki offered a way for people to actually decide in common. On Wikipedia, an apple is what the

contributors say it is *right now*. You can try to change the definition by throwing in your own two cents, but the community … decides in the end." So, if someone contributes an article on "the apple," based on Wikipedia policy, the editorial and administrative volunteers verify that the article is factual, accurate, and appropriate for the site. If the article is found lacking in any way, say there is a disagreement about what actually constitutes an apple, the community jumps in, discusses, and comes to a consensus regarding the article's veracity. Again, based on Wikipedia policy, the editors can then revise, add to, subtract from, deny, or accept the article, after which other editors can conduct the same process, and so on. So the policies function at the level of commonplaces initially as commonly held and agreed upon ways in which the community interacts and comes to consensuses. Where they become explicitly rhetorical, however, is in the discussion forums that accompany each Wikipedia entry. It is in these forums that the editors and administrators can argue and defend their decisions to edit and revise particular articles, and as such, where policies are made and/or rejected.

The commonplace policies, like apparatuses, are also located at the intersections of power and knowledge, and thus serve a strategic function within the self-governance regime of Wikipedia. The enforcement of policies is in part dependent on the technical and social power within the organization (Forte et al.). Obviously those with more technical knowledge and those who have contributed more to Wikipedia hold places of higher "authority" (such as being an administrator rather than just an editor), and thus more power to influence the development or enforcement of specific policies. But these policies can also be loci for resistance or dissent. If, by proper deployment of the argumentative structures of the commonplace policies, a Wikipedian can muster

sufficient support by the rest of the community, the consensus becomes resistance to a policy rather than supporting power. Larry Sanger's ouster as the head of Wikipedia was due, in large part, to this type of resistance. The community came to the consensus that he should no longer have the final say in editorial matters, and thus, his position became unnecessary (Poe). Wikipedia's system of self-governance, then, functions as the result of these commonplaces, rhetorically powerful structures through which arguments are developed and deployed to establish power, generate knowledge, and settle disputes. These commonplaces are developed by a community of users rather than a hierarchical structure of power, and they are reciprocal in nature, the community comes to a consensus on the commonplaces that in return affect the structure and operation of the community, and so on.

Viewing the operation of these commonplaces within the inner workings of Wikipedia begins to establish how these types of rhetorical structures have evolved in an increasingly networked, digital environment, but these structures and the communities that develop them are not restricted to these types of self-governed communities. Viewed from a much larger scale, that of the Internet as a whole, the user/community-developed model of the commonplaces still holds. For example, the website for Wikipedia itself becomes a type of commonplace: "When you want to find out *what something is*, you will go to Wikipedia, for that is where common knowledge will, by convention, be archived and updated and made freely available" (Poe). In other words, Wikipedia has become the *koinoi topoi* for the "what it is," while Google is the same for the "where it is," and platforms like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Prezi, etc., have become a sort of *idioi topoi* for "how to make it" for specific types of audiences. And each of these

commonplaces is also bound intrinsically to axes of power and knowledge as well as carry significant rhetorical weight—brought to bear in support of arguments ranging from what constitutes professionalism (does one present with PowerPoint or Prezi) to the nature and purpose of the Internet itself.

Pedagogically, then, this idea of networked technologies and commonplaces changes the very nature of how we ask our students to engage with these technologies in the classroom. An assignment that requires the student to create something with technology, such as a PowerPoint presentation or a website, usually focuses on the end result of the assignment itself, i.e. is it a "good" presentation or a "good" website? But what is not included is a consideration for these other vectors of technology use, such as what does it *mean* to use PowerPoint rather than Prezi? What structures of power and/or knowledge does a student involve him or herself in by using social media technologies? And for the purposes of this chapter, when someone contributes to a site such as Wikipedia, how does that person become involved in the community (and established commonplaces) of Wikipedians, and how does that affect the generation of that content? The following assignment, which was developed for a technical and professional writing class, requires the students to engage with these considerations and to actively engage with the Wikipedia community and their structure of policies.

Writing for Wikipedia

The description of the assignment, as discussed in class, is as follows: Technical professionals are often required to describe a technical object or process to both general audiences and colleagues. Technical descriptions are also often used before devices or processes are developed (as part of a proposal or planning document) and afterwards (as

part of marketing or technical support documents). Descriptions of processes and definitions of roles are also crucial for making organizational structures visible. In previous iterations of this class, students have provided entries on such topics as piezoelectric accelerometers, Wayne State's Old Main building, the neuropeptide Orexin-A, the legendary character The Headless Horseman, air brakes, and reserved words in programming languages. If you have difficulty finding a topic, you may want to choose one from Wikipedia's list of requested articles and list of most wanted articles.

For your first assignment, you will be asked to contribute a description (or descriptions) to the open-source knowledge base, Wikipedia; given the way this knowledge base is used, you will be writing your description for a general audience.

Learning Objectives

Successful executions of the Technical Definition Project will illustrate that participants have been able to:

- Develop strategies for addressing multiple audiences (expert and non-expert, technical and non-technical, etc.)
- Understand basic forms for defining technical objects and processes (classical, functional, similarity, comparison and contrast, analogy)
- Grasp a variety of techniques for formal and informal technical descriptions
- Begin exploring the use of graphics as descriptive tools
- Gain experience with open source knowledge production

Invention

I would advise that you first study the existing protocols and commonplaces of Wikipedia, as these will influence the item you decide to describe. As part of this

assignment you will add or submit your document to Wikipedia as well as provide a version of the same on our course wiki.

In addition to your actual description, you need to write a brief (less than one page) memo, which will be posted to your team's page on the wiki that proposes your subject matter and why this is appropriate subject matter for the Wikipedia and for your team.

Composition

Your entry must follow the standards and/or requirements of Wikipedia. Length will likely be dependent on what item you choose to describe. For instance, a definition of "mood" will likely require quite a bit of text, whereas an entry in describing new research in human-machine interaction studies may require less text, unless this new research changes something fundamental or renders the existing description inaccurate, obsolete, or incomplete. However, your contribution(s) should total at least 600 words (which might require you to submit more than one entry).

Evaluation

Your final draft of the Technical Definition Project will be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria:

1. Item described is appropriate for the chosen knowledge base.
2. Description/definition shows familiarity with audience and is strategically adapted to same.
3. Entry provides useful information to the knowledge base chosen.
4. Document conforms to standards of technical prose.
5. Memo reflects competent rhetorical strategy.

Within the context of the technical communication classroom, this assignment has the obvious pedagogical goal of teaching technical definitions. By adding the additional goal of contributing to an already established knowledge base, however, engages the students with a larger community and an already established set of rules, regulations, policies, and protocols—everything from *what* constitutes appropriate content to *how* that content should be formatted. This secondary goal is reflected in the assignment description in several ways. First, the suggestion to mine Wikipedia's "Requested Articles" and "List of Most Wanted Articles" for content ideas is a way to direct the students to immediately involve themselves with the culture and content of the community. These requested and desired articles are places where Wikipedians have found gaps in content that need to be filled, and by choosing from this list, the students are not only guaranteeing appropriate content, they are responding to a specific call from within the community for this content. Second, the learning objective to "Gain experience with open-source knowledge production," also foregrounds the involvement not just in knowledge production (a simple technical definition paper), but specifically "open-source" knowledge production, necessitating a navigation of the commonplaces within a community of open-source content producers. This second learning objective influences a major part of the invention process for this assignment, the necessary study of the online knowledge base, which should come before a topic is even chosen, so that the students know "the existing protocols and commonplaces" of the knowledge base. And finally, the first three points in the evaluation section—that (1) the content is appropriate, (2) the content shows familiarity with the audience and is strategically adapted for that audience, and (3) the entry contributes useful information to the site—require that for a successful project, the

actual content is not the only necessary aspect, and that there should also be a concern for how that content works within and contributes to the community.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this assignment is an unanticipated consequence of the submission process, based entirely on the community and the policies that have been developed, and that is the possibility of the article being rejected by Wikipedia's editorial volunteers. Although this is not something that affects all student submissions, the rate of rejection in my experience teaching this assignment is fairly high (teaching two sections of this course on semester, only one student submission got immediate approval). These rejections are usually handed out because a student has run directly afoul of the commonplace policies developed by the Wikipedian community, e.g. submitting an article that is not appropriate for the site, or not having enough of a neutral point of view. The learning experience made possible by these rejections is twofold: First, the students must rewrite and resubmit their articles based on the editorial suggestions/recommendations, thus learning to engage with and navigate through the structures and requirements of the community. Second, the students are able to (and encouraged to) take to the discussion forums within Wikipedia as an opportunity to use the commonplaces as rhetorical devices to argue the appropriateness, etc., of their articles.

The requirements of this assignment, as well as the addition of the community requirements and editorial processes of Wikipedia itself, are powerful of how we need to break away from the view of using technology in the classroom as merely tools for production. Instead, the emphasis should be put on what types of arguments using these technologies make as well as what arguments we can make with them—that any

engagement with networked technologies is not done in a vacuum, but rather makes the students a part of a much larger community of users, intrinsically tied to the policies and rhetorical structures of that community.

CHAPTER 3 "COMMON SPACES"

On a recent trip across the border into Canada for a weekend of wine tasting, I programmed an address for a winery that I had never been to before into the Google Maps application on my phone. After about 45 minutes of following all of the directions exactly as they appeared, I reached the final destination. But rather than a new winery, or even a vineyard, I pulled up to a giant field of corn. In fact, there was nothing but cornfields in every direction I turned. Whether it was a mistake on my part typing the address, or the application's inability to recognize the alphanumeric postal code instead of a numeric zip code, the result was me finding myself in a completely foreign part of a different country. With some surfing on the web, I was able to locate the winery's website, which also had a Google Map showing their location and providing correct directions. Once I plotted these new directions into my own map, finding the winery was a quick and easy procedure—just follow the little blue dot along the little blue line.

What is important in this example is not the success or failure of the application or my ability to turn to the Internet for information, the importance lies in the trip taken between the cornfields and the vineyards. The combination of the many different aspects of the technologies working in synchronicity—linking the Global Positioning System with traditional map information with the Internet at large—to not just get me to my desired location, but to show me where I was at. As I followed the little blue dot that was "me" on the virtual map, the application gave me a sense of my relationship to my surroundings, showing other towns and landmarks that I would not have noticed otherwise. Instead of being a lost traveler in the midst of rural Ontario, I became a part of the landscape, not only properly oriented to the correct direction of my intended

destination, but also properly oriented to the communities and possibilities that existed around my location. Of course physical maps also have this capability to include other landmarks, restaurants, attractions, etc., and in fact, I had a winery tour map in the car with me, providing me with a trail to follow from place to place. However, without the specific addition of myself on the map, without me as a little blue dot, the paper map is just a map, a static representation of an area and its roadways and attractions. But if I was stuck in a cornfield with no physical markers to place myself, I would be lost. The addition of the network places my little blue dot in the map. I know exactly where I am in relation to those roadways – properly oriented to my surroundings, inside the map.

In the last chapter, I put forth the argument that entities on the Internet, such as Wikipedia and Google, function as commonplaces in that they become easy-to-use technologies that give us pathways to locate and disseminate particular types of information and that are easily recognizable to the community of users. For example, when a user wants to get a general idea of *what* something is (or at least where he or she may look to find more information about it) he or she can access Wikipedia. Or if the same user wants to know where to locate a particular piece of information or a web site on the Internet, he or she can go to Google. The user can also use these sites to communicate information to particular audiences (who are also familiar with these commonplaces), and thus they also function rhetorically—if I want to convince an audience that something exists on the Internet, I can use Google (the commonplace of "where it is") as something my audience easily understands. In this chapter, I will be looking more closely at another Internet commonplace, mapping technologies such as Google Maps (or the commonplace of "how to get there"), to develop the second division

of the commons, Common Spaces. In this division, Common Spaces, rather than referring specifically to physical space, refers more broadly to orientation, as in finding one's bearings within a given space (including cyberspace). This addresses the often-heard critique of the Internet as a creator of distance between individuals or that connects people in a way that is less valuable than face-to-face interaction. I take Google Maps as my primary example here because of the ways in which it illustrates the concept of finding one's bearings in both cyberspace and in physical space. I argue that this orientation is crucial to understanding the function of the commonplaces in our networked world, not only in terms of how we use them to communicate, but also how they work to build communities within the commons of the Internet, and that these communities are not "less than" their physical, face-to-face counterparts. This chapter will end with the description of an assignment that utilizes Google Maps (as well as similar mapping technologies) to create interactive maps using data gathered from the communities in which the students live, enhancing the students' relationships with their communities as well as creating visuals that show relationships in a virtual milieu.

Checking In

To return to the example with which I began this chapter, what is interesting about digital mapping technologies that combine virtual maps with satellite and GPS technologies is the ability to manipulate and include oneself in the map. The map therefore becomes less of a simple representation of an area and its roadways and more of a personalized representation of what that area means to the individual. For example, if a person is in a new town and is looking for somewhere to eat, he or she can program the map to become a representation of all possible dining establishments, orienting him or

herself to the new area. The user can also "drop pins," or mark specific locations, for later use, and the customized maps can be shared with the user's network, linking others to that particular user's orientation within the map. The maps become infinitely mutable, allowing users to shift the focus and purpose of their maps as well as to orient or reorient themselves and others in myriad ways.

This mutability of purpose also allows, because of global positioning technology, the ability for users to "check in" to specific locations, which then feeds to social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, alerting the user's network to location and activity. For example, if someone goes to a new restaurant, he or she can check in at that restaurant to let others know that he or she is there, facilitating possible social activity or at the very least documenting the experience of dining at a certain location so that plans could be made for a later date. Social media apps, such as Foursquare, also capitalize on this technology, logging places visited and providing recommendations based on the activity of a particular user and that user's circle of friends. Again, this type of social mapping provides a sense of orientation in several ways: First, it orients the user's friends to his or her activities and habits. Second, it orients users to a particular area by providing recommendations for places not yet visited. Third, it provides a sense of orientation within a community of consumers and businesses, matching people up with businesses based on interests gleaned from the act of checking in and/or mapping one's activities. Finally, it allows the users to create a self-representation online, identifying themselves with particular locations or brand identities (Burns).

In his article, "21st Century Graffiti: Detroit Tagging," Jeff Rice uses this sense of identifying with location, specifically, and with the Detroit "brand" more generally

(especially the title "Digital Detroit" given to the city after the influx of tech companies such as Compuware to the city center), to shift our understanding of deteriorating city spaces from physical places of commerce and economics to virtual networks, or assemblages, of diverse cultural and social significance. Rice's article predates much of the GPS-driven mapping technology I discuss earlier in this chapter, instead drawing on the concept of XML tagging as a way to "map" the significance of the city in a digital media such as Del.icio.us and Flickr. This type of mapping changes the city itself from a fixed place in which people relate to each other *in* spaces to a place of encounter, of networks, where people relate to each other *within* spaces, the distinction being that of information moving between spaces rather than being fixed in one place. According to Rice, this shift "generates a digital sense of connectedness. It does so, however, not through fixed place but through the open encounter of place in terms of digital, social interaction," thus necessitating the connection between individuals and their relationships between people and locations.

Another example of creating community through virtual mapping in Detroit, my own adopted hometown, is the website WhyDontWeOwnThis.com, created by the company LOVELAND Technologies. This particular website includes a map of all of the properties in the city and provides specific information about these properties, including ownership information, property tax status, foreclosure information, foreclosure prevention resources, property tax payment portals, real-time foreclosure auction updates, and social channels to comment and connect with others. At first glance, this seems like a typical real-estate site that provides property information and auction information to potential buyers, but the goal here is somewhat different. The real purpose is to orient the

community to the real circumstances of the properties in their neighborhoods, and to give them portal through which they can affect some change, such as the auction information (including properties that start at a $500 minimum bid) as well as conversation threads where community members can discuss strategies for purchasing properties or donating to the cover the tax debt of properties in their neighborhoods. Similar to the socially conscious mapping of William Binge, which I will discuss later in this chapter, WhyDontWeOwnThis.com utilizes concrete data obtained from the city of Detroit itself, in conjunction with social media applications, to spark social change and address the blight in Detroit neighborhoods.

Much of the other research done into the phenomena of mapping oneself or broadcasting one's activities through the process of checking in is predicated on the notion of privacy and security. These studies claim that broadcasting information of this type on the Internet are plentiful, and much of the time unintended. Checking in to a restaurant lets potential criminals know a user is not home, broadcasting the activity of frequenting a bar can alert potential employers to potential problems, posting intimate details of one's life and whereabouts can be observed more easily by parents or other authority figures, following a GPS signal from one location to another allows one's position to be pinpointed and tracked, all of which chip away at any semblance of security that one may have within social networks or any networked environment (Albrechtslund; Barnes; Burns).

However, as Albrechtslund and Westlake argue, this type of surveillance is distinctly different than that of the Panoptiocon or other hierarchical forms of surveillance in which a subject is being watched by an authority or institution against his

or her will. Rather, this surveillance is in Albrechtslund's words "participatory," or as defined by Westlake, "performative." Albrechtslund's definition of participatory surveillance shifts the impact of surveillance on the subject from disempowerment, such as in the Panopticon or "Big Brother" type surveillance where the association is with an invasion of privacy, to empowerment, in which the subject calls the shots and releases the information he or she wants to release—the power is in the hands of the watched rather than the watcher. Similarly, Westlake's shifts the power from the watcher to the watched, arguing that the Panopticon, within the social network, is "is all the more effective not because individuals are surveyed and reported to an authority, but because individuals are punished directly by others" (36). Users within the social network "perform their roles online in ways that are similar to the ways they perform their roles in face-to-face interaction, creating opportunities for users to demonstrate and police roles and perform the social values associated with those roles. In other words, Facebook is a forum for the policing and establishing of normative behavior, more than the imagined forum of deviant exhibitionism" (35). In both Albrechtslund and Westlake's definitions of surveillance in social media, the environment is much more conducive to the building of networks and community than it is to the common fears of privacy invasion.

The takeaway, then, is that the dissemination of this private information, broadcasting one's whereabouts and activities, is entirely voluntary and, as such, is fertile ground for the building of communities and orienting oneself within a community. Making maps, checking in, broadcasting photographs and other personal information are all voluntary and specific acts of users to open themselves up to their networks, to share the information, establish norms for behavior, and to broaden their scope of experience.

Users of check-in sites such as Foursquare and Dodgeball (the precursor to Foursquare) broadcast their activities and locations intentionally to "coordinate meetings … [and] link their identity to a brand image of a particular location" (Burns 152), and these types of applications and procedures have become the commonplace ways to accomplish such tasks—the "Check-In" becomes the Internet commonplace for letting your network know where you are and what you are doing.

The phenomena of mapping and checking in not only shift the power of privacy from the watcher to the watched to empower users to build broader networks, they also open up spaces for empathy in the shared experiences of others. As I argue in Chapter Two, this is an essential aspect of the Aristotelian commonplaces in that the audience and speaker need to share the experience and knowledge of the commonplaces in order for them to be understood and thus persuasive. Empathy, in this case builds a community between speaker and audience because of this shared knowledge and experience, without which certain commonplace arguments or examples would be rendered useless. For example, if the audience is unaware of the despotism that followed Peisistratus and Theagenes' requests for bodyguards, the warning that Dionysius is scheming to make himself a despot because he has requested a bodyguard will fall on deaf ears.

A recent article by linguist John McWhorter in *The New Republic* illustrates this opening up and building of empathy, using two other specific examples of Internet commonplaces: the "new because" and "LOL." The "new because" is a linguistic device that drops the preposition or independent clause from the standard usage, such as "I left the restaurant because of the poor service" or "I left the restaurant because the food was terrible." The new usage, minus the standard conventions becomes something of a more

generally understood concept: "I ate the whole bag because chocolate." McWhorter argues that this broader usage opens up a space for empathy because it implies "that the reader shares the same specific, many-layered feeling about the thing referred to … and what the proper responses are to it" (McWhorter n.p.). Most people have eaten too much chocolate at some point, and the "new because" sparks an empathic response in anyone who shares in that experience. McWhorter's second example is the use of "LOL," which began as acronym for "laughing out loud." Most uses now are not meant to denote an actual burst of laughter, but rather signal where other non-verbal devices such as giggles or shorter laughs might happen. McWhorter uses the example of a student stuck in the library, writing, "I'm in the library lol." If the student had simply written, "I'm in the library," this gives the readers no clue to the actual experience of the student in the library. The addition of the "lol" at the end opens up the space for empathy, now readers know that the student is not necessarily happy to be in the library, and they can relate. McWhorter claims these linguistic devices have become commonplace ways to "warm" up an otherwise cold text message, acting as "social glue," uniting users in a common experience. A third example of the "warming" of netspeak is "for reasons," which is similar to the "new because." When a user does not want to go into detail about a certain activity which may be potentially incriminating, embarrassing, or simply hard to explain, he or she can abbreviate the possible causes by simply ending the statement with "for reasons" (such as "I have to walk to work today, for reasons" or "That visit to the doctor's office was brutal, for reasons"). Like the "new because," "for reasons" creates an empathic response from the reader because of the ability to fill in the "reasons" with

things the reader may have experienced in the past—for example, he or she may have had their own uncomfortable doctor visit or an inconvenient walk to work.

I argue that all of these commonplaces—mapping, checking in, "LOL"—contribute to the concept with which I begin this chapter: orientation. These are all ways that geographically dispersed networks of users seek out common experiences through which communities can be built within decentralized networks. As I mention above, this commonality of experience and understanding is an essential element of the commonplaces. Understanding the commonplaces that structure the governance of a user-generated website such as Wikipedia, or the self-policing of privacy and information that happens in a social network like Facebook is crucial for users who desire to become part of these networks. Much like the orators of Aristotle's time needed to understand the structure of the rhetorical commonplaces in order to properly address, entertain, and persuade an audience, a new Wikipedian must understand this structure of commonplaces in order to successfully navigate the organization and contribute in a way that is seen as beneficial by the current membership, as much as a new Facebook user must understand what information is appropriate to share and with whom for issues of personal safety and acceptance within the network.

Common Spaces

One of the reasons this sense of orientation is so important now is because of the separation between the physical space our bodies occupy and the non-physical space of the Internet. As networks become more broad and dispersed, more and more interaction transitions from physical spaces to networked spaces. It is a common argument that networked technologies work to create gulfs between people that face-to-face interaction

works to close. People text instead of talk, they play games online with each other rather than socialize, they inhabit their social networks online instead of going out and socializing, each of these are arguments that emphasize the potentially alienating nature of networked technologies. Much of this is undeniable, but the above examples point to strategies that have been deployed online in an attempt reclose any gaps that have opened up between people, and much of this work is done through the use of the commonplaces.

In the *Politics*, Aristotle argues that the state (as an organized collective of individuals) is necessarily prior to the units of the individual or that family because the whole unit must exist prior to each part (as in a hand cannot exist as a hand without being attached to a body first). The state is the natural organization of individuals because "the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole … he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of the state" (*Politics* 5). In other words, individuals need to form communities with other individuals because we have no power by ourselves (as the defenseless creatures of the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus)—one cannot achieve *eudaimonia* by oneself. One of the key necessities for the state, according to Aristotle, is something in common, namely, a common place: "The members of a state must either have all things or nothing in common, or some things in common and some not. That they should have nothing in common is clearly impossible, for the constitution is a community, and must at any rate, have a common place—one city will be one place, and the citizens are those who share in that one city" (20). The community begins with a common place that serves as the basis for the

organization of the community itself, without which there can be no organization; the community cannot have "nothing" in common.

This claim, however, runs counter to arguments, such as those made by Alphonso Lingis, that it is possible for a community to form that has nothing in common. Lingis argues that the community that forms out of a common belief or purpose or that produces something in common merely establishes a "technological universe of simulacra" that excludes the other, "the savages, the mystics, the psychotics" (13). The simulacra round which the "rational" community is organized is just that, a falsehood or a simulation of community. Because it excludes the "other," it is not really community at all. Instead, the community needs to form out of the exposure of oneself to the other, "to forces and powers outside oneself, to death and to others who die" (120). Therefore, death is the only thing that anyone can really hold in common, and it, in and of itself, is individual—nobody suffers the same death as anyone else. It is out of this marginally shared experience of nothingness, of death, that the community of "those who have nothing in common" forms.

From an Aristotelian perspective, though, this experience of death, or the knowledge that eventually one will die, is perhaps the most powerful commonplace of all. More than the relationship of larger to smaller, the will to survive carries with it an extremely persuasive force. Because, as stated above, the individual by him or herself is not self-sufficing, in order to survive, to *not* die, a community needs to form. If a community is formed either based on the experience or knowledge that individuals have about death or out of a desire to survive, this is still something held on common from an Aristotelian perspective. The benefit, as well, of the structures of the commonplace

arguments is that even if there is the exclusion of the other (although a community formed for the sole purpose of survival may not intentionally exclude anyone), eventually the strangers and outcasts can learn that commonplace and thus be brought into the community.

The continued dispersion and decentralization of communities in networked environments, then, becomes increasingly problematic. How does a community organize without a common space? One possibility is to join specific, focused communities with those who hold common interests, e.g. basketball fans joining communities of basketball fans, etc. It makes sense that those of common interest would congregate and associate with each other, the "thing" held in common, then, being that of subject matter or interest. Aristotle warns against this, however, arguing that the state must be a plurality: "there is a point at which a state may attain such a degree of unity as to be no longer a state, or at which, without actually ceasing to exist, it will become an inferior state, like harmony passing into unison, or rhythm which has been reduced to a single foot" (*Politics* 25). Too much homogeneity decreases the plurality necessary for the state to function, and therefore needs to be some other means by which a community can find something in common.

In *Grammar of the Multitude*, Virno suggests that the remedy for this loss of commonality is a return to Aristotle's commonplaces as a mean by which the dispersed multitude can find its bearings. Although the special places do exist (communities of sports fans, adherents to a particular religion, those of a similar political view), "none of them is sufficiently characterized or characterizing as to be able to offer us a wind rose, or a standard of orientation, a trustworthy compass, a unity of specific customs, of

specific ways of saying/thinking things" (37). Therefore we must return to the commonplaces, a return to linguistic constructs that are relatable in any community, no matter how broadly dispersed. Virno argues that "these common places, and these alone are what exist in terms of offering us a standard of orientation, and thus, some sort of refuge from the direction in which the world is going" (38). The only way the dispersed communities can find their bearings, to reestablish a common space, is to return to the fundamental and identifiable devices of the Aristotelian commonplaces. As I argue in Chapter 2, these relationships have transformed in networked environments to include more than the original commonplaces, such as the opposition of opposites, the relationship of reciprocity, the likely vs. the unlikely, etc. Rather the commonplace structures also include Internet devices, such as search engines, browser windows, and interactive mapping, to convey the same sense of orientation.

It is the last commonplace in the above list, mapping, that I will begin to illustrate how a new sense of orientation, of common space, can be established. As I argue above, the important affordance of interactive mapping is the ability to locate oneself within the map, to precisely orient oneself within the communities encompassed in the map. When I use the term "interactive mapping," I am referring to any of the available GPS driven mapping services, such as Google Maps or Apple Maps, and primarily those that can be accessed either via computers or smart phones. In the next section, I will illustrate how interactive mapping, through the work of geographer William Bunge, can reestablish orientation within communities both physically and online, and I will describe a pedagogical approach that uses mapping to raise issues of ethics and community engagement in the classroom. I have chosen Bunge's work here as particularly robust for

community development and orientation because of his intense interest in using geography as a force for social change and his insistence upon using students in the data gathering and mapping process. By sending students into the communities to collect data, Bunge assisted in either connecting or reconnecting them with these particular communities. By using this particular strategy with updated, interactive mapping techniques, the students can not only become connected and involved in physical communities but can also establish relationships through activism in online environments as well.

Orientation Through Radical Geography

William Bunge[10] earned his Master's degree in geography from the University of Wisconsin in 1955, and his PhD in quantitative geography from the University of Washington in 1960. His dissertation, later published in 1962 as the book *Theoretical Geography*, became an extremely influential work in quantitative geography, shifting the emphasis of geographic study from an ideographic perspective, which is concerned with the study of the infinite variation, to a more theoretical perspective where it is possible to discover generalizable theories about social phenomena.

Bunge's first academic appointment was at the State University of Iowa in 1960. He was fired from this position in 1961. He moved from Iowa to Detroit and was an Assistant Professor at Wayne State University from 1962 to 1969. During his stay in Detroit, Bunge lived in and studied the Fitzgerald neighborhood. This work was published in 1971 as *Fitzgerald: Geography of a Revolution*, tracing the history of the

[10] The biographical information about Bunge is derived primarily from the website indiemaps.com, the "Preface and Acknowledgments: Rethinking" chapter of Bunge's book *The Nuclear War Atlas*, and the Wikipedia entry for William Bunge.

Fitzgerald neighborhood from the first white settlers in 1816 to the social and racial unrest of the 1960s. Bunge describes the book as a humanist geography, a text that includes the science of geography in its maps, graphics, photographs, and the words of the people, but also making a humanist value judgment about the desirability of human survival. *Fitzgerald* furthered Bunge's theoretical approach to geography, drawing generalizable theory from the study of an area of only one square mile.

Bunge's stay in Detroit also included the development of the Detroit Geographical Expedition and Institute, or DGEI, a radical mapping and educational mission that provided free classes to young inner-city residents, taught by volunteer faculty on Wayne State's campus. The DGEI taught research skills to the students while also involving them directly in research conducted by Bunge. The Expedition culminated in "A Report to the Parents of Detroit on School Decentralization," a document that eventually forced the Detroit School Board to respond to the illegality of its districting plans. The DGEI ended abruptly in 1970 when it lost the support of Michigan State University. Bunge was dismissed from his professorship at Wayne State during this period over reported administrative disapproval of his attempts to bring in black faculty members.

After leaving Detroit, Bunge moved to Canada, where he worked at the University of Western Ontario from 1970 to 1971 and York University from 1972 to 1973. He attempted a few more expeditions based on the DGEI model: the Society for Human Exploration (1971-72), the Toronto Geographical Expedition (1972-73), and the Canadian-American Geographical Expedition. Bunge touted such expeditions as "the highest calling for the geographer" (indiemaps). After his tumultuous career in American

and Canadian academe, Bunge became a cab driver in Quebec, where he is reported to still reside.

Bunge's last major publication was the 1988 volume, *The Nuclear War Atlas*. This experimental text mapped out the possibilities of nuclear destruction and opined on the nuclear power of the United States and the USSR. After the publication of the *Nuclear War Atlas*, Bunge's publication record dropped off dramatically, and in the late 90s and early 2000s, his work seemed to be focused on revisionist Stalinism, earning him the position of the representative of the Quebec Communist Party to the federal government.

From Bunge's body of work, the two things that are the most pertinent to this chapter are *Fitzgerald: Geography of a Revolution*, and the development of the Detroit Geographical Expedition and Institute (DGEI). These are most important because of Bunge's emphasis on not just the data collected and mapped, but also the involvement of either himself or his students in a particular community. For the *Fitzgerald* project, Bunge actually lived and worked within the community. The text tells the history of the neighborhood, but also details, through photographs and maps, the socioeconomic and racial struggles the neighborhood endured throughout its history. These maps, much like the interactive maps I describe at the beginning of the chapter, include Bunge himself as a crucial element, and the story he tells is one that can only be told by someone who shares a common space with the map. For example, Bunge created a map that depicts the availability of recreational activities for adults, adults and children, and children, in the Fitzgerald neighborhood. This map is an outline of the neighborhood with symbols that depict restaurants, bars, pool halls, play areas, theaters, etc. and is a stark representation

of the disparity in activities for adults compared to those for children. It's imagery highlights the obvious overabundance of bars and restaurants (of which there are 25) and the lack of open play spaces for children (of which there are only four).

Similarly, the Fitzgerald book includes a map that depicts the differential between the open green spaces of West Bloomfield, an affluent suburb of Detroit, and the closed-in spaces of a Detroit neighborhood. This image is specifically intended to highlight the disparity between these two neighborhoods, illustrating visually the gap between the amount of open, green space available to the wealthy and the lack of open space in the poorer Detroit neighborhood. As is common in Bunge's work, the data visualized in these maps was gathered by actually visiting the neighborhoods themselves, experiencing the difference first-hand, orienting himself (or his DGEI students) within the maps.

The key here, again, is that these maps developed out of Bunge's relationship with the Fitzgerald neighborhood itself and not just out of an academic or research interest. As a result, the intent of the maps was to spark social change. By pointing out the discrepancy between the rich white suburbanites and the poor black residents of Detroit, through the visualization of quantitative data, Bunge could spark change, or at the very least generate interest (or outrage) in the gulf between the rich and the poor. These maps represent a sort of "checking in" for Bunge, orienting himself within the neighborhood and identifying himself with its identity to broaden the scope of the community and to tell its story to others. In conjunction with the Fitzgerald project, Bunge also developed the DGEI to give underprivileged Detroit high school students the opportunity to learn research skills in a university environment, and Bunge sent the students back out into the community to collect the data used for many of his maps. As

Bunge himself connected with the communities in which he worked, the students also became connected (or reconnected) with these communities, possibly developing a new or different understanding of their surroundings. It is this type of connection the following assignment seeks to foster, but with the addition of digital, interactive mapping technologies. The idea is for the students to enter particular communities, collect data, and then represent that data to illustrate a particular ethical or social issue in a way that positions themselves within the map, checked in to the community and identifying with the issues at hand. The assignment is designed for a more technical communications-based course, but I will also suggest modifications to make it a more argument-based assignment.

Socio-Ethical Mapping

The assignment itself usually comes in somewhere around mid-term, after the students have been exposed to the traditional iteration of ethics in the classroom (via the text) as well as several assignments, including a technical definition/description assignment, an instruction set, and a proposal for a recommendations report, all of which could arguably involve and/or address the types of ethical issues that are addressed in the text books, such as harm to individuals or users, the need to keep the stakeholders in mind, and the dangers of plagiarism or manipulation of data.

In brief, here is the assignment description as it appears in the syllabus: "It is a requirement that we have at least one assignment that takes into account the intersection of technical communication and ethics. Although we will read technical communication scholarship that addresses the ethical valences of technical communication insofar as such communication can have negative and positive impacts on various individuals and

communities, we will also consider how such research tends to stress the negative possibilities (or ethical challenges) of technical communication. This project is designed emphasize the positive possibilities for technical communication to emphasize some area of contemporary life that can be reasonably referred to as involving ethics (ethical judgment, ethical responsibility, aids to ethical decision-making, etc.).

Assignment Description

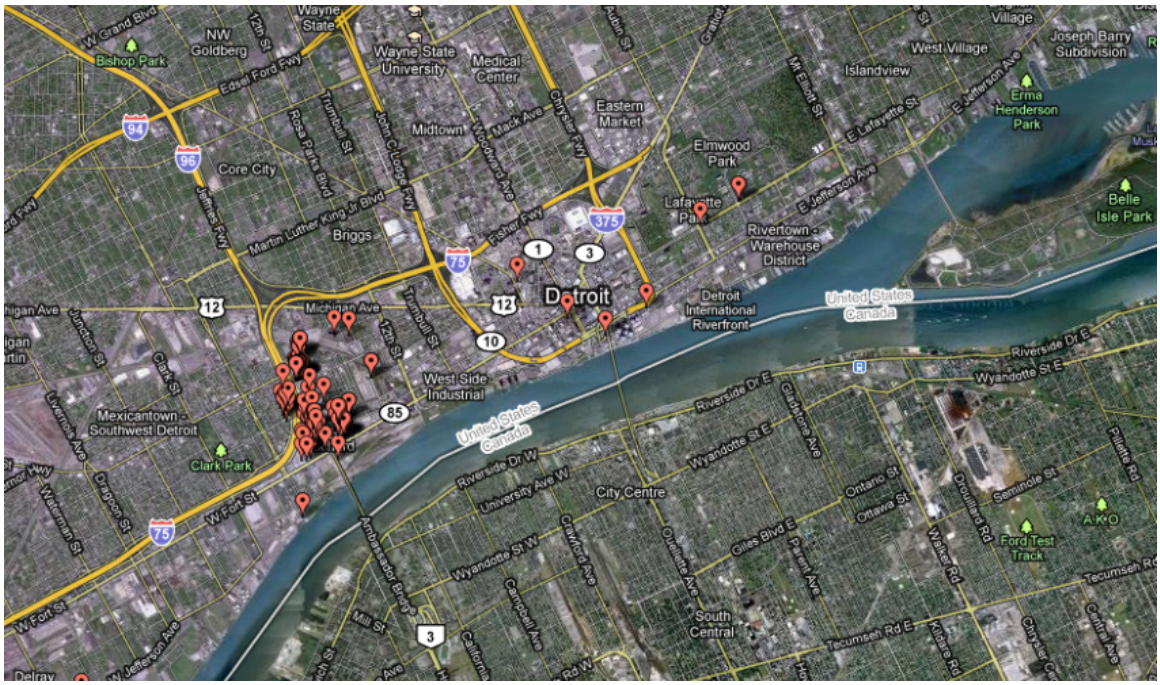
For this project you (or your team) will create an image or active visualization that is meant to influence its audience to think about the ethical dimensions of a particular situation. Your deliverables for this assignment will be composed of the image/visualization itself plus a short description of the data used in the image, its potential audience, and what effect you were hoping it would produce on that audience. While you will have great freedom in choosing your particular topic for this assignment, I will encourage you to consider following in the following in the footsteps of former Wayne State faculty member William Bunge in designing a visualization that represents some question of ethics or (social) justice in our surrounding area (metro Detroit); indeed, you may even decide to update/replicate one of Bunge's visualizations on this topic.

In class lectures, Bunge's work is described in much more detail, and the students are shown examples of his work. In addition to the Recreational Facilities and West Bloomfield/Detroit Green Space maps described above, the in-class examples also include: a map depicting a region of rat-bitten babies inside the city of Detroit (which shows the incidence of rat bitten infants going down dramatically once outside of the city proper), a Purchased Toys map (in which DGEI students collected data in neighborhoods in Detroit and the suburbs by counting the number of purchased toys or make-shift toys

in front yards), and a map depicting areas where commuters run over black children on a route between the Grosse Pointes and Downtown.

In practical application, iterations of this project have been mixed. Giving students free-reign to choose the ethical issue, the data set, and the visualization technique has yielded both assignments that were in line with Bunge's work, and also assignments that were not. However, many of the assignment have at least tapped into the spirit of Bunge's work in that they have raised relatively significant ethical questions using only the visualization of quantitative data as well as involving themselves in particular community issues.

Past classes were given links to different internet-based resources for the generation of dynamic images, such as Many Eyes and Batch Geo, so that a visualization method could be chosen, such as a word cloud, a bubble graph, or a map, the data set could be uploaded, and a visual would be automatically generated. Because of these resources, many of the earlier iterations of this assignment were word clouds, bubble graphs, or Batch Geo maps. However, a few of these assignments generated striking visuals that made effective use of the quantifiable data, and indeed raised questions about social and ethical issues in particular neighborhoods. The most striking of which is a map of properties owned by Manuel "Matty" Moroun, the owner of the Ambassador Bridge Company, and his subsidiary companies in and around the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit. This project is a particularly good example of the possibilities of interactive mapping for two reasons: 1) It focuses its attention on a specific neighborhood in the city and on a specific socio-ethical issue, and 2) the map itself is interactive. When a user scrolls over one of the dropped pins on the map, a new picture appears (see below).



Scroll-Over Image 1

Scroll-Over Image 2

The additional scroll-over images embedded in the map, show that the properties owned my Maroun, for the most part, are not viable, inhabitable properties, but are abandoned and decrepit. This raises the ethical question of why does Maroun own these properties, letting them fall further into decay rather than rehabilitating the buildings and the neighborhood itself. The photographs were taken by the students themselves, furthering their connection to the neighborhood as well as deepening their knowledge of the issue.

For future use of this assignment in a first-year writing course, three changes have been made: First, the instruction will be to more specifically follow Bunge's project, having students connect with particular neighborhoods to discover the issues that may need to be addressed and to collect the data firsthand. Second, rather than focusing on merely raising ethical questions, the students, based on their data and visualizations, will also write a proposal argument for how the situation could or should be addressed. Finally, the students will be instructed to use specific interactive mapping technologies,

such as Google Maps, as well as the check-in function through social networks like Facebook or Twitter. This will incorporate a broader network of individuals and better disseminate the information within that network, rooting the students more specifically in both the physical and online environments, while also orienting them within these specific communities through the commonplaces of mapping and location.

The intent of this particular assignment, either as an exercise in ethics or as the basis of a proposal for change, is not to make the students professional geographers or experts in data collection. The intent is rather to introduce the students to their surrounding communities and to develop a sense of orientation for the students within those communities. This is especially important for schools like Wayne State University, and Saginaw Valley State University, where I currently hold a faculty position, because of their diverse students bodies in terms of geography, race, and socioeconomic status. At a university such as Wayne State, students from extremely different socioeconomic statuses come together from communities that share common borders, yet seem worlds apart. So much so that often times, students have no real knowledge at all of the community that lies either directly to the north or south of them. By sending the students out into these communities to collect data and address community issues, as well as mapping this data using interactive mapping technologies is a way that these divides can be bridged and communities can be brought closer together.

CHAPTER 4 "COMMON GOODS"

It is no surprise that the Internet played a huge role in the United States 2012 presidential election. It was an extremely important element in the election cycle four years before, with both John McCain and Barak Obama leveraging social networking sites to target their constituencies and circulate their campaign messages. However, as I sat riveted to my couch on election night, watching the results pour in during both the 2008 and the 2012 contests, simultaneously on television and online, there was a noticeable difference in the dialogue popping up on my newsfeed. In 2008, as the election was called in favor of Obama, my Facebook page exploded in jubilation at the election of the first African-American president and the hope for a new direction after eight years of the Bush administration. People expressed their delight and the conversation took on a tone of celebration. The contrast when the election was called in favor of Obama, again, in 2012 was very distinct: instead of a celebration of Obama's victory (although there was a celebratory cheer from the left-leaning members of my friend group), the more pronounced reaction was a collective sigh of relief that it was all over. Everyone was glad that their newsfeeds would no longer be inundated with the political messages and the squabbling between "friends" on both sides of the political divide.

What was striking about this development to me was not necessarily that social networks were leveraged for political discussion, but that there seemed to be a "wrong" way to do it. Users of Facebook took issue with the way their newsfeeds were being "taken over" by political messaging and arguments from their friends. In other words, there was an abuse of privilege in the use of this community platform. So much so that Facebook profiles, such as the "No Politics Here" page

(http://www.facebook.com/No.Politics.Here), were set up to express this frustration, providing a forum for those who disagree with the use of newsfeeds for political messaging (which then turns oddly political). A sampling of the posts on the No Politics Here page echoed many of the responses pre- and post-election on my own, personal newsfeed. Comments such as "Who has two thumbs and is ready to have his non-political Facebook timeline back? This guy," "For those of you who are mudslinging and posting inappropriate political comments and smears, I will be hiding your facebook page until after the election," and a link to the Chrome browser extension, NOPPL (No Politics Please), designed specifically to filter out political content, raise the issue that one's personal newsfeed is an owned resource, and it is possible for it to be misused—these anti-political comments are the networked version of "stay off my lawn."

This issue is an incredibly important one to consider in the now, not just because of the perhaps annoying political posts (or religious, anti-religious, racist, homophobic, pro-homosexuality, or whatever type of posts you find the most annoying and disruptive on your newsfeed), but because the question of ownership in terms of the Internet raises myriad other questions of proper use/abuse of networked resources on a global level. Indeed, current headlines are rife with stories about politically charged Internet usage on a global scale. Iran has set up it's own national "Internet" to further separate itself from Western influence and protect itself from cyber attacks from enemy nations. A top US security advisor warned that cyber attacks from nations such as China are potentially the greatest security threat against the United States, of which the US has specifically accused China's military. The issue of identity theft and cyber crime is the modern version of breaking and entering—once the right malicious software is downloaded to a

computer, the hackers have free access to identities, bank, accounts, and other vital information[11]. Each of these issues, again, brings to the forefront concerns about the proper ownership, management, and use of the Internet as a common resource. It also brings up the question of control, and although the Internet is often viewed as a totally free and uncontrolled space, the reality of surfing the network is more like voluntarily participating in a Deleuzian form of decentralized control. As Galloway argues in *Protocol*, whoever holds this control has the power to determine who has access to this decentralized network and who does not: "If hypothetically some controlling authority wished to ban China from the Internet (e.g., during an outbreak of hostilities), they could do so very easily through a simple modification of the information contained in the root servers at the top of the inverted tree. Within twenty-four hours, China would vanish from the Internet" (*Protocol* 10)—the power to kick someone off the digital lawn *par excellence.*

The aforementioned issue of keeping off one's lawn, however, is predicated on the notion that there is a lawn. That a space exists that is owned by an individual who has the rights and privileges of ownership, one being to post a sign warning people to keep out, and having some legal recourse if the sign itself is ignored. But what of the Internet? The vast utopian, lawless freespace; the Wild West of the modern day. How far back along the chain of ownership must we go to establish who has the final rights to stick that sign in the digital lawn? Looking at the Internet as a whole, the answer is of course

[11] The Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), a joint venture between the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center, reported that in the United States in 2012, over $500 million was allegedly lost to cybercrime with individuals losing, on average nearly $5,000 a piece (technewsdaily).

debatable on myriad levels, and is the subject of legal battles over issues such as copyright and intellectual property. But narrowed down to the newsfeed on a free-to-use social media network, I argue that it is the quintessential form of a media commons: the digitally networked version of the Aristotelian agora, a place of commerce and politics made up of individual "lawns" that, as Aristotle states in the *Politics*, must be both privately owned and communally shared.

It may sound cliché to refer to the Internet as a common space, channeling the outdated utopian ideals of the early days of the Web as an unlimited, uncontrolled free space. But there is a theoretical justification for this view that is drawn from legal theory and theories of asset management, and more specifically, as I suggest below, to also view the newsfeed, in particular, as an exemplar of my third division of the media commons: common goods. In this chapter, then, I will argue that the Internet and related social media applications is best conceived as not a space or place (as is commonly theorized), but rather a common good. More specifically, I will show that by looking at the classroom (whether online or seated) as a common good can give instructors a foundation for developing pedagogies that leverage the common good of the classroom as a way to encourage the formation of a community in which the emphasis is on the process of development within the community rather than the end product.

The Internet as Commons

We might, perhaps, begin this line of investigation by turning to policy analyst and political scientist, Ronald Oakerson, who echoes Aristotle's call for the public sharing of private goods in his definition of a commons as: "a natural resource (or durable facility of human design and construction) that is shared by a community of

producers and consumers" (41), including in this definition fishing grounds, pastures, parks, groundwater, and highways. The key to this definition being that these common spaces, although shared by a community of producers and consumers, occupy the middle ground between purely private and purely public goods. Purely public goods, according to Oakerson, are goods that can be used by any number of consumers because these goods are consumed collectively but not used up (like the lighting in a public area), whereas purely private goods are consumed individually and thus become unavailable, or at least temporarily unavailable, to other consumers (like the food we eat).

The commons, then, occupies the middle ground, neither entirely public nor private. To quote Oakerson at length:

> Like pure public goods, the commons is shared, and unlike private goods, it either cannot be or is not (for any number of reasons) divided among separate consumers. Yet like the use of private goods, the use of the commons is characterized by individual consumers who appropriate a portion of the flow of benefits … and make that portion unavailable to others. In the case of a resource commons, individuals actually extract private goods from the resource. Unlike pure public goods, the commons cannot be shared without limit. (42)

The middle ground between the purely public and the purely private necessitates a method of management that maximizes the benefit to the consumers without overusing the resource. For example, a fishery can be overfished, depleting the resource so that none benefit, or common pasture land can be overused, leaving no more grass for grazing.

Probably the most apt example, though, is the example of a public highway. In this case, the resource can certainly be overused, but it is not depleted as in a fishery or pastureland. The physical substance of the road can break down over time with overuse, but in the short term, the "stuff" of the road does not disappear. Misuse of the road, instead, causes congestion, gridlocked traffic, and even accidents, as the number of

vehicles exceeds the capacity. Misuse of the Internet as what we used to call the "information superhighway," then, is similar—as bandwidth gets eaten up, things slow down, freeze, and even crash. What separates the information superhighway from the public highway, and thus the need for specific theorization of the Internet as a media commons, is that as the highway is bound by geography—it has a specific location in space and has specific connection that feed into it and that it feeds into—the Internet is unbound by location, and is a decentralized network without any specific connections. It can be accessed from just about anywhere at any time as long as the technology that is necessary for connection is present.

Oakerson offers a specific framework for the analysis of a common space that lays out four specific attributes of the commons in terms of physical characteristics, decision-making arrangements, patterns of interaction among participants, and outcomes or consequences. Holman and McGregor leverage this framework (specifically the physical characteristics of jointness, exclusion, and indivisibility) to further define the Internet as a commons for the development of legal policies for ownership and digital property rights. Oakerson defines these physical characteristics as follows: *Jointness* is the relative capacity of resource base to support multiple users without interfering with the benefit of the whole group. Thus one person's use does not directly distract from the use of others (such as catching a fish and consuming it), but there is some sense of ownership of the goods being consumed at the time (as opposed to the purely public resource of a streetlight). *Exclusion* is the degree to which the access of a user can be limited. This involves the issue of necessary payment for services and access versus a completely open and limitless accessibility. Again, the Internet finds the middle ground

between the two extremes by offering both free and paid means of access (such as free public library access versus paid access through an ISP or free news sources versus subscription-based news sources). Finally, *Indivisibility* addresses the physical boundaries of the commons: "The relative indivisibility of a commons is mainly a question of scale, determined by specifying the physical boundaries within which the commons cannot be divided without significantly impairing its management potential or production value" (45). Obviously in terms of the Internet, with a lack of physical boundaries, Indivisibility must be defined through access, and the question of whether or not there is a point at which access can be subdivided that diminishes the usability and commonness of the network. Current arguments about network neutrality involve the concept of Indivisibility in that if certain providers can subdivide and section out what websites a user can access and what websites they cannot access, the resource loses its standing as a commons, and tips over into a private resource controlled by a corporate entity, neither jointly owned or indivisible, and absolutely exclusionary—imagine if the users of a public highway were told that they could only use that particular route if they owned a Ford, and that Honda drivers had to take a different, exclusive route.

Oakerson's framework provides a valuable basis for theorizing the Internet as a commons, and the characteristics of jointness, exclusion, and indivisibility help define the Internet specifically as a commons, rather than as purely public or purely private. However, this framework only goes so far as providing somewhat of a definition by negation—based on the characteristics, the Internet is *not* purely public and it is *not* purely private, so by default, it must lie somewhere in between. What this model does not specifically account for is the activity within the commons that defines not only the

commons in relation to the public and the private, but also the relationships between individuals that form within and the products produces in this regime of common ownership.

Carol Rose takes a slightly different approach to this idea of the commonness of the Internet by positing that the most ideal form of organization for cyberspace and the intellectual endeavors within is what she refers to as Limited Common Property (LCP). This stems from arguments found on either side of the fence that either assert that all intellectual activities and/or products on the Internet should fall wholly under the regime of private property or the regime of what she refers to as purely "the commons," but which aligns with Oakerson's delineation of the purely public, i.e. not at all property.

Limited Common Property is defined as a regime in which, within the commons, the resources are self-managed, participation is self-governed, and the access is free to all who have membership. However, for those outside the commons, LCP functions as property and is therefore exclusionary. Within these communities, then, the freedom that LCP affords is extremely beneficial to an exchange of information and the sparking of intellectual endeavors. Members are not as worried about the fruits of their intellectual energy being exploited with no remuneration: "Discussions among mathematicians, musicians, or even Scrabble players might well be more productive if the participants could join a discussion that was completely free-wheeling among themselves internally—subject, of course to their own agreements and norms—but limited in such a way as to exclude vandals and tyros" (Rose 157). According to Erik Olin Wright, Wikipedia is a prime example of this type of relationship, functioning as a creative collective that operates outside of the means of mainstream capitalism, i.e. the current regime of

property. Wright points out four important structural principles upon which Wikipedia is organized: "non-market relations, egalitarian participation, deliberative interactions among contributors, democratic governance and adjudication" (Wright 199). For my purposes here, two of these—non-market relations and egalitarian participation—are extremely important. Within the concepts of non-market relations and egalitarian participation lay the core of any LCP regime in that within Wikipedia, the membership is self-selected and works to create a "product" for which they are not remunerated, however, the structure of the organization and the participation of the other members assures that this product is not misused or exploited. The reason, then, that the member editors feel free to contribute their time and energy for no monetary gain is because of these protections—their efforts produce a database of information that is free for outsiders to use, but is protected from vandalism and misuse by those who are not members.

Rose argues that organizing the intellectual activities and the resulting products online as LCP run counter to the Western ideal of property and commodification, but also works as a corrective for the problems that occur in trying to commodify the products of intellectual activity that aren't easily pinned down under the author/inventor form of property—there are often many individuals who collaborate to produce something that is sometimes a product, sometimes an idea, and so on. The regime of property is desirable because it is easy, at least in theory, to assign property rights to an individual—the inventor or author. However, the Internet challenges this notion, and forces us to cast off our "cultural myopia about the many non-individual forms of property in the limited commons" that results from the complexity of such regimes (so much so that LCPs don't

even resemble property to us in the traditional sense), and instead embrace what seems to mimic Aristotle's sense of property as privately owned and publicly shared (Rose 140). This happens in LCPs on two different levels: first, each member of the LCP brings his or her privately held resources (whether that is intellectual or physical) and shares them freely with the rest of the membership; and second, once the LCP has developed a product (again that is intellectual or physical) it can choose to hold this product privately yet share with a larger public. An example of this in an online environment is open source software. A group of developers assembles as an LCP, allowing a free-flowing dialogue and collaboration between each other within the LCP to develop a particular software outside of the control of a software company (although some of these LCP collectives do form as companies for further legal benefit), as much of the time these developers themselves work for software companies. An example of this type of open source LCP *par excellence* is the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the Request for Comments (RFC) process. The IETF is an association of engineers that use the RFC system to define the core standards of the Internet itself. As opposed to a tightly organized corporate or government entity, the IETF website describes the organization as a "large open international community of network designers, operators, vendors, and researchers concerned with the evolution of the Internet architecture and the smooth operation of the Internet. It is open to any interested individual." The RFC solicits ideas for how certain aspects of the Internet should be designed and standardized, and the members of the IETF contribute their ideas. Once the standard has been developed, software designers write the proper code and the standard is implemented. Through this process, Internet standards such as TCP/IP, ftp, and email have been developed and

implemented (Kelty). Once the standards are developed and implemented, the IETF engineers retain "authorship" of the original standards but they release code so that either end users can install and use the program or so that other developers can add to or change the source code for their own benefit. Again, the LCP environment fosters collaboration and thus blurs the lines of private/public and makes the assignation of property in the traditional Western sense extremely difficult.

In online environments, too, the LCP regime makes apparent another difficulty that I previously alluded to, and that is the difficulty of assigning property rights to things that are not necessarily "things" as such. Rose uses the example of the manifestation of folkloric storytelling on the Internet asking the question how does one assign ownership to a story that was developed using a story tree, calling into question as well, how does one assign ownership to anything created collaboratively and shared digitally? These questions cause the focus to shift, then, from the products themselves to the spaces in which these products are created. As Rose states:

> that is, in the products from 'spaces' that are common to insiders, where each takes inspiration from the others, but exclusive from outsiders, so that the fruits of their intellectual products redound to the benefit of the creators as a group … But more profoundly, the Internet's interactive works suggest that it may be the 'spaces,' rather than the products from those spaces, that require a rethinking of intellectual property protection—the LCP as a set of *activities* rather than, or in addition to, a set of products. (161)

This encapsulates the second and third parts of my division of the Aristotelian commons: common spaces and common goods.

At the beginning of this chapter, I begin to discuss the newsfeed on a social networking medium such as Facebook as a particularly robust example of how the Internet functions as an LCP, but contrary to what may be assumed initially, i.e. that the newsfeed is a space or a place, I argue that it is, instead, a common good—a product that

takes shape from the activities of the community of participants and increases in value as more members contribute to the common good. By demonstrating how the newsfeed functions as a Limited Common Property regime to produce a common good, I will then discuss how viewing the Internet through the lens of LCP can provide us the foundation for a more robust pedagogical model for teaching in a networked environment.

Process, Not Product

The difference between process and product is a common argument in composition theory and pedagogy, in which the focus is placed either on the completed "product" of student writing or on the process of how the student him or herself writes. Here, I would like to offer a slightly different distinction between these two terms and separate them from writing as such and, instead, map them onto Rose's call to invert the focus of the operation of a collective in a Limited Common Property regime from product to process—In other words, to focus on the interaction between the members of an LCP regime rather than on the end result. The purpose of this section, then, is not to get involved in the process theories of Emig, Elbow, or Murray, but to explore how the interactions between individuals in a collective can provide examples of how to engage collectives rather than individuals in networked classrooms. In other words, if process theory in composition typically concerns itself with the series of internal negotiations that happen with the "self" in a writing situation, my focus will shift emphasis on the complex negotiations within a group/networked dynamic and how this functions in the development of collaborative works in an online or networked environment.

As stated in Rose's argument for a turn to LCP instead of more common regimes of property, the individual as author or inventor holds dominance. We, in the West,

understand property as something owned or created by an individual (whether that is an individual as in one person or an individual entity, such as a corporation, which are in many cases viewed as individuals). A single individual created the product, and the single individual holds ownership of that product. Hannah Arendt has masterfully argued that this idea is predicated on the Socratic (and later Platonic/Aristotelian) concern with the immortal. Nature and the gods are immortal, so mankind is the only thing that exists that is mortal. Because of this, mankind strives for immortality. In Arendt's read of the ancients:

> The task and potential greatness of mortals lie in their ability to produce things—works and deeds and words—which would deserve to be and, at least to a degree, are at home in everlastingness, so that through them mortals could find their place in a cosmos where everything is immortal except themselves. By their capacity for the immortal deed, by their ability to leave non-perishable traces behind, men, their individual mortality notwithstanding, attain an immortality of their own and prove themselves to be of a 'divine' nature. The distinction between man and animal runs right through the human species itself: only the best *(aristof),* who constantly prove themselves to be the best … and who 'prefer immortal fame to mortal things,' are really human. (19)

Therefore an individual's creation, and by default, property, is of the utmost importance as it is tantamount to them creating an immortal legacy. One must create to maintain a foothold on the immortal. However, as Arendt points out, the fall of the Roman Empire illustrates that not much of man's earthly creations can truly last forever. This resulted in a turn toward religion as a pathway for immortality not bound to the physical realm, making human activity the "handmaiden" of contemplation. However, as the above examples of property regimes illustrate, the idea of the production and property of the individual is still paramount. It is almost entirely impossible for Western culture to view property as anything other than that of an individual author/inventor, so much so, that anything in defiance of this model of ownership, such as Rose's example of story trees or

other collaboratively created network artifacts, causes immediate confusion. Rose offers LCPs as an viable option for categorizing this form of property, but even this already existing regime of property ownership tends to not look like property ownership in the West. Again, this is because of the emphasis on product over process. Arendt helps us see the necessity of inverting this emphasis in her discussion of action versus labor and work.

According to Arendt, there are three main human activities: labor, work, and action. Labor "corresponds to the life process of the human body," that which is necessary for basic, biological survival, whereas "work" corresponds to the production of the artificial, those things that are meant to withstand time and grant man a sense of immortality (7). The third distinction is action, which is "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter [and] corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (ibid.). In drawing this distinction, specifically between work and action, Arendt sheds light on the issue at hand, that being in terms of property, we look for the product of work rather than the relationship of action—only able to recognize as property the result of man's quest for immortality rather than man's development of relationships between individuals. As an example of the distinction between the products of "action" and "work," I will discuss the controversy between conceptual artist, Damian Hirst, and the teenaged graffiti artist, Cartrain, and Hirst's art piece, "For the Love of God."

For the Love of God

British artist Damian Hirst's 2007 piece of art, "For the Love of God," is a platinum cast of an 18-century skull, covered in over 8,000 diamonds, a piece of art

which, according to Hirst, tackles the heavy subject of death by "laughing in the face of it." (NYTimes, William Shaw, "The Iceman Cometh," June 3, 2007). Whether or not covering a human skull in diamonds is "art" or not is debatable, but what this piece (amongst some of Hirst's other, somewhat outrageous works, such as pickled sharks or a six-legged calf in formaldehyde) demonstrates well is Arendt's definition of the function of "work"—"For the Love of God" is a piece that exemplifies a man-made attempt at immortality (in the face of man's mortality). The skull, which sold for $100 million, is something that will physically endure and will carry with it Hirst's name. However, as a piece of immortal "work," it must also exist out of the eye of the public, as it is much too valuable to display for extended periods of time. So what the public is left with is the image of the skull in a series of photographic representations of the skull itself, circulated on the Internet. This is where the lines between what is the author/inventor's personal property and the commons of the Internet begin to blur and a third line, that of a Limited Common Property regime, begins to appear.

Enter Cartrain, a teenage graffiti artist from England. Cartrain accessed the Internet commons, obtained the photographs of Hirst's art, and created with the images "new" works of collage art, many of which with a negative spin against Hirst and his work. Cartrain then advertised these works for sale on a website for £65 each, selling enough to make approximately £200. Because of this profit from an image of his work, Hirst then called the Design and Artists Copyright Society to contact Cartrain, demanding that he take the prints off the web site and return the £200 profit to Hirst. Cartrain complied with the demand, but then later retaliated by stealing a box of rare Faber Castell dated 1990 Mongol 482 Series pencils from Hirts's concept piece "Pharmacy" at the Tate

Britain in 2009. Cartrain later allegedly sent a ransom note stating "For the safe return of Damien Hirst's pencils I would like my artworks back that DACS and Hirst took off me in November. It's not a large demand... Hirst has until the end of this month to resolve this or on 31 July the pencils will be sharpened. He has been warned" (Independent UK). The grand theft (the pencils were valued at £500,000) resulted in Cartrain's arrest although the charges were later dropped.

These incidents obviously raise many questions about copyright laws and fair use, but they also illustrate the Arendtian distinction between "work" and "action," and demonstrate how action can manifest in an artifact that is potentially as immortal (or more so) than that produced by work alone through the development of a commons around the image of "For the Love of God"—Although, arguably, a commons that Hirst was not happy to be a part of. This commons bears the traits of an LCP regime in that Cartrain and Hirst function as the "insiders," both working with a similar piece of art in a collaborative process, while others, although not entirely excluded, do not have the same membership status as the insiders.

Cartrain's appropriation of Hirst's work, first and foremost, corrected the issue that Hirst brought up himself, i.e. that the skull was too valuable to display and would have to remain under high security for its entire existence. By creating something new with the image, Cartrain gave it a new way to circulate and thus breathed a new life into an object that is necessarily under lock and key. Of course un-doctored images of the skull still exist online, but Cartrain's collage art took these images and added to them, gave them new meaning, and made them potentially more interesting (and affordable) for an entirely different audience. The collaborative action between Cartrain and Hirst

(although a contentious collaboration) created something new and potentially more interesting than the object created by the work itself. The same goes for Cartrain's theft of the pencils from "Pharmacy," although the "product" of the action is slightly different. The theft created a story about Hirst's art that, again, expanded the experience of the art far beyond the walls of the Tate Britain. Much like Phaedrus's retelling of the speech of Lysias to Socrates, by forming a commons with Hirst, Cartrain made it possible for Hirst's art to bypass the traditional and formal channels of media and gave it a much broader scope and audience.

Second, the Cartrain/Hirst LCP opened up to another community of members when the artists collective, Red Rag to a Bull, stepped in to raise funds for Cartrain. This collective appropriated the image of "For the Love of God" as well as Cartrain's collage images that used the skull to create further works of art that were sold to raise money for Cartrain. The use of not only the original images but also Cartrain's art again expanded the scope, audience, and purpose of the artwork as well as adding to the story that was developing between Hirst and Cartrain. So now because of the LCP that grew up around the image of the diamond-encrusted skull, there is a vibrant collective of artists, adding to and creating new forms of art and media that have ever-expanding audiences and pathways for circulation and generation of revenue. The actions of this collective have made use of these pathways in ways that the product of Hirst's work never could—a work of art that achieves immortality physically but not necessarily in the public imaginary.

The key to action is that it is dependent on the presence of others. In order for action to not be work or labor, one cannot act by oneself, but rather has to act within a

group: "All human activities are conditioned by the fact that men live together, but it is only action that cannot even be imagined outside the society of men" (Arendt 22). Without the presence of others, action is reduced to labor, and man is reduced to *animal laborans*, laboring only for bare survival. Of course Arendt draws this distinction primarily to distinguish man's involvement in politics, but we can also draw from this man's involvement in other creative processes (which, of course, often involve necessary political maneuvering). What this also does, then, is give us a pathway into analyzing these processes from a perspective of an LCP, looking at the *activities* of the group as the important "product" rather than the product of that activity itself.

By inverting this emphasis, through an analysis of Limited Common Property Regimes, we can begin to see how action, rather than work or labor, is the essence of building and sustaining a robust pedagogy for online or otherwise networked classroom environments. Rather than focusing on the product of the class (i.e. a paper or project composed by an individual or even as a group that turns in an individual assignment), we can shift the focus to the engagement of students in the process of working within a network. From this perspective, I will present a writing assignment that focuses on the creation and circulation of Internet memes. The meme, which typically utilizes appropriated images and/or text, is a robust example of how the student can challenge the notions of property within a networked context and how the "product" of meme creation can be reached through the activity of a collective. In this section, I will first describe the assignment as it is presented to the classroom and will follow with a discussion of how this assignment can utilize the concept of the LCP to enhance a pedagogy for writing in a networked environment.

Analyzing Memes

The term "meme" was coined by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* as a way to discuss types of replication that may exist outside of genetic replication, and specifically cultural replication. A shortened form of "mimeme," a meme describes cultural artifacts such as "tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches" that jump from individual to individual "via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (192). Unlike genetic coding, however, a meme functions more like a virus: A meme is implanted in one person's brain by another, parasitizing the receiver's brain and replicating from one brain to another. This concept of "going viral" has also passed into the common vernacular, with memes, as a way to describe a meme that has replicated to the point of rapid and widespread replication. As a function of this type of viral outbreak, the concept of the meme has mutated (via memetics) into an object also known as a "meme" or, more specifically, an "Internet meme." The meme-as-object has been boiled down to the base components of the meme-as-concept, usually a video, photograph, or action that passes rapidly, with some mutation, from person to person. Some common Internet memes include "planking" photos, "Harlem Shake" videos, and "e-cards" that contain a fragment of text that correspond to a popular image. Like a virus, these Internet memes, during the process of replication, also mutate. The base concept usually remains the same, but the content changes as quickly as the meme itself spreads. The retention of the original idea or image, then, is what begins to challenge the traditional ideas of ownership—it is possible to trace a replicant meme back to its creator, but nearly impossible to trace the meme all

the way back to its original. Thus, nobody "owns" the meme although an individual or company may own the meme's original image, song, or idea.

The Meme Analysis assignment is, in general, based on the meme as a single unit of cultural reproduction, but more specifically on a particular type of meme as a genre, in which a still image is combined with text that is changed frequently as the meme is replicated. In the assignment, the students are asked to not only choose a particular image meme to analyze, but to also replicate that meme to show an understanding of how the genre works. Based on their analysis of the original iteration of the meme (or whatever iteration it is they happen to be viewing), they mutate and replicate the meme for continued circulation. In the invention phase, the students are directed toward online resources, such a "Know Your Meme" and lists of top memes, plus meme generation tools to give them some idea of what constitutes a meme. They are also directed to the following list of questions to determine the quality of the memes they choose to analyze:

- What makes this particular iteration of the meme identifiable as a member of this "family" or typology of memes?

- What are the specific formal features of this meme that have to be present for it to belong to its grouping? Alternately, which ones are common but not absolutely necessary?

- How complex are these features? Does the meme have a complicated enough history and/or large variety of executions (the flexibility with which people are able to create variations on the meme's first appearance) to sustain a 3-5 page analysis?

The students' goal, in this assignment, is to identify the core characteristics and genre conventions of the particular type of meme and to use a variety of examples of memes of this type to support their argument—comparing the similarities and differences between multiple executions of this meme type to prove to an audience which characteristics are defining, which are common, and which are coincidental. They also need to include an argument of how the memes they create demonstrate effective genre knowledge of the meme type.

In its current iteration, the Meme Analysis retains its focus on a product: analyze Internet memes and create one of your own. However, the meme form allows for a shift of emphasis from product to action. If Internet memes are viewed through the lens of the previous discussion about Damien Hirst and Cartrain, it becomes apparent that the process of circulating a meme is strikingly similar to Cartrain's appropriation of Hirst's artwork for his own artistic expression, both in the use of the photograph of the diamond skull and in the theft of pencils from Hirst's installation—appropriation and theft as actions not products. With this in mind, a subtle tweak to the assignment can highlight the importance of action in the viral spread of memes, as well as illustrating the murky issues of authorship and ownership.

An assignment rooted in the commons, then, would tweak the goal from the original assignment from to identifying the core characteristics and genre conventions of memes and using a variety of examples of memes of this type to support their argument, ending with the creation of a meme based on the meme(s) under analysis, to something that explores, perhaps, the origins of a particular meme itself. For example, the assignment might ask the students to explore the history and circulation of a particular

meme rather than analyzing the meme itself, or to create a new meme (based on the analysis of memes), and then track the distribution of that meme. The focus of these changes would be to shift the student's attention away from the task of writing an analysis paper (production), to engaging in the appropriation of images/text and participating in the spread of these units of culture (action). To put it another way, the assignment shifts from documenting traits to answer the question of "what makes a meme a meme?" to seeking to understand how the *activity* of engaging in a network of memes is a potent creative force.

The second function of this shift in emphasis is to get the students to question authorship and ownership. Whether the task is to attempt to trace a meme back to its origin (a difficult and nearly impossible project in some cases) or to send a new meme out into the world and track its progress, the idea that anyone one individual "owns" the content is quickly dismissed. Yes, to paraphrase Aristotle, there had to be a first mover, someone who "planked" first or took the first photograph of the grumpy cat, but once the content was turned over to the community of meme creators, all claims to ownership become relatively meaningless. Yes, to paraphrase Aristotle, there has to be a first mover. Someone planked the first plank and someone owns the grumpy cat in the pictures, but once the content or idea is given over to the community of meme generators, any real claim to ownership becomes relatively meaningless, and the memes are now owned by the community. By viewing the movement of memes either forward or backward through the lens of Limited Common Property, the students can see how LCP functions to protect the content (people who do not generate memes are not a part of the community), yet it remains entirely open within the community for appropriation and manipulation. Creating

a meme and sending it out into the network initiates the students into the LCP community, allowing them access to appropriate and manipulate rather than simply viewing and analyzing.

Of course, as with the end result of any assignment (especially those in a writing course), there has to be an assessable product. This part of the equation is unavoidable because of institutional requirements, but shifting the pedagogical leaning of the assignment can, at the very least, expose the students to a different emphasis. Rather than focusing on analyzing an object and writing a paper about it, the students are directed to think in terms of their actions. If they are analyzing anything, it is their participation in a community and how that participation has an impact on that community, or how becoming part of a community or network inherently changes the ways in which "products" are owned, manipulated, and distributed.

I began this chapter with a discussion of political comments on Face book feeds and the question of ownership using the image of the newsfeed as a digital lawn—do individuals own their digital lawns to the extent that they can post a sign that says, "stay off my lawn?" Based on Aristotle's recommendation for property in the *Politics* and legal definitions of property, I argue that the Internet, and newsfeeds in specific, are examples of Limited Common Property regimes in which content is protected from non-community members yet is open to all members within the community. A Facebook newsfeed is therefore protected from non-members (or non-friends) but is a free, open resource for members of the user's friend community. To post a "get off my lawn" sign necessitates an unfriending of those of whom the user wants to keep out; an excommunication of sorts from the community that keeps the LCP balance of open to insiders and closed to

outsiders. This type of property regime complicates the notion of ownership, muddying the clarity of the commonly held ideal of a singular author/inventor that holds the sole ownership of a product.

I argue, then, that it is important to incorporate this into a pedagogical approach, to open students to the idea that, when dealing with networks, the emphasis is not, nor should it be, on the end product, but rather the process or action that get them to that product. Whether they are curating a Facebook feed or creating and circulating memes, the lasting "product" comes from the participation in community rather than singular authorship—becoming a part of a digital commons.

CONCLUSION

During the course of this dissertation, I have spoken primarily of networked communities and the Media Commons as spaces, places, and goods in which users willingly participate. The administrators and editors of Wikipedia voluntarily spend their time editing and compiling a vast archive of knowledge. Users intentionally place themselves within the maps made available by GPS-based technologies to locate themselves within communities and to discover new venues for socialization or commerce. Users of all kinds willingly join collaborative networks that create and circulate videos, memes, and open-source software, forsaking the ideal of "ownership" for a more community-based sense of production. I would like to begin here, however by focusing on a slightly different aspect of online community, that being the communities that user belong to not entirely willingly.

The Supreme Court of the United States has recently held a hearing that involves a significantly more sinister aspect of what networks make available, the distribution of pornographic images of minors.[12] The case before the Supreme Court deals with the issue of restitution. A law passed by Congress in 1994 gives victims of this type of abuse legal recourse to sue the creators and distributors of these types of images for compensation for legal fees, therapy bills, and other monetary losses, but because of the massive distribution made possible by the Internet, there is the question of how responsible are individuals who are in possession of these images (i.e. not guilty of production or

[12] Information about the court case and the legal interpretation thereof have been primarily obtained from a *New York Times* magazine profile of Amy, written by Emily Bazelon, legal affairs editor for *Slate* magazine and senior research fellow at Yale Law School, and an interview with Bazelon on the National Public Radio Program, *Here & Now*.

distribution) for compensation. The suit involves the defendant, "Amy," and Doyle Paroline, a man who was convicted of the possession of hundreds of photographs, including two of Amy. Amy is asking for $3.4 million in damages, and although the dispute before the court is about whether or not Paroline, because he neither created nor distributed the images, is responsible for causing "damages" as such (and therefore is or is not responsible for compensation for those damages), this case brings up a very important consideration in regard to Internet communities.

One interpretation of the law in terms of how damagescan be sought, handed down by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans, is that Amy could sue one plaintiff (Paroline) for the full amount, and then Paroline would be responsible for suing others convicted for possession of the same images for contributions to the payment. And because there is a record of all individuals who have been charged and convicted with possession, there is a list of these individuals at the Justice Department—a list that constitutes a community of individuals, united here in the same nefarious action. Of course these individuals did not (we can assume) willingly choose to be a part of this community of convicted criminals. Yes, they downloaded and viewed the images, joining them together in one community of the willing, but it can again be assumed that these individuals did not willingly join the Justice Department's community of potential compensation.

This is an extreme example, but one that I think illustrates well the blind spot that many have for issues of individuality and privacy that arise in a networked environment. This Supreme Court case, as well as the recent scandals involving the National Security Administration and the United States' practice of tapping into the cell phones of other

world leaders, highlight that participation in communities online is not only ubiquitous, but is unavoidable. Once users connect, they are immediately pulled into multiple communities, both through their own choices as well as through the choices of others—even unintentional data, such as the users' IP addresses, can be used to form them into communities for other parties to use. This blind spot is problematic for the establishment of the types of communities that I discuss in this dissertation, both in online and in face-to-face interactions. Not knowing or understanding how information circulates and how this information is or could be used to form communities not only leaves users open for crime and privacy violation (or financial repercussions, such as in the above example), but can also have a dampening effect on the formation of beneficial and productive communities.

An example of this dampening can be seen in online classrooms, and for the purpose of this conclusion, I will draw from my personal experience teaching for Ivy Bridge College, the (now defunct) online division of Tiffin University in Tiffin, Ohio. I taught at Ivy Bridge for a full academic year as full-time faculty, and also taught as an adjunct English instructor for four seven-week terms prior to my full-time hire. During this period, I taught courses ranging from developmental writing to 300-level communications intensives and thus worked with students who were both first-semester students (sometimes after a significant amount of time away from school) to students who had logged two years into the online program. I also worked with students who were incredibly technically savvy and students for whom computers, let alone the Internet, were mysterious and confusing technologies. These types of online classes are designed to mimic the interactions that are present in a seated classroom—this includes lecture

materials (that are often either video/audio files or static PDFs), assigned readings from a textbook, computer mediated peer review workshops, and discussion forums that are designed to spark the types of discussions about the lectures and reading materials that often happen in a seated classroom. Since the students usually do not meet each other or their instructors face to face, these peer review workshops and dialogue forums are ostensibly designed to retrofit the online environment to accommodate the development of relationships between the students as academic peers and a community of learners. However, the experience of teaching one of these courses quickly shatters that illusion, and it becomes very apparent that the students rarely "talk" to each other, instead choosing to communicate with the interface itself. What the students are faced with when they log in is usually a string of emails notifying the students that other students had responded to their discussion posts, and then a blank text box through which the students can respond in turn. Instead of seeing this information as an actual conversation between a community of learners, it is very easy for students to fill the empty box with a meaningless response to fulfill the requirements of the assignment. This leads to the typical responses to posts that amount to no more than "I enjoyed reading your post," or "great job!" The same goes for online peer review workshops, usually mediated through another software interface such as Turnitin.com or MyCompLab, which normally resemble commenting on a static document through a track changes feature and, again, another empty text box. In neither case do the conversations usually lead anywhere other than the completion of course requirements.

It can be easily argued that the problem lies within the interface of the learning management software, i.e. if the software could just be developed in another way to

include more dynamic elements such as video or audio files, students would interact more. It could also be argued that it is the asynchronous nature of online education (which, for non-traditional students is one of the greatest benefits to the form) that is the problem, raising the question of how can students really "converse" with each other if the issues of time and physical location get in the way? Of course these two arguments are valid, and it is undeniable that the situation in which one student logs in at 6:00 PST and tries to communicate with someone who logged in at 6:00 EST is somewhat problematic, especially when that interaction is mediated through a computer, the interface of a learning management software, and varying levels of technological expertise. A sense of community is obviously easier to establish when students are face-to-face in a physical classroom for three to four hours a week, able to respond to each other in real time.

However, social media throws a relative monkey wrench into this theoretical problem. Users are able to have meaningful conversations, respond to opinions, and develop relationships with new individuals in the same type of asynchronous, non-physical, computer-mediated situation they deal with in online classrooms. Social networking, in fact, creates communities incredibly effectively, exemplified by the #Occupy movement and the revolutions that cropped up throughout the Middle East during the Arab spring. Users were able to utilize and harness the energy and intensity of the people and organize them to a common cause through the use of social media. In this dissertation, I argue that the significant difference between these two online platforms—learning management systems and social media networks—is not the interface (some LMS software actually includes social media-like applications), nor is it the content (i.e.

social media being more "fun" than online learning). This significant difference is rather how users view the purpose of these environments.

As I argue in chapter one, the traditional idea of the classroom is still rooted in the Habermasian concept of the rational public sphere, a place in which individuals gather together for face-to-face interaction and that is based in the tradition of print technology, which in the case of a classroom is traditionally a textbook. What is produced in the classroom, then, follows the Arendtian distinction between work and action, specifically, in this case, Arendt's concept of work. Students work in the class to create attempts at immortality, producing products that will withstand the test of time and have some lasting import—for example, the portfolio piece or the gradepoint average. Because of this view, when translated to the online environment the purpose of the learning management system is a tool through which the students produce work, not a space in which students can develop relationships. Conversely, the social media network, as a wholly digital born medium, doesn't fit into Habermas' print-dominated public sphere, and rather than a place to produce work, it is a place to produce action in the Arendtian sense. There is no end product, and the purpose of interaction is usually to build relationships and networks of shared experiences and common views.

To utilize technology more productively in the classroom and in online education, then, I argue that it is important to foreground this distinction and to shift the focus to "action" rather than "work," engaging the students in the fruitful and purposeful development of relationships and networks rather than end products. This is, of course, not to eliminate the creation of a product that can be evaluated, but instead to shift the emphasis of how that piece is produced from a static representation of the work (such as a

term paper) to a more dynamic representation of the community built by such action (such as an interactive map that addresses a community problem and proposes a solution to that problem).

Looking to the future at the increasing use of technology in the classroom and in online instruction, the pedagogical turn I suggest at the end of chapters two, three, and four is designed to facilitate this shift in emphasis from work to action by involving the students in not simply writing, but writing with these types of community involvement in mind. Having students write for Wikipedia, develop interactive maps to involve themselves in their communities, or design and analyze the dissemination of culture through Internet memes adds this extra dimension and opens up the previously obscured reality that participation in networked media always involves a community of other individuals. The action of creating common goods that circulate through common spaces and places, and observing how these goods change, impact, and gain or lose value within specific communities, shifts using technology in the classroom (or as the classroom) from a model of work to a more fruitful engagement with what that technology has to offer.

To this end, I propose that rethinking the Aristotelian commonplaces assists in the analysis of this shift from looking at the organization of individuals in networked environments as publics united in work to communities united in action. This again emphasizes how the commonplaces, as both elements of ancient rhetorical and political theory, are elemental in the formation of communities around particular technologies—whether that technology is the *techne* of rhetoric or the World-Wide Web.

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ABSTRACT

COMMEDIA: RHETORIC AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MEDIA COMMONS

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This dissertation analyzes the organization of individuals through online social media applications and other community-building websites, such as Facebook, Wikipedia, Google Maps, and online classrooms, using the Aristotelian rhetorical concept of the commonplaces as well as political, critical, and legal theory. Based on these analyses, this dissertation also provides pedagogical recommendations for the teaching of writing with technology in both online and physical classrooms.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Conor Shaw-Draves completed his undergraduate degree in Theatre and Communication Studies at the University of Detroit Mercy in 1998, and worked for 10 years as a professional actor/director/writer before applying to the PhD program in English at Wayne State University in 2007. After beginning the program at WSU in January of 2008, Conor has worked as both a Graduate Teaching Assistant with the English Department and as a Graduate Student Assistant through the WSU Graduate School. After passing his qualifying exams and prospectus defense, Conor accepted a full-time position at Ivy Bride College of Tiffin University, working in online teaching and course development. After a year with Ivy Bridge, Conor accepted a full-time, tenure-track assistant professorship at Saginaw Valley State University.