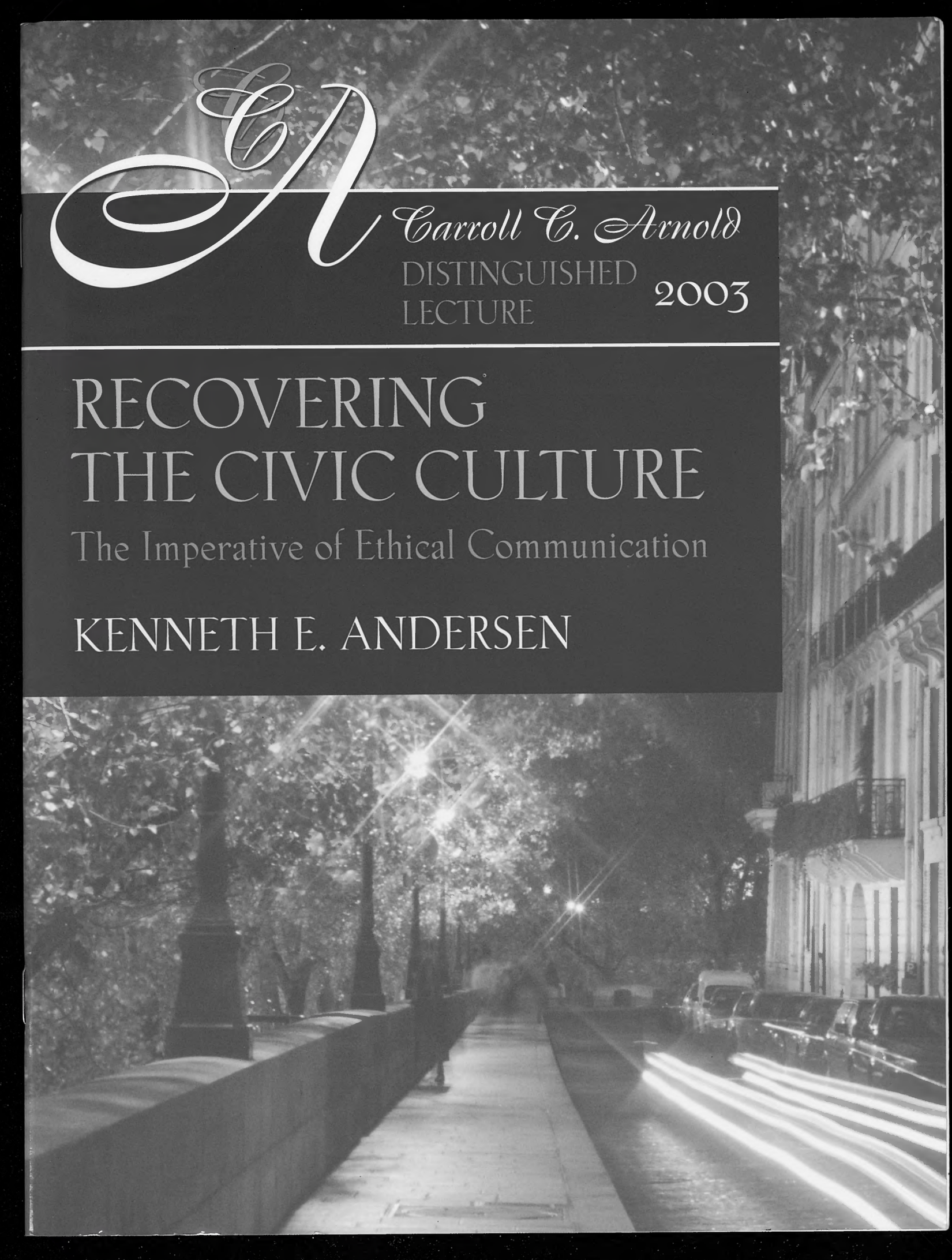


Carroll C. Arnold
DISTINGUISHED LECTURE
2003

RECOVERING THE CIVIC CULTURE

The Imperative of Ethical Communication

KENNETH E. ANDERSEN

The Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture

On October 8, 1994, the Administrative Committee of the National Communication Association established the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture. The Arnold lecture is given in plenary session at the annual convention of the Association and features the most accomplished researchers in the field. The topic of the lecture changes annually so as to capture the wide range of research being conducted in the field and to demonstrate the relevance of that work to society at large.

The purpose of the Arnold Lecture is to inspire not by words but by intellectual deeds. Its goal is to make the members of the Association better informed by having one of its best professionals think aloud in their presence. Over the years, the Arnold Lecture will serve as a scholarly stimulus for new ideas and new ways of approaching those ideas. The inaugural Lecture was given on November 17, 1995.

The Arnold Lecturer is chosen each year by the First Vice President. When choosing the Arnold Lecturer, the First Vice President is charged to select a long-standing member of NCA, a scholar of undisputed merit who has already been recognized as such, a person whose recent research is as vital and suggestive as his or her earlier work, and a researcher whose work meets or exceeds the scholarly standards of the academy generally.

The Lecture has been named for Carroll C. Arnold, Professor Emeritus of the Pennsylvania State University. Trained under Professor A. Craig Baird at the University of Iowa, Arnold was the co-author (with John Wilson) of *Public Speaking as a Liberal Art*, author of *Criticism of Oral Rhetoric* (among other works) and co-editor of *The Handbook of Rhetorical and Communication Theory.* Although primarily trained as a humanist, Arnold was nonetheless one of the most active participants in the New Orleans Conference of 1968 which helped put social scientific research in communication on solid footing. Thereafter, Arnold edited *Communication Monographs* because he was fascinated by empirical questions. As one of the three founders of the journal *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Arnold also helped move the field toward increased dialogue with the humanities in general. For these reasons and more, Arnold was dubbed "The Teacher of the Field" when he retired from Penn State in 1977. Dr. Arnold died in January of 1997.

The founders of the Arnold Lecture specifically called for distributing the lecture widely in printed fashion after the oral presentation has been made and to send it to relevant scholars in allied disciplines as well. This charge became reality via the gracious help of Allyn and Bacon Publishers and by the generosity of friends, colleagues, and students of Dr. Arnold (listed in the back) who honored his scholarly contribution with their personal donations.

Funds for the Arnold Lecture are still being solicited. Those interested in supporting this endeavor should make out their checks to the "Arnold Lecture Fund" and forward them c/o The Arnold Lecture Fund National Communication Association, 1765 N Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

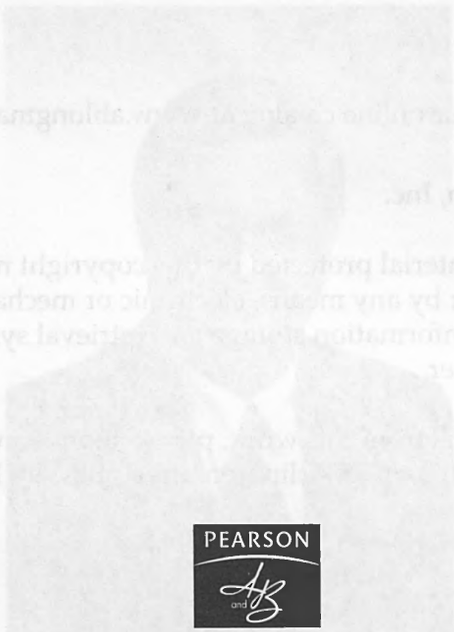
Recovering the Civic Culture

The Imperative of Ethical Communication

Kenneth E. Andersen
Professor of Speech Communication Emeritus
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

NCA
NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

The Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture
National Communication Association
November 2003



PEARSON

Boston New York San Francisco
Mexico City Montreal Toronto London Madrid Munich Paris
Hong Kong Singapore Tokyo Cape Town Sydney

For related support materials, visit our online catalog at www.ablongman.com.

Copyright © 2005 Pearson Education, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of the material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of the publisher.

To obtain permission(s) to use material from this work, please submit a written request to Allyn and Bacon, Permissions Department, 75 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116 or fax your request to 617-848-7320.

ISBN 0-205-44569-1

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 09 08 07 06 04

KENNETH E. ANDERSEN (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, B.A., M.A. University of Northern Iowa) is Professor of Speech Communication Emeritus at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of *Persuasion: Theory and Practice* and *Introduction to Communication Theory and Practice* as well as chapters in various books and journal articles on communication ethics, debate and forensics, academic governance, and politics. He served as president of the Speech Communication Association, Association for Communication Administration and as President and Executive Secretary of the Central States Communication Association and as editor of two journals. Administrative roles at the University of Illinois include Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Interim Head of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, Acting Head of the Department of Speech Communication, and Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. He served several terms as chair of the campus Senate Executive Committee and of the University Senates Conference and more than two decades as Parliamentarian of the campus Senate. He served on the National Council of the American Association of University Professors and chaired three standing committees. He currently is a member and former chair of the Faculty Advisory Council to the Illinois Board of Higher Education and is Treasurer of the State University Retirees Association. He served for more than a decade on the Board of Visitors of the Defense Information School. He has taught at the Universities of Colorado, Michigan, Southern California and Illinois at Chicago.

Kenneth E. Andersen

Credo for Ethical Communication

Preamble

Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication:

Principles

We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.

We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.

We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.

We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.

We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.

We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.

We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.

We advocate sharing information, opinion, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.

We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences for our own communication and expect the same of others.

Credo for Free and Responsbile Communication in a Democratic Society

Preamble

Recognizing the essential place of free and responsible communication in a democratic society, and recognizing the distinction between the freedoms our legal system should respect and the responsibilities our educational system should cultivate, we members of the National Communication Association endorse the following statement of principles:

Principles

We believe that freedom of speech and assembly must hold a central position among American constitutional principles, and we express our determined support for the right to peaceful expression by any communication means available.

We support the proposition that a free society can absorb with equanimity speech which exceeds the boundaries of generally accepted beliefs and mores; that much good and little harm can ensue if we err on the side of freedom, whereas much harm and little good may follow if we err on the side of suppression.

We criticize as misguided those who believe that the justice of their cause confers license to interfere physically and coercively with speech of others, and we condemn intimidation, whether by powerful majorities or strident minorities, which attempts to restrict free expression.

We accept the responsibility of cultivating by precepts and example, in our classrooms and in our communities, enlightened uses of communication; of developing in our students a respect for precision and accuracy in communication, and for reasoning based upon evidence and a judicious discrimination among values.

We encourage our students to accept the role of well-informed and articulate citizens, to defend the communication rights of those with whom they may disagree, and to expose abuses of the communication process.

We dedicate ourselves fully to these principles, confident in the belief that reason will ultimately prevail in a free marketplace of ideas.

Recovering the Civic Culture
The Imperative of Ethical Communication

Kenneth E. Andersen
Professor of Speech Communication Emeritus
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Prefatory Remarks

I will never have another opportunity such as this to say thank you. Permit me to do so.

I discovered speech as a high school debater for Myrna Murken and became a speech major in college while debating for Lillian Wagner. I joined this association at the age of 18, paying the full one-journal membership fee of $3.50, raised the following year to $6.00. My professor at Iowa State Teachers College said we should be reading a new journal, *The Speech Teacher*. Now a life member, I have been part of this association for 51 years. Thank you my many teachers and mentors, students and professional colleagues within and outside our discipline. I hope you enjoy and profit from the opportunities provided by the field of communication as much or more than I have.

It has been my privilege to observe the growth of this field in size and complexity. I had the opportunity to interact with many instrumental in shaping our discipline, for example, talking with James O'Neal about the founding of the association and his editing our first journal. As a graduate student I worked as a TA for Andrew Weaver who was present at the founding of the association. In my early years departments included theatre, interpretation, speech pedagogy, rhetoric and public address, radio and TV and sometimes film, voice science and speech correction. In most instances these are now separate departments, each an academic entity in their own right. We gained in scholarly reputation and merited the growing respect of other disciplines in the academy due to our burgeoning and ever more specialized body of research. We moved from a role of largely preparing future teachers and a few lawyers to a true liberal art, preparing individuals for the widest of career choices and enriching the quality of the lives of majors and non-majors alike.

Aristotle said that there is not just one life; there are many good lives. This field has given me the preparation for and the opportunity to work

in many settings as teacher, researcher, administrator, and to use skills gained in an array of service opportunities in this field, in my university and community, and as a member of the professoriate. It even gave me the opportunity to be tail-hooked onto and steam-catapulted off a carrier. It has been a wonderful 51 years. I thank the discipline and the profession for all that has been offered to me.

Overview

When Isa Engleberg approached me a year ago with the challenge of doing the Arnold Lecture it was "shock and awe"—shocked to be asked and awed by the opportunity. In saying thank you to her, like the British Prime Ministers of old, I offer a "disabling speech" in saying I tried but cannot do justice to the topic chosen. The theme of this speech is as old as the origin of rhetorical theorizing with Aristotle and the education of public speakers by Isocrates. They saw ethical persuasion by skilled practitioners as the key to creating and maintaining the good polis, the community or state, in which individuals could maximize the quality of their lives. Living the maximally good life demanded a good community.

Let me lay out the program. First, I explore the concept of a *civic culture.* Then, ala the steps of Dewey's pattern of reflective thinking, I note some felt difficulties causing this issue of rebuilding the civic community to be a concern. I then take a stab at defining and analyzing the problem, indicate some of the solutions already being explored and argue that essential to any solution is engendering a greater commitment to vibrant ethical communication. Finally I move to implement that solution by issuing a challenge to each of you and to all of us.

In pursuit of this design I draw upon sources current and past: the history of our field, Aristotle, John Rawls with particular emphasis upon his doctrine of fairness, and two seminal documents produced by our association, the Credo for Ethical Communication and the Credo for Free and Responsible Communication in a Democratic Society.

Since this is a speech, not an essay, I follow Isocrates in that a speech is designed with a specific audience in mind. I urgently believe that the theme of this speech is one that should be delivered to many different audiences, in many different settings through many channels by as many individuals as possible. But this one is for us, communication specialists who have the opportunity to profoundly affect not only our students, colleagues, and institutions but also the public generally both through our students and our actions.

Identifying the Problem

What is indexed by the term *civic culture*? We need to consider three terms: *civic, culture,* and *community.* "Civic: Of, pertaining to or belonging to a city, to a citizen, to citizenship."[1] "Culture: The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, . . . institutions, characteristic of a community or population."[2] "Community: a group of people living in the same locality and under the same government, a social group or class having common interests, society as a whole; the public."[3]

The relationship of community and the civic culture becomes clearer in the words of John Garner: "The community teaches. If it is healthy and coherent, the community imparts a coherent value system. . . . It is the community and culture that hold the individual in a framework of values; when the framework disintegrates, individual value systems disintegrate."[4] Ernest Boyer characterized the desired civic culture of the community called a college or university as purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, celebrative.[5]

I define civic activity broadly "to include all activities intended to influence social and political institutions, beliefs, and practices or to affect processes and policies related to community welfare."[6] Clearly, then, I use the concept of a *civic culture* in a broad sense. We need to think of the *civic culture* of the institutions or businesses where we work, the *civic culture* in voluntary groups such as this association and the *civic culture* shared in being a citizen of town, state, nation, that is, of what Aristotle termed a *polis*.

Aristotle believed individuals have a goal of living a good life, one that produces a sense of relatively enduring well-being, a sense of happiness. Aristotle was clear-minded in seeing that the good life for the individual is not possible without a good polis, a good society that both contributes to and enhances the good for the individual while the good lives of individuals contribute synergistically to a flourishing community. One person's good life is enriched by sharing in the good lives of other individuals—in effect increasing the richness of one's own life by sharing in the richness of the lives of others. Hence, all of us need to be involved in the promotion of a good polis, a good society. The good state is "essential to living well." "The good citizen will be the same as the good man only in the perfect state."[7] Yes, politics rears its ugly head because we must make decisions that conduce to the good community in pursuit of justice in the courts as well as optimal laws and systems of governance. Aristotle argued the necessity of a union of politics, ethics and rhetoric as essential to the good polis. If the three did not work together, the desired good governing system could not be created or maintained. He made the case for the necessity of participation in civic life and saw the ethical dimension as part of the essential triad.

What we see as a "good community" is a matter of definition: We can envision two types of communities—for brevity let us call one authoritarian/totalitarian and the other democratic-liberal. There are few clear archetypes of one or the other; reality is messier than that. But clearly what would constitute a good community from an authoritarian view would not match that of the democratic community. To some degree Plato took the side of the few who were wise making the decisions for all while, within limits, Aristotle took the opposing view. Basically, in the concept of our nation Aristotle won that argument. For Aristotle the best state educates and improves its citizens to improve politics, fits political institutions to the situation, balances powers and functions, and modifies and preserves the original forms of government.[8]

Keep in mind Aristotle was thinking of city-states about the size of Champaign-Urbana. Slavery was accepted, women were not relevant decision-makers. Relatively few made the decisions—but among these few the process was democratic. We have come a long way in extending civic participation just as our colleges and universities have come a long way in opening opportunities to a range of individuals not thought possible

100 or even 50 years ago. Having that possibility of participation, not all of us choose to utilize it. Indeed, in terms of civic participation, many of us abstain; some scorn those silly enough to think their vote matters, let alone spend time and energy in civic activity.

Is there a problem with our contemporary civic culture? Concern about the civic culture is currently endemic in what we read in newspapers, in opinion magazines and books. I collected over 200 instances of such concern in the last year. No I will not burden you with all of them. In the business world: think of Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, ImClone, HealthSouth, Adelphia, Andersen—how dare they besmirch the name. Now we see scandals in several mutual funds where the small investor loses and the "big boys" profit once again. The deprecations of these firms have affected every individual in this nation directly or indirectly. In government: conflict of interest scandals, the growing divide between the two dominant political parties impairing the functioning of legislatures and leaving many social advances to the courts, the failure to enforce laws, starving regulatory agencies of funds so they cannot function effectively. The mantra of many is "Government is the problem, not the solution!" One interpretation of the California recall election is that an angry electorate is turning on the incumbents, no matter the party. We are mad and not going to take it any more. Will we ever untangle major issues about the war in Iraq such as whether weapons of mass destruction existed. We can't even reach consensus on the minor issue of who said, "Let's have a banner 'mission accomplished' " as background when the president is tail-hooked onto the carrier, a carrier carefully positioned so the San Diego skyline will not show. How many times does the cynic in us or among us ask, "What really is going on?" Do we, can we trust our government becomes an urgent issue.

Education fares no better: Remember the Baylor basketball coach trying to get players to say the murdered player was involved with drugs. Ignore athletics. Each of you can narrate instances in which students, colleagues and administrators have broken the standards of ethical behavior in higher education.[9] Elementary and secondary have their problems too: e.g., Houston schools over-reported the success of their students and then underreported crimes taking place in the schools.[10] Yet the Houston schools were offered as models of success for other schools to emulate.

We see the decline in fewer people voting, fewer volunteers, fewer of our colleagues active in collegial shared governance, in declining membership and growing leadership gaps in civic groups whether the PTA, the Rotary, or the League of Women Voters.

One of the most publicized analyses of the need for rebuilding a civic culture through civic engagement is Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* Putnam examines political, civic, and religious participation, workplace and social connections, and such character linked issues as altruism, volunteering, philanthropy, reciprocity, honesty and truth, and some counter indications such as small groups, social movements and the net. He examines pressures of time and money, mobility and sprawl, technology and the mass media, the growing generation gap with the young of the society significantly more disengaged.

Not surprisingly Putnam finds several contributing factors: he even tries to weight them: pressures of time and money and two-career fami-

lies, about 10%; suburbanization, communing and sprawl 10%; effect of electronic entertainment 25%; "most important, generational change—the slow, steady and ineluctable replacement of the long civic generation by their less involved children and grandchildren" perhaps 50%.[11]

I accept Putnam's analysis as far as it goes. But I see a number of other factors that he does not fully discuss. I would argue that the extreme partisanship and polarization of the electorate in politics is driving many away from participation. The hollow sanctimoniousness of some politicians; violations of the public trust (two recent Illinois governors went to prison and another will soon be charged with crimes); sexual escapades denied and then admitted contradicting proclaimed values; enormous sums of money expended in running for office; targeting particular subgroups; allowing contributions to buy access; failure to address significant issues. David Zarefsky at last year's convention said cynicism about politics is devastating to politics. Many in my son's generation claim it is not cynicism but realism.

Putnam indicts electronic entertainment as a key factor in reducing participation in the civic community. He might well talk more about the content. And we need to add new elements to his concern about the impact of extensive viewing of TV. What of all the computer games? What is the impact of the computers giving access to the Internet? What of the increasing ubiquity of the cell phone used with a voice level unmatched by any normal conversation? When individuals in the same dorm room or office email rather than talk to one another what happens to other social connections? When a director on our campus in one of the high tech areas banned email among workers in the same building and demanded face-to-face contact, morale and productivity improved. There is a lot of research with real policy and personal implications out there for us in areas such as these.

What of the role of the mass media? What of the promotion of "the disease" I label *celebrityitis*. Gray Davis says it elected Arnold. Do you disagree? Paul Simon discussing the pandering of the media notes the proportion of O. J. Simpson stories contrasted to "hard" news.[12] Currently, we have Lacy Peterson and Kobe Bryant to focus upon. How much more information on Britney Spears or Madonna kissing her do I need? Simon's concern about the declining credibility and utility of the press is echoed by Frank Rich in the *New York Times*.[13] Jonathan Chait in the *New Republic* writes, "thanks to a handful of bad habits, some good intentions gone awry, and a new breed of politicians adept at exploiting these vulnerabilities, today's political reporters routinely provide the public with misleading, sometimes wholly inaccurate coverage of public policy and the officials who make it."[14] He specifically notes issues of sticking to one storyline, e.g., Gore inventing the Internet; excessive objectivity negating the reality of what is happening; image consciousness with words uttered counting for more than the actual actions; and the impact of money on politics.[15] He fails to mention the punishment of denying access to reporters who don't provide favorable coverage and the impact of the bottom line for media in general. Self-censorship may be the most dangerous of all possible types of censorship. With rare exceptions, the media exist to turn a profit and where that is not a factor, the cutoff of funds by supporters or federal and state funds is omnipresent.

We have such an incredible richness of information that we may be drowning in it. Targeting and specialization reigns: the Internet makes it

possible for me to revel in the details of the life and singing of Lauritz Melchoir. You can pursue an interest in golf 24 hours a day on TV if your golf magazines bore you. We can become so focused on our own little segment of reality that we lose all touch with the larger reality that matters to us. Perhaps allowable in children, this is a dangerous habit for adults. The god, Wotan, in the opera *Siegfried* says, roughly translated, "many who think themselves wise, do not know what is most important for them to know."

In any community we need to think about announced standards and the example of the leadership exhibited. Increasingly businesses—profit and non-profit alike—have mission statements that stress the quality of performance, the importance of professional behavior, and announce codes of ethics with required signatures by workers and orientation or training sessions on those standards. But are any of us shocked reading that the three whistle-blowers honored by *Time* as persons of the year called attention of their leaders to violations only to be ignored or even threatened in any of several ways? Why commit yourself to upholding the announced standards when it becomes patently obvious that the leadership and the organizational culture does not?

The first principle in our NCA Credo for Ethical Communication calls for "truthfulness, accuracy, honesty and reason." Almost all the negative cases we could cite involve violating one or more of the basic canons of trustworthy communication. Someone or more them one lied, did not provide needed relevant information, and engaged in a cover-up of one sort or another. When called to account, they denied responsibility—innocent lambs that did not know what was happening although their position and pay meant they were to be responsible.

Sisala Bok in *Lying* says it directly "I shall define as a lie any intentionally deceptive message that is stated. Such statements are most often made verbally or in writing, but can of course be conveyed" by other means.[16] Please note the elegant simplicity and force of this definition. It does not say that one tells the whole truth or that one knows the truth. Rather, it focuses upon the intention to deceive—even if one happens to tell a lie that is ultimately true. Bok reinforces the importance of climate in her focus on the danger of the slippery slope—one small lie leads to another then another and that mandates still another until the bottom falls out and the credibility necessary to maintaining useful communication with some degree of efficiency evaporates. Everyone in our field ought to have read this book. Perhaps it is time to reread it again.

Violation of the norms of ethical communication is, I believe, a major factor in the malaise that has led many people to withdraw from the civic culture whether of their profession, their associations, their political arena. This is not to disagree with Putnam or Simon's views on the factors producing disengagement. We may be engaged in a version of the chicken or egg controversy. One factor produces another, that in turn affects the first, and so the cycle continues. We may disagree about the degree to which violations of the standards of ethical communication are cause vs. effect, and the exact impact leading to decline of participation in various communities and various roles. But, will anyone of us say that unethical communication is without impact? Will anyone of us, professionals in communication, argue that we have no role or respon-

sibility in addressing this concern? If so, speak now for I want to hear your justification.

Toward a Response

What about solutions? Indirectly the previous material has suggested several solutions. Students of professional and business ethics have found that focusing attention on ethical issues does make a difference. Frequent reference to and then exemplifying ethical behavior by those in leadership positions has a positive effect on the ethical behavior of others. Ethics workshops, particularly those using real-life case studies, provide useful guidance. But a formal code of ethics is not of particular use unless it is given a reality in practice. Indeed, it might be argued that the effort to formulate and continually evaluate an ethical code is more important than the actual code. Efforts to develop norms on sexual harassment, research utilizing human subjects, intellectual property rights, faculty and student behavior bring neglected ethical issues forward. Scandals—political, business, individual—while harmful to individuals, the whole of a corporation, organization and the larger society, have the positive advantage of raising ethical issues. Even gossip has a positive function in that it often does raise questions of values, judgments of good and bad, and acceptable responses.

With regard to involvement in the civic arena of public life, higher education has began to be very active with new programs stimulating involvement in civic activity as preparation for life-long active participation as involved citizens.

The fall 2002 issue of *Liberal Education* is largely devoted to the topic of "Civic Engagement." President Carol Schneider of the American Association of Colleges and Universities calls for greater expectations and civic engagement by colleges. Featured articles deal with presidential leadership in terms of moral leadership in the new millenium holding that universities should be "models in confronting the problems of a complex society and contributing to their solution." Curricular and institution innovations are discussed as means of ensuring students encounter participatory democracy in both theory and practice, focusing upon social issues relevant to students and finally leading students to reflect on "the intellectual and moral capacities needed for responsible citizenship."[17]

There are opportunities for faculty to join in these efforts and programs. The current *Change* magazine details several efforts in terms of curriculum, extracurricular activities, and campus culture.[18] Colby et al. provide web-sites and references to several books including one they authored, *Educating Citizens: Preparing Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility.* [19] They note current projects such as the American Democracy Project sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in cooperation with *The New York Times*, one of several programs under way in Illinois. Another is the Center for Liberal Education and Civic Engagement.

Members of our own field certainly are active in promoting civic involvement as I define it. Last year Dwight Conquergood in this lecture dealt with capital punishment and my Illinois colleague, Stephen Hartnett, actively addresses the same issue in a range of venues. Rod Hart and

his colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin created the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation designed to create more voters and better citizens. Robert Craig, International Communication Association president, in his presidential message in a recent electronic newsletter asked if ICA should establish a "comprehensive code of ethics."

Because we recognize that ethical issues are a dimension of all elements in communication in everything from choosing to communicate to refusing to listen, from the appeals offered and arguments chosen to the audience targeted information presented and words chosen, we have a unique opportunity to transmit that understanding and the awesome responsibility that goes with that understanding.

Higher education has always prided itself on having a moral dimension. "Throughout most of its history, American higher education has understood its social mission to include instruction in fundamental ethical values. . . . important opportunities exist for the cultivation of responsibility, justice and compassion. A sense of the common good, a sense of duty, and a principled commitment to respect the humanity and rights of others. . . ."[20] During our field's development in the last century, the importance of the civic function was stressed. We argued in the 1930's for the addition of speech courses, ideally required, in high schools to prepare students to be better citizens. As Mary Andersen pointed out in her analysis of major college basic speech texts, when reference was made to ethical issues, it was typically in the context of the values of a democratic culture.[21] Ron Arnett in a more comprehensive survey of textbooks in 1987 still found this to be the dominant influence.[22] Many authors of early texts made the preparation of citizens living in a democracy a key grounding for the text material. We need to assure that that dimension of civic responsibility continues to be a significant element in our pedagogical efforts.

Aristotle offers a particularly sound approach as we delve into the ethical dimensions of the communication process. As noted earlier, he saw the trinity of politics, ethics and rhetoric as required in developing the good polis (community). Aristotle cautioned "It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just as far as the nature of the subject admits."[23] We will not find the same certainty and precision we find in math. Aristotle saw ethical values as grounded in the basic needs, tendencies and capacities of individuals. His was a virtue ethics: virtues are habits built up over a lifetime of experience utilizing practical wisdom. Ethical action must become habitual as we won't always think through or even consciously weigh the ethical implications when we act. He defined moral virtue as a "state of character concerned with choice lying in a mean, i.e., a mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it . . . a mean that with regard to what is best and right an extreme."[24] On one hand we have an excess, on the other a deficiency—the virtuous act is one that finds the right middle course and in that sense it is an extreme in itself lying between two extremes that define a continuum.

Aristotle saw situations as always making available a range of possible choices. Finding the right mean is always particular to the individual. Finding the right action means choosing to act "to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way,"[25] (Sounds like good communication!) As one progressively makes better and better

choices, the ethical quality improves. The bad spiral downward in their choices ala Bok's slippery slope, the good continue to make more optimal choices. It is the job of individuals using their practical wisdom to make the better choices.

In ethics, then, we do not have absolute certainly, we must consider the individual enmeshed in all the relevant circumstances of life, and we must seek to establish patterns of ethical response that will carry us and our polis forward.

Aristotle at some level is somewhat familiar—at least as a name—to all of us. John Rawls is less well known by people in this field. I personally see that as a grave mistake. The impact of Rawls, one of the most influential philosophers of recent years, went far beyond philosophy influencing fields as diverse as economics, political science, sociology. His ideas are directly relevant to anyone interested in social justice. Rawls brings forth many ideas that relate to the civic life and proper civic behavior as we have construed it. And he makes a major contribution of great utility in testing ethical theory and practice.

Following several preliminary articles and lectures, Rawls finally set down his thinking in the book *A Theory of Justice*.[26] Rawls is concerned with justice: how should the rights and privileges, the duties and obligations be distributed in society? Rawls enunciates two principles in his search for "justice as fairness." The first is that "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others." These liberties include "political liberty (the right to vote and to be eligible for public office) together with freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person along with the right to hold (personal) property; and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the rule of law."[27] This principle directly speaks to conditions of the civic life and issues raised in our Credo for Responsible Communication.

The second, much more complex principle is the major focus of Rawls's work. He restates the principle in a variety of ways and contexts reworking and developing it. Essentially it holds that "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity."[28] The just savings principle means that some resources should be saved and conserved rather than given out or used immediately. Rawls offers a liberal, democratic theory. He tries to work out the method by which the egalitarian principle of equal concern and respect for all should function in societal institutions as well as the actions of individuals. In every case, he argues, we must distribute all social goods so that inequalities benefit those who are worst off. Renee Fleming can have her wonderful voice and the fame and fortune that goes with it so long as those less talented and less rewarded are benefited in the process. Thus, we can bask in her singing while she pays higher taxes and does work to benefit charities. She can and should have her awards, her rave reviews, her high fees. The top executive is allowed to enjoy special benefits of her position as long as her use of that position serves to benefit the company, the workers, and the society. If the reverse is the case, that is unfair even illegal in many cases depending on methods employed. In many senses Rawls's vision is that of a social contract theory in which we agree to the contract so long as the contract on

balance adds benefits rather than costs to the neediest among us. This has a sense of fairness about it expressing respect for the worth of all individuals. Interestingly enough, some recent research suggests that ideas of fairness seem to guide behavior among some primates.[29]

It takes time to develop a "Rawlsian" frame of mind. His 587 pages are filled with arguments, examples, probes, rethinking. Hundreds of articles and several books analyze, disagree, or reinforce his work. But if I have given you cause to think about digging into Rawls you have been well served today.

Rawls offers a device students and I often use in delving into ethical questions. To test his theories, Rawls utilizes a kind of rhetorical device in placing people in an "original position" operating behind a "veil of ignorance" as he terms it. Rawls postulates people meeting together to negotiate the rules by which they will live. "People in this original position" have some notions of economics, of human psychology, but no notion of who they are as individuals, what generation they belong to, or the role they may play. "They must choose principles the consequences of which they are prepared to live with" whatever role and position they may turn out to have.[30] What rules would these people evolve and mutually agree upon? Rawls believes they would agree upon two principles: respect for equal liberty and ensuring that benefits from action must go to those who are most disadvantaged. Suppose we were developing a set of rules for communication. We don't know our ancestry, our age, talents, sex, we don't know who we are and what role we will play. Would we agree that each of us ought to have equal opportunity to communicate, to profit from communicating? Would we agree that the most talented communicator among us should use that ability to the advantage of others less fortunate, less well endowed to some degree. Or given the benefit of the luck of the draw, should that good communicator get even more by taking some of what we have away from us. What would we agree to if we do not know who we are? What choices would we ultimately make for the better polis and the better life for each of the parties involved? Would our communication ethics credo survive such a test? Would the credo for free and responsible communication? In some sense, the group developing the ethics credo worked in a Rawlsian "original position."

The burden of the analysis thus far is that individuals need to reach into themselves to reach out to the community to make both the community and the individual the better in the richest sense of that word—contributing to the fulfillment of potentialities that make for a flourishing life in a flourishing community. That is an ideal vision. In the reality of this world we will fall short of that goal but to the degree we approach it, we are well served.

The Association's two credos provide us with resources of great value to utilize in our thinking, our teaching, and as guides to our activity. The introductory paragraph to the Credo directly addresses the role of communication in enhancing the quality of life in our communities.

> Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth

and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well being of individuals and the society in which we live.

To the degree that we internalize and act on the nine principles of ethical communication set forth in the Credo for Ethical Communication, the civic culture will be invigorated and rebuilt. Are the nine principles stated easy to achieve? No way! Do we often have to resolve conflicts between and among the principles in many situations? Of course! We are faced with the necessity of thinking through the implications for our actions or inaction and finding the right "mean that itself is an extreme between extremes." One principle urges courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice. Paul Simon would like that—it suggests we aren't pandering. Yet we condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity. What if I believe my god is stronger than your god—yours is just an idol? What if I as a judge insist on a monument with the Ten Commandments on display even if a higher court orders it removed? How do I work out the solution in ways that benefit the polis, other people and myself? After all, Aristotle says the choice is particular to individual, setting, etc.

Dealing with these issues requires far more than simply putting a credo on a wall or in a textbook. Rather, a credo must be given tangible reality in helping us to make the tough choices. A credo is a statement of belief, of commitment. Actively considering and weighing any credo's principles seems to me to be a healthy process as we work through the most difficult of decisions—ones where laws do not determine action and where opinions will vary. When in doubt, the actions of others in sharing valid information, honest opinions and actual feelings are of use. Having access to a diversity of perspectives, being willing to listen to those who disagree and being pushed to defend our choices is helpful.

The two credos, Free Speech and Ethical Communication, seem to me like bookends helping to hold the process together. Both grow out of a commitment to a democratic process placing great emphasis upon the dignity and moral worth of persons. Both stress the responsibility of individuals to act within a social context in ways that value the other. A totalitarian state, ruler, individual will not accept the credos as realistic, as binding, as applicable to them. Such rejection does not prove that the values expressed are wrong. If we draw a veil of ignorance and worked out a contract, what approach would we choose and what approach taken over time is the more likely to produce optimal results for individuals and the community? I believe we know the answer. Yes, our traditions bias us and we must be open to the possibility we are wrong. And we must remember, the devil is in the details.

Many commentators see the world as caught between two great clashing views, one that would freeze time and individuals or return us to some better, previous state or what it is believed to have been. As we age many of us remember a past that never was. This view involves holding to existing standards and patterns, to what was and is and thus ought to be. The other view for want of a better term might be termed "modern," envisioning a progressive evolutionary change allowing different standards and patterns. Loaded words I know. I would characterize the battle as between those who fear the choices individuals make

without strong or even binding guidelines and rules and those who trust individuals to seek and make good decisions to the best of their ability. I side with Rawls in granting maximum freedom to individuals so long as they do not infringe upon the basic rights and freedoms of others. Working out that tension between the individual and the other is both a matter of law and societal decisions that determine the culture of the community and of the decisions of individuals themselves. There are inevitable constraints and boundaries. Our civic culture is the arena in which we work out those issues and pass along the solutions devised. How then can we afford to become or remain disengaged from that culture and the processes involved?

Many aspects of what we are talking about are problematic. One of them is the issue of the free rider—the person who takes advantage of the fact that we live by the rules and they do not. But we have many opportunities to deal with this. We can confront the free rider and attempt to change his actions. We can establish and enforce laws. But more importantly we create a culture, a set of practices and norms. Perhaps a society should be best known for the laws it does not need to enact.

We have a long way to go in revitalizing the civic community. The National Opinion Research Center found that while 53% of those sampled in 1964 said "most people can be trusted" only 35% said yes in 2002.[31] Although not as drastic, trust in public figures and institutions has also declined. Yet trust is a key to effective communication. How do we regain what is lost, how do we become and then prove again and again that we are trustworthy? Our daily ethical choices in communication constitute our answers in a daily test.

Free speech issues are taking on a new importance and a new complexity given the National Patriot Act. Censorship issues pop up everywhere. Prospect High School in Illinois had parents protest because they staged *The Laramie Project*—"nothing more than an opportunity to push a homosexual agenda."[32] Lists are being circulated through Congress that "seek to discredit the researchers and challenge or revoke their federal grants" because they deal with such issues as HIV, AIDS, adolescent sexual behavior.[33]

We need to remember Frank Haiman's stirring words: ". . . these principles (about free speech) require a strong and vigilant citizenry for their faithful implementation. The regime which they envision is not one for the squeamish or the apathetic. It is not for those that lack the courage of their convictions. It is not for those described by Thomas Jefferson, as 'timid men who prefer the clam of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty.' "[34]

The Challenge

Finally, we come to the challenge I said would be issued to us as individuals and to the field as a whole:

I believe we must be active participants in rebuilding the civic culture. The communication process as it has and is being utilized has played a significant role in the decline of the civic culture. Altering communication activity can play a significant role in rebuilding the civic culture. Will we accept a role in building the civic community? This field once ac-

cepted that responsibility. Are we willing to do so again? Obviously no one individual can do very much. But if each of us does a little we will have significant impact.

First, we need to value the incredible relevance of the two credos to our work and enrich the experience of our students by making the principles enunciated in the credos a significant part of their growth and learning. The classroom is an ideal setting in which to value and to act in accord with the principles in the credos. Simultaneously we must remind students and ourselves that a subtext in every communicative interaction is the negotiation of our ethical relationship to one another. Within limits, we cannot live more morally with other individuals than they are willing to live with us.

Second, we need to assist students in developing strategies for dealing with the mass of communication stimuli coming at us. We need to help them develop strategies that both maximize their ability to pursue their individual interests and simultaneously remain alert and appropriately responsive to issues that impact significantly upon them and the community. Can they avoid drowning in all the information coming at them by some means other than ignoring it? We need to assist them in "promoting climates of caring and mutual understanding." For me, the performing arts are important resources in my own efforts to develop a breadth of understanding.

Third, as individuals we must accept our responsibility to be active in our several communities to an appropriate degree and participate with others in maintaining and enhancing those communities. In other words, we will exemplify the value and responsibility of being a member of a civic entity.

In closing I want to invoke the image of Martin Luther King who 40 years ago in "I Have a Dream" created a force still at work in our culture today. We don't have the same platform and the same audience, yet each us has the ability to transform at least some part of our world even if not on the scale he did. Most of us here today are educators; all of us are communicators. I remember Lillian Wagner in my basic speech class telling of a student who in search of a topic for a speech decided to research the needs of the college library. She became so concerned she not only gave the speech but also began a campus campaign that led to the library being redone. Our action or inaction matters. The question is, "What do we choose to do."

I conclude using words from one of my favorite columnists, Molly Ivins. Although focused on politics, her words apply to every domain where we have need of a vibrant civic culture. "In this country, we have the most extraordinary luck—we are the heirs to the greatest political legacy any people have ever received. Our government is not *them*, our government is *us*. . . . It's our government, we can make it do what we want it to when we put in the energy it takes to work with other people, organize, campaign, and vote—we can still make the whole clumsy, money-driven system work for us. And it's high time we did so."[3]

Endnotes

[1]*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: New College Edition* 1976. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), p. 246.

[2]*Ibid.* p. 321.

[3]*Ibid.* p. 270.

[4]Gardner, J. 1990. *On Leadership* (New York: Free Press), p. 113.

[5]Boyer, E. 1990. *Campus Life: In Search of Community* (San Francisco: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching).

[6]Colby, A., Ehrich, W., Beaumont, E., and Stephens, J. 2003. "Educating Undergraduates for Responsible Citizenship," *Change* Vol. 35, No. 6 November/December, p. 48.

[7]McKean, R. 1947. "Politics: Introduction," *Introduction to Aristotle* (New York: The Modern Library), pp. 546–7.

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]Hauptman, R. 2002. "Dishonesty in the Academy," *Academe* November–December, pp. 39–44.

[10]Schemo, D. J. 2003. "For Houston Schools, College claims Exceed Reality," *The New York Times, Nat. Ed.* Aug. 28, p. A-14; "Houston Punishes Former Principle in Undercount of Dropouts, Aug. 30, p. A-11; Winerip, M. 2003. "A 'Zero Dropout' Miracle: Alas! A Texas Tall Tale, *The New York Times, Nat. Ed.*, Aug. 13, p. A-19; Dillon, S. 2003. "Houston's School Violence Data Under a Cloud," *The New York Times Nat. Ed.*, Nov. 7, pp. A-1, 16.

[11]Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster), p. 283. Also Table of Contents, pp. 9–10.

[12]Simon, P. 2003. "Pandering in the Media," *Our Culture of Pandering,* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), pp. 59–98. The essence of his point is caught on p. 59.

[13]Rich, F. 2003. "So Much for 'The Front Page,' " *The New York Times* Nov. 2, pp. AR1, 25.

[14]Chait, J. 2003. "Bad Press: How political journalists get the story wrong," *The New Republic* Nov. 10, p. 20.

[15]*Ibid.* pp. 20–23.

[16]Bok, S. 1989. *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York: Vintage Books), p. 13.

[17]*Liberal Education,* 2002. Vol. 88 #4 Fall. Descriptions largely from the table of contents relative to articles on pp. 1–3, 6–33.

[18]Colby, A., Ehrich, W., Beaumont, E., and Stephens, J. 2003. "Educating Undergraduates for Responsible Citizenship," pp. 40–48.

[19]Colby, A., Ehrich, W., Beaumont, E., and Stephens, J. 2003. *Educating Citizens: Preparing Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.)

[20]Jennins, B., Lindemann, N. and Parens, E. 1994. "Values on Campus: Ethics and Values Programs in the Undergraduate Curriculum," (Briarcliff Manor, NY: The Hastings Center), p. 3.

[21]Andersen, M. K. 1979. "An Analysis of the Treatment of Ethics in Selected Speech Communication Textbooks" Ph.D. Dissertation (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan)

[22]Arnett, R. C. 1987. "Communication Ethics and the Basic Texts: An Uncommon Theoretical Relationship" Paper for Joint Central States And Southern States Speech Associations, St. Louis, April.

[23]McKean, *Introduction to Aristotle,* p. 310.

[24]*Ibid.* p. 340.

[25]*Ibid.*

[26]Rawls, J. 1971. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.)

[27]*Ibid.* pp. 60–61.

[28]*Ibid.* p. 302.

[29]Conniff, R. 2003. "Rethinking Primate Aggression," *Smithsonian* August, Vol. 14 #5, pp. 60–67; Cohen, A, 2003. "What the Monkeys Can Teach Humans About Making America Fairer," *The New York Times* August 21, Week in Review, p. 10.

[30]Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 137. The entirety of Section 24, pp. 136–142 is relevant here.

[31]Burns, G. 2003. "America's motto: In few we trust," *The Chicago Tribune Midwest Ed.*, June 7, p. 1

[32]Rubin, B. M and Munson, N. 2003. "Offstage drama over school play," *The Chicago Tribune Midwest Ed.*, Oct. 24, pp. B1, B8.

[33]Herbert, B. 2003. "The Big Chill at The Lab," *The New York Times Nat. Ed.*, November 3, p. A21.

[34]Haiman, F. S. 1981. *Speech and Law in a Free Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press) p. 429.

[35]Ivins, M. 2003. "Offering up a host of examples identifying Bush's many problems," *The Chicago Tribune Midwest Ed.* September 18, p. 13.

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

Benefactors of The Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture Fund

Janis Andersen
Peter Andersen
Ronald Applbaum
Susan Applbaum
Carroll C. Arnold
Deborah Atwater
Robert Avery
Wallace Bacon
Harold Barrett
Charles L. Bartow
Samuel Becker
Thomas W. Benson
Roy Berko
Goodwin Berquist
Erwin Bettinghaus
Jane Blankenship
Don Boileau
John Waite Bowers
Irving Brown
Robert Brubaker
Joseph Bulsys
Karlyn Kohrs Campbell
Noreen M. Carrocci
Ingeborg G. Chaly
Kristin F. Chaudoin
Sister Joan Chittister
Timothy Y. Choy
Kenneth Cissna
Herman Cohen
Celeste Condit
Martha Cooper
E. Sam Cox
Ralph B. Culp
John Daly
Arlie Daniel
Suzanne M. Daughton
Arthur F. Dauria
Robert Doolittle
Nancy Dunbar
Robert Dunham
Margaret Eadie
William Eadie
Flo Beth Ehninger
Lois Einhorn
Donald Ellis
Keith Erickson
Walter Fisher
Paul Friedman
Gustav Friedrich
Linda Fuller
D. C. Gila
James Golden
Dennis S. Gouran
Richard Gregg
Leland Griffin
Bruce Gronbeck
Roderick P. Hart
Kenneth Harwood
Gerard Hauser
Nola Heidelbaugh
Kathryn Hening
Thomas Hopkins
Robert Hopper
Fredric Jablin
Carol Jablonski
Anita C. James
Kathleen Hall Jamieson
J. Vernon Jensen
Bonnie Johnson
Christopher Johnstone
Henry Johnstone
Lynne Kelly
Corwin P. King
Dennis R. Klinzing
Mark Knapp
Roberta L. Kosberg
Kathleen Kougl
Manuel I. Kuhr
Robert Kully
Reiko Kuramoto
James M. Lahiff
Dale Leathers
Beverly Whitaker Long
Stephen Lucas
Jeanne Lutz
Cheryl Malone
A. Jackson McCormack
James McCroskey
Sherrie L. McNeeley
Martin Medhurst
Paul Messaris
N. Edd Miller
Ray Nadeau
Mary Newman
Thomas Nilsen
Victoria O'Donnell
Thomas Olbricht
Thomas J. Pace
Arlie Parks
Stanley Paulson
Douglas Pedersen
Sue D. Pendell
Mary Pettas
Gerald Phillips
Darrell T. Piersol
Linda Putnam
Sharon Ratliffe
Loren Reid
Beatrice Reynolds
Richard D. Rieke
Lawrence Rosenfeld
Alan Rubin
Rebecca Rubin
Akira Sanbonmatsu
Joan Sanbonmatsu
Father Leo Sands
Thomas Scheidel
Patricia Schmidt
Robert L. Scott
David Seibold
Barbara Sharf
Daniel Shurman
Malcolm Sillars
Herbert Simons
Craig R. Smith
Jo Sprague
Hermann Stelzner
Nathan P. Stucky
Jerry Tarver
Anita Taylor
Robert Tiemens
Kathleen J. Turner
Richard Vatz
Paul A. Walwick
Steven A. Ward
Robert Welch
Molly Wertheimer
Eugene White
Harold E. Wisner
James A. Wood
Julia Wood
Margaret Wood
David Zarefsky

Allyn & Bacon is proud to sponsor the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture Series. As publishers committed to the discipline of speech communication, we are dedicated to working together with the National Communication Association to further research, disseminate vital information, and encourage participation in the field of communication. It is our pleasure to honor Carroll C. Arnold by publishing this lecture.

Cover Photograph: © Philip Coblentz / Brand X Pictures / Getty Images

For related titles and support materials, visit our online catalog at www.ablongman.com

ALLYN AND BACON