

Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive)

Volume 6 *Volume 6 (2008)*

Article 10

2008

A Silent Rhetoric: The Mechanism of Propaganda as Persuasion

Ken-ichi Sasaki

Nihon University; The University of Tokyo, ken-sasaki@k3.dion.ne.jp

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics



Part of the [Aesthetics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sasaki, Ken-ichi (2008) "A Silent Rhetoric: The Mechanism of Propaganda as Persuasion," *Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive)*: Vol. 6 , Article 10.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol6/iss1/10

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Liberal Arts Division at DigitalCommons@RISD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive) by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@RISD. For more information, please contact mpompeli@risd.edu.

[About CA](#)

[Journal](#)

[Contact CA](#)

[Links](#)

[Submissions](#)

[Search Journal](#)

[Editorial Board](#)

[Permission to Reprint](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Publisher](#)

[Webmaster](#)

A Silent Rhetoric: The Mechanism of Propaganda as Persuasion

Ken-ichi Sasaki

Abstract

Under ongoing globalization the particularity of cultures has become a major topic in contemporary aesthetics. Someone insists on the right of national culture against globalism, others wish to bridge cultures.^[1] Apparently opposing one another, they share the same gaze on the individual character of every culture. To confirm or transcend our cultural or national affiliation through art there exists the common dimension of aesthetic persuasion: that is the subject of this paper.

Key Words

aesthetics, film, material particularity, person, persuasion, propaganda, *Rocky*, *Sands of Iwo Jima*, type, viewpoint

1. Persuasion as the Task of Propaganda

Many people claim, in the current trends of globalism, the right of particular cultures. Such a claim must be driven by a critical consciousness. Some go further to consider that, because of their national character, genuine art works contribute to solidify the tie binding the audience to their culture. Here they believe in the persuasive power of art. Such a belief goes against modern aesthetics, which not only expels the persuasive function from the domain of the aesthetic but also denies its possibility in the aesthetic field. I am going to reflect on this problem, which I find interesting, in view of renewing aesthetics.

I should be prudent and mention in advance that this paper does not concern the aesthetic effect of the so-called "national style" in art. For example, I perceive in a painting of Korin's school (Korin Ogata, 1658-1716) or a porcelain of Kakiemon something completely different, not only from those of the West, but also delicately from those of China or Korea. Because of this difference, I perceive them as Japanese. I do not judge a Korin or a Kakiemon as Japanese on the basis of a concept or a schema that may already have been established, as a connoisseur might do. I just feel and perceive the difference, and the concept 'Japanese' is something to be constructed through an interpretation of these artworks among others. As aesthetic experience, the national character of style is not preserved. The sympathy I might conceive with the Japanese style does not prevent me from enjoying Korean, Chinese and Western paintings. Aesthetic judgment in particular is characterized by this universality.

This being acknowledged, however, my intimate sympathy with the Japanese is far from being an impure motive but rather constitutes my aesthetic experience. Since such sympathy stems from being in a cultural world, how can aesthetic experience be lively without such feeling? The aesthetic is rooted in ethics. In the case of literature and film, on the contrary, the cognition of and sympathy to national identity these arts might produce are not the effect of aesthetic feeling but of a persuasion made by a diegetic

construction of the artwork: a novel, a drama, or a film can suggest a notion of national identity, or inspire a satisfaction or a pride in this identity, through its story. This is more or less propaganda.

I mean by propaganda the activity aimed at inspiring or confirming a real value consciousness by a discourse, including fiction. I distinguish propaganda from brainwashing, which consists in forcing a reformation of consciousness by violent means, such as using a drug or repeating the same phrase into the ear of someone who is physically bound. The task of propaganda is to persuade because, in contrast to brainwashing, it aims at the spontaneous agreement of the audience. The difference is that propaganda concerns *thoughts*, while ordinary persuasion seeks for agreement on a certain *action*, such as a contract, vote, participation, or marriage, etc.

To modern art consciousness, propaganda art seems very suspicious because the aesthetic dimension as the element of art is a world of appearance, denuded of reality. From the standpoint of the concept of autonomous art, the intention to serve a real purpose other than art itself is nothing but corruption. In fact, however, the relation of the real world and the artistic world of appearance is not something so incisively differentiated. An artwork, seemingly very distant from the real world, such as a blue monochrome painting by Yves Klein, keeps a certain reference to the real world because we experience it either as a blue we have never seen or as the same blue we saw at such and such a time and place, for example the marine blue of the Mediterranean that we perceived in Nice. You might say that this is only a matter of perceptual reference that should be set aside, and that it is by contrast a serious matter for something to serve a real purpose in propaganda. About this problem modern aesthetics has not made a sufficient effort at theorization. Greek tragedies and the epic of every race had definite political and moral purposes, and it is beyond doubt that religious art, which is the original form of art, is impure. The art forms promoted by the Nazis and totalitarian socialist countries are not the only forms of propaganda art: the works of a Homer, an Aeschylus, a Fra Angelico, that is, most classical arts, are a kind of propaganda art. Modern aesthetics, however, instead of openly attacking this problem, has evaded it by pretending that these arts are pure on the ground of their temporal distance. If we wish to radically consider the possibilities of art, propaganda offers an authentic topic.

Nevertheless, as soon as we approach this question modern aesthetics starts its counterattack. These classical propaganda arts are naive in the sense that they include their thesis or lesson directly in their subject matter. But according to modern aesthetics, this material particularity is easily overcome in artistic experience, and indeed only those artworks that have transcended their material particularity are considered to be classical masterpieces. For example, I neither live in a society in which the polis is based on blood relations nor follow the morals of such a society. But in spite of this basic distance, the political drama of *The Persians* excites me, and the religious and ethical afflictions and conflicts of Orestes cause a deep sympathy in me. The fact of not being Christian does not

prevent me from being moved by the profound piety of J. S. Bach's *St. Mathew's Passion*. These facts have been repeated to satiety, so much so that they have become common-sense matters. According to modern aesthetics, an aesthetic experience is not only possible in spite of the material particularities of the artwork but it also purifies and transforms these particularities into something irrelevant. If so, propaganda art is fundamentally impossible.

I do not pretend to resolve here directly this problem of impossibility. My aim is rather modest: I wish to analyze the tactics of propaganda in some concrete examples and to evaluate the reach of its effect. To the fact that the material particularity is in fact overcome and becomes irrelevant in aesthetic experience I prefer to answer with another fact: propaganda arts exist. My final goal is to prove that propaganda is managed by a deep rhetoric. In the first half of the paper, I will discuss the macro-structures, such as viewpoint and the mode of being a person, which make persuasion possible; in the second half, I will analyze some examples of film for the purpose of exhibiting a concrete mechanism of persuasion. I hope this reflection as a whole will contribute to including the factor of propaganda in our sense of the authentic art experience.

2. Viewpoint in Narrative Art

By viewpoint I mean narrative in its basic forms, namely the narrative of human acts. Not only the epic, the drama, and the novel, but also dramatic films and most classical ballets are composed of narrative structures; even historical painting and program music depict stories. I will refer to drama and film in particular because I find in the narrative structure of these arts the most efficacious means of propaganda. I think that their efficacy comes primarily from the structural peculiarity of these narrative arts, which imposes a definite viewpoint on the audience.

J. Margolis speaks of the ambiguity of the paintings of A. Kiefer in including Nazi's icons.^[2] A picture can depict any object and suggest to a certain extent its change and movement, but the facts concerning modes of cognition, such as negation, doubt, supposition, and time, etc., are properly beyond its ability.^[3] Consequently, a painting having a swastika among its images certainly expresses something about the Nazis, but we cannot tell solely from the image what attitude the painter takes. All these facts that lie beyond the reach of visual images belong to linguistic expression. Of course, even propaganda art does not formulate the opinion to be inspired directly with words. So the viewpoint in narrative plays a useful role. A drama or film can charge the characters with its basic opinion either in word or in action. It goes without saying that there exist antagonists who embody the opposite opinion and enter into conflict with the main characters. Then it is the viewpoint the author gives to the dramatic situation that indicates which is his opinion.^[4] The main character is the one who embodies this authorial viewpoint and the representative in the drama with whom the audience identifies itself in following the story.^[5]

As to the viewpoint, it is important to touch upon a naive illusion we easily entertain. As Aristotle says, unlike the epic

performed in narration, the drama presents all the characters in actors' bodies: the former is a description according to a certain vision, the latter a representation of reality in a strong sense of the word. Their mutual relation is similar to that of a portrait to a statue, an analogy which invites us to imagine that while the epic has a fixed viewpoint, we can choose any viewpoint for a drama just as we can in the case of a statue. This is natural, however, and because natural, a deep and imperceptible illusion. A dramatic world is not only a perceptible three-dimensional space but also a spiritual world constructed according to ideas. Analyzing the structure of dramatic situations, Etienne Souriau thought that differences between dramatic situations were produced by the combination of several roles or "agents," such as "the thematic force," "the representative of the value," "the opponent," etc., and in addition, the choice of the character from whose point of view the situation is seen.^[6] The viewpoint can be freely chosen. But we should be careful; it is the author who chooses the viewpoint, and the piece we read or see is constructed according to a viewpoint already chosen by the author.

We might ask, then, if it is possible to produce a play from a viewpoint different from that of the one given by the author. If the viewpoint can be freely chosen, then this should be possible, and that possibility should be very interesting because it would suggest radical creativity on the part of the producer (*metteur-en-scène*). But, unfortunately, this is impossible in principle. The viewpoint is objectively structured in the piece as well as the being and character of the *dramatis personae*, their mutual relations, and the development of the plot. For example, the dramatic world of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is constructed from the viewpoint of Prince Hamlet. Claudius, who assassinated his real brother, the former king, and Gertrude who, after the unexpected death of her husband, agreed to marry her brother-in-law who succeeded her husband to the throne must have their thoughts and wishes, agonies and sadness. But we cannot know these as such because, from the first line on, we see this dramatic world through the jaundiced eyes of Hamlet. It is not because Claudius and Gertrude are not given sufficient words. In a sense, we know them well already, even better than Hamlet does, so much so that we have no need to hear more confidential talk from them. But we do not stop seeing the dramatic world from the viewpoint of Hamlet. The truth of Claudius and Gertrude is only episodic while the truth of the tragic world of *Hamlet* is seen throughout from this prince of Denmark.

Such is viewpoint. This fact is to be emphasized all the more if it is usually thought that the viewpoint belongs to interpretation to the extent that the creativity of the latter depends on a free choice of viewpoint. The production (*mise-en-scène*) is an interpretation but a special one. If we think of mythical subjects such as Ædipus the King or Antigone, which have been repeatedly dramatized by many poets, we see that each poet presents a new interpretation of the myth in his or her new version, and we may say that the novelty of such an interpretation is measured by how different the viewpoint is from one she or he could have taken. In short, the creativity of interpretation here is supported by the bias and difference of viewpoint. We cannot, however, generalize from this and

grant to the producer (*metteur-en-scène*) the same freedom to choose a viewpoint different from the one given by the author. The reason is but one: the author has to stage the totality of the work and so cannot restructure the work to get a different viewpoint. In a study or criticism you may talk about *Hamlet* from the viewpoint of Claudius. Then, however, you must be prepared for the objection that it is no longer the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare. If you completely change the viewpoint, you also revolutionize the work into another. We have an excellent example of this in *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966) by Tom Stoppard, which remakes the story of Hamlet from the viewpoint of the two minor roles.

The fact that the viewpoint is objectively structured in the work can offer to a project of propaganda a very important tactical foothold. We have only to embody the thought to be inspired in the main character in whom the main viewpoint is laid. But this might be too simple an observation. Every dramatist knows this instinctively, and even a scholar who wishes to talk about the philosophy of a dramatist pays attention at first to the words of the main characters. It is a simple fact, the entrusting of the opinion to be inspired in the audience to the main role is transparent persuasion, and therefore not so efficacious. The secrets of persuasion must be found beyond this.

3. Sympathy as Bridging Reality and Fiction

That transparent persuasion has no effect suggests an intervention of the reality principle of the audience. This may be his or her moral, religious, or political credo or the requirements of his or her logical or aesthetic judgment. What concerns us here is not the simple collaboration called the "fusion of horizons;" there really is kind of conflict between the creator and the appreciator. We have underlined the function of the viewpoint in order to elucidate the structure of persuasion in theater and film. The dramatic world of a play or a film is constructed from a definite viewpoint, and we, the audience, see this world in identifying ourselves with the main character to whom the viewpoint is given. Now we must ask about the limits of identification. How is this identification possible? I should like to begin with this basic point.

We may profitably consult the philosophy of theater by the French philosopher Henri Gouhier;^[7] the "totality" mentioned above is his idea. He defines theater as an art of presence. Of course, he means by 'presence' the fact of the actor's metamorphosis on stage before the audience. Indeed, presence is peculiar to the theater.^[8] According to Gouhier, however, this presence is not simply given by actors but absolutely requires the conspiracy of the audience. We, the audience, know very well the person we see on stage is not Hamlet himself but the actor George Pitoëff disguised as Hamlet, and that Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, should not speak French with a Russian accent. Knowing all those things, we nevertheless agree to regard him as Hamlet, as far as we are the theater audience. This is too commonplace a fact to notice; we can understand that this is a very basic condition for the theater if we try to conceive a case where someone dared to cancel this agreement.

This act of good will on the part of the audience in accepting the fictional world is one of the most fundamental conditions of theater. The identification of the audience with the viewpoint structuring the piece is nothing but a concrete process of the realization of this premise, that is, the agreement to the fiction. The existence of a hero or heroine in drama is inseparable from the existence of his or her surrounding world, the truth of his or her world vision. Gouhier states this as follows:

I am not required to believe what Sophocles believed but to enter into the universe of his belief so as to "make a tragedy of" what, in the universe of another belief, might probably be taken differently. If Antigone exists, she exists with her belief in the invisible laws; without this belief, she is not Antigone any more. You are free to think that she is a little fool and that she would do better to let the dead bury the dead. On the pretext that her belief seems an illusion to you, you find that her history has no sense: this means that you refuse to believe in her existence, and your bad will makes an outsider of you (*vous mettre hors du jeu*).^[9]

The theoretical discrimination is clear. What the audience is requested to do is not to offer real consent but only to "believe as if."^[10] This corresponds in the field of perception to "seeing as" (Wittgenstein): it is a problem of imagination. But the imagination does not function except on the basis of the facts or what we believe the facts to be. Isn't it the case that the spiritual world of Antigone almost coincides with mine, so much so that the discordant part (corresponding to "as if") is in reality minimal? Otherwise her world would remain an object of curiosity, which would hardly deeply interest and even move me. Gouhier himself admits, at the end of the quotation above, that failing to find this point of contact, we have to leave the theater.

This is a fact that actors and producers know very well. Their task is to struggle with the real interest and world vision of the audience, soothing, humoring, and even browbeating to persuade them. Gouhier presents a comment of the famous French stage producer Gaston Baty on Racine's *Bérénice*. The story of this tragedy is this: Titus has fallen in love with the Jewish Queen Berenice on his journey and comes back to Rome to find himself elected Roman Emperor; the Roman laws prohibit the Emperor to marry a heretic woman, so he renounces this love in spite of himself and sends Berenice back to her country. According to Baty, while the audience at the time of Louis XIV asked the Emperor to behave in the manner peculiar to the sovereign, the contemporary audience are mainly interested in the love being carried through.^[11] That is to say, to produce *Bérénice* now is to drag into an alien world an audience that has a world vision quite different from that supposed by the poet. If the other party has changed, then you must naturally change the tactics. Here is the very core of the task of propaganda, even in the broader sense of the word.

This is surely a problem difficult to generalize about; the

difference of situation or personality very often decides the case. To break through this difficulty, let us reflect on a concrete example, the American film *Sands of Iwo-Jima* (1949, directed by Allan Dwan).^[12] Iwo jima is a volcanic island in the South Pacific and was a hard-fought battleground in the last phase of the Pacific War because the island was the best situated for the U.S. army as a base camp for bombarding Japan proper. The violence of the battle is testified to by the fact that almost all of the 20,000 Japanese soldiers guarding the island were killed. The film has as its main characters the United States Marine Corps, which performed the operation. As far as nationality is concerned, even if it was a past war, I come from the "enemy" of the heroes in this film. Now videos of this film are on sale and can be rented in Japan, which signifies that many Japanese can enjoy this film that was produced from the point of view of the old enemy. I myself enjoyed it to a certain extent; my reserve stems not from the real principle of being the enemy but from the quality of the film.

The heroes of the film are Sergeant John Striker, played by John Wayne, and his men. As part of the audience, I identify myself with the sergeant in the scenes of trouble with the troops, and with each of the marines in those of the larger battle. This viewpoint remains the same even in the scenes of direct struggle with Japanese soldiers. When a Japanese soldier appears suddenly from behind and is ready to attack a U.S. marine, I cry under my breath, in spite of myself, "Look out!" That means I perceive the Japanese soldier as enemy at that moment. At the next moment, when the Japanese soldier is knocked down and riddled with bullets, I almost feel a physical pain in my body. But it is not because the soldier is my compatriot, but only a physiological reaction against the violence of the scene. In short, following this film, I forget my real principles and abandon myself to the logic of fiction. What makes such an identification possible? Let us consult Gouhier once more.

blockquote>On screen was being projected *La Bataille du rail* (The Battle of the Railway), a good film about the French Resistance. A German soldier is shot; two railway men hide the corpse under a pile of coal: hilarity in the hall. As no sympathy is present, hate has spontaneously removed from their minds the fact that that man may be married, a family man, a honest boy....[T]he hate has schematized him into a type: the occupier. The dead man, then, is no more than a bulky package, and his disposal becomes a good farce

—

Besides, we can conceive the same little scene happening in a hall in Berlin, but at the moment when an enormous tank of the German Army (Wehrmacht) crashes into the wicked armed men of the Maquis.^[13]

Gouhier gets to the heart of the problem of the sympathy the audience feels for the hero to whom the main viewpoint is given. His subject is the nature of the comical, and he discusses here a certain abstraction as its condition: "This abstraction rejects the historical reality of the person which might cause sympathy, or pity or love."^[14] We see now that the keywords are 'person' and 'type.' A 'person' is our living

neighbor, with whom we can sympathize. Sympathy means that we regard him or her as someone who has his or her own joy, pain, anxiety, etc., just as we do. It is the experience of human identification. A 'type,' on the contrary, is the result of an abstraction that removes from the person his or her historical reality or living aspect in common with us. As this historical reality, which is to be removed here, is just the object of our sympathy, from the beginning the type remains out of the reach of sympathy, and this distance enables him to become a target of laughter in a certain situation, just as the "occupier" is made into a corpse.

According to Gouhier, what abstracted this soldier, reduced him to a type, was the real hate the audience felt for the German army. But I think that such a context is not all there is to it. Not being able to see this film, I only imagine that the film is constructed with this soldier as a type. The viewpoint being from the anti-German Resistance, it is out of the question to make the German soldier susceptible to the audience's sympathy; he must absolutely be the occupier type. Certainly the real hate against the enemy during war must bring the reaction of laughter against the type to the extreme of hilarity. Moreover, seen from the opposite side, a German during the war could probably not enjoy or even watch *La Bataille du rail*. But now, as the hate against enemy has gone, a German might laugh at this sight. At least, as for the Japanese soldier in *Sands of Iwo Jima*, I, a Japanese, have seen him as simply the enemy, and it was impossible to see him as an object of sympathy.

Now I think we have arrived at a provisional conclusion to the foregoing discussion. This is that when the persuasion is based on the sympathy the audience conceives for the hero, the hero must be presented as a person with historical reality; and, conversely, if the author wants to introduce an enemy, this must be treated as a type. Whatever the real situation is at the actual time of the creation or presentation of the representation, this is an invariable principle for the construction of a work. Then, since being a person is the mode of existence common to every human being, shouldn't it be that sympathy is realized at the level of universal humanity, so that we cannot effectuate such a partial persuasion as propaganda? As the audience's agreement with the credo of the hero or heroine consists only in "believe as if," not in a real conversion, the difficulty of persuasion is not resolved.

Now we must go beyond this mechanism of sympathy with the hero or heroine and reflect on the persuasive effect of his or her words and the construction of the work. Here, the principle of reality in the audience functions once more as a basic fact of the tactics of persuasion. The mechanism controlling sympathy and antipathy by means of person and type is not the last word and does not imply the purity of artworks.

4. The Mechanism of Persuasion

Is *Sands of Iwo Jima* a propaganda film? In other words, does it contain any opinion it seeks to inspire in the audience? Let's consider this point first. Being produced after the end of the War of the Pacific, this film cannot be intended to whip up war spirit. The most important motive and drawing point is, without any doubt, an illustration of the famous news photo by

Joe Rosenthal of the scene of the U.S. soldiers hoisting the Stars and Stripes on the hilltop of Suribachi-yama. Being probably one of the most well-known photographs in history, this shot must have impressed on Americans the idea of the battle as one of the most glorious exploits of the U.S. Army. The film makes special mention of this event (not the photo) at the end of the title. In fact, we see towards the end of the film this event as an inconspicuous episode in the battle; the producer seems to say through this presentation that an event that will become famous later happens in reality in a casual way. Seen in relation to this photo, which must be the creator's intention, the film appears as a kind of epic. Its reception by the audience as anticipated by the producer must be very different from that of a foreigner such as I, who looks at the film a half century later.

For me, *Sands of Iwo Jima* is a home drama with the war or army as its scenery. Sergeant John Striker, played by John Wayne, trains his men very hard, and the officers put strong faith in his troops. But he is unhappy in his family, divorced from his wife, and suffering from being unable to establish a trustful relationship with his son, aged ten, whom he loves profoundly. He now has Pete Conway among his new men. Having become a Marine by following his family's precepts, Pete dislikes the Marine Corps, hates his father Sam, who has recently been killed in action as a Captain, and rebels in every instance against John, who respects Sam. The army is anathema to an intellectual like Pete. Experiencing actual hard fighting, however, and realizing that Striker has every reason to be severe with his men, having his own life saved during training by Striker, Pete opens his mind little by little, so much so that he is now willing to give his father's name, Sam, to his new-born son, and comes to feel a hearty friendship with John.

The fierce battle having passed the critical point, they succeed in hoisting the American flag on the hill top. Striker offers his cigarettes to his fellow men to have a good smoke. Then a Japanese sniper shoots him from behind; an instant death. He leaves an unfinished letter to his son, which Pete takes to finish, and the film ends. Thus this film has the following dramatic structure. There are three father-son relationships; John and his son; Sam and Pete; and Pete and his new son. These are symbolized by Sergeant John Striker and his man Pete Conway and the friendship established between them after a history of confrontation projected onto the three paternal relations.

With this dramatic structure, this film is a home drama for me. It was in reference to this structure that I perceived the Japanese sniper in the film as an enemy. The scene of the Stars and Stripes on the hilltop only suggested to me the notion of the reality of the producer above-mentioned, and helped me reflect on the iconicity of the photograph. In short, even if there were some aspects of propaganda in it, they did not enter into my horizon at all. But the American audience at 1949 must have seen the film quite differently. Having no testimonies, I assume their reaction as follows: The American audience was familiar with the scene of the Stars and Stripes hoisted on the hilltop of Suribachi-yama. (todaysseniorsnetwork.com) It was a symbol of valor and

glory in winning a fierce battle; it was the very image of their pride in being American citizens. One of the reasons they went to the movie was to know the details of this glorious historical event. In fact, the film was made in such a way as to respond to this curiosity and, in addition, to confirm, almost physically, their patriotism. I say "physically" because the film showed the great glory as an extension of their daily life behavior. The glory is not achieved by such exceptional heroes as Caesar or Napoleon but by ordinary American citizens just like themselves, in particular, by strong fathers. Strong fathers are in general misunderstood, but they are justified by the results of their deeds in this case, the conversion of the rebellious Pete Conway. In short, this film proved to the audience the justice of their patriotism based on daily life.

Seen immanently, as I saw it, *Sands of Iwo Jima* shows no particular color of propaganda. However, in the context of the real world, this film seems to have had a strong influence in whipping up the patriotic spirit and strengthening the pride and confidence of American people. It might not be intentional propaganda, such as that made by a government, but rather the result of the producer's will to respond to the virtual needs of the American audience. The Second World War was over, but in Eastern Europe and Eastern Asia there continued the quickening of a new international order, seen in the collapse of the old system, the coming to power of the Communists, and the independence wars of old colonies. The opposition between the United States and the Soviet Union had become obvious and, in 1950, that is to say the year following the film's production, the Korean War broke out. In short, it was a time when America pursued a world-wide political strategy. It was of greater importance to the national interest to confirm the confidence of people in the existence and politics of America than to lift up a fighting spirit against a definite enemy. [15] If the film succeeded as propaganda, was not the strongest reason for this that it did not directly advocate the idea it wished to inspire in the audience?

We have an excellent textbook which teaches us the secret of persuasion: Anthony's memorial speech addressed to the murdered Caesar in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Act III, Scene 2), which is one of the best examples of the rhetoric of persuasion. First, Brutus ascends the platform and explains why he could not but kill Caesar. "I loved Caesar, but I loved Rome more. Because of my love for Rome, I dared to slay my best friend. I have done no more to Caesar than you shall do to Brutus." He is very serious from beginning to end, and his speech is a masterpiece. He has fascinated the people, who cry "Live!" Then comes Antony with the corpse of Caesar. After calling him to the platform, Brutus leaves the forum. In this atmosphere in which the entire audience is inclined to Brutus, Antony begins his speech. Beginning "For Brutus' sake," he declares that he wishes not to praise but to bury Caesar, and continues: "The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious; if it were so, it was a grievous fault, and grievously hath Caesar answer'd it." He does not contradict Brutus' assertion that Caesar was ambitious. But neither does he affirm it, and only suggests a slight doubt. Weaving into his speech the famous dictum "Brutus is an honourable man," he recalls one by one the famous deeds of Caesar. All these make doubtful the claim that Caesar was ambitious. But Antony

never asserts as much. He has brought many captives to Rome, whose ransoms filled the general coffers; when the poor cried, Caesar wept. Aren't these a sign of something different from ambition? But Brutus says Caesar was ambitious, and "Brutus is an honourable man." I am not disposed to stir you to mutiny and rage; I should do wrong to the "honourable man." In this way, he repeats eight times this famous phrase. The winning point is what he pretends to be the "seal" of Caesar: leaving seventy-five drachmas to every Roman citizen and making of his immovables a kind of public garden. This he reads to the audience after keeping them in long suspense. At the beginning, "honourable man" has expressed what the audience believed, but the phrase comes to sound more and more ironical, arriving finally at "what you are made to believe to be true, but which is, in fact, a glaring lie." The crowd, who saw off Brutus with cheers, having heard Antony, now cry mutiny.

From this wonderful speech of Antony, we can extract the secrets of persuasion. There are two points: to appeal only to what the audience knows and believes, then to let the audience formulate the conclusion for themselves. Antony speaks only about what all the Roman citizens gathered there know of Caesar. He completely avoids anything that sounds like a false rumor, that is, what no one but himself knows. The audience, hearing only what they know and believe, have no occasion to doubt or oppose. Antony never contradicts what they believe; he repeats "Brutus is an honourable man." By repeating it, he leads every hearer to notice the contradiction between what they believe and what they know, and leads them to doubt their belief. Asserting that he has no intention to stir people and pronouncing no word that calls on them to do anything, he succeeds finally in making the Roman citizens rise in riot.

Now we can verify that *Sands of Iwo Jima* as propaganda conforms, in its mechanism of persuasion, to the secrets of persuasion we find in Antony's speech. The political intention mentioned above, that is, to confirm confidence that American greatness and glory are achieved in an extension of their daily life, including paternal relationships, was never pronounced in the film. Probably, the audience does not notice it explicitly. They only feel that their daily life at home has been sublimated into American greatness.

5. *Rocky IV* and a Deeper Rhetoric

There remains just a final step in my reflection. Let us think back to the arguments made so far. Propaganda, in the broader sense of the word, being a kind of real persuasion, is performed in the art of narrative construction such as drama and film first of all through the function of the viewpoint of dramaturgy. This viewpoint from which to survey the dramatic world, usually given to the hero, is objectively structured in the work by the author so that it is impossible to move it to another character when the work is being performed. Accordingly, the audience adopts this viewpoint on the dramatic world; in other words, in most cases, we identify ourselves with the hero in following the plot of a drama or a film. Besides, since the audience needs a fixed viewpoint and looks for one from the beginning, this identification with the

hero is something like a spontaneous agreement by the audience. (Let us notice that this coincides with a secret of persuasion taught by *Julius Caesar*.) Consequently, we may find in the living philosophy and credo of the hero a means of persuasion. But the audience does not unconditionally follow the hero to whom the viewpoint is given. When his life style and thoughts and credo are too unsympathetic, they leave the hall or theater. So this principle of fiction, having a viewpoint with which to identify, is always in competition with the reality principle according to which the audience lives their real life. We cannot hope that every speech pronounced by the hero can persuade the audience.

Paying particular attention to the discourse of persuasion, we find in the speech of Antony in *Julius Caesar* two secrets. In the first place, it is to appeal only to what the audience knows and believes, that is, to not impose on them anything contrary to their knowledge and belief. In the second place, it is that in cleverly leading the audience, the speaker should avoid pronouncing the belief to be inspired but let them find it by their own initiative. These two tactics also show the difficulty of persuasion. It requires extraordinary skill to inspire an antipathetic idea in an audience by speaking only of what they know and believe. In fact, the amazing persuasion of Antony, who succeeds in converting his audience completely, is probably exceptional in the art of propaganda. Emphasizing what the audience thinks does not equal persuasion. Because of this, how can we perform persuasion by speaking only what they think? This is our last difficulty.

To present my solution in advance, this persuasion is a matter of a deeper rhetoric, by which I mean that the persuasion is performed at the subconscious level of the audience, or beneath what they directly notice. The effect I assumed that *Sands of Iwo Jima* had on Americans at the time of its production has already shown this characteristic. To finish, let us examine a more familiar example, in order to verify this mechanism of persuasion. It goes without saying that special attention is to be paid to the deeper rhetoric. We will take as an example for examination *Rocky IV* (directed by Sylvester Stallone, 1985).

Being the fourth of a popular series, this film takes for its precedent the first three as prehistory and its own plot is simple. Rocky is a well-known world champion of heavy-weight boxing. Apollo Creed, from whom he once took the champion belt, is now one of his best friends and serves him as trainer. He feels, however, increasing desolation and is thinking of returning to the ring. At this point Ivan Drago, world champion of heavy-weight amateur boxing, and his team come to the United States to promote his debut in professional boxing. At a press conference they make a display of the superhuman destructive power of the body trained with all the latest technological means. Watching this television broadcast, Apollo finds in it a good chance to make a comeback and accepts an exhibition match with Drago. Having held Drago in low esteem as an amateur having muscle power but ignorant of boxing, Apollo is, however, killed by Drago's death punches in the match, held in a hotel in Las Vegas with a spectacular setting. Rocky then challenges Drago, and they set this match to be held in Moscow on December 25. Amidst

the general hostility of the full public in the hall, the gong sounds. Rocky gets well through the destructive punches of Drago, and even knocks him down in the final round, by which time the whole audience has begun to call Rocky's name. After the fight, Rocky gives a short television interview in the ring and says "We can change," which moves the public, including the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, who stands up to clap.

The story is a kind of revenge tale, and as perspicuous as all kinds of didactic drama, including Westerns. Its clothing, however, is political. The year 1985, when this film was produced, can be regarded as the first year of the last phase of the Cold War period. In March, Gorbachev was elected as the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, and in the film the General Secretary attending the match is a copy of Gorbachev. But this beginning-of-the-end is a course we can only retrace in retrospect; at that time, we must have considered ourselves to be in the midst of the Cold War. At the opening of the film two boxing gloves appear. They turn, and we discover on each of their backs a national flag: one of the United States and one of the Soviet Union. They clash together and go to pieces. This scene summarizes the meaning of the plot and shows clearly the strong propaganda message of the film. In a Western film, the death of the villains resolves all. But that kind of resolution is impossible in the political conflict between America and the Soviet Union. So *Rocky IV* presents the subject of change. In the first place, when Rocky was told by Apollo of his resolution to fight Drago, he tries to dissuade him by saying, "We gotta change sometime." To which Apollo retorts: "I don't want to change. Maybe you think you're changing. But you can't change what you really are." In the next place, explaining to his wife Adrian his resolution to revenge Apollo, Rocky in his turn uses the same phrase: "I'm a fighter. We can't change what we are." And the final use of the phrase is made by Rocky in the ring just after the fight with Drago, as his awakening: "...what I'm trying to say is . . . that if I can change . . . you can change! Everybody can change!" The very last message of the film is "I love you," addressed by Rocky through television to his son in America. [16]

From the hate of the cold war to love, it is possible to change: this is the message of the film. It is an explicitly pronounced statement and not a deeper persuasion. *Rocky IV* appears to be completely clear and explicit in its structure of persuasion. But without the support of a true device of persuasion, which is a deeper and silent rhetoric, this kind of explicit message very often becomes transparent and weak. In fact, there functions here a deeper rhetoric that gives true persuasive power. Its mechanism is quite similar to that of *Sands of Iwo Jima* in that, by using as support a thought so usual as to be unnoticed, it emphasizes an ideological implication. Here, however, the film achieves a higher perfection, since the deeper rhetoric is embodied in the composition of the film instead of relying on the real context. The basis of the mechanism is the opposition of technology or artifice to nature. Koloff, the fight manager accompanying Drago to the United States, is proud of "the advances his country's made in the technology of human performance," and asserts that "most of the world is ignorant in body chemistry." Immediately a

reporter asks about "rumors of blood dropping and widespread distribution of anabolic steroids in the Soviet Union." The camera makes a close-up of the profiles of Koloff and Ludmilla, the wife of Drago, to emphasize their "lie." Ludmilla laughingly denies the rumors: "No, Ivan is *naturally* trained." Then how has he gotten such extraordinary strength? She answers with a joke: "Like your Popeye, he ate his *spinach* every day."^[17] Despite being proud of the fruits of technology, Koloff and Ludmilla acknowledge that artifice is a vice; that is to say, everybody thinks that nature is good, artifice bad, without this being pronounced. If we refer to the fact that America has been leading in technology and that its position as a superpower relies largely on technology, this thesis, assumed as evident, is paradoxical, and we have to acknowledge in it a strong ideological implication.

The schema of nature-technology is emphasized in a long cut-back scene of Rocky's and Drago's training. Rocky lives in a rustic cottage under snow and goes jogging under the blue sky on a white snowfield. Drago runs around in a dark and closed gym with a low ceiling. As for the training of muscle, Rocky lifts up stones, bears a log on his shoulders like Christ carrying the cross, chops wood, and utilizes the barn's space, while Drago makes use of different machines, the results of which are counted by many electronic instruments and, as rumored, gets an injection in his shoulder without showing any emotion. The shot of Rocky felling a tall tree is doubled by another of Drago knocking down his sparring partner. Rocky is surrounded by the love of Adrian, who arrives later, of her brother Paulie, and of Duke, the trainer. Drago is observed by the selfish Koloff, by Ludmilla, who looks like a controller rather than wife, and by technicians. Rocky continues his hard training with clenched teeth; the wooden face of Drago is distorted with pain throughout his training. More impressive are the Russian peasants Rocky encounters while jogging. They have no hostility toward him and are simply looking at him curiously. This is the face of nature, which is contrasted with that of Drago, Ludmilla, Koloff, and in particular those of the audience around the ring in Moscow. Russians as such are natural and good; the vice and artifice come from the institutions of the Soviets. Through the fighting between one body and another, Drago finally starts to show a strong defiant attitude toward Koloff and cries: "I fight to win for me!"^[18] The public, abandoning the animosity they have shown at the beginning, is starting little by little to praise Rocky's fighting. In short, the mask of artifice is dropping and nature is recovered.

You see now that this silent philosophy of nature and artifice is the axiom supporting *Rocky IV's* message, "Let's change, we can change." That is the evident truth, needless to pronounce, that sustains the plot and in exchange is itself strengthened by the emotion produced by the plot's development. An impressive message is remembered. But a truly penetrating influence on the minds of the audience comes from this deeper layer. Certainly this axiom concerning naturalness is a philosophy believed in by the American public, otherwise it would be impossible to invoke it tacitly. In addition, since it is not explicitly pronounced, it is not something against which the audience can react. In the final phase, strengthened by the emotion of the film, this conviction is fed back to the real

life of the whole audience. This is the structure of the deeper rhetoric.

Now I think we are ready to answer our basic difficulty. We have needed an answer to the objection that the would-be conviction reproduced through the film simply repeats what is evident to the audience, which of course is not a high achievement and is far from real propaganda. This objection appears entirely reasonable. But is it really? If the thought that nature is good and artifice a vice is perfectly axiomatic, so that all people from every culture share it, and if they regard this as a most important proposition, then it is needless to reproduce that belief. In the laboratory of Doctor Copperius, however, the opposite was apparently the truth, and actually our film depicts Russians as having faith in the modernism that takes technology as good. A thought that appears evident in a closed cultural zone such as America shows its ideological meaning when we consider it in a wider horizon. The deeper rhetoric has a significance as persuasion, in reproducing this American world view or bias of their nationality.

What is the effect of *Rocky IV* on audiences other than American? While *Sands of Iwo Jima* was, for me, a simple home drama with war scenery, *Rocky IV*, which contains a mechanism of persuasion in its construction, might have a rather international reach as propaganda. For a Japanese audience, being allied politically to America, sharing the same image of the Soviet institution, and believing even more firmly than America in the power of nature, the message "Let's change, we can change" might have been easily accepted in 1985. But it would have been accepted not as directly concerning the Japanese but in the first place as an American affair. This must have attenuated the realistic effect of the work and changed it a little into something like a fairy-tale. Then, if the film had been shown in Moscow in 1985, how would Russians have received it? The following is purely my assumption: For those who were loyal to the policy of the government, *Rocky IV* must have been a lie unworthy of looking at and false propaganda by the cat's-paw of capitalism. It would not be surprising if they even refused to look at the film. The persuasion would not be successful, in this case, because the depicted facts were entirely different from what they knew. If there had been some people who could enjoy the film, they must have been those who sympathized with the axiomatic premise of the film concerning nature and artifice. To those who in addition opposed the Communist regime, *Rocky IV* must have appeared even more strongly colored with ideological import.

The ground for persuasion is entirely the philosophy of nature and technology. The relation of this philosophy to the message "Let's change, we can change" is quite indirect, and this distance represents the depth of the rhetoric. This message, however, is not the only one that is related to the philosophy of naturalness. Every motif related to this axiom has a persuasive effect and constitutes "the American" expressed by the whole work so as to make it appear more real. As an example of such a motif, we can quote the words of Drago once he has returned to nature: "I fight to win *for me*." This cliché of individualism, which in fact is almost egoistic, is probably an American motto. Drago, who has been wooden,

throws these words first with anger upon Koloff, who has been controlling him. This anger signifies that he has now returned to wild nature, being finally freed from the spell of the regime; his expression "for me" is a cry of nature as well, and the implied individualism is presented as a natural, true, and good concept.

More importantly, this marks at the same time the defeat of "the Sovietic" in Drago. "Let's change, we can change" can be convincing because it is the awakening Rocky has arrived at through fighting and winning; the conquest of the Cold War must come about through the triumph of nature, that is of America. The physical victory of Rocky in the ring is the victory of American individualism. That this victory is a matter of justice is never even slightly doubted. The message "Let's change, we can change" is tightly united with this concept of "the American," which is visualized in Rocky's trunks decorated with the Stars and Stripes. The catharsis *Rocky IV* causes in an American audience is an effect of a deeper rhetoric that inspires a conviction on the reality of and a pride in American justice. The effect of the deeper rhetoric works silently in such a way as to control people's behavior from then on without being noticed as such. That is a power penetrating into the real world.

Probably I should answer theoretically the problem of the impossibility of propaganda in aesthetic experience. The effect of a deeper rhetoric reaches to reality. That, however, does not prevent the experience from being aesthetic. An experience is aesthetic because we distance ourselves from the material content of the work, so much so that we refrain from taking it as real. Seeing *Rocky IV* in 2008, I, as a Japanese person, ensure the same aesthetic position as a modern audience watching *The Persians*. The deeper rhetoric does not conflict with the aesthetic attitude but rather works better with it because the distance peculiar to the aesthetic makes the depth possible. The fact of its persuasiveness shows purely and simply that the aesthetic experience is rooted in and open to reality. The deeper and silent rhetoric undoes the modern myth of the superficiality of the aesthetic.

Endnotes

[1] The right of particular cultures was one of the key topics of the 15th International Congress for Aesthetics, held in 2001 in the Tokyo area. The key topics were not something prepared by the Organizing Committee but the result of the propositions of the participants. Cf. my closing report of the organizer, summarizing all papers to have been read during the session: "Stirrings of a New Aesthetics—An Essay on a Collage of Papers," in the proceedings of the Congress in CD Rom: *The Great Book of Aesthetics*, c/o the Institute of Aesthetics, the Faculty of Letters, the University of Tokyo. The 17th occasion of the same congress, held in Ankara, Turkey in 2007, presented "Aesthetics Bridging Cultures" as its general theme.

[2] Joseph Margolis, "Relativism and Cultural Relativity," in *JTLA* 22, 1997, 16.

[3] We need to discriminate between two things: If we enlarge the field of expression from natural images to artificial signs, then we can use, for instance, × (negation) or ? (question). As

for supposition and tense, we have no means for having this kind of sign. Why this difference? Even with \times and $?$, there is no painter who utilizes them. Stylistically, Magritte is the painter from whom we might most readily expect such an adventure, but I know no such example among his works. What is the reason for this? These are interesting problems.

[4] Etienne Souriau, *les Deux cents mille situations dramatiques* (Paris: Flammarion, 1950), pp.143, 236-39, *et passim*.

[5] I do not deny the fact that there exist pieces lacking viewpoint or in which the viewpoint has no meaning. A piece lacking viewpoint is one that has no hero in the classical sense of the word. For example, two classics of the anti-theater, *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Becket and *The Lesson*, by Eugène Ionesco have no heroes who are given the viewpoint. We, the audience, are not waiting with Vladimir and Estragon for the arrival of Mr. Godot with thrilling suspense. That does not, however, prevent us from feeling a need for sympathy. The most natural response to this basic need is, as we know, a vaudeville-like presentation (*mise-en-scène*) of these pieces. But since our subject is propaganda art, we do not need to consider those works lacking a viewpoint.

[6] E. Souriau, *les Deux cents mille situations dramatiques*, ch.2, "Les Fonctions dramatiques," pp. 57-141.

[7] Henri Gouhier, *L'essence du theater* (1943) (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968), chs. 1 and 10. All quotations from Gouhier are translated by me.

[8] A dramatic film also presupposes the actor's metamorphosis, which, however, is not given to the audience by his or her presence but through the optical image on screen. Presence is applied equally to the musicians in a concert, but the artistic fact here is not their physical presence on stage but the music played by them. So we can admit that the theater is the only art of presence.

[9] Gouhier, *Le Théâtre et l'existence* (1952) (France: Vrin, 1973), p.31.

[10] *Ibid.*, p.103.

[11] *Ibid.*, p.30.

[12] As I have mentioned above, Gouhier wishes to distinguish strictly between theater and film, which is absolutely justified since he tries to theorize the essence of the theater. But I think we can adapt to the film his whole argument on consent to the dramatic world. It would be too formalistic to say that without an audience actors would stop playing while the projector would continue to work. In reality, with film as with theater, an empty hall will make the atmosphere cold. In addition, even now, in movie theaters in America, there are audiences who applaud the hero's actions. Knowing that the actors are not present there does not prevent them giving enthusiastic consent.

[13] Gouhier, *Le Théâtre et l'existence*, p.159.

[14] *Ibid.*, p.160.

[15] Discussing *Sands of Iwo Jima* in 2008, we cannot avoid mentioning the twin films by Clint Eastwood: *Letters from Iwo Jima* and *Flags of Our Fathers* (2006). Do they inspire us any new ideas about the mechanism of persuasion or propaganda which we are concerned with here? In the first place, the basic idea of twin films depicting the same battle from the opposite sides is new and worthy of praise. Indeed, we perceive in them the spirit of impartiality and the thought of the director about the being of soldiers as person and the cruelty of army as an institution. General Kuribayashi and Baron Nishi are presented as human as the simple soldier-baker and sharply contrasted with the fanaticism of some other officers in *Letters From Iwo Jima*. *Flags of Our Fathers* focuses on the cold exploitation by the army or government of the heroes who hosted the famous flag on the top of Suribachi Yama; this film curiously highlights the history of the famous flag's photo, which was main episode in *Sands of Iwo Jima*. Without mentioning other interesting points, I just say that as far as it concerns the persuasion/sympathy, the mechanism uses nothing different from what we have found by referring to *Sands of Iwo Jima*. We sympathize with the characters in the film, not according to the reality principle but according to the construction of the story, and it is through this experience that we perceive the stand point of the director above-mentioned.

[16] Quotations from the script of the film are made from: *Sands of Iwo Jima*, Screenplay Publishing Co., 1992, pp.21, 46, 90.

[17] *Ibid.*, p.15-16, my emphasis.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.85.

Ken-ichi Sasaki

Nihon University

The University of Tokyo

Japan

ken-sasaki@k3.dion.ne.jp

Published July 20, 2008