INTRODUCTION: PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGY

This book is intended for those who want to teach composition primarily and centrally and not just as an adjunct to the study of poetry, short fiction, and essays. It will probably not have much appeal for those who consider that the composition course must be primarily concerned with writing as self-expression, because that view generally is accompanied by a deep suspicion of method—and the heart of this book is a method of composing. Certainly I am concerned with both the person and the expressive function of language, but since language also has referential and heuristic functions, personal expression is seen here neither as the chief end nor as the principal means of composition. The book will not appeal to teachers who prefer to work with manuals and guides and a rigid syllabus. There are no special "study questions" because the whole book is a study question. I learned a lot in writing it, and I am hopeful that teachers will learn a lot in using it, adapting it to their needs.

This is a book about the composing process that provides continuing opportunities to put theory into practice; it does not simply line up exercises that demonstrate theoretical points. Most rhetorics, it seems to me, assert a principle that is then illustrated with trivial examples; the student is left wondering how to apply the principle to the problems faced in writing real

sure "proficiency in the language arts" or "basic skills," but to note how students go about composing in all areas of their academic life. Meanwhile, the assistance offered in the composition class should be substantial and pointed but not exhaustive, and it should assure that students have the experience of mastery as a safeguard against frustration and despair. (I'm suspicious of any approach that requires students to produce a piece of terrible writing before teaching can begin.) Students can gain that mastery more easily from a dozen starts than from a single finished job. The principle that students of composition should be encouraged to discover continually is that unless several things happen simultaneously in composing, composing doesn't happen.

In my view, any exercise—perceptual, grammatical, expressive, rhetorical, logical—can have heuristic value only if students know what they are trying to do. Discovering how to work is contingent on exploring what is to be done: a method of composing should continually ensure that the *how* and the *what* and the *why* are seen and experienced in dialectical relationship. There are two consequences of this methodological principle: one is that the exercises will be carefully limited in scope; the other is that, since what is being presented is "everything at once," there will be lots of repetition.

The first consequence—short writing assignments—means that teachers can afford to encourage students to compose continually, habitually. The fact that short "papers"—single paragraphs, selected sentences—are easier to read than 500-Word Themes means that there can be more time for conferences; more time for considered responses; more energy to give to an ongoing review of writing careers. Teachers don't have to read everything that students using this book produce; indeed, they *shouldn't* read everything. Students reading one another's work is the best alternative, especially if it's combined with discussion in small groups. Knowing that there is an attentive reader whose critical questions you can learn to make your own ahead of time is an experience every writer should have. But whether papers are read by the instructor or not, they should not be "graded." * Although the writing exercises are generally

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short, I have tried to counteract the feeling that they don't lead anywhere ("When do we come to paragraphs?") by including all along the way suggestions for composing in units larger than the sentence and the paragraph. I suggest that students keep a journal of observations while working in Part I and include there paragraphs and essays developed from such journals. Many of the exercises in Part II could develop into themes, papers, and essays.

The second consequence of teaching a method of composing in which everything is happening simultaneously is that there will be a great deal of repetition. This can work to everyone's advantage, since repetition is, after all, a fundamental aspect of form. Every principle of composing gets presented and re-presented in this book—explained and demonstrated and explained again. Every teacher I know agrees that the fundamentals of composing have to be presented, analyzed, demonstrated over and again. (In my experience, the first of several explanations of classification, say, might take 2 weeks, but the next time around, when classification shows up again as an aspect of paragraphing, it might be handled in a single class.) The challenge is to make that repetition have a cumulative effect by having students see how principle and practice are related. There is a spiraling effect in each of the several composition courses I teach, and I have tried to write the book so that this can happen for those who use it. The book is consequently full of echoes, but they are there for the reader to apprehend and enjoy. I have seldom allowed myself to say, "As you will remember . . ." or "We have seen how . . .": if it isn't remembered, the mere mention will not help, and if it is remembered, why spoil the fun?

This book is neither handbook, nor rhetoric, nor reader, although it serves some of the functions of each. It offers detailed procedures for revision, which is an integral part of the composing process, as correction is not. I have included a brief analysis of some common errors, showing how paraphrasing and establishing context and other techniques can help to locate faulty structures and to repair them. The book is centrally concerned with rhetoric as the study of the relationship of language

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and thought. Rhetoric is only superficially a matter of evaluating audience and adjusting tone; it has deeper foundations that we can discover only insofar as we develop a philosophy of knowledge, a theory of imagination.* A "rhetoric" should, therefore, be concerned not just with sorting out topics and places but with exploring the dialectic of names and purposes, images and concepts, thinking and forming. The Paragraph Sequences in Parts I and III provide a philosophical framework for the method of composing set forth in Part II. The passages offered for study are complex, and the effort they require is considerable, but that is the only kind of reading which has heuristic value for students of composition; I believe that students like to think, if they think they can. One of the chief themes of this book is that the acts of mind involved in critical reading, in making sense of texts, are the same as those in operation when we compose: how we construe is how we construct. The passages appearing throughout the book are meant to illustrate kinds of writing, principles of composing, and the process of forming concepts; they are not intended simply to offer topics. Just as the appreciation of music is not furthered by asking students to describe what the music makes them think of, so the appreciation of literature—or any other kind of discourse—is not encouraged by using it to stimulate response. †

Part I includes a sequence of eight passages—one or two paragraphs each—on how we see relationships; *seeing relationships* is the book's working concept of thinking. Part II includes 30-odd paragraphs that illustrate rhetorical and logical principles. Part III, which reviews the method of composing presented in Part II and demonstrates ways of adapting it to the process of critical reading, includes two sequences of paragraphs: one set is about composing works of art; the other concerns the relationship of interpretation and context in scientific, linguistic, and historical inquiry. Almost all selections in the book have been kitchen-tested; my students have found them challenging and interesting—and frequently amusing. The concepts in Paragraph Sequence III are frequently difficult to grasp, but the entire book provides a context and they support and explain one another.

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* I have made this case in "From Problem-solving to a Theory of Imagination," *College English,* 33 (1972), 636–649. Reprinted in *Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers,* ed. Richard L. Graves (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., 1976).

† The case against using literature in this way is argued persuasively by C. S. Lewis in *An Experiment in Criticism* (Oxford, 1961).

The method of composing is not tied to these or any other selections appearing in the book; it is adaptable, for instance, to a composition course that includes reading books on a single theme. Reading and writing, I believe, should always be taught together. The danger is, of course, that in the literature course, composing will be restricted to such formats as The Book Report and The Term Paper and that in the composition course, reading will move to the center, pushing writing to the edges where Drill-for-Skill lurks. But the risk must be taken because composing is best nurtured by interpreting texts as well as experience. A course in composition that includes reading offers the best chance of encouraging students "to explore, for themselves, their own abilities and grow in capacity, practical and intelligential, as a result."