CHAPTER 1

Non-discursive Symbolization

What is non-discursive rhetoric? The following chapters attempt to answer this by proposing that the stuff of rhetoric—the symbols used—includes more than the ordered, grammatical, and codified linearity of discursive text. In fact, rhetoric throughout history has often taken advantage of our ability as a species to symbolize through non-discursive text, a text that is more than the linear, largely nonaffective, and enthymemic set of resources found in discursive text; more than the one-to-one correspondence between sender to message to receiver; and more than any supposition that symbolization is primarily a set of (arbitrary) linguistic sign systems useful in communicating thought transparently from sender to receiver. Rhetors have always known about the power of a particular orator's tone of voice, the use of gesture at key points in a speech, appeals to patriotism and the emotions, the use of vivid imagery and storytelling, and even the value of grooming and general appearance: manipulation of any one of these elements has a direct affect on the audience. Over time, however, as rhetoric became increasingly bound to the printed word, it also became bound to discursive symbol-making. As rhetoric became more and more reliant on written discourse, the non-discursive aspects of rhetoric became more and more ancillary, even rejected altogether as logical positivism and rational discourse prevailed during the modern age—vestiges of which still dominate today.[1]

As a result, the view that language is primarily a vehicle for the communication of ideas continues to dictate the way textual production is theorized today. One such discursive symbolization systems is the Shannon-Weaver view of communication—a paradigmatic example of how texts are discussed: symbols "communicate" by sending "information" through a medium between sender and receiver.[2] Obviously, this use of symbols is acceptable and necessary—as compositionists, it literally exemplifies what we most often are asked to do. However, even the Shannon-Weaver theory of communication eventually acknowledges the complexity that emerges from human symbol systems left unaccounted for in discursive symbolization. And as Langer states, "If the mind were simply a recorder and transmitter,

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typified by the simile of the telephone-exchange, we should act very differently than we do" (*New Key* 36). Non-discursive symbolization is simply a term that accounts for the many other ways humans use symbols to create meaning—methods wholly outside the realm of traditional, word-based, discursive text. With this distinction in symbolization, then, comes a distinction in rhetoric; non-discursive rhetoric is the study of how these symbol systems persuade, evoke consensus, become epistemological, and organize or employ intended results in human behavior. In short, non-discursive rhetoric is to non-discursive symbolization what discursive rhetoric is to discursive symbolization.[3]

The terms discursive and non-discursive provide another way to talk about symbolization, or language. Susanne Langer's main claim in *Philosophy in a New Key* is that humans are capable, even practiced, at much more than communicating discursive information in sequence. By including all symbol systems as a legitimate part of our repertoire of language (some of which—specifically ritual, art, and dreams—may only be internalized by the individual), the tools available to any composer become complete, no longer limited to convey merely the "facts of consciousness" (36). On the other hand, it is too often the case that the communicative role of symbols becomes the entire concept of symbolization; that in our efforts to create and clarify our discursive texts, we often overlook the pivotal role of non-discursive composition. In contrast, the view of meaning-making proposed here necessitates and values all that our symbols—though especially image—can do: affectivity, circularity, ambiguity, incongruity, and even ineffability.

The main consequence of Langer's insistence on including *both* discursive and non-discursive texts in her theory of symbolization is that it broadens the landscape for rhetoric. By considering non-discursive texts, all possibilities of symbolization become tools for the rhetor: the symbols of math, music, textiles, food, poetry, commerce, violence, inaction, and even silence. The world is text because we read the world as symbols, and, in turn, create symbols to be read.[4] Jacques Derrida acknowledges this in *Of Grammatology*, and his notion of the sign continually rewriting itself is consistent with the way symbolization is viewed here: what we know about the human ability to symbolize is that we must, and that we do it often, and that such symbolization itself recreates itself as it goes along.[5] We create and produce symbols whether or not we are educated or uneducated, within a community or alone, naïve or wise, destitute or wealthy, sleeping or awake. Symbol-making consists of more than its discursive function, more than Roman Jacobson's six "constitutive factors of any speech event" (as one example), more than the traditional sender-messenger-receiver paradigm.[6] Rather than consider symbolization to be primarily communication in the absence of noise, I prefer to think of symbolization as encompassing all of

our powers to create and manipulate meaning and emotions through a wide variety of symbols beyond the discursive word.

As I illustrate more fully later, a view of symbolization that accounts for both discursive as well as non-discursive texts can provide a more integrated view of composing better suited to the contemporary composition classroom: one that encourages the powers of the imagination not just for what is often labeled "creative" writing, but for logical, reasoned, claim-based argument as well; one that acknowledges the value of emotions not just in so called "expressivist" or "personal" writing, but also in the kind of social awareness and normal, rational decision-making we encounter every day; one that views text not just as printed paragraphs on a 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of paper, but as any kind of symbolization: digital or analog, 2-D or 3-D, haptic, olfactory, or gustatory. The key element, the piece that has been missing in our composing models—in the way we view symbolization, and in the way we discuss the rhetorical implications of any text—is the value of the non-discursive.

Langerian Symbolization

It is crucial to begin with symbolization systems to show the impact image has to our textual production because traditional conceptions of language may be too narrow to allow for non-discursive elements—elements that I argue are often as important as discursive elements of text. The terms "symbolization," or, sometimes, "language," are not intended to refer to grammar systems, or a particular brand of linguistically codified rules and procedures that communicate or produce meaning and emotion.[7] Symbolization, as I mean it here, is the very nature of a human symbol-use in all forms—both discursive and non-discursive. By symbolization I mean the act of cognizance at the very beginning of our lives that is hard wired, innate, inevitable, and most characteristic of our species—a definition very similar to Suzanne Langer's: "The symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities, like eating, looking, or moving about. It is the fundamental process of his mind, and goes on all the time" (*New Key* 41). Symbolization, therefore, goes on all the time and is part of who we are.

As many other theorists have noted, symbolization is learned socially, within a culture, and with immediate emotional consequences and shadings. But symbolization or our use of language is rarely if ever talked about this way when it is mentioned in theoretical or pedagogical texts: language has traditionally been biased toward discursive meaning-making and little else (just as this text is). Although it is true that this line between discursive and non-discursive text is often blurry (that both have elements of each other

to some degree), there is little question that what we do in traditional, monomodal writing classrooms is often to help students move toward the discursive without addressing the non-discursive. As Langer explains, insistence on focusing on only the discursive aspect of text leads to a reified conception of symbolization, leaving out an element which can be our most powerful tool:

> So long as we regard only scientific and "material" (semi-scientific) thought as really cognitive of the world, this peculiar picture of mental life must stand. And so long as we admit only discursive symbolism as a bearer of ideas, "thought" in this restricted sense must be regarded as our only intellectual activity. It begins and ends with language; without the elements, at least, of scientific grammar, conception must be impossible. A theory which implies such peculiar consequences is itself a suspicious character. But the error which it harbors is not in its reasoning. It is in the very premise from which the doctrine proceeds, namely that all articulate symbolism is discursive [. . . .] I do believe that in this physical, space-time world of our experience there are things which do not fit the grammatical scheme of expression. But they are not necessarily blind, inconceivable, mystical affairs; they are simply matters which require to be conceived through some symbolistic schema other than discursive language. (88–89)

Langer is not only making the case that not "all articulate symbolism is discursive," but she also calls into question any theory of language which fails to account for those types of expression that "do not fit the grammatical scheme of expression." Not only is Langer providing an alternative to the discursive bias in other symbolization theories, but she is also highlighting what she sees as the main failure of what she calls "discursive mentalism": humans exist in a "physical, space-time world of our experience," and to forget this is to forget all if not most of what it means to be human. In short, language theory must account for all of human experience, both the discursive and the non-discursive.

Symbolization, conceived in this way, becomes our sixth sense, our ultimate legacy, and it is completely natural and indicative of being human—as far as it is possible to know, we have created symbols since the dawn of our recorded history:

> The earliest people made art—whether they called it that or not—as evidenced by the cave paintings found in various parts of the world. Archaeologists tell us that in the Ice Age, about 35,000 years ago,

> Cro-Magnon peoples in Europe "suddenly" began making objects
> that we would describe as art [. . .] They painted the walls of their
> caves, carved figurines, decorated their tools and everyday imple-
> ments with fine designs, and even made musical instruments. (5)

Accordingly, symbol-making, whether considered "art" or not, exists across
and among many different types of relationships: between voices within
an individual, between groups, cultures, and beyond the constraints of
time and, increasingly, place. Non-discursive symbolization, then, includes
attempts to symbolize that are not necessarily statements made in printed
text on paper, or vocalized words intended to communicate a main idea.[8]
Such symbolization includes art, but it also includes photographs, graphs,
music, textiles, ceramics, doodles, et cetera.

There might also be an erroneous temptation to look at language as
being the sum of its symbols. Langer says in *Philosophy in a New Key* that
"[o]ur confidence in language is due to the fact that it [. . .] shares the
structure of the physical world, and therefore can express that structure"
(88). On the contrary, language is not the sum of its symbols; language is
not even limited by its symbols. James Kinneavy's book, *A Theory of Dis-
course*, provides one example of a reduced view of language. The aim of
discourse, as Kinneavy proposes, can be broken-down and classified because
it is made manifest, made objective, through words on paper (and this is
usually what is meant by language in this case—words on paper). The
shadings of symbolization, the difficulty of reading a painting, the feelings
involved, the contributions to meaning by silence and ambiguity: all these
things are too easily overlooked because symbolization is often written,
discernable, expository, and interpreted as having a direct translation into
discursive meaning.[9] Langer teaches us to open up what we view as language
in order to understand all aspects of symbolization as a whole: we need to
look also at non-discursive text.

In addressing language theory that includes the non-discursive, I hope
to show how our view of language necessarily shapes views of rhetoric,
philosophy, and communication. Cassirer, Vygotsky, Vološinov, Bakhtin,
Langer, and others complicate what we mean when we talk about language
in order to make their own theories relatable, even understandable. In
order to examine what a theorist says, it is just as crucial to understand the
theorists conception of language beneath the exhortation, whether that view
is stated explicitly or implied (J. Murray 19). In fact, rhetoric and compo-
sition scholars are always necessarily theorists in language, even if such a
theory remains subsumed by whatever emphasis or specialization is currently
occupying the discussion (a point that I. A. Richards originally voiced years
ago).[10] By starting at the level of symbols, by expanding the possibilities of

symbolization to include non-discursive text, we may begin to understand image as crucial to all symbol-making and, consequently, the value of the imagination and, ultimately, the role of emotions in composing.

This chapter will review some of the ways language and symbolization have often been discussed in composition studies. The purpose is to lay to rest some of the criticisms that dismiss work such as this as "expressivist" or atomistic. Upon close analysis, those in composition studies who have made it a point to marginalize the importance of the non-discursive in our symbolizing lives are now having to rethink what it means to compose in the twenty-first century. By reviewing a few important language theorists in the field, I hope to show how broadening our conception of symbolization and language offers rich theoretical possibilities that connect our meaning making to image making. In some cases, such as with Cassirer, Vygotsky, Vološinov, Bakhtin, Langer, and to some extent Berthoff, a few of these theorists make direct claims about symbolization that are then supported in their original texts. In other cases, such as with Britton, Moffett, and Coles, their perspective on symbolization theory is more implicit and made opaque only through the way they advocate writing instruction and curricular design. Specifically, I intend to establish four main claims in this chapter:

1. Symbolization includes all forms of meaning-making through symbols, both discursive and non-discursive—accordingly, language must rely not only on discursive thought but also intuitive thought;

2. Language is used and practiced within a social, historical, and cultural fabric; it is therefore layered, stratified, by time and place—never wholly atomistic, individualized, or entirely introspective;

3. The ambiguities in language, the places where language fails to communicate or fails to convey a message, are crucial to both the process of learning about language, invention, and interpretation itself—in fact, it is within these cracks, these places where language works against itself to convey meaning, that we find possibility enough to invent new texts and discover new knowledge.

4. Language, image, and consciousness are intimately connected, so much so that theorists attempting to make claims about language often also account for image and consciousness.

In taking each of these claims in turn, I hope to build a theory of symbolization that is broader and more indicative of most language theories—one that is compatible with non-discursive texts.

At the end of this section, I review some of these theorists again to demonstrate that many of them anticipated some of the more salient points made about image, consciousness, and the imagination, especially within the context of language theory. Though most of these theorists were writing in the first half of the twentieth century, they anticipated many findings in neuroscience and psychology which are just now becoming available to a wider audience. Our field has yet to deal seriously with questions involving consciousness and the relationship between image and imagination to self and identity, though some of these theorists, such as Vygotsky and Bakhtin have, and their ideas are worth noting as a way of introducing the importance of non-discursive symbolization.

As I highlight lesser known aspects of the following theorists' work, or provide alternate interpretations of their writings, I also hope to reinvigorate the applicability of these theorists to modern composition studies. Some of these theorists may be considered dated or otherwise less relevant to contemporary scholarship than others: in short, some may think that these theorists have already run their due course in the field, such as those at the forefront of the social-epistemic view of rhetoric. On the contrary, I restore an expanded and, subsequently, slightly different view of some of these theorists' work as it becomes relevant to the present project: theorists, for example, such as Cassirer, Langer, and Berthoff who, as phenomenologists, may have been written off too early by critical theorists as ignoring the social, historical, and cultural consequences and elements of language; theorists such as Vygotsky, Vološinov, and Bakhtin are not readily known for their theories on image, imagination, and consciousness, yet all three touched on these topics; and, finally, theorists such as Britton, Moffett, and Coles shed some light on the value of ambiguity and abstraction in language, though they did not necessarily propose an explicit theory of language in their original texts. Therefore, to those who might ask "Why are you looking at these theorists again?" I would answer, "Because they have more to teach us."

Language as both Discursive and Non-discursive

Ernst Cassirer, Susanne Langer, and Ann Berthoff each posited language in such a way as to highlight the significance of the non-discursive, but more importantly, all three advocated a language theory which could account for the imagination.[11] Though Berthoff is the only one who might be considered a compositionist, Cassirer and Langer both constructed philosophies that heavily influenced her work. The most valuable contribution I take from them, however, is the way language comes to encompass both discursive

and non-discursive text. It was Cassirer, then Langer, who proposed how it is our symbol systems work to include all of human articulation, not just speech or the written word (Ann Berthoff carries this work on in composition, and I discuss her contribution later in this chapter). Each of these language theories also make contributions to how symbolization connects to image and the mind.

Ernst Cassirer considered himself a neo-Kantian, meaning that his theories were in response to and aligned with Kant, and his language theory was an extension of Kantian philosophy:[12]

> The problem of language, however, is not treated in the work of Kant. He gives us a philosophy of knowledge, a philosophy of morality and art, but he does not give us a philosophy of language. But if we follow the general principles established by his critical philosophy we can fill this gap. According to these principles, we must study the world of language, not as if it were a substantial thing which possesses a reality of its own, an original or derivative reality, but as an instrument of human thought by which we are led to the construction of an objective world. If language means such a process of objectification, it is based on spontaneity, not on mere receptivity [. . . .] Language cannot be regarded as a copy of things but as a condition of our concepts of things. If we can show that it is one of the most valuable aids to, nay a necessary presupposition of, the formation of these concepts, we have done enough. We have proved that language, far from being a substantial thing, a reality of higher or lower order, is a prerequisite of our representation of empirical objects, of our concept of what we call the "external world." (*Symbol* 148)

Cassirer seems to point early to language as a means to understanding our world: that it objectifies our world for us, makes it tangible and a "condition of our concepts of things." In a significant way, Cassirer seems to posit that "in the beginning" there was language. Everything else soon followed: "Language grants us our first entrance into the objective. It is, as it were, the key word that unlocks the door of understanding to the world of concepts" (153). Cassirer's starting point is to show the primary way language functions—how it comes to objectify and thus, essentially, provide our experiences in the world.

Cassirer also attempts to distinguish between the mythic branch and the language branch by how the two engender thought differently as a way to introduce the difference between discursive and non-discursive text:

> While certain contents of perception become verbal-mythical centers of force, centers of significance, there are others which remain, one might say, beneath the threshold of meaning [. . . .] Logical contemplation always has to be carefully directed toward the extension of concepts; classical syllogistic logic is ultimately nothing but a system of rules for combining, subsuming and superimposing concepts. But the conceptions embodied in language and myth must be taken not in extension, but in intension; not quantitatively, but qualitatively. Quantity is reduced to a purely casual property, a relatively immaterial and unimportant aspect [. . . .] In mythico-linguistic thought, however, exactly the opposite tendency prevails. Here we find in operation a law which might actually be called the law of the leveling and extinction of specific differences. Every part of a whole is the whole itself; every specimen is equivalent to the entire species. (*Language* 88)

I interpret "beneath the threshold of meaning" as Cassirer's way of talking about the non-discursive. It is not that the non-discursive is meaningless. Rather, the non-discursive, or "mythico-linguistic thought," does not have to be reliant on syllogistic or logical thought to express concepts. In fact, such non-discursive thought, as it exists in language, helps to create the whole of language: without it, there is only the discursive. Cassirer thus postulates a gap between "subjective impulses and excitations" (i.e., sensory information processed as thought) and "definite objective forms and figures" (i.e., symbolization). This gap, or "inner tension," is precisely where language and its failure to truly objectify occurs—that there is a difference between what is finally symbolized and the subjective impulses and excitations that originally led to ideation. This gap, then, is often continuously and repetitively navigated through discourse with varying degrees of success. But Cassirer stresses that this "indissoluble correlation" between myth and language is both "independent" and coincident: they combine at the substrate where mythico-linguistic thought exists. Any suggestion, then, that language or thought (or myth) could proceed one or the other is not tenable for Cassirer: "[N]o matter how widely the contents of myth and language may differ, yet the same form of mental conception is operative in both" (*Language* 84). This "mental conception" may be our innate ability to symbolize, or our imagination, or perhaps even the biological workings of mind in the presence of language. Whatever his intent, Cassirer was loathe to think of language as only discursive in nature, and through the mythico-linguistic, he postulates the existence of the non-discursive in language.

Another important contribution by Cassirer is that he critiques positivism by asserting that myth is not a "mental *defect*" but the primordial soup from which all language (both discursive and what he calls "the creative imagination") springs: "The Self feels steeped, as it were, in a mythico-religious atmosphere, which ever enfolds it, and in which it now lives and moves; it takes only a spark, a touch, to create the god or daemon out of this charged atmosphere" (*Language* 72). It is not enough to say that language springs from momentary gods known as the Word, and so Cassirer wishes to trace all theoretical knowledge to its base in myth:

> For all, the concepts of theoretical knowledge constitute merely an upper stratum of logic which is founded upon a lower stratum, that of the logic of language. Before the intellectual work of conceiving and understanding of phenomena can set in, the work of *naming* must have proceeded it [. . . .] All theoretical cognition takes its departure from a world already performed by language; the scientist, the historian, even the philosopher, lives with his objects only as language presents them to him. (28)

This kind of discursive thinking is marked by a totalizing nature, one that moves inductively from small observations to large concepts. "Mythical thinking," on the other hand, does not move in this way; it "does not dispose freely over the data of intuition" (32). Mythical thinking "comes to rest in the immediate experience" and consumes our senses with wonder:

> [I]t is as if the whole world were simply annihilated [. . . .] instead of expansion that would lead through greater spheres of being, we have here an impulse toward concentration; instead of extensive distribution, intensive compression. This focusing of all forces on a single point is the prerequisite for all mythical thinking and mythical formulation. (32–33)

From myth to "noticing," to naming, to ideation and conception, to discursive language (which includes the will-to-integrate), Cassirer takes his argument to community and the sociocultural fabric of our lives.

> Indeed, it is the Word, it is language, that really reveals to man that world which is closer to him than any world of natural objects and touches his weal and woe more directly than physical nature. For it is language that makes his existence in a *community* possible; and only in society, in relation to a "Thee," can his subjectivity assert itself as a "Me." (61)

Cassirer, therefore, also underscores the social nature of language, and he emphasizes how without language, community (and identity) would not be possible.

Perhaps most relevant to my purposes here, Cassirer also theorizes on the origins of language itself. He identifies a kind of "mental operation" which functions in the substance of myth and language. He calls this operation "metaphorical thinking" and it is fueled by a kind of inner tension mentioned already: "the nature and meaning of metaphor is what we must start with if we want to find on the one hand, the unity of the verbal and the mythical worlds and, on the other, their difference" (84). From this, Cassirer postulates a kind of symbolic formulation:

> Language and myth stand in an original and indissoluble correlation with one another, from which they both emerge but gradually as independent elements. They are two diverse shoots from the same parent stem, the same impulse of symbolic formulation, springing from the same basic mental activity, a concentration and heightening of simple sensory experience. In the vocables of speech and in primitive mythic figurations, the same inner process finds its consummation: they are both resolutions of an inner tension, the representation of subjective impulses and excitations in definite objective forms and figures. (88)

This "inner tension" marks the named from the unnamed, self from other, utterable from unutterable, and discursive from non-discursive. Tension is the motivating force behind language, behind ideation, behind all mental conceptions.
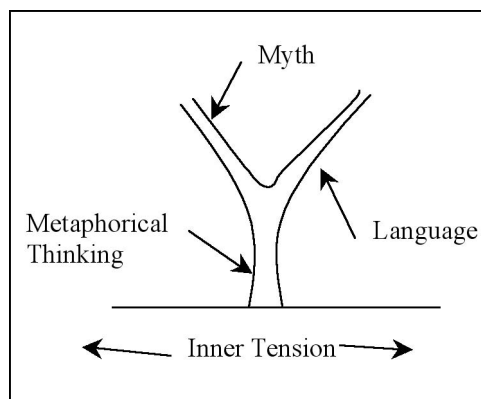

Fig. 1.1 Cassirer's Conception of Language

What Cassirer does is clear a space for Langer to talk about symbolization in a new way. By taking Cassirer's notion that language and thought are both "resolutions" to an inner tension, Langer reminds us that language is larger than mere discursive thought—that non-discursive thought *also* provides us a way to symbolize language. Rather than demarcating language into only symbol and object, Langer resists any notion that language exists solely as an objectifying tool for discursive thought:

> At best, human thought is but a tiny, grammar-bound island, in the midst of a sea of feeling expressed by 'Oh-oh' and sheer babble [. . . .] Most of us live the better part of our lives on this mud-flat; but in artistic moods we take to the deep, where we flounder about with symptomatic cries that sound like propositions about life and death, good and evil, substance, beauty, and other non-existent topics. (*New Key* 88)

Langer considers thought and language as Cassirer does—broader than discursive text, older than written history, and coincident with feeling and the way humans experience their existence. Langer seems to say here that our "mental life" includes much more by way of symbolization than discursive text alone would allow. She also stresses that we limit ourselves when we limit what we consider "language"—that language includes so much more in our "space-time world of our experience" than what is possible discursively (89). As I noted earlier, Langer's emphasis on the non-discursive broadens what is normally talked about when we talk about discourse, and it provides an essential insight into what she calls the "paragon of symbolic form": language itself (*Feeling* 28).

Some may be more familiar with Langer's term "presentational symbolism" rather than non-discursive symbolism. She uses both terms, and they have come to mean similar things, but in looking at *Philosophy in a New Key*, non-discursive symbolism is explained before presentational symbolism is mentioned, and it seems to be a broader category than presentational symbolism (93, 97). Arthur C. Danto, in "Mind as Feeling; Form as Presence; Langer as Philosopher," directly states that "presentational form" is "the most familiar sort of non-discursive symbol" (644–45). The terminology "presentational symbolism" may have been assimilated by some fields as a more meaningful opposite of discursive symbolism because Langer emphasizes its similarities to a presentation: "Their very functioning as symbols depends on the fact that they are involved in simultaneous, integral presentation" (97). In fact, Langer uses several terms to describe the non-discursive, each getting at different aspects of non-discursive text depending on her intended audience: the "art symbol" in *Feeling and Form* (3–41); the

"expressive form" in *Problems of Art* (126); and "presentational symbols" in *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* (Vol. I, 156; Vol. II, 66). This apparent inconsistency is an effort by Langer to characterize more specifically for disciplinary scholars what she means with the term "non-discursive"; she is consistent in her opposition to discursive symbolization as the only recognized type of text. In addition, she relies on the term non-discursive to talk more about the general nature of that symbolization, as she does in the appendix of *Problems with Art*: "And although I am convinced that some abstractions cannot be made by the non-discursive forms we call 'works of art,' yet the basic abstractive processes are all exemplified in language at various stages of its ever-productive career" (168). What is the most salient here, despite Langer's seemingly inconsistent use of the term, is that our knowledge of feeling is "not alogical but prelogical: known without the mediating symbolism of discursive reason" (J. Johnson 64).

In addition to allowing a place in her language theory for the non-discursive, Langer also stresses "intuitive reasoning" as essential to our symbolizing practices: "Intuition is the basic process of all understanding, just as operative in discursive thought as in clear sense perception and immediate judgment" (19). Here Langer reveals her phenomenologist worldview, but she also demonstrates one paramount ramification of such an expanded view of language: that is, what we value in symbols indicates what we value in thought processes. A long history of valuing discursive language may imply a long history of valuing discursive reasoning. So, to define language theory as being both discursive and non-discursive is to make the case for intuitive reasoning *as an additional and critical component* of our conscious ability to understand.[13]

Another distinction Langer makes regarding language is the difference between signs and symbols. Whereas signs are proxy for their objects, symbols come to carry the meaning of objects:

> In talking *about* things we have conceptions of them, not the things themselves; and *it is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly "mean."* [. . . .] Of course, a word may be used as a sign, but that is not its primary role. Its signific character has to be indicated by some special modification—by a tone of voice, a gesture (such as pointing or staring), or the location of a placard bearing the word. In itself it is a symbol, associated with a conception, not directly with a public object or event. The fundamental difference between signs and symbols is this difference of association, and consequently of their *use* by the third party to the meaning function, the subject; signs *announce* their objects to him, whereas symbols *lead him to conceive* their objects. (*New Key* 61)

Clearly, Langer is emphasizing the role of the non-discursive even in the understanding and interpretation of the discursive. It may seem at times that I have been drawing the line between these two as a way to create a dichotomy, or a dualist philosophy, but that is not the case. Langer emphasizes how the non-discursive is necessarily part of the discursive, and vice versa. But because we so often privilege the discursive over the non-discursive, the latter is eclipsed in favor of the former. Because the distinction between sign and symbol is one, largely, of human interaction (the sign is just there; the symbol is our perception/interpretation of that sign), signs carry less weight in language than symbols do. In fact, the *New Key* Langer refers to in the title of her book is symbolization itself. The symbol, in fact, has a relationship to our perceptual "sense data" that must evoke awareness in order to be processed at all:

> Symbolization is pre-rationative, but not pre-rational. It is the starting point of all intellection in the human sense, and is more general than thinking, fancying, or taking action [. . . .] The current of experience that passes through it undergoes a change of character, not through the agency of the sense by which the perception entered, but by virtue of a primary use which is made of it immediately; it is sucked into the stream of symbols which constitutes a human mind. (42)

Langer considers perception a possible building block of conception, but not the exclusive building block.[14] Language, as a consequence, is not made up of signs at all; language becomes the result of these "vehicles for the conception of objects" taking shape as symbolic conceptions in the human mind (60–61). Language, in short, is made up of symbols, not signs.

Another consequence of thinking about language as both discursive and non-discursive is that writing—the composition of symbols—is no longer simply the articulation of words. In fact, words and sentences are only but one type of symbolization among a cosmology of many we as humans inhabit all the time. Langer stresses how these other kinds of articulation aid our formulation of concepts and conceptions: "Visual forms—lines, colors, proportions, etc.—are just as capable of *articulation*, i.e., of complex combination, as words" (93). Langer's symbolization theory, then, paves the way and even provides a theoretical frame for some of the recent trends in composition studies for composing with visual forms: for thinking of the visual not as merely representation or mimicry, but as crucial steps in our ability to form concepts—in other words, a fundamental part of language. Langer's theory, then, provides a way for language to include images (whether visual, auditory, haptic, olfactory, etc.) as an articulate form of symbolization.

Yet Langer does warn theorists from broadening the term "language" in relation to the arts (*Feeling* 225), but she does so because "language" for Langer is synonymous with speech: with oral communication (it is, in the end, translatable). In fact, true "language" for Langer is the same as "discourse": "Perhaps it were well to consider, here, the salient characteristics of true language, or discourse" (*New Key* 94). My interpretation of Langer contends that she regards the word "language" and symbols as synonymous *to the extent* that those symbols are discursive. Language, broadened to include non-discursive text (which is my argument, not Langer's), becomes capable of all symbolization—a distinction that works against the discursive bias that has held sway in language theory. Nevertheless, Langer's theory of non-discursive and discursive symbolization does offer an opportunity to refigure image as central to both.

Finally, another major contribution by Suzanne Langer is her theorization about virtuality—she is possibly one of the earliest philosophers willing to talk about nongeographic space. In *Feeling and Form*, Langer characterizes the virtual in this way:

> The harmoniously organized space in a picture is not experiential space, known by sight and touch, by free motion and restraint, far and near sounds, voices lost or re-echoed. It is an entirely visual affair; for touch and hearing and muscular action it does not exist. For them there is a flat canvas, relatively small, or a cool blank wall, where for the eye there is deep space full of shapes. This purely visual space is an illusion, for our sensory experiences do not agree on it in their report [. . . .] Like the space 'behind' the surface of a mirror, it is what the physicists call 'virtual space'—an intangible space." (72)

Langer expands on this "virtual space" by outlining the modes of virtual space ("illusory scene," "illusory organism," and "illusory [. . .] place"), virtual powers (symbols of "vital force" as in dance), and virtual memory ("narrative [. . .] the semblance of memory")—each are manifestations of the symbolic world as perceived by observers in the actual world (95, 175, 265). Langer's virtuality, then, places symbolization into our lives just to show us how much it is a part of what we do as humans: how much symbols offer us "a life of feeling" (372).

Language as both Individual and Social

The influence of Russian theorists is palpable in composition studies, so much so that their combined authority has helped to define how our discipline

views issues as diverse as the nature of self and identity, the social nature of language, and the importance of cultural histories on writing instruction. What is not often mentioned, however, is how theorists such as Vološinov, Bakhtin, and Vygotsky also advocated an expanded view of language somewhat before its time, as well as the importance of the individual within the social. Generally considered as linguists and psychologists, these theorists reacted against the communication model of language, as well as the Saussurian notion that language is made up of the signified and the signifier (and that meaning is created by simply having "inherited" an understanding of both). Much has been written about these theorists and their work. I only wish to briefly summarize some of the main points here regarding the relationships between image and these theorists' own particular view of language.

One such language theorist is V. N. Vološinov.[15] In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Vološinov spends a great deal of time in defending his view of language:

> In somewhat simplified form, the idea of language as a system of conventional, arbitrary signs of a fundamentally rational nature was propounded by representatives of the Age of the Enlightenment in the 18th century [. . . .] Abstract objectivism finds its most striking expression at the present time in the so-called Geneva school of Ferdinand de Saussure [. . . .] It can be claimed that the majority of Russian thinkers in linguistics are under the determinative influence of Saussure.[16] (58)

In particular, Vološinov positions himself in opposition to Saussure by theorizing language as revealing ideological and social relationships. Unlike Saussure, Vološinov does not see language within an individual as any less social than that language used in the greater social fabric of speech acts:

> In point of fact, the speech act or, more accurately, its product—the utterance, cannot under any circumstances be considered an individual phenomenon in the precise meaning of the word and cannot be explained in terms of the individual psychological or psychophysiological conditions of the speaker. *The utterance is a social phenomenon*. (82)

He then contends that the relationship between the utterance and the individual are within a dynamic that is constantly changing and layered by history and social contexts. Language "exists not in and of itself but only in conjunction with the individual structure of a concrete utterance" (123). Again, the dominant emphasis by Vološinov is to challenge any static notion

of language: that language is simply passed down from generation to generation. Instead, language "reflects, not subjective, psychological vacillations, but stable social interrelationships among speakers" (118). This fluidity, which is a direct challenge to Saussure's semiotics, stresses the give-or-take of language by emphasizing the human role in the way it is learned, used, and forgotten. Though commonly cited as a proponent of the social importance of language, it would be a misreading to say that Vološinov did not see the value of the individual because it is precisely at the intersection between the two that the forces of language interact: both are present, and both contribute to the dynamic nature of language.

Another Russian theorist, Lev Vygotsky, focuses his work on the study of language as reflected in the development of children—a methodology in sharp contrast to Vološinov's more philosophical methodology. He often stresses what is missing in discursive language, openly criticizing any effort to separate metaphor or emotion from the relationship between thought and language:

> When we approach the problem of the interrelation between thought and language and other aspects of mind, the first question that arises is that of intellect and affect. Their separation as subjects of study is a major weakness of traditional psychology, since it makes the thought process appear as an autonomous flow of 'thoughts thinking themselves,' segregated from the fullness of life, from the personal needs and interests, the inclinations and impulses, of the thinker [. . . .] Unit analysis points the way to the solution of these vitally important problems. It demonstrates the existence of a dynamic system of meaning in which the affective and the intellectual unite. It shows that every idea contains a transmuted affective attitude toward the bit of reality to which it refers. (Vygotsky 10)

Language for Vygotsky must be dynamic, and it must come from an individual within a social context. He outright refutes any notion that thought can be "segregated from the fullness of life," and by associating intellect and affect, Vygotsky is allowing language to be a "dynamic system of meaning," helping to reintegrate the otherwise too easily separated realms of affect and intellect. These two realms may be so easily separable precisely because language, through its symbolization, materializes into a *thing* (symbols on a medium that are usually—or ultimately—static) that can then be perceived by the senses. Language itself seems isolated from the "thinker," or the "personal needs and interests, the inclinations and impulses" of the person behind the symbolization. In uniting intellect and affect, Vygotsky allows definitions of language to broaden significantly.

For Vygotsky, and like Vološinov, the relationship between thought and word is dynamic and depends on the presence of a symbol. But Vygotsky does not necessarily limit his discussion to what we translate as speech or printed text on a piece of paper: "Language does not have to depend on sound [. . .] The medium is beside the point; what matters is the *functional use of signs*, any signs that could play a role corresponding to that of speech in humans" (75–76). Vygotsky expands the popular notion of the time that language is just words or speech, or that it consists only of sign and referent:

> Schematically, we may imagine thought and speech as two inter-secting circles [see Figure 1.2]. In their overlapping parts, thought and speech coincide to produce what is called verbal thought [. . . .] **There is a vast area of thought that has no direct relation to speech** [. . . .] Nor are there any psychological reasons to derive all forms of speech activity from thought [. . . .] Finally, there is 'lyrical' speech, prompted by emotion" (88, bold my emphasis).

Again, Vygotsky is more interested in stressing the separateness of thought and speech than in defining a new area of cognition. In order to wrangle thought away from linguists who saw thought and speech the defining elements of language, Vygotsky is actually helping to define language in such a way that is broader than simply the use of speech.

But Vygotsky goes only so far in defining the separation of thought and language, and it is possible to conflate the idea of verbal thought with speaking to oneself silently. James T. Zebroski, in analyzing Vygotsky, makes the distinction between inner speech and inner speaking clearer:
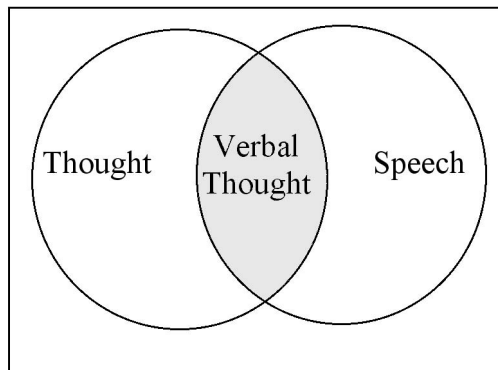

Fig. 1.2 Vygotsky's Thought-Speech Relationship

> Inner speaking is subvocalized speaking, one of the psychological functions most distant from deeper levels of thinking, yet still too often confused for Vygotsky's inner speech. Inner speech in the strict sense is the intermediate and transactional form of thinking-speaking that has its own speeded up movement, its own peculiar syntax, semantics, and pragmatics [. . .] It is beyond the threshold of consciousness but plays an important role in helping to *prepare* for specific kinds of utterances. (*Thinking* 199–200)

The inner speech area shown in Figure 1.2, is preconscious, fueled by "motive" or will, and that it contains a "subvocalized" form of language ready to "prepare" for an utterance, whether vocalized or not. Because this brand of speech is clearly internal to the speaker, Vygotsky is stressing the importance of the individual in our use of language. It would be too simplistic to say that language for Vygotsky is primarily or entirely a social construction.[17]

Similar to Vygotsky, M. M. Bakhtin also aims to broaden notions of language. He is arguably the most popular language theorist in composition studies, and his works are cited within many different, even competing, areas in the field. Bakhtin's work on language, like Vygotsky and Vološinov, is long and complex, and I will only try to highlight his most relevant contributions to language theory, especially regarding its reliance on both the social and the individual forces in language.

Though his object of study is often narrative and the novel, Bakhtin has a lot to say about the dialogic nature of language:

> Language—like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives—is never unitary. It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualizations that fill it, and in isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is a characteristic of all living language. Actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems; within these various systems (identical in the abstract) are elements of language filled with various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different sound. (288)

The sound element and the semantic element form a heteroglot in language layered with possibility. The position that language is never unitary—and that the consciousness of the "verbal artist" is also, necessarily, never unitary—is

not inconsistent with modern views of consciousness as both integrated and differentiated.[18] Both Bakhtin and Vygotsky work to expand thought and language to include more than simple communication, or the sender-message-receiver model of language. Bakhtin often characterizes language as a "world" in which thought and speech intersect:

> [L]anguage is a heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. (291)

Bakhtin posits layers, much like Vygotsky does, with inner speech as a layer between thought and speech, and these layers are made up of epochs and worlds unto themselves. The consequence of such layering is a view of language that is both social and individual: the world is an ecosystem where individuals interact with their environment. Though Bakhtin's emphasis is on the social, he acknowledges the "bodily form" which ultimately provides the nexus for these layers. The social, in order to make any sense whatsoever, must also be embodied.

Especially relevant is the way Bakhtin incorporates space and time into his theory of language. Both Vygotsky and Vološinov posit how language is dynamic, changing, and social, but Bakhtin takes this further by making language rife with layers of different places and times—an element he labels the "chronotope": "We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). He then relates the chronotope to language by situating discourse within a context: "Also chronotopic is the **internal form of a word**, that is, the mediating marker with whose help the root meanings of spatial categories are carried over into temporal relation-ships (in the broadest sense)" (251, bold my emphasis). This "internal form of a word" is a mediating form entrenched in spatial as well as temporal relationships. What is pertinent here is the fact that Bakhtin's language theory is also laced with its own history and location(s): it is social, it is dynamic, and it is linked to its own time and place just as individuals are within a social context.[19] As a consequence, Bakhtin's language theory is in opposition to a simple sender-message-receiver model because every element of that exchange carries along with it different times and different places: associations that make up the full "internal form of a word." In short, language is inherently connected, not just to other words, but to the past layers, voices, and eras contained within each utterance.

Bakhtin's interests in the utterance, though he would call it the "word," emphasizes the give and take of language. By looking at the way language