
Reviews

RICHARD McKEON'S CONCEPTION OF RHETORIC AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURE


Richard McKeon (1900-1985) wrote well over 150 published essays during a long and active career as a philosopher at the University of Chicago. Recognition of his synoptic philosophy of communication and culture awaits a future edition of McKeon's complete essays, an enterprise that will require several volumes. McKeon spent more than sixty years investigating patterns of philosophic inquiry and discussion—in expressions of knowledge and of what is known in all the arts and sciences—including, as one part of that enterprise, an ongoing preoccupation with the methods of philosophy and with the arts of discourse.

From the beginning, he traced the continuities and transformations in philosophy and cultural history of logic, rhetoric, and dialectic. And from the beginning McKeon waged a constant battle against the nonrhetorical suppositions that often dominated the scene of his own philosophic activities. He was tolerant of the supplementary hypotheses represented by the existence of divergent philosophic schools; but one common assumption which was anathema to his own conception and use of the rhetorical tradition—whether espoused by empiricists, positivists, naturalists, or realists—was the "tendency to think of reality as a kind of statue on which one drapes language like a Roman toga." Against this passive view

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2In Logique et Analyse 41-42 (June 1968), p. 217. See note 7, below.
McKeon reflectively inquired into the active uses of language as a heuristic instrument: one which is productive of new theories, arts, facts, and values, and constitutive of new inclusive concepts of culture. The dynamic instrument of these inquiries was rhetoric.

Thus, Mark Backman's edition of nine of the many essays McKeon published on conceptions of rhetoric and its uses affords an invaluable glimpse of McKeon's philosophy of communication and culture, especially that element of his work aimed, rhetorically, at a philosophy of creativity. These "essays in invention and discovery" emphasize McKeon's achievement in using the methods of rhetoric to invent new discursive arts; he constitutes these arts as instrumentalities for disclosing continuities and revolutions in philosophic discussion, and for discovering new subject matters of interdisciplinary fields. The new fields he opens up by the use of rhetoric would reorient and integrate substantive inquiry into the conditions of modern life and knowledge. McKeon refurbishes culture by creating a new organization of arts and sciences.

*Rhetoric: Essays in Invention & Discovery* is concerned with nothing less than the possibility of discussion and inquiry—with, that is, the foundations of communication as an instrument of theory-formation, as a bond within community and across communities for mutual understanding, and as the condition for experience, perception, and meaning in our postmodernist world of "texts." Such a program is ambitious, even radical (in its proper significance). Moreover, the program sorts oddly with McKeon's reputation as an editor of and commentator on Aristotle. These essays show clearly that McKeon, although immensely erudite, was never a scholastic exegete nor mere antiquarian; and they suggest, too, that to brand him an "Aristotelian" is a misnomer. Aristotle is the continuing source of much of our vocabulary, of our basic distinctions for relating the theoretic, practical, and productive or poetic sciences in inquiry, likewise for discussing those bodies of knowledge by recourse to the universal arts of analysis and proof in logic, of invention and persuasion in rhetoric, and of propositions and problems in dialectic. In Richard McKeon's recovery of Aristotle's vocabulary, he reinvents the basic Aristotelian distinctions and their continuity in Western thought and discussion—alternately as instruments of renaissance and for the overthrow of old doctrines (including the doctrines of Aristotle)—by use of the methods of rhetoric. Rhetoric leads him to a novel view of the history of philosophy and of the traditions of interpretation of that history, including interpretations of texts.

During his student days at Columbia University, where he formed his lifelong friendship with Kenneth Burke, McKeon nurtured the conviction that a good basis for twentieth-century philosophy would reorient it to communication, as principle and conditioning framework. Instead of inquiries into the nature of things or the forms of thought, in other words, inquiry into semantic structures of philosophy—into the interconnections of meanings and references which any term can undergo—became the
project of his philosophy in a new key. And it was Cicero who likely provided McKeon with a point of departure for understanding the languages of invention and interpretation in the evolution of the medieval liberal arts and the Renaissance philological arts (languages he would use in later researches). During his graduate school years, while he was studying medieval philosophy in Paris during the mid-1920s, McKeon began collecting the texts of Aristotle (then unavailable in the United States). In reading (philological) commentaries on Aristotle, he was disturbed to find that Aristotle seemed frequently to be using the dialectical method of Plato, and that his texts were therefore thought to have inconsistencies and contradictions; at the same time, McKeon discovered traditions of commentary on Plato that made the dialogues appear to use Aristotle's method of resolution. Approached philologically, the texts appeared to have no unity of structure or consistency of meaning; but approached philosophically, by use of arts of discourse, the texts would yield meaning in a balance of traditions of interpretation that took into account a schematism of opposed meanings and methods which had been adumbrated by Cicero's semantics of opposed philosophic schools, a semantics based on a rhetoric of interpretation and probability in context of conflicting philosophies.

My purpose in these prefatory remarks is to suggest that McKeon, from his early study of Cicero, learned that conflicting interpretations of the same text have their source in the opposition of philosophic traditions, including traditions of opposed methods of interpretation. At a formative point in his career, that is, he discovered that texts have no fixed meaning. If the history of Aristotelianism discloses a series of different Aristotles, or if it is possible, for example, to interpret Plato as a materialist (or Democritus as an idealist), how does one identify meanings in these texts?

McKeon's solution was to construct a semantic matrix—a paradigm—of possible meanings for a text; he used a method of rhetoric to array opposed basic ideas (commonplaces) from which to derive opposed methods

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of interpretation (both analogical and literal). By virtue of such a paradigm of plural possible meanings, the interpreter constructs a "profile" of a given text or of a thinker's works. It is a method precisely of invention, in this case the invention of meanings: McKeon taught himself to read Aristotle deliberately as if Aristotle were a Platonist, and to read Plato as if he were an Aristotelian, to see what the consequences would be for their structures of arts and sciences or their faculty psychologies or other logoi. That is to say, it is possible, with the recognition of systematic ambiguities in the statements of texts and accounts of traditions for interpreting those texts, to use a semantic paradigm to impose a "profile" of meanings on the text, deliberately switching profiles to see which one is most fruitful—and which one is most likely to yield a unity of structure and consistency of meaning. The paradigm supplies the reader with reasons for making the interpretations he finds, subject to explicit statement and rational criticism in context of opposed possibilities. It is not, in short, a relativism. Certainly, it is less "relativistic" than the decentering operations of deconstructionism. Here, the paradigm supplies a system of possible interpretations of an issue or text together with reasons for arguing one versus an opposed interpretation.

McKeon's discovery that texts have no inherently fixed meanings—and that the psychologies of authors or the sociologies of the conditions of their times are subject to statement that also has no fixed meanings—was a radical turn to discourse itself as the basis for all discussion and inquiry. Many implications of that discovery are traced out in *Rhetoric: Essays in Invention & Discovery*. The semantic paradigm has its source in and is put to use through methods of rhetoric; McKeon is explicit about his debt to Cicero (and to Protagoras, progenitor of the skeptical or rhetorical method) in the essay which closes this volume, "A Philosopher Meditates on Discovery." In that essay, McKeon shadows forth some dimensions of his semantic paradigm (the whole is still unpublished). He also states that his purpose as a philosopher is to reorient older projects of metaphysics as the science of first principles of being to a new metaphysics as the study of first principles of discourse. His own method in working this revolution comes directly from the rhetorical tradition, in which the fundamental assumptions are that knowledge is best advanced by the free opposition of arguments, that a common truth may be given a variety of statements from different perspectives. Thus, if the truth is one and is changeless, there is nevertheless no single expression of that truth, and the philosophical problem of pluralism in a philosophy of communication is to differentiate the senses in which expressions of truth are many, and to judge the circumstances under which it is degraded and rendered false. McKeon sought a preliminary study of the relations of cultures (their traditions of meanings, their ideologies in practice) "as expressions of values, divergent in form but possibly identical with each other in fundamental character" (p. 220).
Rhetoric, clearly, takes on vastly enlarged significances and applications in McKeon's conception of its interactions with philosophy and cultures. By no means is rhetoric constricted to the semantic tasks of interpreting cultural traditions and texts. McKeon broadens rhetoric, instead, "from persuasion to include all elements of existence and to use commonplaces or topics for discovery of the unknown" (p. 119).

The phrase "all elements of existence" is tantalizingly ambiguous. Given McKeon's system of contexts for terms, I suspect that these elements refer to what he calls, elsewhere in this book, the commonplace of commonplaces: those modes of simplicity which delimit fundamental aspects of any situation (like the commonplace things-thoughts-statements-actions). They condition experience in the way William James spoke of it: you open your eyes and see nothing but a big, buzzing, blooming confusion. When he was teaching or conversing, McKeon frequently referred to James in this context. In front of him might be a desk, something we could focus on and call "the desk," but in saying "I see the desk," we don't see it; it is something we abstract from our buzzing confusion by the modes of simplicity—which we tend to organize by our methods and principles—which, in turn, are based on our whole past experience (including, ultimately, our experience of metaphysics).

Moreover, in using the phrase "topics for discovery of the unknown," McKeon probably intends the classical topoi as the locations where argument occurs or arises (not the argument itself). Topics are the places of discussion, where disagreements over the interpretations of a statement result from the distance between them. (If two people agree completely, however, there can be no discussion, since no aspect of the situation would be problematic; and if they have no object or element of existence in common, there is likewise no discussion.) To put this another way, discussion depends on ambiguity, as inquiry itself depends on productive ambiguity in order to discover anything new. The distance or difference of interpretations is what sets communication in motion between two or more discussants, and it is rhetoric itself which provides the means for removing ambiguity by the examination of differences of interpretation: it specifies the precise senses in which the same thing is stated in different ways, or, in which the same word comes to mean different things.

Here the importance of rhetoric emerges with special force. If, as Protagoras and the other early sophists held, there are two sides to every question, then it seems likely that the opposition of perspectives is what generates philosophical problems. For McKeon, the oppositions can be sorted out systematically and related to common issues through the use of

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4This particular example of an appeal to the phenomenology of William James is from the transcript of a telephone interview with McKeon by James E. Ford of the University of Nebraska, 6 April 1982.
topoi (usually structured as pairs of opposed terms initially empty of any specified meaning). Topics are the means for pushing any problem to its extreme—that is, pushing it backward to its beginning point or forward to its end, where in either case it becomes a philosophic problem. The process starts with basic ideas in opposition—with topics of discovery. McKeon often introduced students to the ways in which philosophic problems arise by developing, from the buzzing confusion of consciousness, the various kinds of "knowledge"; he used the commonplaces of known, knower, knowable, and knowledge in paired covariations which, as empty commonplaces, he structured as variables on a diamond matrix. Philosophy would thus be shown to be unavoidable, discovered and set in motion by use of the methods of rhetoric.

McKeon conceives of rhetoric as an instrumentality, both for the discovery of philosophic problems and for the discovery of the subject matter of rhetoric and discourse in the broadest sense as propadeutic to metaphysics. The task of philosophy is to clarify and organize divergent perspectives initiated in rhetoric. Through illuminations by use of rhetorical tools, history and experience become a process of the regularity by which certainties become doubtful, leading to new questions and problems, to new arts and inquiries which reveal new aspects of existence and new choices of fundamental values. Rhetoric sets up the circumstances for a continuing pluralism of perspectives: a pluralism in which alternative hypotheses generate those opposed meanings, and the new problems and solutions which in turn create further problems, that constitute the progress of communication and culture.

We should expect the essays contained in this book, then, to be explorations indeed in invention and discovery. As I shall show in the following chapter comments, these essays elaborate the varied meanings and functions of rhetoric—in their past relations to other discursive arts and to particular subject matters, in their present and future potentialities for uncovering new universes of knowledge and action. McKeon develops rhetoric as an instrumentality of values for humanistic application to all fields and to include all elements of existence. Topics themselves become the places which are potentially common to all people and to all times and cultures.

In "Rhetoric in the Middle Ages" (first published, 1942), McKeon traces medieval culture and its legacy to the Renaissance as a cycle of arts and sciences which derives from rhetorical terms of art fixed by Cicero. According to received modern opinion, rhetoric has had virtually no history during the Middle Ages (p. 122nf.). McKeon upends this belief by using a semantics of varying shifts in subject matter and function for the arts and their interrelations: grammar, rhetoric, poetic, dialectic, and logic display elegant variations—in assimilative, subordinate, and disjunctive relations—when they are applied, variously, to actions, words, things, or
thoughts as their subjects (e.g., p. 157). The rhetorical distinctions of Cicero oriented the subsequent interpretations of ancient thought. Cicero's rhetorical instrumentalities—the three kinds of oratory, the dichotomy of thesis (propositum) and hypothesis (causa), the rhetorical constitutions, the topics or places—provide means for distinguishing altered meanings of "rhetoric" and for identifying transformations of its devices in application to the other arts and sciences. McKeon discovers patterns of distinct development in which rhetoric enlarges or contracts (a) in the operational tradition of common notions of the mind applied to law and morals, (b) in the Augustinian tradition of philosophy and theology using a rhetoric suited to divine eloquence and divine things, and (c) in the peripatetic tradition of supplementary relations between rhetoric, dialectic, and logic in which rhetoric was limited to probable reasoning. He traces the intermingling of these traditions through four historical periods during the Middle Ages; in this history, revolutions in doctrines and subject matter become continuous in an intelligible historical sequence in which at a later stage Renaissance rhetoric is alternately a part of rational philosophy subordinate to logic, or it dominates all the arts in assimilations to dialectic, or it becomes a discipline of words (independent of philosophy and dialectic). Rhetoric played a critical role in formulations of methods of discovery and proof, of the bases for modern scientific inquiry, of psychology, philology, civil philosophy, and literary studies.

Lines which cross fields and transmute meanings through the devices and terminology of the arts set up McKeon's histories of rhetoric, and they are in turn the rhetorical instruments of revolutions in thought. Out of such continuities of revolutionary changes, McKeon constructs a program for stating new questions and constructing new methods of a new rhetoric, transformed to philosophic uses. This is the burden of "The Methods of Rhetoric and Philosophy: Invention and Judgment" (1966). We need rhetoric if we are to deal adequately with our twentieth-century consensus view of knowledge, where discourse has shifted away from concern with metaphysical causes or essences, reasons in things, to cultural cases or the places of question and discussion, where the agent or speaker is the "cause" in equations (by the act of writing interrelations of variables, replacing the "reasoned facts" of the old metaphysics).

With the enlargement in this essay of the scope of rhetoric to include any object of attention whatsoever, McKeon can treat invention and judgment in terms of specifically rhetorical histories of culture and interpretation—in opposition to conventional histories of philosophy (and rhetoric) as interpreted by the canonic philosophical schools. Issues of innovation are found in theses and in hypotheses, which in turn are determined by the rhetorical constitutions in Cicero's and Quintilian's schemata. In addition to invention, questions of judgment, another one of the traditional parts of Ciceronian rhetoric, are differentiated into kinds according to the
kinds of oratory (demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial), in whose opposition the basic problems of philosophy arise. From this history of rhetoric McKeon draws some unmistakable lessons for philosophy; he exhorts us to consider (a) the role of commonplaces in invention (not in repetitions of past problems) and (b) the uses of judgment for adapting communication to content and ends instead of to linguistic formalisms and mere techniques of persuasion. "A new schematism of commonplaces is needed to make the exploration of the new a proper method of philosophy; and a new examination of demonstration, deliberation, and decision is needed to lift judgment from formalisms and mechanisms and to make the treatment of what is the case or what may be made to be the case a proper method of philosophy" (p. 64).

What would the new schematism of invention and the new examination of judgment look like? One of the invaluable qualities of this essay collection is the opportunity I think it provides for readers to follow McKeon's revolutionary enterprise: making rhetorical commonplaces and kinds of rhetorical discourses into "proper" methods of philosophy. The philosophy he makes is a supple instrumentality of vast scope—precise in its relation of universals, architectonic in its objectives for an age of communication and technology. By way of hypothesis, let me suggest here that McKeon uses his radically novel conception of the history of rhetoric and philosophy to unfold, in these essays, a sequence for the new schematism of invention and the new structures of judgment. The sequence would run from the use of rhetoric to make (1) a philosophy of creativity, (2) a philosophy of meaning (in forms and matters of expression and what is expressed), (3) a philosophy of arts of discourse (systematic ordering of lines of discourse into perspectives), and (4) a philosophy of values or ends (inquiry which constructs new fields and uncovers new objectivities in an inclusive world community). The total sequence discloses an architectonic philosophy of culture. Each of the steps of McKeon's transformation of philosophy by the methods of rhetoric turns on Cicero's rhetoric as exemplar: Cicero's amplification of Aristotle's basic distinctions, accomplished by converting them to places (and by abolishing the distinction between proper and common places, shifting rhetoric from audiences as "fields" to the speaker or agent as maker of meanings and values), has been repeated time and again in the revolutions of philosophy. McKeon uses the example of Cicero, not only to trace the continuity of renaissances of culture in the West, but also to make that continuity an instrument of revitalizing past arts and of discovering a pluralism of philosophies in interplay which stimulates ongoing revolutions in the solution of new problems.

(1) "Creativity and the Commonplace" (1973) invents a schematism of new commonplaces for a philosophy of the new. McKeon's history transforms the Ciceronian commonplaces from repeated adages to "neutral
sources of new perspectives operative in new directions in the thought and culture and philosophy of the twentieth century" (p. 34). McKeon, always a master of irony, is fully in command of the paradoxes of innovation and tradition; he uses the commonplace "known-unknown" to rewrite old-fashioned postmodernist histories of the battle of the books or the battle for creativity—where the historical succession of the modernists and postmodernists seems always in its pattern of revolts to be repeating old dogmas—by tracing alternations of the unknown (invention) and the known (repetition) in a series of revolts against older arts, including rhetoric, by the uses of rhetorical invention and the commonplaces. The pattern traces shifts in the meanings and functions of rhetoric and in the subject matters to which it is applied (from things to thoughts to words and deeds in alternating cycles). The principal players in this story include Cicero, Boethius, Lully, and Ramus. Their innovations were refashioned by Bacon, Leibnitz, and Vico. These seventeenth-century thinkers used Ciceronian topics to extend the scope from invention and memory to all five parts of rhetoric: from places for discovery of the unknown to places of the recovery of the known in new schematizations of arts and sciences, to the tropes of proof and figures of speech and thought, the lines of inference and flow in styles of elocution, and the action of delivery in places of doing. The variety of meanings and functions of "creativity" expands likewise from isolated term to ambiguous statement to variables in an argument to functional relations among things, statements, thoughts, and arts in a system. McKeon's schematism of commonplaces extends creativity, in systematic productive ambiguities, by means of the commonplace "known-unknown" which he explores in argument by means of the commonplace "term-statement-argument-system." He creates the commonplace "things-thoughts-actions-words" to systematize the processes of invention in interpretation (of texts, experiences, character, thought, actions, things), in perception (discovery of existential data and experiential facts), in arts and methods (to relate interpretations and perceptions), and in new universes of discourse (discoveries of communication, thought, sequences of occurrence, and systematic organization). He calls this schematism of topical subject matters and functions the "commonplace of commonplaces" (p. 35).

(2) "A Philosopher Meditates on Discovery" (1952) shifts focus from places of known-unknown to places of the knower. McKeon's philosophy of invention is here put to use in a philosophy of meanings created and judged in a new schematism of commonplaces for a semantics of philosophic discussion. Again, Cicero provides the stimulus to discovery (in concert with Protagoras, p. 202f.), as McKeon recounts his own experiences as a student, the discoveries he made which launched his program of reorienting philosophy to a new prolegomenon to all future metaphysics in a philosophy of the first principles of discourse (pp. 207, 220). He elaborates a classification of all possible subject matters, methods, prin-
piciples, and ends of philosophy, that is, a paradigm of possible meanings any philosophy or text can actualize.⁵

The discovery of this schema of philosophic semantics takes place against a background of McKeon's milieu. The problem of discovery is to locate the experience and insights of one philosopher in an (ironic) pattern of reiterative novelty which is common to all philosophers and to all people. It is the philosophic problem of the one and the many. McKeon traces the pattern of innovations as the rediscovery of novelty, again and again, in the use of science or forms of knowledge to uncover and achieve new values. During his studies at Columbia he meanwhile learned from F. J. E. Woodbridge to seek intellectual order in an intelligible structure of the universe which one explores in ideas derived from experience; Woodbridge also stressed the integrity of philosophic texts. From John Dewey he learned to link philosophic positions to the problems they were intended to solve, to contextualize processes of thinking within the experi-

⁵The semantic taxonomy is complex and strictly functional in its differentiations and integrations. The 1952 essay confines its scope to two of four dimensions: subject matters (or selections of categories) and method. A highly condensed account of the functions of philosophic semantics (relative to arts, inquiry, and topics) appears in another of McKeon's autobiographical essays, "The Circumstances and Functions of Philosophy," in Philosophers on Their Own Work, ed. André Mercier and Maja Svilar, 1:95-112 (Bern and Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Herbert Lang, 1975). The taxonomic paradigm is more fully developed in an unpublished essay, "Philosophic Semantics and Philosophic Inquiry" (1966). Leaving aside McKeon's sketch of the complex relations of semantics to inquiry, the paradigm can be used to decompose texts of any sort, verbal or even musical and visual, into "rhetorical" commonplaces, which take on common values or meanings as variables: (a) single-term categories (in relativities of language or perception, reductions of matters, hierarchies of forms, and commonplace distinctions of arts and sciences); (b) kinds of "realities," or two-term propositions (which acquire significance in fluctuations of phenomena, underlying atomic realities, transcendent ideas or ideals, and essences and their functions); (c) methods, or three-term arguments (which order or connect textual significations from a categorial selection, in arguments or discourses that turn on heuristic debate, axiomatic derivation, assimilative dialogue, and structured analytics or resolutions of forms and matters); and (d) principles, or compendent sets of terms (which cause texts to function or to make them a functioning whole in creative projections, conservational simples, comprehensive totalities, and self-caused causes). The guiding places are (1) symbols-things-thoughts-actions and (2) the basic problems of philosophy: one and many, reality and appearance, universal and particular, the whole and part. For an excellent development and application of philosophic semantics to texts in all fields, including non-Western cultural traditions, see Walter Watson, The Architectonics of Meaning: Foundations of the New Pluralism (State University of New York Press, 1985). Watson builds a sixteen-term matrix, derived in certain respects from McKeon's, whose structure and variations display the essential features of all thought, and whose hermeneutic emphasis I borrow in this note.
ence in which they originate. Since the 1920s—perhaps no less now than then—the leading problems of culture and philosophy have been relativism (the absence of underlying common values) and anti-intellectualism (distrust of reason which escalates into ideological oppositions). The relativism of varieties of philosophic and ideological expression has caused us to lose hold of the truth. The circumstances under which philosophic concepts express ideals and truths are subject in other times and places to degradation, misinterpretation, and misapplication, thus we lose confidence in the truth. From his patterned history of reiterative novelty McKeon reveals the need for a schematism of commonplaces of judgment to explore the variety of expressions of a single truth and the circumstances under which that truth is rendered false in misapplications. It is the same problem of the use of science or forms of knowledge to uncover and achieve new values, but he here puts it to new formulation and solution. McKeon came to his insight through the rhetorical and pragmatic philosophies of Cicero and (Plato's) Protagoras. His solution, to the philosophic and practical problems of methods and values, is to “distinguish the aspects by which the forms of expression and proof may be differentiated and by which the criteria of continuing validity and values may be applied” (p. 206). McKeon's anticipation of “poststructuralism” is thus a pluralism which is anti-relativistic and, at the same time, put fully in the service of restoring reason and content to discussion of philosophy and rhetoric. It is based on adjustment of a semantics of meanings and judgments to experience and circumstances, a semantics which is flexible in its recognition of differences; reflexive in its neutral exhaustion of possibilities; on-going in its continuity of uncovering new problems; and unified in its search for common patterns of experience and the possibility of mutual understanding.

McKeon here lays out a version of his schema of historical periods, a frequent practice of his for building contexts of dominant philosophic vocabularies of different ages. In this case, he uses it to illustrate the aspects of the alternation of subject matters (or fundamental problems) in his semantic schema of commonplaces. The history is a mythos (which he often uses as propadeutic in his theoretic, practical, and poetic inquiries); it is balanced by more formal statement of the schema, elsewhere in this book, as a logos (pp. 101-103, "Philosophy of Communications and the Arts"). The subject-matter commonplace is things-thoughts-statements-actions. The cycles of alternation or modulation proceed from problems of metaphysics (principles in the nature of things), problems of epistemology (cri-

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teria of knowledge in forms of thought), to problems of semantics/pragmatics (interpretations of actions and experience, patterns of culture in symbols and communication). McKeon delineates the cycle of alterations from classical Greece to the present (pp. 209-212), where the three-step rhythm of changes in subject matter has occurred four times. The most recent of these large periods begins with seventeenth-century ontology, goes on to the Kantian revolt against the old metaphysics in a reorientation of philosophy to methodology, then turns in the twentieth century to revolts against idealisms in philosophies of technology and the particularities of existence and experience. Ontology, methodology, and technology (or culture) provide different contexts within which different fundamental questions arise, and which mark off fundamental characteristics of these ages. The historical schema has the advantage of tracing continuities and transformations of problems, to each of which the semantic paradigm of methods, principles, and ends (or interpretations) remain constant while adapting itself in particular solutions of particular problems. McKeon joins invention and judgment in such histories (or mythoi).

For historians and philosophers of rhetoric, McKeon's historical schematisms have special interest. The whole cycle contains within it a separate cycle of specifically rhetorical ages which precede our own: the Roman, the Carolingian, and the Renaissance periods (p. 212), where judicial, deliberative, and demonstrative oratory, respectively, were predominant. At several points in this book, McKeon compares our own rhetorical age with those of Rome and the Renaissance, remarking on the legal rhetoric and structure of laws in Rome, the rhetoric of art criticism and culture of the Renaissance, and the rhetoric of decision-making and communication which characterizes the twentieth-century period of technology. He can, accordingly, track the transformation of rhetoric, vis-à-vis philosophic problems, by use of another set of commonplaces: practical, poetic, and theoretic, each one of which illumines a new context for the uses of rhetoric and all of which together can be used as a diagnostic for the problems and possible solutions of our own age.

(3) The structure of commonplaces—for invention in the creativity essay, for judgment in the discovery essay—is enlarged to a schematism of methods of judgment and disposition in “Discourse, Demonstration, Verification, and Justification” (1968). The ideas McKeon presents here are complex and the relations between them involved. Following the sequence of essays I am schematizing here, it would follow that the point of view shifts from creativity and the known, followed by discovery and the knower, to discourse itself and knowledge as a structure of inclusivities. McKeon's fundamental task likewise shifts from philosophic topics to philosophic semantics to, now, philosophic arts: these arts produce, guide, or trace philosophic problems and solutions and the relations between philosophic positions. The arts focus on common themes of philosophic discussion, including the productive ambiguities of what some have called “essen-
tially contested" meanings of terms like "art" and "method" as the connecting links and common problems of discussion. McKeon argues in "Discourse" that the philosophic acts are propadeutic to, and context for, uses of philosophic semantics (for interpretation of contradictory significances), philosophic inquiry (inclusive theory and systematization of related meanings, problems, and solutions), and philosophic topics (selection of one set of meanings, initiation of new variations, new ambiguities, new problems). These—philosophic arts, semantics, inquiry, topics—are the four grand dimensions of the enterprise of philosophy as McKeon invented and practiced it. His employment here of the grand dimensions as context for approaching the whole problem of discourse makes a synopsis of this essay impossible.

Nevertheless, the structure of the essay's argument yields, I think, some grounds for advancing a few conclusions. Themes are the matters treated by philosophic arts; they are a continuing story or an evolving structure of ideas and facts, of functions and operations. Here, McKeon develops the theme of the transmutation and interrelations of the philosophic arts themselves in a history of arts and methods. He broadens demonstration, justification, and verification from their proper meanings to universal meanings (making any one of them inclusive of the matters, functions, and devices treated by the others). He adds to this trio of arts the art of discourse per se, because—as one variant on the theme of methods and arts—"discourse and culture have assumed the structuralizing functions of metaphysics" in our time. Although metaphysics is still out of fashion, its functions continue in broadened theories of discourse. The intelligible structure of the universe McKeon glimpsed in his work with Woodbridge seems now to become a search for intellectual order in an "intelligible structure of discourse," that is to say, in patterns of knowledge as lines of discourse traced by the arts in interrelations of symbols, actions, thoughts, and things. McKeon finds such patterns in the transformation of kinds of rhetoric from particular methods to universal arts (again, using the exemplar of Cicero): arts of deliberation, judgment, demonstration, and systematization in processes of disputation, controversy, discussion, and dialogue. These universal arts of rhetoric McKeon then transmutes into universal methods of discourse, each one adapted to logical categories,
McKeon is tracing a movement in this universe of discourse from rhetoric (whose subject matter is whatever is experiencable) to metaphysics (which he calls "philosophy" or philosophic analysis). The steps are complex, but in the first of two moves (pp. 46-51), McKeon establishes subject matters of discourse by expanding topics to wholes, using the devices of the four rhetorical constitutions: omnipresent data as subject matters are uncovered in answer to the question "is it?"; omnipossible facts in answer to the question "what is it?"; omnidesirable ends in answer to the question "what sort is it?"; and omnientexistent principles in answer to the question "why?" The new principles of "rhetoric" or discourse then lead to the second move (pp. 51-54), a new metaphysics of particularizing the common questions or constitutions of discourse into ordered perspectives as lines of discourse. Those perspectives range from a dialectic of knowledge (discourse as assimilation of things, thoughts, actions, symbols to concrete fact and contextual statements), to a logic of discourse in the known, to a grammar of discourse in the knowable, to a rhetoric of discourse in the knower. This last perspective squarely places a focus on the agent or creator in the universal method of (rhetorical) demonstration, which McKeon presents as the art of arts. The new, plural metaphysics is a rich and flexible tool for grounding new directions of inquiry, one which he lays out in more detail—and, again, with explicit attention to rhetoric—elsewhere. The anchor McKeon seems to make in the agent or knower—as element, as cause, as principle—could be said, without pushing an analogy too far, to reveal an individual mind in contact with universal relations. It is like Aristotle's mind which, in actively thinking, is the objects which it thinks; or like Spinoza's proof that common possession of true ideas is what makes human beings agree in nature. A mind so grounded is the embodiment of knowledge or wisdom. It, the mind displayed in this essay, is the source of the possibilities and the desirabilities of discourse—of discussion and inquiry.

(4) The new universal methods for structuring and examining what is the case in the discourse essay become universal methods of invention for philosophic inquiry in "The Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age: Architectonic Productive Arts" (1971). Following my proposed sequence for these essays, the previous shifts from known to knower to knowledge now light on the knowable—that is, on conversion of continuities of problems of discourse into potentialities which can be realized by means of the invention of new principles and methods for rhetoric per se. Such an in-

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vention is McKeon’s first task in this essay; he then uses the new principles and methods of architectonic productive rhetoric to create new fields of inquiry. This end or objective develops the program he has been laying out in the preceding essays, which constructed a rhetorical philosophy of creativity, a rhetorical paradigm of possible meanings of statements or expression, and a rhetorical philosophy of first principles of discourse. Taken together, the elements of this program provide the conditions of the possibility of discourse itself in a new metaphysics of culture or communication. The next step, the new metaphysics of the concrete and of discourse in operation, takes active form in McKeon’s investigation here of architectonic productive arts; he pursues his task with a dazzling use of the rhetorical devices of amplification and schematization. In “The Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age,” McKeon extends and applies the variant programs of rhetoric from Rome and the Renaissance, continuing their aim to rejoin wisdom and eloquence, words and deeds, theory and practice, grounded for our century in a new rhetoric which is theoretic in its orientation. Instead of the practical and poetic ends of earlier rhetorical ages, ours is oriented to “technology,” whose etymology dictates to McKeon the need for elaborating a “science of art” (p. 12, also p. 54). This science of art will be a new rhetoric which amplifies places in a productive art of solving new problems and which schematizes places in an architectonic art of forming new inclusive communities (p. 2). The new methods and principles of rhetoric will radically reorganize, at a second stage, the subject matters and arts of education and life—they will constitute new basic arts of culture.

Once again McKeon rehearses the history of rhetoric, and again it is a history constructed rhetorically toward the aim of “the discovery of ourselves and our times” (p. 11). His account of the continuities and revolutions in the development of rhetoric, like the previous histories of rhetoric he has composed, diverges from or is in refutation of conventional accounts, but its aim continues to be the disclosure of basic distinctions or commonplaces which reveal new possibilities for directing and relating knowledge, action, and production. The history isolates Aristotle’s theoretic distinctions: of art and method; of theory, practice, and production; and of being, thought, action, and statement. These places, together with Aristotle’s four scientific questions or principles, become transformed practically in Cicero’s construction of rhetorical issues which relate facts, words, values, and judgements as means of producing a determined subject matter for discourse (not natures). The structure of fact and cause in the subject matter of Aristotle’s sciences becomes a structure of issues for Cicero, a structure which establishes facts and resolves “causes” or “cases.” The transformation of scientific questions into rhetorical issues yields a new basis for organizing arts and sciences; likewise, Cicero’s transformations of the kinds of Aristotelian rhetoric become new rhetorical fields of
doing, making, and knowing. Having laid out this history of continuities and modulations, McKeon is altogether explicit in his imperative to reject the traditional subject-matter divisions of education and inquiry. Instead of organizing our curricula and research programs around distinctions between the natural, social, and human sciences (or other, older schemata), McKeon establishes grounds for a return to rhetoric for “hints” about making completely new interdisciplinary substantive fields. Cicero “did not adjust rhetoric to a subject-matter, but used the four kinds of issues or constitutions to develop the three kinds of oratory, that is, he used rhetorical methods to constitute relevant fields. We may well follow his example” (p. 18).

In this unmistakably creative use of exemplary history (Cicero again the principal exemplar), McKeon amplifies and schematizes the altered terms of art of Aristotle’s and Cicero’s old rhetorics for a new rhetoric and for new interdisciplinary fields. Rhetorical demonstration suggests a new field of assertions and displays of data, a new field of “topics” as subject matters for consideration and as places for invention. Rhetorical judgment suggests a new field of judgments of knowledge and action applied to known truths and values, a new field of “hypotheses” which rejoin fact and value in a broadened hermeneutics. Rhetorical deliberation suggests a new field of structured connections which merge ethics, politics, and rhetoric in themes and their variations, a new field of “arts” and “methods” as mathema-tized structures of concrete processes of operation. And rhetorical organization or dialectic suggests a new field of possible worlds in systems of communication and operation, a new field of “theses” which are stabilized into principles as a reflexivity and responsibility of agents in rational action.

McKeon’s construction of new substantive fields is consistent with his invention of the basic arts of culture which appear both in the other essays collected here and in those published elsewhere. The details of their implications and applications will turn on close exegesis of McKeon’s work as a whole, and on practical experiments by thinkers and educators who follow his lead. In recent decades we have nevertheless been involved already in the emergence of new fields of inquiry which take their turns from communication and the methods of rhetoric. We are interested in problem-creation (or “problematology”) and in question-analysis; in data storage and retrieval and in hypothesis-construction; in decision-making

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and the translation of matrix schemata into concrete processes;* and in systems flow and cybernetic feedback.

McKeon develops the basic arts and fields of culture as new interdisciplinary fields with even more truly encyclopaedic and masterful force in "Philosophy of Communications and the Arts" (1970), the summum sum-marium of the nine essays Backman has gathered here. It organizes a master structure of processes, actions, and productions—a science of sciences, an art of arts, a practicum of practices. Again, this essay builds a logos and a cosmos from the philosophic arts, drawing into its universe the philosophic topics, semantics, and inquiry which McKeon employs to make a "dead-reckoning" of the uses of philosophy in the future. To treat the problems of philosophy, which are problems of multiple perspectives (perspectives of cultural space and temporal change), he develops new arts of communication and construction in an art and a science of first principles. Those arts are rhetoric, grammar, logic, and dialectic. They lay out, among other things, new subject matters: the unknown, in the selections of topics; all situations and all that is known in the recoveries of hypotheses or interpretations; all that can be conceived and all the connections constituting possible worlds in the presentation of themes; and the total framework of things to be done in the actions of theses.

The ordering of essays I have set out here is not the same sequence they occupy in Backman's edition. Issues of initial selection of essays aside, the imposition of an order is already an interpretation of Richard McKeon's thought. I have used some of the commonplaces McKeon isolates in order to highlight his conception of the history of rhetoric as an instrumentality in philosophic revolutions and as a means for discovering new problems in the transformation of philosophy by the methods of rhetoric; that transformation opens up an architectonic philosophy of culture as solution to those problems. It is clear that McKeon has always been interested in the arts of rhetoric. His discovery that rhetoric, as instrumentality of discourse, has enjoyed a continuous history informs our understanding of his own uses of rhetoric to find principles and methods in discourse itself. Thus, in these essays, he invariably treats the history of matters, parts, functions, and ends of rhetoric as prelude to reorienting and enlarging discussion of and inquiry into the problems of our own age. The intelligible sequence of relations between rhetoric and the other arts over time leads to the discovery of issues of invention and judgment as points of departure for a new philosophy and for what, with irony, one might call a "revolution to end all revolutions." The schematisms of

*For the relevance of set theory, matrices, and mathematics of pattern recognition to decision and to the method of rhetorical demonstration, see pp. 23, 44, and 53.
commonplaces for innovation and methods of discourse for judgment, dis­
position, and organization take root in McKeon's refashioning of a lan­
guage of discourse derived from the instrumentalities of discourse itself:
topics, hypotheses, themes, and theses. McKeon's new philosophy of
communication grounds the old functions of metaphysics in a new first
philosophy of culture.

I have glossed seven of the nine essays in this collection. The two es­
says I have omitted concern the practical and productive uses of rhetoric.
“Symbols, Myths, and Arguments” (1954) is a treatment of the uses of
symbols for negotiations between groups and for generating unity within
groups. McKeon is critical of linguistic analysis which depends for its as­
sumptions on ontology or epistemology rather than on the devices of dis­
course itself. Argument and myth are two discursive modes of generality
by which to achieve particularity in the external and internal uses of sym­
 bols, and McKeon shows how symbols operate concretely in oppositions
between ideologies (as in the conflict between Marxist and Western so­
cieties). McKeon's analysis shows that symbols—the rhetoric of practical
communication—need to be enlarged for their uses to achieve concord or
agreement appropriate to the whole of mankind. His demonstration of the
practical value of ambiguity is a vibrant application of the art of rhetoric.
The second of the omitted essays treats poetry and rhetoric, whose rela­
tions he elaborates for an illumination of the basic problems of aesthetics
in “Poetry and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century: The Renaissance of
Rhetoric” (1946). Although McKeon did write many essays on the practical
implications of communication philosophy, “Symbols, Myths, and Argu­
ments” is a particularly good instance of his use of rhetoric for the discov­
ery and resolution of problems of society, politics, and international rela­
tions. On the other hand, “Poetry and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century”
seems less well suited to this collection than other available choices.

Although McKeon's encyclopaedic approach to culture in inquiry is in
controversial opposition to other philosophies of culture, his recovery and
transmutation of the philosophic arts is inclusive; those arts build uni­
verses of discourse—fields, methods, principles—which uncover com­
mon problems of modern life and knowledge. Philosophic arts can be used
in turn to make reflexive expositions and extensions of McKeon's philo-
phy of communication. A dialectic of communication, such as I have been attempting here, would trace in his work a pattern of ideas which assimilates structures of inclusivities and continuities, possibilities and transformations in reflexivities of forms and matters. The other arts might likewise be applied for other ends: rhetorics of communication which vary perspectives by discriminating and translating intentions and subjectivities in demonstration; grammars of communication which apply meaning by compounding and decomposing alternative frameworks of ideas and facts in judgments; and logics of communication which develop connections by identifying and presenting crossing lines of fields in arguments and histories. Any of these arts will find a place in understanding McKeon's distinctively arts-and-sciences approach to action and knowledge. His development of a philosophy of communication, in its dialectical aspects, is a "system of the arts and sciences, the encyclopaedia of facts and suppositions, the compass of the actualities and potentialities" (p. 116).

In "Philosophy of Communications and the Arts," McKeon makes a wry reference, in the context of transitions from metaphysics to our present concern with concrete expression and experiment, to the methods of philosophic hermeneutics and "deep-seated cravings for generality and universality" (p. 104). McKeon's philosophy obviously supplies a great deal of material for satisfying any such cravings. But the craving for particularity and individuality is the more powerful impulse in an age in which rhetoric is resurgent. In asking what happens to philosophy when philosophy uses rhetorical methods, McKeon adapts reflective rhetoric to the amplification of facts: from facts as an environment in the nature of things and human nature, to facts as ingredients in thought in a manifold brought under the rule of judgment, to facts as the inclusive designation of what is, what is thought, and what is meant. In this last, amplified, rhetorical context, rhetoric is no longer concerned with differentiations of proof from persuasion. McKeon leads us to a transition from rhetoric as persuasion to a rhetoric which is heuristic—from products and doctrines to processes and instruments. Rhetoric opens the way to discovering unnoticed facts and previously unconceived values by examining arguments which make both sides of an opposition credible, and which place opposed theses in the context of alternative directions of inquiry. By separating the opposition of alternative interpretations of fact from oppositions of fact misinterpreted and from misstatements of fact, rhetoric orients us away from controversy and disputation and toward discussion. Instead of closure, McKeon finds in his instrumental continuities the methods for

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\(^{15}\)In the summer of 1967 McKeon gave a course entitled "Philosophy of Communications and the Arts: Rhetoric and Poetic." I reconstruct these observations on rhetoric and facts from a transcription of his lecture of 2 August, "Hypothesis and Fact," prepared by Robert Wess of Oregon State University.
modifying fruitless verbal controversy and for enriching our ongoing inqui-
ries into the unknown.

DOUGLAS MITCHELL
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