ABSTRACT

THE INTERSTICES OF MEETING: MARTIN BUBER, RHETORIC, AND THE DIALOGIC TRADITION

by Joseph Wyatt Griffin

This paper seeks to expand a limited understanding of traditional rhetoric by first examining key figures from the rhetorical cannon for areas of their theory that might be underrepresented or reductively interpreted. The paper also outlines distinctions between ‘monologic’ and ‘dialogic’ rhetoric, surveying various contributors to what might constitute a dialogic tradition. This paper also presents Martin Buber as a unique contributor to a dialogic rhetorical ethic—focusing closely on Buber’s theories of dialogue contained in his I and Thou—and supplements these analyses with theories of communication ethics presented by scholars from a variety of disciplines.
THE INTERSTICES OF MEETING: MARTIN BUBER, RHETORIC, AND THE DIALOGIC TRADITION

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Introduction

It is common within the academic study of composition and rhetoric to hear the term “dialogic rhetoric,” invoked as a subfield of study, just as the phrases “feminist rhetoric(s),” “comparative rhetoric(s),” and so forth, might also be comfortably used. This term is invoked casually within academic discourse, often within the classroom, as well as in settings that might be considered extracurricular. In my experience, there has never been much discussion about what dialogic rhetoric is, what it looks like, what are the theories and approaches that give it substance, and further, how these theories appear alongside other theories on rhetoric. Basic research on the term shows that there remains little consensus about just what dialogic rhetoric could be, let alone how and where it might find application in rhetorical consideration and pedagogy. Codifying a certain type of rhetoric as “dialogic,” by implication, underscores the tendency to interpret what we might call traditional Athenian rhetoric as explicitly non-dialogic, possibly agonistic, and primarily concerned with suasive elements. Another central motivation guiding this paper concerns the instrumental values attached to rhetoric in first-year composition. I hope that by examining a dialogic rhetorical tradition, I can present another angle of rhetorical pedagogy that values inclusion, mutuality, and presentness alongside traditional instrumental concerns of persuasion.

In Chapter 1, I consider possible reasons why Athenian rhetoric has come to be framed as primarily agonistic, and I challenge specific interpretations of Plato’s anti-rhetoricity and Aristotle’s invariable alignment with persuasion. With the contributions
of established scholars, I hope to create room for an interpretation of Athenian rhetoric that is (and was) more broadly considerate of the rhetorical situation—one willing to afford interpretations that transcend the persuasive only. In doing so, I don’t hope to deny that rhetoric can and oftentimes must be a persuasive game, but I try, in effect, a broadening of consideration. After these initial observations, in Chapter 2, I attempt to define dialogic rhetoric, while also making a cursory survey of some existing definitions of a dialogic rhetorical system. Chapter 3 considers various contributions of Hassidic scholar Martin Buber, critically examining them to determine what they potentially have to offer the study of rhetoric writ large, in addition to ways that Buber’s thought may contribute to pedagogy. I connect certain aspects of Buber’s philosophy with Bakhtinian, Burkean, and Platonic ideas, and in closing, I discuss ways that the ideas of Martin Buber may open up new critical space within rhetoric and composition studies.
Chapter I: Investigating the Agonistic Interpretation of Current Traditional Rhetoric

To understand the agonism ascribed to Athenian rhetoric, little more is required than to read a handful of popular writings on the subject. In most such readings, the connections forged between rhetoric and conversation are likely grounded in persuasive discourse—a discourse predicated on assumptions of conflict, as well as a tension that must be resolved or defeated through a sort of discursive violence. This agonism has been recognized by some scholars as, at best, a shortcoming of Athenian rhetoric, and at worst, a failure. From those scholars who see a predominantly persuasive rhetoric as one-dimensional, there have been manifold calls for change.

I turn to a short section from the introduction to Rhetoric: Discovery and Change, by Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike, where the authors write that

From the time of the Greek rhetoricians who developed the art over two thousand years ago, men have successively defined and redefined rhetoric, at times narrowing it to little more than the art of dazzling an opponent in an argument by verbal elaboration (hence the pejorative phrase “mere rhetoric”)…(1)

This introduction is telling, especially the subtle assertions that rhetoric is an art developed by the Greeks some two millennia ago. Although Young, Becker and Pike would elaborate and expand the ownership of rhetoric, so to speak, this small quote belies a general attitude toward rhetoric to view it as a purely Hellenistic commodity. It is on the Greek tradition that a majority of the scholarly focus has rested, often at the expense of cultures both prior to and contemporaneous with the Greek city-state—cultures which were using linguistic constructs just as complex as the Greeks were.

Of course, what Young, Becker, and Pike are saying, arguably, is that within the Hellenic tradition, rhetoric was codified into a discrete system that has been the parent of most contemporary Western rhetorical study. It is ostensibly within the Hellenic
tradition that rhetoric has been given due attention and concretized through systems of classification, division, and application. What I notice though is that even this simple (and oftentimes unwitting) characterization and association of rhetoric with ancient Greek culture can lend an air of agonism to the reception of rhetoric, principally because the two major Greek players associated with presenting rhetoric, Plato and Aristotle, have traditionally been interpreted as being arhetorical and concerned only with persuasion, respectively (more on them shortly).

The last thing I want to do is brand Young, Becker and Pike as purveyors of a far-too-standard view of rhetoric, or as scholars who promulgate a closed and agonistic view of rhetorical interpretation—far from it. These are scholars who have done much to expand new space within the field of rhetoric, and the remainder of Rhetoric: Discovery and Change bears this out. However, this very well may be an indication of how insidious and subtle certain associations can be—that Young, Becker, and Pike might, unwittingly or otherwise, transmit these associations underscores the need for personal scrutiny when tracing the history of the field or expounding its origins. As their introduction clearly states, “the conditions and insights of our own times seem to demand a new rhetoric” (2). I am on board with them for this adventure, and in the latter portions of this thesis, I will investigate some directions of this “new rhetoric.” But what might be equally as important as developing a new rhetoric may be the act of revisiting the Athenian model of rhetoric with an eye open to moments that might indicate a more inclusive and dynamic rhetoric than commonly interpreted. In short, this first chapter is a call for a “new old rhetoric.” In revisiting Athenian rhetoric, the question then becomes where to begin, and popular wisdom indicates at least two distinct sources.

In the introduction to Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks, Carol Lipson and Roberta Binkley write that “broadly, rhetorical teaching in the western world has
canonized Aristotelian/Platonic rhetoric as Rhetoric, with its sanctioned principles, goals, and conventions” (1). Lipson and Binkley are not alone—Plato and his student typically serve for the starting point of much discussion of rhetoric. In proceeding, I feel it is necessary to focus first on allegations of Plato’s anti-rhetoricity. I then turn to Aristotle, and look for evidence that—at the very least—supports my attempts to complicate the perpetuated view of his rhetoric as being one shackled to persuasion.

**Plato and Rhetoric: Some Considerations**

Of the various readings of Plato as anti-rhetorical, I focus here on an article by Brad McAdon which I think is emblematic of an attempt to not only distance Plato from rhetoric, but conflate his anti-sophistic discourse with the anti-rhetorical. McAdon begins his article by criticizing a contemporary scholarly trend that interprets Plato’s *Phaedrus* as advocating a favorable view of rhetoric—or what has been termed as *philosophical* or *dialectical rhetoric*.

McAdon cites in particular the work of Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, and C. Jan Swearingen to “recover” a positive view of rhetoric from *Phaedrus*. Swearingen, arguing that Plato has not abandoned rhetoric entirely, states that

> [Plato] argues for a philosophical and ethical rhetoric that is dialogical and dialectical, that draws upon Socrates’ presence in the agora and symposia and his attempts to reintegrate the burgeoning specializations of the sophists—in logic, cosmology, epistemology, mathematics, and language theory—with the life of daily culture in the symposia of educated Athenians. (McAdon 21)

McAdon contends that represented in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias* is an anti-rhetorical attitude, arguing in no uncertain terms “that Plato’s view of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* is consistent with the view expressed in the *Gorgias*—he denounces it completely’ (22). For the duration of his paper, he takes Plato’s anti-rhetorical stance in
the *Gorgias* as a given, choosing here to focus exclusively on the *Phaedrus*. McAdon argues that

Plato’s dialectic that is outlined in the [*Phaedrus*] is to be understood as his ‘philosophical method’ and not as a ‘philosophical or dialectical rhetoric’—the latter of which is an oxymoron as far as Plato is concerned. By equating Plato’s dialectic with his *true conception of rhetoric*, advocates of the view that attribute to Plato a positive, dialectical, or philosophic view of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, conflate Plato’s conception of what a philosopher is and does with what the rhetor is and does. Therefore, it will also be necessary to delineate the distinction between Plato’s conception of the philosopher and rhetor. (22)

In response, I find it puzzling that in making such a claim, McAdon chooses to stay close to only one of Plato’s texts in support of his argument against such “conflation.” He sees *Phaedrus* as part of a “dynamic dialogue” among Alcidimas, Isocrates, and Plato, and to highlight the alleged conflation, shows how texts from these three figures dialogue with each other. What I find lacking about this approach is that it decontextualizes this artifact of Plato’s work from his other works, and precludes the possibilities of Plato’s writings (notably, the *Phaedrus*, the *Gorgias*, and *Protagoras*) from informing each other. I find this problematic, because to my mind, the extant writings of Plato do not offer anything on the order of an unvarying response to what a rhetor is (and whether or not this stands opposed to the work of the philosopher), even given the obvious differences that are a natural result of different translations. It is no new argument that Plato himself is responsible for certain of these confluences and ambiguities concerning the roles of both the rhetor and philosopher. As Bizzell and Herzberg say, “modern questions about Plato’s view of rhetoric are complicated by the fact that the ideas expressed in various dialogues do not fit together neatly into a
systematic theory” (81). This variation perhaps indicates that Plato’s dialogues were far more considerate of changing audiences, that his different works themselves represent a sort of *doxa* that avoids what might be thought of as a “unifying theory of rhetoric,” and that ultimately Plato may have not seen the roles of rhetor and philosopher as entirely binarized.

As mentioned, McAdon asserts that it is important “to delineate the distinction between Plato’s conception of the philosopher and rhetor” (22). His approach then, is a close etymological account, focusing on the *Phaedrus*. It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer rebuttals to McAdon’s major arguments, but it is important to note that much scholarship undertaken by scholars of rhetoric and classical languages has found equally compelling textual evidence that supports a reading of Plato in favor of the necessarily complementary structure of rhetoric and philosophy — readings which at times show that rhetoric and philosophy are variable terms that resist airtight definitions. Brian Vickers writes in his “Territorial Disputes: Philosophy vs. Rhetoric” that “if rhetoric were concerned with nothing more significant than pleasure or power at any price then it would be properly dismissed” (251). Vickers recognizes however that the function of rhetoric “even [in Plato’s time], was much more valuable” and that if it had not seemed necessary to assert territorial rights [between philosophy and rhetoric] Plato and Socrates could have produced far more convincing arguments for [rhetoric]. Between them they embodied a remarkable union of philosophy and rhetoric. (251)

Similarly, James Golden calls attention to how “in the *Sophist* [Plato] observes, ‘To rob us of discourse would be to rob us of philosophy’” (17). This seems like a fitting move for a scholar who is interested in expanding Plato’s regard toward rhetoric: by hitching rhetoric’s wagon to the star of philosophy (which Plato clearly and unambiguously
loved), it confounds the idea that Plato categorically denounced rhetoric in favor of philosophy, as if he had to choose one over the other.

This nexus of philosophy and rhetorical purpose hinted at often in Plato figures elsewhere in rhetoric both after and before Plato’s time. We could see this connection represented as Quintilian’s “good man speaking well,” —a rhetorician first imbued with communal *eros* and an abiding concern for the state (Bizzel and Herzberg 413). This might represent what Jeffrey Walker has identified in Hesiod as the *basileus* (good prince or king) who “brings...squabbling and vendetta to an end by means of eloquence, and...thus restores the people or peoples of his *polis* to the path of ‘straight justice’ and intelligent decision” (5). I find this principle also embodied by Cicero, who according to Bizzel and Herzberg “regarded his knowledge of philosophy as crucial to his development as a rhetorician, evidently viewing it more as an aid to practical affairs than as a search for absolute truth” (284). Evidence suggests that it would be reasonable to argue that a hallmark of much Athenian rhetoric is the search for a communicative system inclusive of and harmonious with the normative areas of law and ethics.

Undoubtedly, certain of Plato’s dialogues are rife with passages clearly critical and denunciatory of rhetoric and rhetoricians, but it is important to remember that these are rhetoricians of a certain type. R. G. Collingwood, in response to interpretations of Plato being anti-poetic in Book X of *The Republic* stated that Plato was not anti-poetic entirely, but opposed to “one kind of poet,...who (admittedly with marvelous skill and very amusingly) represents trivial or disgusting things: the kind of person who makes farm yard noises and the like” (Gross 263). In like manner, to interpret Plato as being anti-rhetorical is to perform conflation of a different sort than what McAdon is alleging—it is to appropriate his reactions to the Sophists into his overall stance on rhetoric: a stance which is far from being monolithic.
Of course, as Brian Vickers stated, a rhetoric “concerned with nothing more significant than pleasure or power at any price” would indeed be “properly dismissed” (251). This type of rhetoric, characterized by Socrates in Gorgias as “made art...a certain habitue...rascally, deceitful, ignoble...illiberal,” and perhaps, as the ultimate Platonic affront, a mere “semblance of a branch of politics,” serves as an easy foil to represent the Sophists whom Plato viewed as enemies to a rational understanding of ideal forms, and were thereby enemies of society (97-98). But there remains substantial evidence in Plato’s dialogues that indicate a noble, true, and ideal rhetoric. From Gorgias, we read that “whosoever means to be the right sort of rhetorician must really be just and well-informed of the ways of justice” (126), and that “rhetoric is to be used for this one purpose always, of pointing to what is just, and so in every other activity” (138). That the Phaedrus itself has at its heart a major concern of how to “develop an art of rhetoric” (Bizzell and Herzberg 158) serves again to underscore the idea that if Plato was indeed anti-rhetorical, his distrust was toward bad or false rhetoric.

Another contention guiding McAdon’s scholarship is the argument that contemporary commentators who understand a positive Platonic rhetoric do so by appropriating to Plato and Plato’s texts a contemporary understanding of “rhetoric” rather than understanding the terms \textit{rhetoric} and \textit{rhetor} within their immediate and ancient contexts. (22)

My response to him on this point is to challenge the idea that the past remains as an objective artifact, ready for reading by whoever acquires the requisite skills (linguistic, anthropological, or otherwise). On this point, I maintain that McAdon overlooks the possibility that these “immediate and ancient contexts” are informed, interpreted, and constructed by modern sensibilities, particularly, modern sensibilities filtered through an agonistic understanding of Athenian rhetoric. In following with McAdon’s thinking, there remains an unassailable truth, not open to interpretation—a sort of Platonic
Rosetta Stone on which is inscribed all that Plato meant, but which many of those contemporarily interpreting Plato have grossly misrepresented or misunderstood. What seems to be required to access this unsullied meaning is a strong command of Attic Greek and considerable understanding of Ancient Greek culture. This is not the case.

Overall, I find McAdon’s focus on just one of Plato’s dialogues as atomistic and limited. While allowing Phaedrus to enter into dialogue with Isocrates Against the Sophists, McAdon ironically excludes Plato’s dialogues from entering into dialogue with each other, thereby curtailing a holistic view of certain of the terms which to McAdon are victims of conflation. This practice doesn’t necessarily silence Plato on the matter, but it does place a restriction on how much he (the author) can inform the situation. But there is still evidence in the Phaedrus to challenge McAdon’s argument.

In the Phaedrus, we are introduced to rhetoric as a “great art”—one that “demand[s] discussion and high speculation about nature,” as all great arts do, for this iteration of Socrates. A trope to which Plato often returns in his dialogues is that of the doctor or healer—Plato valued this knowledge for its utility and necessity, and in the Phaedrus, among other connections with rhetoric, he offers: “the method of the art of healing is much the same as that of rhetoric” (162). Plato justifies this comparison by offering that in both cases, analysis is crucial “if you are to proceed in a scientific manner, not merely by practice or routine” (162). Here we see a distinct recognition by Plato that rhetoric is far more than a series of prescriptions performed by rote, but is a contingent situational art that indeed has a social function. As the medical practitioner observes the patient to grant “health and strength to the body,” the rhetorician offers “proper discourses and training to give the soul the desired belief and virtue”—those that promote the civic good. Clearly, here, we see that Plato not only recognizes the necessary overlap of rhetoric and the philosophical ideal, but argues that that latter is
only possible through responsible, attentive, and genuine rhetoric. That McAdon sees these domains as distinct and antithetical is not directly supported by the *Phaedrus*.

Socrates continues to tighten the connection between philosophy (namely, ethics) and rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* when he says that a responsible rhetor must “know the truth about all the particular things of which he speaks or writes.” From there, the rhetor can acquire the proper understanding of the distinct rhetorical situations at work so that she or he might “find out the class of speech adapted to each nature.” Until this is done, a rhetor “will not be able to speak by the method of art” (167). Within this ethically grounded rhetorical model are distinct moments that, for whatever reason, have gone unacknowledged in Plato’s corpus by many, or have been completely disallowed by others. There are seeds within this discussion of an ethically charged dialogic rhetoric which will appear in 20th century rhetorical studies as if they were completely new ideas. Though they are not distinctly amplified within the Athenian rhetorical tradition (for reason of translation, exclusion, misinterpretation, etc.), their absence is curious, because they are found in Athenian rhetoric.

Although I focus exclusively (perhaps unfairly) on McAdon for this analysis, I see much of what he is saying as a common tendency. Keeping Plato as the enemy of not only poetics (which may or may not be a separate matter altogether) but rhetoric as well serves to keep academic lines (the line between philosophy and rhetoric, or English and communications, for example) clearly demarcated. I recognize that McAdon feels strongly about possible distortions of Plato’s thought—and Plato is a figure admired and respected by McAdon. Naturally, his desire to intervene, clarify, and defend is well-intentioned. But it is also exclusionary and appropriative in its own right. It forcefully delimits the range of consideration in an ironically un-Platonic, anti-dialectical way.
What stands notably in Plato’s work are possible threads of a dialogic rhetoric which I will examine in subsequent pages. Suffice it to say that there does not exist in the corpus of Plato’s writing a unanimously negative view of rhetoric, nor a clear distinction between the work of rhetoric and philosophy, as McAdon and others might allege. Despite his equivocation toward rhetoric and his challenges to rhetoricians alike, Plato commands discourse with a distinct style and purpose, and ultimately (to many, ironically) serves as an enduring model of persuasive Athenian rhetoric. The recognition of this irony is nothing new, as even Cicero remarked that “what impressed me most deeply about Plato...was, that it was when making fun of orators that he himself seemed to me to be the consummate orator” (296).

The Available Means of Aristotle

A. D. Leeman, in his “The Variety of Classical Rhetoric,” begins his sketch of the history of ancient rhetoric in the (problematic) traditional rhetorical epicenter of Ancient Greece. In arriving at the contribution of Aristotle to rhetoric, Leeman concretizes, in unambiguous terms, the prominent view that “Aristotle...reduced rhetoric to what he thought it should scientifically be: the study of the means of persuasion—no questions asked” (Vickers 41). This is not an uncommon assertion—to fasten Aristotelian rhetoric to persuasion, as persuasion was a major feature of the rhetoric that Aristotle saw as being crucial to the maintenance of the state. Before addressing this assertion directly, it may be helpful to look at a more broad representation of Aristotle’s Rhetoric.

In Robert N. Gaines’s “Aristotle’s Rhetoric and the Contemporary Arts of Practical Discourse,” the author begins by citing two broad independent surveys conducted by Carlo Natali and Michael Leff which sought to examine the “place of Aristotle’s Rhetoric in twentieth century-thought” (Gross, “Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric” 3). Gaines concludes that Natali—whose survey focused on European scholarship since the 1950s— traces two major (and prevalent) contemporary
interpretations of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* to Chaim Perelman and Hans-Georg Gadamer. While both saw Aristotle as offering a “rhetorical mode of practical deliberation, one which may replace the scientific mode of formal reasoning associated with Descartes,” the distinction was that Perelman “understands [rhetorical deliberation] as a means of inward reflection and preparation for reasoning to good decision” while Gadamer “considers it a form of power and a means of shaping civic conscience.” Natali’s survey concludes that European research on rhetoric after Perelman and Gadamer “has developed in response to their views.” The broad distinction again is one of society and the individual—Gadamer’s conception is “that as a model of practical rationality, rhetoric is essentially democratic,” whereas for Perelman, “rhetoric is conceived as a generative art that enriches common sense in discovering matters and arguments” (Gross “Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric” 3).

Gaines recaptures a similar survey conducted in America by Michael Leff which studies scholarship “since the coming of the postmodern revolution.” Leff ultimately locates 3 broad categories that typify American scholarly responses to Aristotle: 1) “Aristotle’s relation to Plato, truth and ethics in Aristotelian rhetoric, and the status of rhetoric in Aristotle’s system of arts,” 2) “the association of Aristotelian and Platonic rhetoric, this either to aggrandize the *Rhetoric* for its insistence on knowledge and truth or to discredit it for its ‘metaphysically tainted conception of the rhetorical art,’” and 3) “the artistic status of Aristotelian rhetoric” and whether it is “a productive art, a theoretical art, a practical art, or some combination” (Gross, “Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric” 4).

For the sake of this thesis, of most interest to me is the European survey which ultimately saw Gadamer and Perelman as representative of two distinct interpretations of Aristotle. The view expressed by Gadamer—that rhetoric for Aristotle was to be understood as “a form of power and a means of shaping civic conscience” (Gross,
“Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric” 3) is the view that remains intact largely throughout American rhetorical discourse as well. In fact, it would be disingenuous of me not to freely admit that when I have taught rhetoric to undergraduate students, I have started with Aristotle, and my focus foremost (although hedged with caveats and conditions) is with persuasion. I find it curious that even in the midst of a call for an expanded notion of rhetoric I and many other teachers I know of continue, somewhat hypocritically perhaps, to use Aristotle and persuasion as the initial loci of discussion. Even if a subsequent broadening of the definition of rhetoric occurs, the hierarchy likely remains and is still implied.

While acknowledging the utility of these broad surveys to roughly capture the trajectory of Aristotle scholarship in Europe and America, Gaines asserts that they both fail in touching upon “arguably the most significant influence of Aristotle’s Rhetoric in the contemporary era—namely, its application in the theory, criticism, and pedagogy of the practical arts of discourse, especially in the United States” (Gross “Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric” 4). As stated above, I argue that the impact of Aristotle’s Rhetoric in the contemporary era has been distilled into a succinct axiomatic underestimation, commonly invoked yet possibly misrepresentative of Aristotle’s complete intent. When asked to summarize what rhetoric meant to Aristotle, students and professors alike will, in all probability, resort to the time-worn aphorism that “rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (181). This is a summary that Jeffrey Walker indicated “lies at the heart of one rhetorical tradition that has had great sway through much of the twentieth century and, so far, the twenty-first” (Walker, “Jerzey Axer” 1). The appeal of this response may be sociologically rooted—something in the Western, post-enlightenment mindset that seeks oppositions. It may be that there is appeal in a breezy, memorized response to the unwieldy question of
“what is rhetoric?” Regardless of the “why,” it may be important to complicate, just a bit, our understanding of Aristotle’s focus on persuasion *per se*.

Jeffrey Walker, in a conference plenary session in 2003, continued his discussion of this passage of Aristotle, by saying that “as anyone knows after looking at the Greek a little while, this line can be read in different ways” (Walker, “Jerzey Axer” 2). Walker’s alternative readings reform Aristotle’s pithy summary of rhetoric (one which by interpretation has become iron-clad), and show possibly that

the usual way the definition [of rhetoric] gets invoked — elides the fact that Aristotle’s *estô de rhêtorikê* employs a third-person imperative, *estô*, meaning something like “let rhetoric be,” which some translations render as “rhetoric may be defined as.” What commonly gets lost is the fact that Aristotle is invoking a stipulative definition, as in a speculative argument or mathematical hypothesis, where one says “let the value of X be Y.” (“Jerzey Axer” 1)

Walker continues this line of thinking, ultimately reasoning that Aristotle may indeed be offering an altogether different (yet equally tenable) statement on rhetoric that reads more like “Let’s say that rhetoric is a faculty of observing the available means of persuasion — where will that get us?” (“Jerzey Axer” 2). Obviously this reading is dramatically different than the traditional reading, and it opens the possibility that Aristotle recognized the contingent nature of discourse far more than many contemporaries are willing to allow.

Walker doesn’t stop there, however, and soon his interest turns to the Greek “*to endechomenon pithanon*” which has commonly been translated as “the available means of persuasion,” though for Walker, nothing is really ever said about “means” in the original Greek. He finds an even more apt translation of this Greek phrase as “the persuasive or plausible thing,” ultimately constructing Aristotle’s definition not to read
“the available means of persuasion,” but more accurately “what is admissible, allowable, or acceptable as persuasive.” Walker considers the significance of these varying interpretations, stating that

On this reading, Aristotle is stipulatively defining rhetoric not so much as a faculty of invention — of scoping out the available means of persuasion in any given case — but as a faculty of critical judgment — of deciding what should earn one’s assent. (“Jerzey Axer” 3)

What I find fascinating is that with this hermeneutic broadening, Walker seems to reveal an Aristotelian rhetoric that is more actively considerate of the role of the audience in the rhetorical situation. The focus shifts from the speaker, using tools at hand to create persuasive discourse and shape the reactions of the audience, to the audience and a sort of communal sanction about what is acceptable or not as persuasive discourse. In this latter interpretation, the focus becomes dialogical as participants in a communicative act discretely consider not only what is available, but what is admissible. This idea is one that I want to keep on the table for later consideration.

If we are inclined to accept only the common explanation of the purpose of Aristotle’s rhetoric, then it still may be well-advised to think of Aristotle as limning an ad hoc iteration of rhetoric—a rhetoric instated to properly conduct the business of a democracy and serve as an imperfect yet functional system to mediate claims, convince a legislative body, preside over a state event or funeral, etc. Along with this, it is important to note that referring to Athenian rhetoric as “the Greek system,” as I have done either directly or by suggestion within this very paper, is a manner of excluding the rest of Greece at the cost of Athens. We know that various rhetorics thrived contemporaneous to the Athenian city state, including Rhodian rhetoric, uniquely characterized by Richard Enos as seeking “the ability to negotiate and communicate
with those who did not share political orientation or cultural ties” (Lipson and Binkley 192), as well as maintaining a Pan-Hellenic, “inherently inclusive” nature (194).

This simple contrast shows the Athenian model of rhetoric (what I have referred to as Athenian rhetoric, Hellenic, Greek, etc.) to be an enterprise of *doxa*—one that considers the proper handling of matters of the Athenian state as its focus, not accounting for all possible communicative contexts. It shows the Athenian model of rhetoric as a discourse community—one of many—in which you have to know the rules and sanctions to enter the game. To claim that Aristotle saw his (traditionally interpreted) iteration of rhetoric as adequately accounting for all possible rhetorical acts may be an untenable argument, and might also be a disservice to Aristotle himself.

**Conclusions from Chapter I**

My purpose in this chapter has been first to establish that there remains within the field of rhetoric a tendency to align rhetoric’s “creation” with the Hellenic tradition, which is problematic. I also sought to address certain of the standard interpretations of both Plato and Aristotle that limit them as being anti-rhetorical and monological, respectively. In doing this, I hope to create the groundwork to later connect a dialogical method of communication, as presented by Martin Buber, to both of these rhetoricians.

But where do such considerations leave us? To begin, allowing the formerly definitive barriers categorizing rhetoric to be more permeable allows for an expanded consideration of not only how rhetoric functions contemporarily, but how it may have functioned classically in Athens. The interpretations cited above of both Plato and Aristotle show that calls for new rhetoric might do well to consider that perhaps we haven’t fully considered the possibilities afforded by the old. To call for a “new rhetoric” could ironically be a statement that the old rhetoric is entirely understood to us and shown to be insufficient. There is a sort of smug intellectualism in such a maneuver, as well as careless dismissal of other rhetorics (Chinese, Sumerian, Egyptian,
et al) that have not been given equal representation, but would be inclusively jettisoned because of their ancient status. Perhaps what such calls for new rhetoric entail though is not a system broken entirely from Athenian rhetoric, but an expansion of what I have surveyed above—a revisitation of existing models to mine from them more holistic views of the communicative scene.

In Daniel J. Fogarty’s *Roots For a New Rhetoric*, this titular new rhetoric will “need to make considerable provision for a new kind of speaker-listener situation” (59). I would take this admonition as a sort of permanent charge for the theoretical vanguard. By this I mean that the study of rhetoric should always be not only looking for situations of how this “speaker-listener situation” might be remediated, but also seek to find instances of practice where the theory might take hold. My concern, however, is again the phrasing—as simple as it is—of this call for novelty. Stating the rhetorical situation as “speaker-listener,” there is again a subtle reinscription of rhetoric within its old agonistic shackles. While arguably benign (or even harmless), I find that this construction promotes the idea of speaker centrality and fails to perhaps consider the ways that a speaker is also concurrently an audience within herself. The associated image is both static and linear, still representing the monological transmission of an idea from one subject to a receiving object, even if the speaker is accounting for the fact that communication may be about some other business than persuading. Such a description fails to accord rhetoric a generative and cooperative force, and still limits rhetoric to the oftentimes necessary (but entirely incomplete) realm of agonistic communication.

In the chapter that follows, I will look closely at discourse analysts (from here on I use this term as a catch-all for philosophers, rhetoricians, sociologists, anthropologists, etc.) whose interests are chiefly with dialogue, dialogism, and dialogic rhetoric. My intent is not to form a consensus or unified concept of what dialogic rhetoric is, but to
indicate what dialogic rhetorics are. I do this with awareness that subfields of rhetoric manifest themselves in various forms and flavors. The study of dialogue draws on multiple traditions, and I will examine some of these.
Chapter II: Dialogic Rhetoric and Ethics of Communication

In this chapter, I begin by delineating some general distinctions between dialogic and monologic rhetoric, hopefully adding to distinctions that may seem readily apparent and obvious. I want to briefly examine the theories of dialogue as presented by Mikhail Bakhtin, as well as Kenneth Burke’s concepts of identification and consubstantiality, in order to later connect them with Buber’s theories of intersubjectivity. In the closing moments of this chapter, I present a synthesized list of communicative ethics (as presented by Richard L. Johannesen) that might serve as the tenets of a dialogic rhetoric. These considerations will all be reinforced in the following chapter by an examination of Martin Buber’s contributions to interpersonal discourse, and where his thinking contributes to or diverts from the established tenets.

I think it may be important to first assess the use of a few key terms that appeared in Chapter I and will persist through the remainder of the paper. These terms, as related to rhetoric, are “monologic” and “dialogic.” The first important distinction that I think needs to be made clear is that I do not wish to conflate the terms “monologic” and “persuasive.” I claim that not all persuasion is of the monologic sort, and that furthermore, persuasion is a necessary component of most communication. As explained in Chapter I, I do recognize that Athenian rhetoric has been commonly and unfairly classified as both primarily persuasive as well as monologic—that countless rhetorical scholars have considered rhetoric “instrumental, intentional, unidirectional, formulaic, and agonistic” (Anderson and Cissna 39). I hope to impress upon the reader that I do not see the terms “persuasive” and “monologic” as interchangeable. Persuasion may figure prominently in either dialogic or monologic rhetoric, and is often more subtly ever-present than we are willing to allow.
Characteristics of Monologic Rhetoric

In *The Human Dialogue*, Floyd Matson and Ashley Montagu offer that “the field of communication is today more than ever a battleground contested by two opposing conceptual forces—those of monologue and dialogue” (Johannesen et al. 47). That these terms appear so concretely dichotomized seems at first blush somewhat simplistic. Hopefully, by examination and support, we can consider how a chief distinction between these two concepts turns on consideration of audience. It may be easy to argue that both words could be understood by merely defining the range of one and allowing through abstraction the opposing qualities to define the other term. Regardless, the quote of Matson and Montagu serves as a fitting starting point to begin defining the terrain.

“Monologue” or “monologic rhetoric,” as maybe implied by the basic etymological structure, is unidirectional and considerate only of the speaker. It “moves in one direction, from speaker or message source to the listener or receiver, and the goal of communication is for the speaker to influence the listener” (Anderson and Cissna 40). Value for such communication is based in “its usefulness in getting others to do or think what one wants. Thus conceived, the most important aspects of communication are the skills and knowledge of the speaker” (Anderson and Cissna 40). A fitting sentiment for this type of rhetorical approach might be the abstraction made from the commonly received Aristotelian quote of “available means of persuasion,” to “whatever means possible” or even “win at all costs.” A monological rhetorical perspective sees each communicative exchange foregrounded as a competition from which only one disputant (and involved parties are almost unanimously ‘disputants’) can emerge victorious.

In the introduction to *The Interpretation of Dialogue*, Tullio Maranhão describes how the monologic has characterized epistemology traditionally as “the clash between
two ideas” and the subsequent “triumph of one over another” (1). The general upshot of this model is that the prevailing idea “won out” simply because it was more true, and the focus becomes a type of deified knowledge instead of a consideration of the actual process involved in selecting one idea over the other. The focus in such a rhetoric is taken away from intersubjectivity and given to a process of discursive violence. This model fails to consider the work of contemporary rhetorical scholars who advocate rhetoric as epistemic—as a generative force in its own right that conditions attitudes, assent for belief, and perceptions of other commentators/arguers. None of these conditions exist outside of discursive influence.

Monologic rhetoric is a common feature in politics, law, media, and very often, first year composition, among other realms. Its basis is in what linguist Deborah Tannen has termed “the argument culture,” which believes that

The best way to discuss an idea is to set up a debate. The best way to cover news is to find people who express the most extreme views and present them as “both sides.” The best way to begin an essay is to attack someone. The best way to show you’re really thoughtful is to criticize. The best way to settle disputes is to litigate them. (Emmel 91)

Accordingly, monologic rhetoric emphasizes “individual skills, linear and one-dimensional control, and the instrumental utility of communication” and thereby positions “the individual self, the speaker, as the center of the communication process (Anderson and Cissna 40).

Monologic rhetoric is the type normally invoked pejoratively (normally appearing as simply “rhetoric” or what Wayne Booth termed “rhetrickery”). It stands in for and maligns all of rhetoric with its problematic—but often useful and thereby even more dangerous—tactics. It makes for an easy straw man in the political arena, where any difference of platform can be brushed away as “mere rhetoric.” As Alain
Letourneau writes, in this possible act of brushing aside, what is lost is the possibility of progress:

In the identification of all rhetoric into manipulation and abuse, what is lost is the value of the rhetorical act itself. Such a move would be catastrophic on the practical level, because if argumentation is excluded, no public debate, and therefore no democratic life would be possible. We would go back to brute force, violence and constraint. The fact that some rhetorical abuse might and does exist can be seen as the main reason for proposing an ethic for argumentation (Letourneau 74).

To Wayne Booth, such a monologic rhetoric is ethically wrong because it challenges notions of community. In an ethical frame similar to Kant’s Categorical Imperative, Booth understands that a universalized monologic rhetoric would undermine the social order. Just as it “is ethically wrong to pursue or rely on or deliberately produce misunderstanding,” it is “right to pursue understanding.” Operating from the monologic position “creates non-communities in which winner-takes-all. To pursue mutual understanding creates communities in which everyone needs and deserves attention” (40).

As an important caveat, the problem with defining such terms is that these definitions cannot simply stand in for any communicative act regardless of context. For example, let’s imagine that we are in need of an item at the grocery store. We are having trouble finding the item, and we ask a store employee for direction, which the employee gives. We thank the person and proceed to find the item. In this instance, it would be easy to retrofit our definition onto the communicative act (asking for directions) and see this as a communicative attitude emphasizing the “instrumental utility of communication” and not true dialogue (Anderson and Cissna 40). However, this application elides the distinct rhetorical situation at play—one in which a fellow
human being is contributing to the social order by voluntarily standing ready to provide information to customers in need. There are aspects of this exchange that could arguably take on monologic tendencies, but the act of merely asking a person who has voluntarily entered into the role of someone to be asked shouldn’t, I think, qualify distinctly as monologism. In support of this consideration, ethicist Don Marietta recognizes that “some institutionalized communication transactions…do not ethically demand full dialogue” and that such interactions require at minimum “honesty and civility” (Johannesen 57). The strain of making all interactions on par with deep personal connection “would be intolerable” (57).

**Characteristics of Dialogic Rhetoric**

Kenneth N. Cissna and Rob Anderson in their “Dialogic Rhetoric, Coauthorship, and Moments of Meeting” outline a taxonomy of what dialogue (and directly, dialogic rhetoric) might be. They structure their conceptions as

- **dialogue 1** (the pervasive dialogic nature of human social life),
- **dialogue 2** (dialogue as a potential for human meetings), and
- **dialogue 3** (the facilitated dialogue that can improve organizational, community, social, and public life). (42)

While I think this is a fitting and helpful guide, I tend to shy from the idea of sequestering dialogue in three domains because a lack of confluence and overlap is implied. I see no problems with the proposed structure other than this—that it might suggest that these applications of dialogue are hermetically sealed from each other when this may not be the case. Considering the category of dialogue 1 suggests the Bakhtinian concept of dialogue (soon to be discussed) which sees all utterance as an infinite chain. This conception is one of ubiquity—for Bakhtin, you can’t operate outside of it—and as a result, any application of dialogue 2 or dialogue 3 will of necessity be also classifiable as dialogue 1. Also, dialogue 2 (as explained by Buber), is a form of
dialogue that can result in a genuine meeting, but resists control as an object itself. To Buber, such dialogue occurs by the happy meeting of grace and will. This shouldn’t however suggest that there isn’t a voluntary, willful dimension to achieving this dialogue, because there is, which might as a result indicate some shared space with dialogues. As a caution then, it may be wise to think of these categories as encircled by permeable barriers and not as strict and discrete classifications.

Pervasive of all dialogic rhetoric are characteristics outlined by Richard L. Johannesen, Kathleen Valde, and Karen Whedbee, and one important characteristic among them is authenticity. By authenticity, the authors mean that a dialogic communicator should be “direct, honest, and straightforward in communicating all information and feelings that are relevant and legitimate for the subject at hand” (55). Authentic communication is consciously directed toward what the audience seems to give assent to—not everything is fair game. Beyond this, authenticity in speech suggests that speakers avoid the façade of “‘seeming’ to be something we are not” (55). This ideal is not easy to enact within cultures that supremely value an appearance of stability and rationality. In determining what is appropriate for the rhetorical moment, an authentic speaker is concerned with the perspectives and needs of other participants as well as her own, and does not attempt to hijack the trajectory of discussion toward an end of her choosing.

Confirmation is a hallmark of dialogic rhetoric as well. The theories of Martin Buber will add significantly to this line of thinking, but for now, suffice it to say that by confirmation, I refer to the act of attempting to imagine the reality of the other’s viewpoint. Even if such a viewpoint differs wildly from the one we hold, it should be understood to be informed and grounded in a contingent reality probably equally as disparate from ours. This in no way requires an abdication of our rhetorical positioning,
not a sloughing off of belief or “sense of self,” but we “attempt to understand factually and emotionally the other’s experience” (Johanessen et al., 55).

The result of such inclusion is often a confirmation of the other—a moment in which we “express a nonpossessive warmth for the other,” and they are “affirmed as a person, and not merely tolerated” (55). Obviously, this confirmation of the other can at times seem nearly impossible to realize, especially in the face of intentionally hateful, harmful, or otherwise hostile discourse. Such confirmation becomes a matter of degree. If the person we meet seems to give assent for a reciprocal confirmation, then perhaps a true dialogic meeting can be realized. Many times, however, this confirmation can be realized only unilaterally. In such an instance, Johannesen, Valdee and Whedbee advocate that even though we may be “opposed...on some specific matter,” we confirm others in their “right to their individuality” and to “their personal views.” This confirmation should be rooted in the hope of generating a unique trust, where we can “affirm others as unique persons without necessarily approving of their behaviors or views” (55).

Again, such confirmation of radical hostility may seem unreasonably idealistic, given certain rhetorical situations. What I think is important is to include this more readily in our pedagogical discussions of rhetoric, especially if our focus remains on persuasion. It is unreasonable to think that we will always meet such a demanding communicative ideal, but its consideration and attempted application has the chance of impacting the rhetorical act. As Northryp Frye stated, attempts at such confirmation constitute a type of “genuine speech” which “assumes that the hearer is a genuine personality too—in other words, wherever it is spoken it creates a community” (334).

Presentness is a key concept to dialogic rhetoric. I would argue that the foremost consideration for presentness to be realized is direct access to the person—a direct, physical intersubjective space created in the act of two or more people interfacing in
real time. Given that the contemporary classroom space has been refigured to include pedagogical settings predicated on “distance learning” and a distinct absence of immediate presentness, this notion seems to ask the question if these meetings can be considered truly dialogic. In my closing statements, I want to come back to this idea of how Buberian “presentness” might figure into online and Web 2.0-based learning experiences. For now, let’s assume that presentness is also concerned with a concerted effort to grant full concentration—we could think of it in one sense as “nondistractedness.” Such presentness can happen in virtual environments (though not without distinct and particularly challenging sanctions) as well as in the face-to-face encounter. Presentness then becomes not just physical but mental access. It concerns our awareness of engagement, and whether or not we are according the person to whom we are speaking the requisite attention to actually see them as a genuine person.

For Fred Newton Scott, in “Rhetoric Redivida,” two major rhetorical traditions have “come down to us from ancient times,” and in his description, these broad categories could be reasonably interpreted as monologic and dialogic rhetoric. The tradition which I would classify as the monologic tradition, sees “the proper subject matter of rhetoric” as “persuasion or argumentative composition” (416). This tradition has been granted more attention, and Scott’s purpose in “Rhetoric Redivida” is to “enter a plea” for the latter tradition (a dialogic rhetoric), which recognizes the shared space of philosophy and rhetoric, and has at its heart a concern with “the social function of discourse” (416). Along such meta-statement lines, we may think of the major distinction between dialogic and monologic rhetoric hinging on the speakers’ awareness of the audience. This is not simply awareness in the empirical and observable sense, but awareness in the sense indicated by Northrop Frye when discussing “genuine speech,” which is speech that not only “takes pains” to ensure
lucidity, but “grows from a spirit of community” and “finds the speaker addressing the audience on a basis of equality stemming from shared humanity” (Johannesen 53).

What is missing from this consideration of dialogic rhetoric is a historiographic situating, which to my thinking would show connections between the dialogic tradition, feminist rhetorics, and comparative rhetorics. To adequately situate dialogic rhetoric within these confluent traditions is beyond the scope of this paper, and I am led to believe that the sort of “dialogic turn” seen in 20th century American scholarship may find its genesis in feminist and comparative rhetorics as well as in the educational reforms influenced by Dewey, Freire, et al. Hopefully, the characteristics outlined above can serve as an adequate starting place. With these in mind, I now consider two specific contributors to rhetorical scholarship from the 20th century.

**Bakhtin, Burke and the Dialogic**

Within this section, I hope to offer a cursory view of certain concepts of Mikhail Bakhtin and Kenneth Burke. This is not meant to be an expansive interpretation and application of these theories, but simply a visitation of ideas that arguably have some purchase in considering dialogic rhetoric. I visit these ideas now in anticipation of Chapter III, where I find direct connection with Martin Buber’s intersubjective theories.

For many, Mikhail Bakhtin is the discourse analyst most distinctly aligned with investigations into dialogue. In particular, two of Bakhtin’s major writings—“The Problem of Speech Genres” and The Dialogic Imagination—directly address dialogism, and a dialogic ethos encompassed Bakhtin’s work generally.

To Bakhtin scholars Gary Saul Morrison and Caryl Emerson, dialogue and monologue stand as “frequently misunderstood terms of Bakhtin” (Macovski 264). They claim that Bakhtin “uses the term ‘dialogue’ in various senses, “and he is not careful to specify which he has in mind on a given occasion, a lapse that has obscured his meaning” (Macovski 264). Shared by the various notions of Bakhtinian dialogue is
“the sense that [it] involves two or more distinct speakers, each with a special voice, a set of experiences, complex of attitudes, and outlook on the world” (Macovski 265). In an intersubjective sense, Bakhtinian dialogue is “shaped from the outset by both speaker and listener (whether present or potential).” All utterance is unavoidably presented to a “superaddressee’ and the orientation to earlier utterances on the same topic or using the same words” (Macovski 265). In this sense, all utterance responds to, refigures, and allows itself to be refigured by an infinite connection of utterances, and existing within this is an ideal audience, who is not necessarily a “mystical or metaphysical being” but “a constitutive aspect of the whole utterance, who, under deeper analysis, can be revealed in it” (Bakhtin, “Speech Genres” 126-127). Another aspect of Bakhtinian dialogue is primarily epistemological, and sees truth as “something that can only be represented by a conversation, as something that by its very nature demands many voices and points of view” (Macovski 266).

Key to the Bakhtinian conception of dialogue is that

Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere...Every utterance must be regarded primarily as a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word “response” here in the broadest sense). Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account. (Bakhtin, “Speech Genres” 90)

Bakhtin is discussing metalinguistic matters—the ways in which speech genres synthesize and inform each other by their mutual presence, and the ways in which discourse is an evolving amalgam, unfinalizable and multivocal. As Cissna and Anderson put it, rhetors then are charged to
...recognize that dialogic conversations resound with others’ voices beyond those of the participants. We come with cultures, personal histories, webs of relationships—in short, every person is entwined in myriad conversations, some of which inevitably will find their way into every conversation. Thus, never forget the coauthored and multivocal nature of conversation. (46)

Bakhtin’s metalinguistic conception of dialogue has direct purchase when considering the interpersonal, because an understanding of their importance could theoretically foster a sense of cooperative humility. This consideration of a Bakhtinian dialogic works to undermine myths that we as individuals are self-made, that our accomplishments can be fixedly isolated from the accomplishments, innovations, and overall groundwork of others. Such monologic thinking hermeticizes the individual beyond the cooperative act. By underscoring this, I don’t wish to suggest that understanding Bakhtin illustrates how we are all together in our ineptitude and unoriginality, but that we each have a definite stake in human progress and it has a stake in each of us. It allows the confirmation of the other, if we believe that to be a verifiable tenet of a dialogic rhetoric.

As an important aside, I find it interesting that Bakhtin’s ideas on dialogue (especially this metalinguistic aspect described above), are exemplified in a sort of dialogic lineage that conscientiously acknowledges the influence of Buber. Bakhtin affirmed that he thought of Buber as “the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century, and perhaps in this philosophically puny century, perhaps the sole philosopher on the scene.” Maurice Friedman, writing about connections between Buber and Bakhtin continued, explaining that although Bakhtin found figures such as Nicholas Berdiaev and Jean-Paul Sartre as excellent thinkers, for him there remained a difference between thinkers and philosophers. Bakhtin said, “But Buber is a philosopher. And I am very
much indebted to him. In particular for the idea of dialogue. Of course, this is obvious to anyone who reads Buber” (Friedman, “Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin” 2). Metadiscursively, the dialogism of Bakhtin serves as a dialog with Buber. In Chapter III I will go deeper into examining these two dialogic forms and their reflection/refraction of the other.

Kenneth Burke’s contributions to the field of rhetoric might arguably be considered dialogic, as they consciously transcend the standard speaker→listener paradigms. Burke’s analysis of rhetoric identifies it as a cooperative act—as a communication that requires effort. Two central ideas of Burke’s are those of “identification” and “consubstantiality.” In A Rhetoric of Motives, Burke explains that A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insomuch as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so. Here are the ambiguities of substance. In being identified with B, A is “substantially one” with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another...Similarly, two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an “identification” that does not deny their distinctness. (21)

Within this passage, we recognize that identification works on not only the level of recognizing inclusion within a discourse community, but possibly on the intersubjective level, where identified space is created between communicative participants without ceding the distinct positions or personalities of either. This is the stuff of community construction.
For Burke, identification stands in to offset the traditional rhetorical focus on persuasion—but not to replace persuasion, which he is careful to point out. Burke posits that identification has a sort of preserving feature, biologically. It is a natural consequence of individual human identity. Since we are biologically separate, in the strictest sense, we seek to overcome this separation by recognizing mutually shared interests, attitudes, values, life experiences, and this creates a social order.

As I interpret Burke, there exist a lower and higher order of rhetorical consideration. Within a monologic order of rhetoric exist “invective, eristic, polemic, and logomachy”, which are common and “pronounced...aspect[s] of rhetoric” (20). Although Burke doesn’t necessarily attach these attributes to Athenian rhetoric, I again reiterate that these are primary markers of such a rhetoric, fair or unfair as this might be. Also, these are the primary aspects of rhetoric often presented to new students in the field, serving to again reify a monologic model. Beyond this lower order is a “shift to a higher level of generalization” which “enables us to transcend the narrower implications of this imagery, even while keeping them clearly in view” (20). Again, Burke retains the position that we shouldn’t “deny the presence of strife, enmity, faction” as characteristics of rhetoric, or “close our eyes to their almost tyrannous ubiquity in human relations; we can be on the alert always to see how much temptations to strife are implicit in the institutions that condition human relationships” (20). In this sense, such eristic agonism tends to produce a dialogic rhetoric—gives it an impediment to overcome. “Identification,” Burke writes, “is to confront the implications of division.” A similarity then exists between these Burkean orders and Aristotle’s aretaic ethics—for Aristotle, courage cannot exist independent of fear lest it become foolhardiness, and in the Burkean rhetoric, identification cannot exist without the agonistic, lest it become a Pollyannaish naiveté, ultimately vacuous in the context of most human communication. Burke succinctly captured this paradox, saying that “If
men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (22).

The rhetorician must then “look beyond” the antagonistic lower order “to the principle of identification in general, a terministic choice justified by the fact that identifications in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression” (20). Burke remains consistently real-world on the matter, not advocating identification as a simplistic panacea for all communicative ills. He promotes that we be “frank about” the interdependence of the monologic order and the dialogic, reasoning that if such frankness “doesn’t convince,” that it will “at least serve another important purpose of this work: it will reveal a strategic resource of terminology” (20). For Burke then, characterizing the dialogic aspects of rhetoric might not be enough, but it is something. There is a virtue in the act of codifying these terms, presenting them, and allowing them to expand the scope of rhetoric. They offer a holistic rhetorical landscape and present the conscientious rhetor with a further range of considerations within intersubjective discourse.

According to Brooke L. Quigley, Burke advocates identification so that we learn to perceive at what points we are using and abusing language to cloud our vision, create confusion, or justify various and ever present inclinations toward conflict, war and destruction—or our equally-present inclinations toward cooperation, peace and survival. (2) Identification then can be reasoned, among other interpretations, to be the conscientious act of recognizing the full range of rhetorical purpose, offering a higher-order ethic to guide the rhetor. Identification is an ideal order of rhetoric, ever present yet capable of expansion, whose focus that we are as individuals apart, yet a part.
Outlining a Dialogic Rhetoric

Where in the beginning of this chapter, I highlighted characteristics of a possible dialogic rhetoric, I will now turn to Johannesen, et al., who synthesize eight “standards for sound and ethical rhetoric” (Johannesen 62) derived from Douglas Ehninger, Walter Fisher, Wayen Brockriede and Henry Johnstone, Jr. I will herein equate a dialogic approach to rhetoric with an ethical approach. As all eight standards in their entirety might run on for multiple pages, I summarize their list and offer some theoretical context. Such a move transcends merely describing dialogic characteristics, and gives us a dialogic heuristic to consider. For Johannesen, et al., dialogic rhetoric:

1. ... serves the ends of self-discovery, social knowledge, or public action more than personal ambition

As discussed in the first Chapter, this ethic may well be embodied in the image of Plato’s “Philosopher King” who, as a skilled orator, recognizes a sort of Utilitarian perspective of the civic good (however that may be mutually decided) as superior to personal ambition and striving.

2. ...avoids intolerance and acknowledges audience freedom of choice and freedom of assent

Also considered in Chapter I was a possible reconstruction of Aristotle’s intent concerning his infamous “available means” passage. Jeffrey Walker’s expansion of this claim allows Aristotle’s concept of available means to dovetail nicely with this second element, wherein the audience takes a stake in either determining their level of assent toward the speaker’s persuasion.

3. ... is reflexive in including self-scrutiny of one’s own evidence, reasoning, and motives

A recurring theme in the Platonic dialogues is that of finding the correct path, with a self-assured willingness on Socrates’ part to relinquish any wrong thinking for the best possible path. Whether or not this is an example of genuine maieutic process or not is debatable (by this I mean that since Plato’s dialogues appear in written form, the
correct path is unanimously predetermined, and Socrates is always walking it).
Regardless, this stands prevalently in the Socratic method as a central concept—a willingness to collaboratively examine through dialogue and questioning until the proper path is recognized.

4. … is attentive to data through use of accurate, complete, and relevant evidence and reasoning (validated by field-dependent tests for soundness)

This is an ethical concept already well-established within not only discourse for public scrutiny, but the instruction of writing at the college level, though sadly the scope of such a consideration is routinely narrowed to focus on the act of plagiarizing sources. To intentionally present lopsided or incomplete evidence is to objectify the other, and this undermines the social order as described by Northrop Frye.

5. … is bilateral (includes mutuality of personal and intellectual risk, openness to the possibility of self-change, and openness to scrutiny by others)

On this point, there is overlap with the third tenet, although these are not exactly the same concept in principle. This ethic is supported by Burkean identification—a personal need to hopefully effect a change in a communication partner should be reciprocated. In any communicative act involving two or more disagreeing parties, a speaker recognizes the desire for confirmation on all sides. Also, in the Bakhtinian sense, we recognize the other participants as conglomerate utterances themselves—as products of ideological forces that likely differ from the forces that made us, but with the consubstantial space that all our rhetorical contributions are contingent and constitutive.

6. … is self-perpetuating. Disagreement leaves possibility for deliberation on other subjects and tabling of the disputed subject for later revisitation

The idea of self-perpetuation implies a Bakhtinian meta-linguistic perspective. Our utterances serve to refigure previous utterance, be refigured by them in turn, and
also prefigure future utterances. Important here is a consideration of *kairos*—an ethical rhetor is able to allow a communicative impasse to be set aside for later consideration, with the understanding that other utterances might refigure or reshape an understanding of the disagreement. It reasons that additional context is often crucial to overcoming communication roadblocks.

7. ... *embodies an attitude of reasonableness, including willingness to present reasons in support of our views, tolerance of presentation of reasons by others, respect for the intrinsic worth of the other person as a human, and avoidance of personalizing the controversy*.

As Johannesen et al. contributed earlier in the Chapter, even in deep misunderstanding or disagreement, it becomes the responsibility of the ethical rhetor to still affirm the other participant(s) in their individuality and personhood.

8. ... *manifests a “logic of good reasons” that considers implicit message values and their appropriateness to the nature of the message, considers the effects of adhering to the suggested values, considers possible critiques of adhering to values presented*.

Through this principle, we take pains to understand the perspective of the audience and try to reason what the rhetorical situation gives assent to. Again, with this consideration firmly affixed, not everything is fair game for open discussion. Consideration is given to assent—what will be the possible outcomes of allowing certain lines of reasoning? For all parties, what stands to be lost or gained by assent?

**Conclusions from Chapter II**

In this Chapter, I have outlined certain characteristics of both monologic and dialogic rhetoric, in an effort to have some defined terminology from which to operate. In addition, Bakhtin and Burke have further grounded the dialogic discussion with their unique outlooks—Bakhtin’s recognizing dialogue’s ubiquity and polyvocality, and Burke’s covering the willed act of rhetorical identification.
In considering the fact that I have herein interpreted a rhetorical binary, with the monologic form standing in stark opposition to the dialogic form, it seems to me inadequate to think that such a simple taxonomy reflects the reality of most communicative situations. Such dichotomizing, says Alain Letourneau, “sheds some light on issues, but it proves not entirely satisfying” (75). Within the established taxonomy, monologue has been typified just as the other has, and both are thrown into relief by the characterization of the other:

on one side we will have authenticity, openness, inclusiveness of the other, completeness, relevance to the context, respect for the audience; on the other side, we will have manipulation, concealment or systematic deformation, the rhetor or arguer as unattainable...The persons are reduced to being objects. But in reality, things are much more complicated. The opposition between monologic and dialogic communication does not take into account intermediate situations like what happens in negotiation, working place communication, strategic communication, etc. It certainly does not take into account multiple strategies taking place in complex exchanges between organizational arguers. It also does not take into account historical and chronological perspectives, strategies for the middle and long term, all things that in practical settings really count. (75-76)

The major problem with outlining this system is that doing so is still reflective of the misinterpreted traditional rhetorical model—I have again staggered an opposition, set up an immoveable object and an irresistible force. Teasing apart monologue from dialogue in reality does little more than simply reify a model of agonism. We once again have a system of struggle, in which one conception is cast as wholly undesirable and the other as ideal, although Burke especially calls attention to even the
consubstantiality of monologue and dialogue. To further remedy this, I will now turn to the writing of Martin Buber, who within his model of interpersonal communication, above all recognized that “true existence is in meeting,” and that these meetings are manifold in purpose and necessity.
Chapter III: Martin Buber in the Dialogic Tradition

In this final chapter, I will first examine Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* for elements of dialogic rhetoric. The ideas presented within this primary text will be supplemented by other Buber texts, including *The Way of Man* and *Between Man and Man*. These readings will be further undergirded by critical interpretations of Buber’s work, namely from Maurice Friedman, Robert Johannesen, Rob Anderson and Kenneth N. Cissna, and Jeanine Czubaroff. Keeping the focus close on specific passages of Buber, I will also interweave these interpretations with comparisons to other discourse analysts discussed in prior chapters to show how the ideas presented work together, and where they might be at variance.

Meeting Martin Buber

Martin Buber was born to an Orthodox Jewish family in Vienna, 1878. While still young, his mother left the family, and in the resulting family crisis, young Martin was sent to live with his grandparents, Solomon and Adele Buber. Solomon Buber was a well-known scholar and editor, and it was in this household that Buber became something of an aesthete. From an early age, Buber took on an interesting preoccupation with languages, learning not only Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, and German, but also, eventually, Greek, Latin, English, French, and Italian. It was through living with his grandparents that Buber encountered perhaps the three greatest widely known influences on his personal philosophy, empiricist Immanuel Kant, and existentialists Frederic Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard. Buber’s scholastic interests ranged far, and throughout a broad range of formal study in various locations in Austria and Germany, Buber studied literature, poetry, psychiatry, linguistics, philosophy, and ethnopsychology. These interests offered him an impressive theoretical pool from which to draw, and has also subsequently painted Buber as a person who is resistant to titles.
Buber is known to many people as many different things. Buber scholar Adir Cohen writes that Buber’s “mind ranged wide and inclined him no less to creative and practical activity than to theoretical speculation.” Buber was one whose “restless intellect left its mark on an impressive variety of disciplines. Anthropological philosophy and theology, sociology, and Zionism all fell within his scope” (Cohen 11). Such “wide-ranging” often made him the target of academic critics who enjoyed the distinct classification and separation of disciplines. Cohen writes that Buber’s exceptional scope...inspired more anxiety than admiration among the technocrats of learning, and his audacious encroachments on so many of their terrains...opened up Buber to the charge of having dissipated his intellectual energies and courted superficiality. (11)

Buber’s entrance into various disciplines, however, should not be interpreted as a prodigal use of his mental energy, but as an indication of the dialogical inclination at the heart of everything he did. “Having all of his life hearkened to the call addressed to him by the Thou in man, society, and the universe, Buber could hardly have confined his thoughts to a modest compass” (Cohen 11). For Buber, fragmented professionalization was a source of anxiety, and represented “scholarship set spiritually adrift” which tended to lead to a sort of human enslavement to purely mechanical laws (Cohen 11).

It would be a mistake to assume that Buber wasn’t a serious scholar or that he undervalued scientific research. On the contrary, he was a dedicated scholar who recognized the usefulness of logic and the ways of science, but merely “refused to regard these as the ultimate values and exclusive tools of learning” (Cohen 12). His thinking and approach to philosophy was an arguably healthy amalgam of both the analogical and the logical, and at the core of all he did “was a call to dialogue
demanding of each of us receptive and profound personal engagement in the quest for our existential confirmation in the existence of our fellow man” (Cohen 11).

Among his various accomplishments, Buber is probably best remembered for four general things, 1) reviving interest and opening scholarship on Hassidism and Hassidic narrative, 2) his German translation of the Hebrew Bible (with Franz Rosenweig), 3) his advocacy later in life for a bi-national Jewish-Arab state, and 4) his theories of dialogue, most recognizably embodied in his 1923 book *I and Thou*. This last element is crucial to the reasoning of this thesis, and it may be important to first offer a brief anecdote to understand Buber’s dialogic impulse.

A common story told by Buber is one that many scholars attribute as the defining moment for his resulting focus on dialogue and intersubjectivity. As the story goes, Buber had been in meditation late one morning, when he had a visit from an unknown young man. This was not uncommon for Buber, who was often sought out at his home as a sort of oracle or sage. Buber made a habit of meeting callers, time allowing, and he welcomed the young man in to his home. Although Buber met him graciously and altogether warmly, he recognized later that his own intention was not so much on conversing with the young man, but of returning upstairs to finish his meditations. Buber claimed that he himself was not

there in spirit. I certainly did not fail to let the meeting be friendly, I did not treat him...remissly. I conversed attentively and openly with him—only I omitted to guess the questions which he did not put. Later, not long after, I learned from one of his friends—he himself was no longer alive—the essential content of these questions; I learned that he had come to me not casually, but borne by destiny, not for a chat but for a decision. He had come to me, he had come in this hour. What do we expect when we are in despair and yet go to a man? Surely a presence by means of which we are
told that nevertheless there is meaning. Since then, I have given up the “religious” which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken. (Buber “Between Man and Man” 13-14)

According to Buber’s acquaintance, Aubrey Hodes, what Buber learned was that the young man who had called had shortly thereafter taken his own life. Buber continued, saying

Do you see what that means? He came to consult me in the hour of his deepest need. He came to ask me whether he should choose life or death. I talked to him openly. I was sympathetic. I tried to answer his questions. But I answered only the questions he had asked me. And so I failed to see through to the man behind the questions. And why did I fail? Because that morning, before his visit, I had been filled with religious enthusiasm…then this young man came to see me. And it “converted” me because it showed me that there could be no division between the life here and the life beyond. (Hodes 10-11)

For many scholars, from here was born Buber’s unique focus on the immediacy of interpersonal dialogue. The religious zeal that had formerly directed his thinking had now been focused on the terrestrial, the quotidian, and it became for Buber the only place to ever “meet” anything such as God.

Dialogue at the Heart of I and Thou

Probably no work of Buber’s is better recognized than I and Thou. First published in Europe in 1923 as Ich und Du, it arrived in the United States first in a 1937 translation as I and Thou. It became probably most well known by the Walter Kaufmann translation, appearing in 1970 after the insistence of Buber’s family for a new and better English translation. Although Kaufmann allowed the title to remain unchanged from
the 1937 translation (for the sake of recognition), he replaced all uses of “thou” within the text to “you.” As he explains in the introduction to his translation,

I-You sounds unfamiliar. What we are accustomed to is I-Thou.

But...Thou and You are not the same. Nor is Thou very similar to the German Du. German lovers say Du to one another, and so do friends. Du is spontaneous and unpretentious, remote from formality, pomp, and dignity. (Buber, “I and Thou” 14)

“Thou” for Kaufmann was a problematic construct that invoked God above man, and this subverts Buber’s focus on the immediacy of everyday interpersonal relationship. I mention this to note that all subsequent references will appear as Kaufmann’s translations, always substituting I-You for I-Thou.

Central to this short yet dauntingly mystifying text is the concept of the word pairs hinted at in the title. Buber explains that I-You and I-It constitute the “two basic words [man] can speak”. These basic constructs “do not state something that might exist outside them; by being spoken they establish a mode of existence” (“I and Thou” 53). What is foremost important about this introduction is the ontological essence of discourse. The words and manner of address which we call upon in interaction are not inert and value-neutral artifacts, but by their invocation work to transcribe subjectivity. Rhetoric is accorded a generative force—we come into being only in the realm of the interpersonal; it is what gives us our “selfness,” and the selected discursive habits and ethics of communication constitute our “I-ness.” The focus for Buber is ultimately on the non-verbal as well as the verbal, but diction plays a special role. As Paul Mendes-Flohr writes,

Buber...instinctively resisted the conclusion that language is merely a necessary social convention or at best expressive of inner feelings. Despite
all doubts, language for him remained a precious and indeed sacred vessel. (12).

“Basic words [I-You or I-It] are spoken with one’s being. When one says You, the I of the word pair I-You is said too. When one says It, the I of the word pair I-It is said, too” (“I and Thou” 54). For Buber, the general utterance is not only an outward address or expression in a vacuum, but also establishes the ethos of the utterer. It becomes then important to understand how the distinctions between I-It and I-You have come to be interpreted—what is entailed when one “says You” or “says It.”

Buber continues, saying that “There is no I as such but only the I of the basic word I-You and the I of the basic word I-It” (“I and Thou” 54). Buber is herein refuting a solipsistic, isolationist view of existence in which individuals are ultimate, untethered agents. He asserts that we frame our existence in relation to things and/or people, and this framing is informed primarily by our communicative interactions. “When a man says I, he means one or the other [You or It, accordingly],” Buber continues.

The life of the human being does not exist merely in the sphere of goal-directed verbs. It does not consist merely of activities that have something for their object. I perceive something. I feel something. I imagine…want…sense…think something. The life of a human being does not consist merely in all this and its like. All this and its like is the basis of the realm of It. But the realm of You has another basis. (“I and Thou” 54)

The “realm of the It” then is object-oriented, overly technistic, instrumentally-focused, crass-humanist, impersonal, and contains at its heart a sort of rationality-run-wild.

An I-It relationship is characterized by monologism and instrumentality. At its very worst, it is intentionally manipulative, abusive, cynical, coercive, or deceptive. “It” ranges from this egregiously negative conception to less intentionally-exploitative modes (and even positive, empathetic modes), but what I-It shares across all
incarnations is objectification, mental ownership of the object invoked, and an exclusion to consider the self as audience to another “I.” It is “characterized by self-centeredness, deception, pretense, display, appearance, artifice, using, profit, unapproachableness, seduction, domination, exploitation, and manipulation” (Johanessen 47). In such a monologic I-It mode, we are concerned with how we appear above the discourse between us. In a soft form, this is often the value ascribed to Athenian rhetoric, and Buber instantly desires to challenge this static and unilateral interpretation of communication.

The realm of the I-You experience is fundamentally different:

Whoever says You does not have something for his object. For wherever there is something there is also another something; every It borders on other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering on others. But where You is said there is no something. You has no borders. Whoever says You does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation. ("I and Thou" 55)

Central to the I-You is Buber’s idea that “relation is reciprocity” ("I and Thou" 59). The I-You is described as “unmediated” ("I and Thou" 62), without conscious purpose, greed, or anticipation ("I and Thou" 63). It is an experience of Burkean consubstantiality, wherein “particulars” are subordinated to what is shared ("I and Thou" 61). Such a communicative act does not have a prefabricated teleology—discourse is allowed to proceed as it will and in itself is not an object to wrested and repositioned ("I and Thou" 63). It is an innate “longing for relation” that becomes a “true meeting” when it is reciprocated by both parties, although I-You can occur unilaterally, regardless of differing communicative perspectives ("I and Thou" 78). As Johanessen et al describe the I-You relationship, it is characterized by “mutuality, open-heartedness, directness, honesty, spontaneity, frankness, lack of pretense,
nonmanipulative intent, communion, intensity, and love in the sense of responsibility of one human for another” (52).

In defining the I-It in contrast to the I-You, I have again come full circle to the monologue/dialogue model created in Chapter II. For Buber, the separation of these two forms of relating is not always possible. To understand this, I cite Jeanine Czobaroff, who notes that Buber identifies two ontological movements which underlie the meeting or relating which is at the heart of being human. The first movement, “distancing” or “setting at a distance” is a presupposition of the second, relating or “entering into relationship.” (170)

Czobaroff continues, saying that “once the human being experiences the self and other as separate, opposite, and over-against each other” (or what we could arguably define as an objectified, individualizing I-It relation) “s/he experiences the desire for entry into personal relations” (171). In such a turn, associations to Burkean ideas of identification and consubstantiality become immediately apparent. Along with Buber, Burke also posits that illocution then become the means to connect identifications. “Not surprisingly, “speech”...is the human being’s primary means of establishing contact and coming to an understanding over situations” (Czobaroff 171). So from this we see that often the I-You encounter can arise only as a result of objectification or I-It experience. I-You is born of recognizing distinctions between and among. Inversely, the I-You can lead to objectification—when our acceptance and mutuality begins to enter a prideful sort of obsessive love of ownership. The ontological relationship, established through dialogic meeting, is always in a state of flux.

This...is the sublime melancholy of our lot that every You must become an It in our world. However exclusively present it may have been in the direct relationship—as soon as the relationship has run its course or is
permeated by means, the You becomes an object among objects, possibly the noblest one and yet one of them, assigned its measure and boundary. (I and Thou 68)

The dichotomizing of I-It and I-You into discrete categories, similar to the monologue/dialogue dyad constructed in Chapter II (which may be insufficient, given the exigencies of boundless rhetorical situations), is one of the fundamental misunderstandings of I and Thou. Buber doesn’t dismiss the realm of I-It as categorically pernicious. Freidman explains that

Buber really meant these dyads as ideal types; he did not mean for us to choose one or the other. That is why it has always been a complete misunderstanding of the [I-You] relationship to imagine that Buber thought it was possible or desirable to have only the I-Thou, or that he saw the I-it as evil in any way. He saw as evil only the refusal to return to the Thou, but not the “It” itself. (Friedman, “Human Sciences” 5)

I-It and I-You are only two distinct means of interfacing which are also represented across a range of interpretation. There is not simply one or the other, but as Figure 1 (see below) indicates, have broad application encompassing a spectrum of interaction.
Both the I-It and the I-You are not only necessary for life and the generation of understanding, but the I-It is completely unavoidable, whereas the I-You is always possible but not guaranteed. The I-You then becomes a communicative sociological ideal, one that is evanescent and difficult to trace. Perhaps it can best be recognized by noting some of its key descriptors.

**Buber’s Dialogic Rhetoric: Audience, Presentness, Confirmation, and Mutuality**

Within his I-You rhetorical schema, Buber advances the idea that if we make an utterance, “we ourselves become the object of a summons” (Cohen 35). At any rhetorical situation, then, Buber advocates that wittingly or not, a speaker (whether initiator of discussion or not) is also concurrently an audience. Such a conception undermines the traditional understanding of rhetoric as a linear pronouncement, involving the simplified trichotomy (most commonly represented in a triangle) of speaker/message/audience. Buber’s simple expansion of the rhetorical model brings to mind Jeffrey Walker’s translation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* from Chapter I, where, posing a stipulative definition of rhetoric, Walker allows that one translation would acknowledge Aristotle’s willingness to include the audience within an active dialectical mode of joint meaning-making. “When the burden is placed on the listener to become a partner in the rhetorical exchange by determining what he or she will give assent to,” writes Barbara Emmel,

rhetorical exchange becomes very different indeed. The paradigm becomes much more balanced: it is no longer a matter of individuals’ learning how to wield power and coerce agreement, an aggressive act. It becomes instead virtually a civic matter, for each individual to learn to recognize what might constitute reasonable and just grounds for agreeing
As Maurice Freidman explained, “What is essential [in the I-You experience] is not what goes on within the minds of the partners in a relationship, but what happens between them” (“Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin” 25). The realm of the between then makes the fine distinctions of speaker/audience insufficient. All participants are envisioned as speakers and audience concurrently. To my experience, this is an interestingly different notion than what is often taught regarding rhetoric. The focus within the Athenian rhetorical model is perpetually upon the speaker—what the speaker can do to influence the audience. Within Buber’s schema, a rhetor is invited to consider her role as an audience to another as a role concurrent with that of speaker. Considering yourself as the audience of an address is a fitting consideration for rhetorical exchange, and it is one that is not too often called out.

In becoming the object of a summons, as Buber describes, we become enacted in what we might think of as a Bakhtinian polyvocality. Utterance brings us into a rich dialogic past, a present, and allows us to prefigure future utterance, to which we will also reflexively become audience. This seems a shared discourse between Buber and Bakhtin, and for Maurice Freidman, “It is not surprising that Bakhtin uses Buber’s terminology and shares his emphases, for Bakhtin was deeply influenced by Buber. Bakhtin had already read Buber when he was in the gymnasium (“Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin” 25). Freidman asserts that the relation between Buber and Bakhtin is more obvious and prevalent than any of the literature on Bakhtin cares to make it. And I maintain here that these ideas are confluent, though not identical. For Bakhtin, utterance was, among other things, a meta-linguistic entrance into a larger dialogue—one to which the utterer has been audience for some time, and to which she will remain audience.
An authentic, dialogic meeting for Buber is also characterized as an attempt between participants to set aside categorical limitations of kind—a confirmation of the subjects. It transcends the objectifying tendencies of the I-It relationship, and in doing so, attempts to loose itself from the moorings of potentially limiting associations and ideologies. “When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things” (“I and Thou” 59). In such a moment, associations and biases are subordinated to meeting the You on their terms, allowing them to be unbounded. “He is no longer He or She, limited by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities” (“I and Thou” 59). This is not to say that a communicator is blind to the situatedness of the You being addressed, but response to the addressed You is not bound by social or cultural sanctions. An audience is allowed to be what they are, as well as be what they will become. “The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between the I and You…no greed and no anticipation” (“I and Thou” 63). Existing outside of anticipation, such a dialogic rhetoric strives toward ateleology. This is not to say that persuasion does not occur, but a fixed end is never assumed. Assent and direction are created organically and collaboratively in a sort of communicative utility that seeks to best answer the various needs of the communicative stakeholders.

Envisioning others in their unique situatedness is “the mystery at the heart of dialogue,” often what Buber referred to as the “coincidentia oppositorum, or coincidence of opposites” (Freidman, “…Human Sciences” 4). For Buber, this is the fundamental ability of communicants to confirm each other in their uniqueness without the need to cede identity for the sake of dialogue. Dialogue could occur, and occurred wholesomely, when those communicating were able to recognize their separateness or distinction, and allowed this tension to keep the rhetorical situation energized. Buber
recognized, as well as anyone, the difficulties associated with such an act. He understood that it is in differentiation that strife also can arise, dependent upon people’s tendencies, but that the noble ideal of meeting was always possible, if grace and will allowed. As Buber said, the objectifying I-It was necessary, but not sufficient: “…in all the seriousness of truth, listen: without [I-It] a human being cannot live. But whoever lives only with that is not human” (I and Thou 83). Freidman writes that in Buber’s philosophy,

confirmation is interhuman, but it is not simply social or interpersonal…the confirmation of the other must include an actual experiencing of the other side of the relationship so that one can imagine, quite concretely what another is feeling, thinking, perceiving, and knowing. (“Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin” 26)

Such inclusion “does not abolish the basic distance between oneself and the other,” but is “a bold swinging over into the life of the person” (“Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin” 26). Confirmation of the other is key to the dialogic exchange and is how Buber distinguishes between “dialogue,” in which I open myself to the otherness of the person I meet, and “monologue,” in which, even when I converse with her at length, I allow her to exist only as a content of my experience” (Friedman, “Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin” 26).

Seymour Cain writes that Buber’s insistence on meeting with others in their uniqueness is the “height of realism” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 136). “Insisting that we address real beings in their actual concrete situation, not treat them as…stereotypes or remote abstractions—which are outside the realm of address and response” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 136). As mentioned, such meeting does not preclude the chances of hostility or conflict. These remain included even in a dialogic moment, and this is commonly witnessed today. The upshot of such a genuine meeting
though is that it “steers us away from the demonization of the other person, nation, religious community, or socio-political party, from the dehumanization of our adversaries, of those who differ with us” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 136). True dialogic encounter, in granting such humanity, dismantles “abstract reductionism” often incurred as a result of allegiances and affiliations.

Aubrey Hodes wrote that Buber once told her, “I believe in people. If I trust someone, we can work together to make our ideas concrete. But ideas cannot change anything themselves. They have to be shown to be true. And only people, living human beings, can do that” (Hodes 18). To Buber, concretizing abstractions is the province of discourse, and it is a process predicated on trust, which is generated through dialogue. Rhetoric becomes generative, and communicative encounter is the only epistemic force. The central idea of Buber’s theories is the ontological claim that “all actual life is encounter” (“I and Thou” 62), or what is characterized as the I-You meeting.

Philosopher Nathan Rotenstreich once critiqued Buber’s dialogic theory as not being concerned with content—that verbalization was only ancillary to the true meeting, and that the confirmation suggested was of another sort. In response, Buber said “No, I am very much concerned with content, but the content is not a general content” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 10). The content important for Buber in rhetorical exchange was contingent, situated, and dually-meaningful. In keeping with the tenets of a dialogic rhetoric explored in Chapter II, Buber’s thought dovetails well with Johanessen et al., who claimed that within an ethical dialogic framework, assent is mutual, and ethical dialogicians recognize that not any topic is fair game. For Buber, the importance is “again and again a unique content, a situational content” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 10). This is again part of the act of confirmation—the confirmation itself is not entirely something that a rhetor can bring prior to the
interaction itself, but is witnessed within the communicative act, and generated by their reactions to an incomprehensible and evolving set of rhetorical sanctions.

Also key to defining a Buberian dialogic rhetoric is the idea of presentness (which fittingly coincides with elements of dialogic rhetoric as delineated earlier). True meeting is done with the “whole being,” and “all that but a moment ago floated playfully through one’s perspective has to be exterminated….Whoever commits himself may not hold back part of himself” (“I and Thou” 60). This is an austere form of devotion to the rhetorical situation, but for Buber, it is crucial to an authentic “meeting.”

Buber’s idea of presentness transcends the mere spatial relation, i.e.: being corporally within the immediate sensory range of another, and begins to take on a meaning of intensity, hyperfocus, or “flow,” coupled with the habit of respectful, thoughtful, and reciprocating attentiveness. Such present intensity characterized not only Buber’s explanation of the possibility of I-You, but also his interpersonal interactions. Buber’s friend and student Aubrey Hodes explained that

Whatever Buber did was done intensely. This does not mean that he was dour and earnest. He laughed often. But when he laughed he laughed intensely. When he drank a cup of tea he drank and enjoyed it intensely. To see him read a letter that had just arrived in the post was an education: the eyes, the mind, the memory, the entire acute person responding to the new situation, to the stimulus of the unexpected question. (16)

Buber would often not offer calling guests refreshments, as this became something that he felt distracted from the possible dialogue. “He taught me to live in what he called the given moment,” Hodes wrote,

but we could do this only if we lived intensely in the moment through which we were passing and did not use it for halfhearted actions or speech…What counted for Buber was the sincerity and impulse behind
one’s actions, which could often be more meaningful than the objective quality of the action itself. (16-18)

Within the rhetorical act, what counted for Buber was this close attention, a personal dedication to the rhetorical moment and interhuman encounter, and an awareness that allowed the communication to be unsanctioned by ulterior preoccupations. This again was likely influenced by Buber’s early story of the young caller whom Buber felt he failed due to his casual inattention.

This respectful and consecrated presentness is likely the key factor involved when Buber’s philosophy entertains the idea of whether or not an I-You meeting is possible between a human and some non-living or at least non-reciprocating “subject”. Buber writes in a memorable passage of I and Thou about enacting just such a meeting with a tree. In Between Man and Man, Buber spoke of this form of relation, the one in which “a worker can experience even his relation to the machine as one of dialogue” (37).

Such an abounding, intense, and focused dialogical presence lends itself to not only rhetorical exchange, but pedagogical contexts, as well as rhetorical methodologies and scholarship. Kenneth Cissna and Rob Anderson acknowledge that “the study of dialogue calls for somewhat unconventional methodological moves” (44). With this acknowledgment, Cissna and Anderson, in a dialogic fashion, allowed their “methodological approach to emerge from…encounter with the texts themselves, rather than applying a predetermined methodology” (45). Such a move eschews a template approach, which imposes a pre-existent external frame on an interpretative work, instead of allowing the work itself to dictate which approach might work best. A dialogic principle then, fitting for both our own work and classroom instruction, is to suggest allowing the text to participate in determining a critical methodology.
Cisna and Anderson also suggest six additional Buber-inspired methodological approaches, 1) to avoid lionizing the text (seeing it as sacrosanct and beyond external influence), 2) experience a text in multiple modalities and pursue a dialogic relation to it, 3) never forget the coauthored and multivocal nature of conversation, 4) attend to relevant contextual information, 5) recognize and admit your own humility within the research process, and 6) pursue dialogically-oriented coauthored projects (47).

This is a unique feature of a Buberian rhetoric, where the focus turns not just to the content of the speech act, but to the engagement of the interlocutors—and Buberian rhetoric then takes into account not just verbal exchange, but all action. The possibility for dialogue is present in every moment, oftentimes waiting to respond to our level of dedication and willingness to be completely present.

The concept of mutuality is also a hallmark of Buberian dialogic rhetoric. In an interesting passage of *I and Thou*, Buber lauds Socrates as someone who ideally sought the mutuality of the I-You, although it was not always realized. Buber writes how beautiful and legitimate the vivid and emphatic I of Socrates sounds!

> It is the I of infinite conversation, and the air of conversation is present on all its ways, even before his judges, even in the final hour of prison. This I lived in that relation to man which is embodied in conversation.

(“I and Thou” 115).

Though praising Socrates’ dialogism, Buber seems to here be imagining an idealized Socrates (one who remains veiled behind the Socratic problem), and not necessarily all of the Socratic iterations as appearing in Plato’s dialogues. Buber later wrote in a letter to Robert Maynard Hutchins that although he venerated Socrates, he was against a purely Socratic method as a pedagogical heuristic. To Buber, “Socrates overvalued the significance of abstract general concepts in comparison with concrete individual experiences” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 19). He also found that
Socrates’ dialogic form was “certainly no full partnership,” due to Socrates conducting his “dialogue by posing questions and proving the answers he received untenable; these are not real questions; they are moves in a sublime dialectical game that has a goal, the goal of revealing a not-knowing” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 19).

Freidman writes that Buber held Socrates in esteem for his insistence on going to people, trusting them and meeting them often on their terms, and never suspending dialogue with them. Freidman explains that for Buber, Socrates’ insistence on dialectic at the cost of dialogue often cast him as an essentially “monological thinker whose dialectic, even when it brings in other people, is little more than a moving forward through the opposition and interaction of different points of view.” The focus is not on the interaction of “really other persons” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 19). And in this way, Socrates often fell short of what Buber would define as authentic mutuality.

Buber then saw Plato’s rhetoric as a sort of dialogic attempt at dialectic—it had the trappings of true mutuality, but ultimately remained shackled by its predeterminations. In summarizing Buber’s stance on the distinction between dialogue and dialectic, Freidman writes that

*Dialogue* recognizes differences and never seeks for simple agreement or unanimity. *Dialectic*, in contrast, begins with the categories of “the same” and “the other,” but excludes the reality of “the between” and with it the recognition of real otherness as that which can be affirmed even in opposing it. (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 21)

In *Between Man and Man*, Buber writes that “the life of dialogue is no privilege of intellectual activity like dialectic. It does not begin in the upper story of humanity. It begins no higher than where humanity begins” (35). Within dialogue, there are to Buber no “gifted or ungifted,” simply “those who give themselves and those who withhold themselves” (35).
On the topic of mutuality, there is other shared space between Plato and Buber, and that is in the recognition that effective rhetoric and true meeting occurs most normally on a mutual one-to-one basis. The first indicator that Plato believes this is witnessed by the style of his dialogues—their actual form. Richard Weaver’s interpretation of the *Phaedrus* offers that this dialogue represents a view equating noble love with noble rhetoric. Unique to this Platonic dialogue is the dialectic exchange involving only two participants. Although unique, we see in most Platonic dialogues a close focus on two interlocutors at a time, for general purposes. Socrates typically will converse with one other person until that interlocutor has run his course and fades to the periphery, sometimes offering rejoinders, but not necessarily sharing the locus of discussion again with Socrates. Each interlocutor is also seemingly persuaded of Socrates’ arguments, and this is done through direct dialectic involvement, one-on-one engagement. Plato routinely equates effective communication as an art that, like medicine, investigates “the nature of the person whom she treats and the cause of her proceedings” (*Phaedrus* 122). The focus is always uniquely on mutual discussion between two people, although this discussion is typically a unilateral exchange in a guise of bilaterality.

For Buber, effective communication was possible within the setting of oratory, but was most meaningful and special in the mutual encounter between two people. For Buber, “Genuine conversation is most often found in the dialogue between two persons…” (Freidman, “Life of Dialogue” 87). It is exchange in which “each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them” (Friedman, “Life of Dialogue” 87).

As a fitting end to this Chapter, I hope to summarize the ontological/relational nature of Buberian dialogic rhetoric by turning to a seemingly unrelated source.
Arabella Lyon, in an excellent essay concerning Confucius’s *Analects*, speaks of the primacy Confucius gave to authentic, dialogic relationship—what we might think of as I-You rhetoric—and the danger of using “glib speech”—what we might think of as I-It rhetoric (Lipson and Binkley 136). The discourse of “dialogic relationship” as epistemic is a discourse that has travelled, in this case, from Confucius’ *Analects* to Buber’s *I and Thou*. As Lyon writes, what was important was “Not entertainment or power in speaking, but the person’s relationship to others [as] his source of human knowledge, self-cultivation, [and] a society based on care ethics....” Lyon then offers a wonderful reconception (attributed to Roger des Forges) of the Cartesian “I think, therefore I am,” as “We relate, therefore we are” (Lipson and Binkley 136). This broadened and dialogic ontology succinctly captures the ethos of Buberian dialogic rhetoric—“we relate, therefore we are.” Our existence is predicated on our relating, and our subjectivities are shared and generated in the congress of language.
Chapter IV: New Space, Additional Considerations, and Thesis Conclusion

New Space

There are many areas that extend beyond the scope of this thesis that warrant consideration, and there are various additional opportunities created within the rhetorical study of Martin Buber.

As mentioned in Chapter II, to more expansively detail a dialogic rhetorical ethic, it would perhaps be wise to fully trace the historiographic roots of the dialogic discourse as related to, informed by, and co-interested with feminism(s). Buber’s theories have been the study of feminist rhetorics (Rose Graf-Taylor’s “Philosophy of Dialogue and Feminist Psychology” and James Walter’s *Martin Buber and Feminist Ethics*, to name a few), and there remains ample room for consideration within various contemporary feminist projects. One area where such studies might continue is in Buber’s claim that within the I-You experience, full participants become unbound by objectifying pronouns (no longer She or He bound by others of the same type). While this hints at a sort of egalitarian ideal, a feminist perspective might find reason to expand, challenge, and/or integrate Buber’s philosophy.

Within new media studies, Buber’s thought could create consideration of the role of the teacher within the expanding and continually reconfigured classroom space—a space that is becoming daily more cyber through the ever-popular options of distance learning and online education. For Buber, the educator stands in a unique position to enact what he termed an educational “communion.” Buber often talked about the guild model of education as an ideal learning context—one where student and master shared labor, and learning proceeded informally as well as formally (Cohen 33-34). In light of this, Web 2.0 might offer interesting reconceptualizations of Buber’s thought, especially regarding the possibility of an interesting and ironic sort of presentness between teacher and students that formal classroom learning might not be able to provide. In addition,
questions of cyber ethos could offer interesting insights when seen through a Buberian lens. That the classroom space is daily becoming more cyber is also interesting in light of Buber’s theories, which might suggest that for a true dialogue between teacher and students, that the dialogue occur in these cyber discourse communities, or wherever the student feels most at ease. This is a Buberian ideal—meeting the other on their terms and in their space, offering concession concerning the literal topos of discussion.

The field of comparative rhetoric also offers additional scholarly avenues for Buber studies. One such area would be investigations of Hassidic rhetorical traditions, research of which currently seems to be scarce. Buber’s thought also positions itself uniquely between what philosophers David Hall and Roger Ames have termed first problematic thinking (which is analogical, relational, and largely acausal) and second problematic thinking (which is primarily logical, objectifying, rational, and casuistic). Indeed, Buber’s I-It and I-You wordpairs seem to correspond interestingly with these observations of Hall and Ames, and beyond this, his distinct dialogic approach occupies a space that is at once both logical and analogical, or to quote Hall and Ames, both forms of thinking seem “importantly present” (xv).

As explained, the scope of Buber’s philosophical enterprise was broad. Subsequently, his thought lends itself well to not only various subfields of rhetorical study, but also linguistics, sociology, law, and ethics, among many others. His work represents a rich field from which to draw, and there are many areas as yet untouched.

**Additional Considerations**

“I am no philosopher, prophet, or theologian,” said Martin Buber at the age of 80. Buber was constantly hailed as a philosopher and theologian, and many zealous admirers claimed him to be a prophet. Buber, however, thought of himself as “but a man who has seen something and who goes to a window and points to what he has seen” (Dew 1). In light of the rhetorical variables examined here, it is telling that Buber
conceptualizes his place as such—one who is simply pointing to something outside of himself. In this subtle didactic gesture, Buber indicates that what is crucial to his concept of the I-You and I-It wordpairs is that they remain only communicative possibilities which are a sort of linguistic ontology. What they are not, however, is deontological. Buber was not suggesting a moral imperative, only showing an existential, communicative ideal that was worthy of individual examination.

John Stewart and Karen Zediker, in their article “Dialogue as Tensional, Ethical Practice,” label Buber’s dialogic philosophy as “prescriptive,” stating that it is “an ideal to be striven toward or a goal to be achieved” (227). In critique of this position, I agree with Cissna and Anderson, who state that the label of “prescriptive” “does not tell the whole story” (41). Although Buber did of course hope that dialogue could occur more frequently, he recognized that dialogue and monologue were necessary complements and that true dialogue occurred with spontaneity and the meeting of both grace and will. What one can do is advocate inward reflection about communicative habits, hold the discussion (the dialogue) about them, indicate the possibility, but not prescribe, in the strictest sense. For Buber, “true norms demand not our obedience but ourselves” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 6). He “did not reject command; what he rejected was command as universal” (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 7). The imperative to allow moments of true-meeting through dialogue was not an absolute normative command, but a freely followed ideal that can be modeled by unilateral dialogue, hopefully to germinate into a bilateral meeting.

Buber, in a move resonating with a dialogic reciprocity which allows the audience their motivations and inclinations, is not claiming that it is the duty of any individual to seek out the relational I-You encounter. In this marked way, Buber deviates from the second formulation of the Kantian categorical imperative, which binds an individual seeking authentic life to treat others as an end in themselves, not as
a means merely. Buber, in a pragmatic turn, recognizes that we will inevitably treat others as means, and we do this quite often. But this should in no way elide a relational ideal, founded largely in part on a communicative ethic. As described then, Buber’s system itself maintains a dialogic rhetorical ethos vis-à-vis other rhetorical systems, and in another interesting connection with Aristotle, suggests an aretaic and virtue-based ethic as opposed to a duty-driven ethic. Within Buber, however, is not a set of commandments, imperatives, or a blueprint for true living, but a discussion about its possibility.

In response, there are other voices—the cynical voices that read Buber and other rhetoricians advocating communicative ideals and dismiss them as impractical, outmoded, burdensome, naïve, and foolish. Such detraction is common, and will persist. Buber was often charged with dabbling in endless abstractions, but those who study him earnestly seem to discover the opposite. Aubrey Hodes wrote that “anyone who thinks of [Buber] as an abstract mystic has either not read him or has not understood what he read” (15), and Friedman claimed that “while Buber was a great scholar, he was also the most concrete person that I have ever known, and he insisted on concreteness in those he talked with” (“...Human Sciences” 3). Such concreteness was founded upon Buber’s focus on the quotidian, not on religious idealism or a prescriptive set of religious principles through which we gain the favor of man or God. His philosophy sought “hallowing the everyday,” primarily the interhuman relation established through authentic dialogue (Friedman, “…Human Sciences” 8). The cynical voices will persist, but Buber’s philosophy remains as well, as a field of study ready for overturning, depending on what one values. To begin the discussion, even if ultimately it proves useless, is a worthwhile endeavor.
Conclusion

Central to this thesis, I hope, is the concern of what is taught—what I know I have taught, what I have often witnessed as being taught—concerning rhetoric. And it is not simply the content of the teaching that is of interest to me, but where the discussion begins and where it is directed. I understand in principle that rhetoric is fundamentally more than the study of available means of persuasion—that it often transcends containment within a triangle or any other geometric pattern, that it shares a commonly overlooked lineage with poetic, and it applies to more than simply advertisement and essay writing. I know as well that most contemporaries hold similar views. Yet, for all my belief and theoretical backing, there often remains a theory-practice divide with the model of rhetoric that becomes perpetuated in my classroom and the classrooms of others.

Like it or not, educators ought to understand that value is implicit in all educational experiences. Value rides each exchange, and I maintain that beginning the discussion of rhetoric in its usual topos (Athens, Plato, Aristotle), while beneficial, can’t but ultimately resort to a unilateral focus on persuasion in a limited speaker→audience dyad. What I hope I have been able to accomplish by surveying the field of dialogic rhetoric, and Buber in particular, is to have some new places from which to begin the discussion, by hopefully locating the discussion on the importance of not only the message to be transmitted, but an abundant concern with the audience, and an awareness of the audience in oneself. Buber’s work serves to undermine the traditional persuasive focus of rhetoric by presenting ideas about reconfiguring the audience, offering yourself with genuine attention and requisite concern, and focusing closely on selected diction and behavior—which define us—while maintaining a mental assessment of the mindset of the other participant(s). Buber may also depart radically from other discourse analysts in his insistence on presentness and mutuality as
practicable, necessary, and improvable rhetorical strategies. These are things that I have never taught explicitly in the classroom, often assuming that students bring some sort of communicative ethic to the classroom. But I feel that it may be necessary to be more explicit about such discussions within the classroom—what do we value in interaction? What do we owe our audience? What do we owe the speaker? In exchange, do we think of ourselves as audience to someone else? Do we have a duty to attempt mutuality, compassion, presentness? Do our discursive practices truly indicate our essence? How so?

It may be a feature of the western tradition (second problematic thinking) to desire a tight heuristic for application—it may still be an overwrought tendency to get at the heart of the thing. What I have done within this thesis is largely discuss a possibility. I have herein outlined no pedagogical exercises for application in the classroom. I have not quantified or collected data for a summary interpretation of a phenomenon. I have not claimed to have solved any problem or proposed any solution. But hopefully from these investigations, I can begin to formulate a new locus of discussion for the introduction and practice of rhetoric within the classroom. I believe that it is within the classroom that students will be introduced to ethical communication, and nowhere else. Certainly, tacit understanding of communicative respect and consideration may be gained from other opportunities, and in the professional world, legal sanctions and codes of conduct will help some students to opt for an ethical mode of discourse. But I am certain that the composition classroom is a unique space, and in a way, the only space, to interweave the discussion of ethics and language. Martin Buber stands in this space as an example of a communicative ideal situated in the very real and very present now. To discuss the ways we succeed or fail in hallowing our interaction with others is worthy of our pedagogical focus.
Works Cited


