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Definitions

For those new to the study of invention, this brief introduction of some key terms will set the stage for a fuller elaboration of these terms in the later chapters. Definitions are also to be found in the Glossary in Chapter 6.

Classical Terms

Many of our rhetorical terms come from the Greek and Roman rhetoricians. Aristotle defined rhetoric as a *techne* (art), characterizing an art as the knowledge of principles and strategies to guide a complex activity like rhetoric. He thought of it as a faculty of the rhetor (speaker or writer), who used it to guide his discoursing and a practice that could be studied and taught. Because this knowledge was used to produce something that affected others, it differed from that learned in science or philosophy. Aristotle argued that those who learned and practiced an art were better off than those who only engaged in the activity unguided because the former knew why they were doing something and could teach the art to others.

Invention was one of five terms used by Aristotle to characterize the parts of the rhetorical process. The other terms were *arrangement*, *style*, *memory*, and *delivery*. Inherent in the notion of invention is the concept of a process that engages a *rhetor* (speaker or writer) in examining alternatives: different ways to begin writing and to explore writing situations; diverse ideas, arguments, appeals, and subject matters for reaching new understandings and/or for developing and supporting judgments, theses and insights; and different ways of framing and

verifying these judgments. The acts of invention often occur intensely in the early phases of writing but can continue throughout the composing process. As this volume will demonstrate, throughout rhetorical history as well as in the twentieth century rhetoricians have held different views of what constitutes invention.

One of the earliest terms deployed by the Sophists (fifth century BCE theorists and teachers of rhetoric) was *kairos*, a term never subsequently translated into Latin or other languages. The term, meaning “the right moment; the right place,” characterized an appropriate situation in which rhetoric could occur. Because rhetorical discourse was always tied to a specific time and place in contrast to philosophical or scientific discourse, which were thought to transcend concrete circumstances, it was important that the very initiation of discourse be “right.” As Chapter 3 illustrates, scholars have differed over what “rightness” meant for the Sophists and other rhetors, as well as whether the rhetor could interact with or control *kairos*. In the later Greek period and especially the Roman period, the terms *stasis* (Greek) and *status* (Latin), also never translated into English, named a strategy to determine the starting point of discourse. Assuming that discourse began with an issue, rhetors used this strategy to determine the point at issue, deciding whether it was a question of fact, definition, or value and then pursuing one of these. Notice that this strategy initiated the discursive process with a question to answer or a conflict to resolve, not with a judgment or thesis already at hand. *Status* has been deployed not only in rhetorical history but also in current writing and speaking.

Another important term, *dissoi logoi*, represented the Sophists’ epistemology of probability—that there were two contradictory propositions on every matter. They argued these two sides of a matter, relying on the situation to determine the just or unjust, the truth or falsehood, and making decisions on the basis of *kairos*.

Aristotle also identified topics (*topoi*), lines of argument and categories of information that were effective for persuasion, listing and grouping these topics so that they could be taught to others. Aristotle listed two broad types: 1) twenty-eight common topics (lines of reasoning) that could be used for any types of discourse; and 2) special topics, categories of subject matter that provided content for specific types of discourse, such as political (deliberative), judicial, or ceremonial (epideictic). Rhetors thereafter could peruse these lists of possi-

bilities, selecting some to help them investigate their own subjects. The difference between the topics and *status* is that writers can choose many topics from these lists, while they have to select only one of the alternatives in *status* to follow. Aristotle not only created lists of topics but also analyzed the structures of rhetorical reasoning. In contrast to philosophers and scientists, who used deduction or induction as strict ways of reasoning, rhetors had their own yet parallel ways of reasoning: the enthymeme and the example. Using the enthymeme, the rhetor started with a premise that came from the audience and then reasoned to a probable conclusion. The example, an extended narrative or elaborated case, also yielded probable conclusions.

Modern Terms

Since the 1960s, a number of new terms have emerged. Some of the most common will now be defined. The term *epistemic* when connected to rhetoric means the construction of knowledge through discourse. In the 1960s, scholars like Robert Scott argued that rhetoric creates knowledge, not just transmits it and gives it effectiveness. Related concepts are the situatedness of knowledge (limited to a particular context) and the probability of knowledge so generated. Probable knowledge, which falls between certainty and mere opinion, is supported with good reasons and evidence. Since Greek times, rhetoric has always functioned in the realm of probability. In the process of establishing a discourse's probability, the rhetor uses warrants, lines of argument that connect a starting premise to a conclusion, often implicitly. In *Uses of Argument*, Stephen Toulmin referred to warrants as rules, principles, inference licenses, or practical standards that show how data bear on a claim.

Another term that emerged in the 1960s was *heuristics*, the study of the processes of discovery. Psychologists characterized heuristic thinking as a more flexible way of proceeding in creative activities than formal deduction or formulaic steps and a more efficient way than trial and error. They posited that heuristic strategies work in tandem with intuition, prompt conscious activity, and guide the creative act but never determine the outcome. Heuristic procedures are series of questions, operations, and perspectives used to guide inquiry. Neither algorithmic (rule governed) nor completely aleatory (random), they prompt investigators to take multiple perspectives on the questions

they are pursuing, to break out of conceptual ruts, and to forge new associations in order to trigger possible new understanding. Heuristic procedures are thought to engage memory and imagination and are able to be taught and transferred from one situation to another. While students typically use heuristics deliberately while learning them, more experienced creators often use them tacitly, shaping them to their own styles. Richard Young, in "Toward a Modern Theory of Rhetoric," posited: "There are two different (though related) kinds of heuristic: a taxonomy of the sorts of solutions that have been found in the past; and an epistemological heuristic, a method of inquiry based on assumptions about how we come to know something" (131). Young has defined the process of inquiry as beginning with an awareness and formulation of a felt difficulty followed by an exploration of that unknown, then proceeding through a period of subconscious incubation to illumination and verification (*Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* 73-76). Others have referred to illumination as insight, which Bernard Lonergan defined as finding a point of significance, reaching new understanding. He explained that insight comes as a release to the tension of inquiry and is a function of one's inner condition or preparation.

Two of the prominent sets of early heuristic procedures were the Tagmemic Guide and the Pentad. Richard Young and Alton Becker developed the "Tagmemic Guide," drawing on the tagmemic linguistics of Kenneth Pike. Young suggested that writers explore their problems for inquiry guided by nine directives based on viewing their issue from three perspectives: as a particle, a wave, and a field and noting their subject's distinctive features, range of variation, and distribution in a network. Kenneth Burke developed the Pentad originally as a guide for the interpretation of texts within his theory of dramatism, which views language as symbolic action. Compositionists, however, began using the Pentad to explore their subjects to produce texts. The Pentad helps the writer to seek five motives of any act: scene, act, purpose, agent, and agency and to generate their ratios, the interaction between two terms. Later Burke added a sixth term, *attitude*, and argued for the importance of circumference, the surrounding situational context. In addition, Burke introduced the notion of terministic screen, the discursive medium through which we know things but which blinds us from knowing other things.

The use of hermeneutic practices, methods of interpretation, as invention goes back to St. Augustine's rhetorical analyses of biblical

texts. As a counterpoint to heuristics, hermeneutic practices of various kinds have been advocated for rhetoric: 1) using topics, tropes, ideologies to interpret texts, convincing others of the truth of their explications (Mailloux); 2) engaging in invention as questioning not *what* but *why*, following clues and hints as to where meaning is localized, and participating in Heidegger's understanding of "truth as a happening in human existence" (Worsham 219); and 3) performing dialogic, open-ended, and non-systematic acts in a paralogical rhetoric (Kent 1989).

Terms from Poststructuralism, Postmodernism, and Cultural Studies

The rise of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies (see the Glossary, Chapter 6, for discussion of these three movements) has introduced new terms that bear on invention. The term *intertextuality* signifies the interdependence of texts as sources of their meaning. James Porter identified two kinds of intertextuality: iterability (the inclusion of parts of one text in another, e.g. quotations) and presupposition (the assumptions a text holds about its readers, subject matter, and situational and cultural context) ("Intertextuality"). Another phrase, *signifying practices*, describes the characteristic means by which a community produces and analyzes meaning. Such practices are influenced by the dominant ideology. As applied to invention, *signifying practices* refers to those inventional strategies that are typical of particular peoples and communities. Another important term for invention is subjectivity, used by postmodernists to characterize not only the means of self-knowledge but particularly the amount of agency or control writers have over their writer positions. They replace the term *self* with *subject*, which they consider fragmented and not unified, changing, and constructed by dominant ideologies (systems of power that govern beliefs in what is real, what is good, what is desirable, and how power should be distributed). A related phrase is *cultural codes*, signifying practices that govern the ways people fashion their subjectivities and interpret experiences.