Voices on the Horizon: A Theory of Ludic Rhetoric

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VOICES ON THE HORIZON:
A THEORY OF LUDIC RHETORIC

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
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December 2019
ABSTRACT

VOICES ON THE HORIZON: A THEORY OF LUDIC RHETORIC

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Dissertation supervised by Ronald C. Arnett, Ph.D.

Voices on the horizon: A theory of ludic rhetoric begins with the assumption that rhetoric and play offer hope for cooperation and community in a fragmented and divided world. Rhetoric and play share an intellectual trajectory in the history of ideas. The earliest use of the terms rhetor and rhetoric in the Western tradition encouraged playful cooperation. The move toward reason and science during the Enlightenment relegated rhetoric to mere techniques for persuasion and silenced alternative avenues for seeking truth. Reclaiming traditional rhetoric as a meeting place for potential negotiation and cooperation encourages constructive civic discourse. The conclusion of this dissertation proposes that attention to the play of rhetoric in the history of ideas opens the possibility for teaching rhetorical theory as an appreciative praxis for the enrichment of others in discourse and encourages cooperation over consensus. This is ludic rhetoric.
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Chapter 1: Play in the History of ideas

Play concepts and rhetoric are at the center of collaboration, competition, and cultural competency. In *Gods and Games*, David Miller interrogated Gadamer’s use of play metaphors and concluded that in Gadamer, play is “a matter of creative imagination and the creative artist is a player” (1636). Miller’s analysis of play according to Gadamer is “Very American!” Gadamer’s comment is at the heart of the most general issue of prejudice in research. It exposes how presuppositions work into the fabric of understanding. The problem with Miller’s construction of play, Gadamer declared, is “English” (Miller, “Forward” vii). The inadequacy of English to translate the German term “speil” leads many Americans or English users to think of play narrowly as fun and games. *Speil* in German is imbued with meanings not accessible in a single English word. In English play is a verb and game is a noun. Gadamer explained that in German the term *speil* means both. Gadamer described the tension of bolts on a bicycle wheel between prohibiting and allowing it to spin, the “wheel has to have some play in it” (Miller, “Forward” vii). Play/speil is an expansive term in German and can broadly express space and the in-between, both literal and figurative. Play is “leeway…, as in a bicycle wheel, a little space, some distance, in relationships, in ideas,…in life…so that the wheel will turn” (vii). Play is the movement between ideas; play is space; play is ground; play is wiggle room.

The in-between nature of play helps examine the movement of concepts and the formation of knowledge. Play lives in the imagination where self-awareness ties to free exercise of ideas. The first chapter of this dissertation details the pervasiveness of play in the history of ideas from the earliest writings of Homer to the ancient Greeks. Miller
showed how play concepts transitioned from physical to rhetorical. He drew on the work of Huizinga and Caillois to support the seriousness of play (799). The collective notion of play links to Kant’s free-play of ideas. Play is both internal and external; it forms our awareness of and sense of self through engagement with others.

Play metaphors encourage new discoveries of self. Existential phenomenologists “have become…fascinated” with the structuring properties of play. Miller explained that this turn in philosophy draws from “the possibility that the ‘play’ metaphor could contribute significantly to the human understanding of the structure and form of meaning in the contemporary world” (1605-1607). He divided the contemporary approach to play into two groups: Kantian “aesthetic-ontological” and a hermeneutic Gadamarian “cosmic-ontological” approach. The former considers uses of the “concept of ‘play’ for theorizing about the basic philosophical (i.e., ontological) nature of works of art and their place in human meaning” and the latter theorize about play and the ontology “nature of the world and man’s place in it” (1608-1613). Each approach unites around communication and the turn toward language in philosophy.

1.1 Play in the history of ideas

Rhetoric and play establish a fertile ground for hope in a fragmented and divided world. The interplay of rhetoric and play in Homer’s epics amplify the significance of rhetorical theory in the ancient world. A key point in contemporary Homeric scholarship is that the received text reveals a literate bias. The original stories survived orally over generations as fragments used for specific purposes for specific occasions. The literate bias grounded much of the work occurring at the same time in biblical hermeneutics. The Iliad reveals a notion of rhetoric and competition that emphasize meeting and gathering;
it was only later that the competition grew to mean contest over rather than contest with others. This change affected the nature of rhetoric in scholarship and academia. Reclaiming the originative meaning of playful competition opens new ways to understand rhetoric and persuasion as standing together. Attending to rhetoric and play in Homer’s text reveals competition as a meeting place of others in a competitive spirit for and with each other.

Play and rhetoric converge at important moments in the history of ideas. The opening section explores the history of rhetoric by considering fragments of theoretical construction evident in The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer. A survey of play metaphors in Homer adds a new way to understand rhetoric in history and contributes to strategies to teach persuasion and argumentation. Communication technologies employed to protect and promote collective memory and instruction reveal rhetorical theory in practice.

Attending to play can help bring to light a rhetorical theory and practice at the foreground of Homer’s epics. What emerges is an expansive notion of both persuasion and rhetoric not limited to competition and control but as a site of potential negotiation and cooperation. I conclude that ludic rhetoric sustains culture and provides an additional way to engage students in the classroom.

Rhetoric, hermeneutics, and play circulate through interrelated moments of tension in Western thought. In early Western texts, when skill in battle defined the heroic ideal, play was characterized as violent and combative; play metaphors drew on images of war and conflict. As ideals of violence dissipated, play metaphors softened and inclined toward intellect and pedagogy (Spariosu 6-10). Each of these moments of play reveals rhetorical thinking. Play concepts in ancient thought followed the shift from
physical prowess to rhetorical/intellectual skill. Initially, play metaphors described battles and warfare; as Hellenism progressed toward democracy and relative stability, we see play tied to education and children’s games (Miller 61; Spariosu 11). Homeric epics attest to a transforming culture, from war to peace, couched in play metaphors. The bard shifts from combat and “overtly martial” themes in The Iliad to a “more domestic” orientation in The Odyssey (D’Angour 294). This section reviews the history of rhetoric in the performance of the Homeric epics. The performance initially occurred in song.

The Iliad is the oldest extant text in the West and demonstrates the urgency of rhetoric and hermeneutics as the bonding element of culture. The songs of Homer demonstrated a communication technology employed to preserve, protect, and promote values, attitudes, and beliefs. The long history of preservation of the epics themselves from the pre-literate days, through the initially cumbersome process of writing, to the advent of the printing press, and beyond demonstrates the significance of the texts. Homer’s epics literally have survived the test of time.

Traditional scholarship places the origin of rhetorical theorizing in Sicily circa 476 BCE by the legendary Corax and Tisias. Others point to a much later date, but attempts to date the origin of the field obscure meaningful fragments preserved before prose (Enos xvii). The “process that leads to the development of rhetoric” is more important than “pinpointing” a particular date (Enos xvii). Refiguring concepts of preserving collective memory and instruction uncovers a rhetorical richness already evident in Homer.
1.2 A Rhetorical Companion to *The Iliad*

The *Iliad* is one of the two great epics of ancient Greece attributed to Homer. Along with *The Odyssey*, it promoted, preserved, and protected culture and cultural memory. The stories, motifs, and gods provided a touchstone and referent point for community. Homer’s epics were history. The events described occurred in The Mycenae Age approximately 1100 BCE. They provide a glimpse into a world before alphabetic writing. Kept alive in an oral tradition, the first recordings appeared in approximately 800 to 600 BCE. Although Homer’s epics are the oldest surviving texts, they record a long tradition of oral stories. The stories themselves begin *en media* res and much is presumed to be already understood by the audience. The event of the performance mattered. The action of the story is couched between visits by the Greek god Hermes, the god who gave humanity the alphabet and interpreted the messages of the gods. Hermes both precedes the initial action of the story and brings it to an end.

The epics record events from more than three thousand years ago, nearly half a millennium before writing. They have much to tell us about the role of rhetoric and play in the perpetuation of culture. Richard Enos in *Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle* contended that these ancient texts are still important for rhetorical scholars today. The Homeric texts maintain “unique status” in the Western world because they are “massive and monumental” and they are the “first, the oldest, and the archetype” (Havelock, *LR* 150). Frobish suggested that *The Iliad* served as the “cornerstone of Western philosophy” (16). The rhetorical tradition in Western culture was born in the songs of Homer, but much of the work interrogating the communicative issues originated in classics departments in American universities (Havelock, *Literate Revolution* 151). Attention to rhetorical theory
and communicative issues embedded in the Homeric epics is growing in the field (Beck 155; Knudson 38-77; Havelock, *LR* 150-153). Rhetorical theories from *The Iliad* may then be seen as an important aspect of the Homeric “social encyclopedia” not just for what they say about culture but what they tell us about the nature of rhetoric and hermeneutics at the time the stories were recorded (Havelock *Muse* 58; *Preface* 61-86). Scholars across disciplines claim academic lineage to Homer’s epics, “but their contributions to the history and development of writing and rhetorical theory have received far less attention” (Enos 21). Rhetorical thinking is evident throughout many ancient Greek narratives. Frobish in *Rhetoric Review* contended that rhetoric scholars have much work to do with Homer. Here I attempt to draw attention to the moments of play in Homer to explore how the earliest sources of rhetoric may be an additional resource to teach rhetoric and persuasion in the contemporary classroom. The next section introduces touchstones of rhetorical significance in Homer’s epics beginning with a brief summary of the epic tradition and important elements from the narrative.

1.3 An Epic Journey

The term “Epic” itself proves witness to the influence of Homer. The original meaning of *epic,* as used by early Greeks, meant simply a narrative song sung to a specific rhythm, dactylic hexameter. Sound, rhythm, and music played a central role in ancient Greek thought. Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson suggested that music was “the heart of Greek culture, and was often indeed synonymous with culture” (1). Epic gatherings established, promoted, and preserved community. Music was the center of cultural life and led to growth of temples, rituals, and cities. Epic performances were communal activities that involved audiences and performers. *Mousike,* slightly broader
than our sense of the word music, implied the union of song, dance, and word. It played a vital role in every aspect of culture. From individual work and learning to structure and development of the polis, mousike “may well have been the first Greek cultural practice that produced systematic descriptive and explanatory accounts of itself” (Murray and Wilson 12). Murray et al described the communal orientation of music that helps bring together rhetoric, hermeneutics, and play. First, music exists as an ethereal connection between all members of a community. People become united in music. The muses, daughters of the goddess of memory, were the gods of music and knowledge. Epic performances were social gatherings. The invocation of the muses was a call to a communal memory; epics recreated and created shared memories. Audience and performers experienced the epics in collectively and creatively. The performers and audience experienced the music together in a playful and communal way (Murray 1-5). The central feature was the coming together as community. So, the first communicative issue broadens the scope beyond the lyrics to an aural indicator of sound and rhythm; the music was a message. The medium mattered. Through the gatherings and performances, culture developed, grew, and survived.

As the influence of Homer’s epics grew, heroic themes and long journeys gradually evolved as defining characteristics of an epic. The cumulative meaning of epic as used in classics and literature departments today draws from the significance and persistence of Homer. A text that predates Homer, the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, is so named because the archeologist who uncovered the fragments found it similar to the stories of Homer (George 1-3). It is called an epic because “it is a long narrative poem of heroic content and has seriousness…and pathos…” (George 1). The Sumerians did not
have a term for epic or make any distinction between various narratives (Nagarajan 108).

The Western tradition is so influenced by Homer that an epic came to mean a long poem with similar content to Homer.

Homer’s epics are a glimpse into history before the introduction of writing. They are the oldest literate recordings of the fullness of oral collective memory and point to fragments of philosophy and rhetorical theory under construction. Epics functioned as primary sources of culture for the early Greeks and continue to influence thinking today (Ford, Epic Traditions 33). The songs provided examples of how to act; they were a unifying structure of knowledge and teaching (Frobish 16-19). Homer’s work supported the longevity of culture as it endured from one generation to the next.

Homer demonstrated multiple levels of rhetorical theory and practice. Ideas that later become codified appear fluid in the presentation of The Iliad. We can identify fragments and concepts that underscore Richard Enos’ contention that “[r]hetoric did not originate at a single moment in history” (xvii). Homer’s epics attest to a growing theory of rhetoric; attending to moments of rhetorical theory helps uncover “an evolving, developing consciousness about the relationship between thought and expression” that locates the origin of rhetorical theory in the mists of prehistory (Enos xvii). Our distance from the originative expressions of the epics obscures our view.

That The Iliad still exists is a feat of rhetorical survival. Rhetorical practices employed to maintain the narrative indicate a pre-historic birth of our discipline; communication technologies engaged to perpetuate knowledge through the epic narratives involved imaginative capabilities linked to multiple academic disciplines from Art History (Snodgrass 12-31) to Zoology(Sachs 17-23). The medium participates in the
meaning. Ong pointed to significant distinctions between sound and visual communication when he famously wrote, “[s]ound exists only when it is going out of existence” (Ong, *Orality* 31). Sound is ethereal. Much of Ong’s work helps identify slippages and transmutations of meanings during the “slow drift” from orality to literacy. He unpacked interior effects of words on a page and showed how writing disengages from “dynamic” meanings in sound. An important configuring aspect imported to narrative meaning through writing are the quantifying and limiting implications of letters and words. Ong explained how the introduction of the alphabet isolated meaning, the adaptable “phonetic alphabet…” reduces “sound to visible form” (Ong, *Orality* 90). Considering how language use becomes distorted by writing, he explained that interpreting words orally restricts “words to sound” which in turn actually “determines not only modes of expression” but “thought processes” (Ong, *Orality*, 33). Extending Ong’s aural construct to broader reaches of music brings multiple important rhetorical concepts to the foreground. A simple shift in inquiry from oral culture to song culture elevates the importance of music.

Songs utilize a variety of rhetorical techniques to preserve content. The oral nature of the originative songs ties to a variety of rhetorical issues. Murray et al (11-12) explained performance encouraged interaction; engaged audiences and performers helps establish the ground for a cooperative rhetorical theory based on mutual respect (Meyer 390-391). Walter Ong pointed to a distinction between oral and literate cultures that sheds light on a playful gathering of people in oral traditions lost in literacy, “Writing fosters abstractions that disengage knowledge from the arena where human beings struggle with one another. It separates the knower from the known” (44). The struggle
yields engagement. Oral communication personalizes messages and heightens the relationship between performer and audience. Importantly, the role of the epic singer is not only performative but interpretive. Attending to the experience of epic as an engaged musical performance highlights the cooperative aspects of rhetoric.

Oral performance of the epics stressed experience. The oral nature of the epics before literacy is an important theme to understand the points of contact between the oral tradition, hermeneutics, and play. Epic singers invented, interpreted, and performed with, to, and for audiences. The performance brought together singers and audiences in the act of interpretation and invention. “By keeping knowledge embedded in the human lifeworld, orality situates knowledge within a context of struggle” (Ong, Orality 43). The struggle, Ong contended, appears “agonistic” to literate audiences (44). Communicative ground overwhelms agon/contest as the event of epic. The competitive orientation thrived not attached to winning, but to gathering. As literacy crept into the Greek world, the type of contest shifted, but a playful agonistic orientation remained. The oral nature of the Iliad in pre-literate society adds layers of complexity to the meaning and composition of the text and the relationship between performer(s) and the audience. Epic singers both challenged and collaborated with their audiences in the generation of meaning during performance. Ong explained that “Proverbs and riddles are not used simply to store knowledge but to engage others in verbal and intellectual combat” (Ong, Orality 44-46). The event of an epic performance then, is much more participatory and less stable than a single recorded event with the audience muted. Attending to the relational variations involved in epic performance uncovers multiple connections between rhetoric, hermeneutics, and play.
The oral nature of the transmission of epics ties rhetoric and hermeneutics to play in at least two distinct ways. First, the interactive experience between audience and performer establishes an “agonistic tone” that was “central to the development of Western culture” where “they were institutionalized by the ‘art’ of rhetoric” (Ong 44-46). Contests between rhapsodes came to highlight the games at festivals (West, “Rhapsodes” 3-10; Nagy, Plato’s Rhapsody 8). Rhapsodes sought “audiences at events where crowds were gathered for other purposes, such as public festivals” (West 1). The competitive gathering of epic performance preserved the community. Rhapsodic competition underscores the first building block of a ludic theory. The second block is added by Gregory Nagy, a classics scholar from Harvard University. He showed how the rhapsodes, even though competitive, worked together. The epics were a community effort emphasizing the gathering of performers. Nagy’s work was built on the theories developed at Harvard University by Milman Parry. He detailed a variety of intersections relevant to this study. Importantly, he explained the significance of understanding the oral nature of composition tied to a community of imaginative rhapsodes composing while performing (Plato’s Rhapsody 8-21). The competitive spirit and the cooperative spirit are not at odds, “But if the performance as a whole was a collaborative effort that does not exclude…” competition (West 3-5). Rhapsodes, playfully promoting and preserving culture, provide layers of textual evidence of ludic rhetoric attested to in The Iliad.

Multiple levels of play theory converge with rhetoric in performance. The text of The Iliad was fluid and the singers both recited and composed in performance (Knox 14). The performers played together; they composed together and they competed. Nagy pointed to Plato’s account of rhapsodes competing in the Ion and suggested that oral skill
is a sign of cultivated arête, “we see here the virtuosity of making mental connections in a competitive situation,…an agon” (Plato’s Rhapsody 25). Ford added subjective experience and rhetorical agency. He pointed to Plato’s account as evidence of the significance of the role of the rhapsode not only as performer but interpreters (“Performing Interpretation” 35). Ford uncovered a broader agonistic sphere where the rhapsode is empowered and creative. Rhapsodes engaged in creative and imaginative work cooperatively in performance, attested to in Plato’s Ion, bolsters the evidence for a ludic rhetoric in the Homeric corpus, at least until Plato.

Attention to the experience of an epic performance introduces a host of substantive communicative issues. The nature of song and music in ancient Greece uncovers multiple arenas of play and new ways to understand rhetoric in the history of the humanities. Greek civilization was recorded in epics, “It is only thanks to writing that we can study what we call, in a significant divergence from the Greeks, their early ‘literature.’” They are valuable texts, but the classification of these early songs as literature eschews much of the meaning (Ford “Letters” 22). Important substantive ideas are lost when songs are reconceived as poems and “almost certainly omit music, and it certainly lacked dance or gesture, to say nothing of costume, and such potent intangibles as the tenor of a maiden’s or a boy’s voice” (Ford, “Letters” 23-24). The meaning of the songs moved beyond the words to include the moment of expression and the reaction of the audience. Simply reading words essentially vacates meaning, “Thus, when songs were reduced to words on a page…they sacrificed a wealth of appeal and significance” (Ford “Letters” 24). The original performance of the songs implied a playful connection with the audience (Ong 44). The singers collaborated with the audience as the music
progressed. The response of the audience was not a distinct separate action but the completion of the meaning. Emphasizing song tradition moves performance into a ludic rhetorical space. Performative issues highlight the connections between rhetoric and play by bringing the relational connections together as both a gathering and a competition. Although persuasion is not the only element of rhetoric in *The Iliad*, important ideas are drawn from a persuasive perspective.

1.4 Persuasion, Arête, and the Epic Hero

Homer’s epics indicate a playful and collaborative potential for persuasion. Persuasion exhibits multiple characteristics in *The Iliad*. The first is competitive, a battle of wits. Homer shows that persuasive force is an important aspect of arête, even for warriors. Achilles, the greatest warrior and the ultimate hero of *The Iliad*, achieves the fullness of hero only through rhetorical skill. He cannot be persuaded; he is a rhetor; he is a rhapsode. Intellectual dominance is a heroic trait; a measure of dominance revolves around theories of rhetoric and persuasion. Alles (175) explained how the chief hero of *The Iliad* boasts of his inability to be moved by persuasion, “‘you will not persuade me!’ appears so frequently on Achilles' lips that the reader is tempted simply to skip it.” Not only does Homer rhetorically construct a hero unmovable by the force of persuasion, but he shows a battle between two great warriors rests not solely on the battlefield but on the role of persuasion. “The dying Hektor breathes out, “I know you well as I look upon you, I know that I could not persuade you,”” (Alles 175-176). Hektor is defeated not only on the battlefield but in a battle of wits. Even in battle, victory and survival are tied to rhetoric.
Homer used the term *rhetor* only one time in the entire epic corpus and it was employed to describe Achilles as “a rhetor of speech and a doer of deeds” (*Iliad* 9.443). Homer’s use of the term is “provocative.” The earliest recorded use of the term “is…clearly associated with the god-blessed hero Achilles” (Enos 29). The rhetorical act we witness immediately following this description is Achilles playing the lyre and singing an epic. The context of the scene adds to a distinctly quasi-divine nature of Achilles and rhetoric. Homer described Achilles as a rhetor and the very next time we see him he is a rhapsode playing a lyre “as he sang the songs glories of heroes in war” (*Iliad* 9.193-194). Minimally, we can expand our understanding of what the term *rhetor* implied in this period; rhetoric is not only persuasion; a rhetor is a rhapsode, a singer of epics. Additionally, that he is singing of heroic virtue accelerates the connection to divinity to both Achilles and rhetoric. Singing songs of heroes was the grasp of immortality that heroic death allows. Homer attested to at least an emerging rhetorical theory, one that points to multiple meanings of rhetoric not limited to persuasion.

1.5 Rhetoric as Gathering

The playfulness of oral performance in *The Iliad* points to an expansive understanding of rhetoric not tethered merely to persuasion. Frobish in *Rhetoric Review* explained the significance of Homer for Western civilization and suggested that “is widely accepted that the Homeric epics were valued as guides for future writers, rhapsodes, and thinkers” (16). Frobish contended that *The Iliad* reveals rhetorically significant information that deserves attention. The presupposition that ancient rhetoric was inherently and only persuasive prevents scholars from identifying rhetorically significant themes. The “focus on persuasion in ancient Greek” skews the direction of
research (Frobish 16). The textured *ethos* in many speeches contained *The Iliad* are an opportunity to uncover rhetorical theory (Beck 155-158). For Aristotle, ethos emerges in action and performance “when one portrays himself or herself as having practical wisdom (phronesis), good moral character (arête) and concern for the audience…” (Frobish 19). Moments in *The Iliad* where ethos is rhetorically constructed uncover a bounty of rhetorical information preserved by Homer. Much more rhetorically important concepts can be brought to light by attending to play concepts.

The literate bias that confines *The Iliad* to a textual examination of one specific example recorded in writing after many generations of oral performances was challenged by Gregory Nagy in much of his work. Nagy considered how scholars approach the Homeric epics crucial to understanding the contribution to Hellenic thought and culture. Understanding Homeric songs as performances sung by groups of rhapsodes reveals an authentic character of the narratives (*Preclassic* 90). In *Homer the Preclassic* (2010/2012), he drew attention to the communal activity of singing in the Homeric tradition. Not only was the singing of *The Iliad* a group effort, rhapsodes “taking turns” was mandated at important festivals (68). Nagy contended that the performances of Homer’s epics were communicative encounters. The participatory nature of the epics is attested to in Plato. Susan Meyer explained that the choral performance in *The Laws* “falls into the category of mousike,” the full context of singers and audience experience the performance together (391). Meyer’s work also confirmed the oral residue in the literate world of Plato. Performers/rhapsodes work with other performers in extended events. Though competitive, the essential feature of agon is the gathering. The
communicative ground is essential to explore nuances in the coming togetherness of epics.

1.6 Performance and Oral Composition

Homer’s epics represent a rhetorical history of encounters between rhapsodes in performance and composition. West explained the name Homer itself may even “relate to gathering or assembly” (1-2). He contended that the rhapsodes in The Iliad show an already accepted competitive understanding of oral performance that may predate even received text by centuries. “Thamyris…a competitive singer…boasted that he would be victorious even against the muses themselves” (West 1-2). Homer’s epics confirm both the competitive nature of oral communication in the ancient world and the creative encounter of subjective rhetorical agents. Epic performance included participation between an audience and multiple rhapsodes. The central feature of the ancient Panathenaic Games was rhapsodic performance of The Iliad and the Odyssey.

Homeric scholarship deals with a variety of communicative issues, both procedural and substantive. Time and distance cause multiple problems associated with the Homeric Questions and transmission of the text. Because of the distance from the original performance, many unknown issues abound in Homeric scholarship (Knox 3-11). Homeric Questions are a broad set of research questions related to authorship, composition and date of the The Iliad and The Odyssey (Nagy, Homeric Questions 1). Nagy expanded the original line of scholarship from the Homeric Question to Homeric Questions, expressing the varied themes tied to his research. The questions are communicatively grounded and still ripe for constructive inquiry by rhetorical scholars. Specifically, Nagy challenged the prevailing assumption that the received Homeric texts
“as reconstituted in various editions…are a single synchronic reality” (3). His attention to a fluid consideration of both diachronic and synchronic issues in the received text pointed to rhapsodic rhetorical agency that a purely synchronic lens obscures. Diachronic questions consider how the ideas accumulate over time; synchronic inquiry examines a snapshot of language and available cultural texts and artifacts at a given point in time. Nagy revealed problems associated with distance “as an outsider thinking about a given system…” and not as one from “within that system” (4). His analysis was based on an “evolutionary model” that presumes Saussure’s diachrony but allows for “the potential for evolution within a structure” (4). Nagy emphasized Saussure’s diachronic notion of evolution. The center of his argument was a distinction between the texts of Homer as received and “Homeric Poetry” that only a textured use of diachrony brings to the surface. His approach opened new ways to “confront the general phenomenon of meaning in the media of oral poetics” (4-5). Adding to Nagy’s work to ludic theory uncovers community and rhetorical agency. He pointed to a collaborative rhetorical practice in performance which uncovers the constructive potential of both agon and rhetoric in Homeric composition. Both Homeric rhetoric and Greek culture survived through playful rhetorical engagement.

Homeric songs were a collaborative process that emphasized a fluid oral culture and responsive rhetors composing songs within a given structure. Nagy pointed to varied examples that support an oral composition theory of authorship. The received Homeric texts are but a single recording of a single instance of epics in performance. More importantly, the recording of The Iliad is only one telling of the events. Every story or depiction of the Trojan War and Mycenaean life is not necessarily related to Homer’s
telling. Scholars often conflate proof with evidence found in the material remnants of the past (Snodgrass 6). A vase depicting a man with a lyre may represent a rhapsode, but not necessarily Homer. Suggesting this same rhapsode is connected to the specific telling of the Homeric Iliad we know today overstates the evidence (Snodgrass 5-9). The Iliad is the result of generations of rhapsodes repeating and reconstituting the epics. (Homeric Questions 17-27). We cannot know what pre-dates the received texts, but through a close textual read, Nagy showed how a literate bias affected meaning. He emphasized the event of the epics; the performance binds audience and performers who stand together on common ground. The coming together of rhapsodes composing Homeric poems eventually became the recorded Homeric texts (Homeric Questions 18-19). Nagy’s light on the flexibility of composition illustrated the connection between rhetoric and play. As we understand the importance of the epics as performances, we can center on the gathering, the standing together, as central.

The meeting of the rhapsodes during the pre-literate period ties Nagy’s work to rhetoric and play. If we think of The Iliad and The Odyssey as a collection of fragments arranged for a particular occasion but driven by a loose structure of concepts, the rhapsodes are “the very embodiment of an evolving medium” (Nagy, Homeric Questions 82). Nagy unpacked an evolutionary model of Homer through five stages. From a rhetorical perspective, we can see that rhetorical agency ebbs and flows during the transition from orality to literacy. From the pre-literate “mostly fluid period” the epic singers both recited and composed the songs in performance. Textual stability followed the introduction of writing in the second stage where Athens claimed ownership and moved toward standardization; epics singers did not have a rigid script but a general
category of ideas from which to draw. Athens championed itself as arbiter of the text and the Panathenaic Festivals contributed to their “gradual shaping” (Nagy, _Plato’s Rhapsody_ 6-7). The next three stages extend the most stable text of _The Iliad_ growing from “transcripts” to “scripture” (6). As literate culture expanded, the standardization of the text solidified until it took on a near divine state. For many years after Homeric Greek lost is place as the common spoken language, the language of _The Iliad_ remained fixed in performance. The experience of rhapsodic transmission is distinct from the received poems. The oral composition of the epics shines light on how play and rhetoric emerged early in Western culture; each were tied to the Greek notion of agon as both contest and gathering.

1.7 Agon–izing History

The history of _The Iliad_ is driven by the concept of agon. Theories and use of play in ancient thought inch from domination and to education. Dutch historian Johan Huizinga characterized play concepts as agons, or contests that “manifest themselves in sacred rituals, heroic feats, sports etc” (Miller 19). Spariosu extended Huizinga’s analysis of Homer and showed how terms used to describe playful activities evolved from Homeric Greek, through pre-Socratics, to Plato. Violent constructs waned while the external contest orientation endured. Agon in Homeric and classical Greek meant both competition and a meeting of competitors. Each of the implied meanings ties to rhetoric.

Conceptions of agon demonstrate the primary importance of communicative practices in early culture. Walter Ong explained that oral cultures are “agonistically programmed” (44). He described “enthusiastic” descriptions “of physical violence” contained in oral narratives (44). The oral medium, tied to an agonistic frame,
emphasized violence. The distinction between oral transmission and writing is an underlying element of cultural agonism. As literacy spread the “[p]ortrayal of physical violence, central to much…oral genres…, gradually wanes or becomes peripheral in later literary narrative” (Orality and Literacy 44). Ong’s point brought together rhetoric and play in The Iliad and the “development of Western culture.” The agonistic content of epics ties to rhetorical theory. The “agonistic dynamics of oral thought processes and expression…were institutionalized by the ‘art’ of rhetoric.” The process unfolded in the dialogues of Plato “which furnished agonistic oral verbalization with a scientific base worked out with the help of writing” (Ong, Orality and Literacy 45). Ong pointed to an understanding of agon as a contest, but additional meanings of agon have been explored by contemporary communication scholars.

The ancient Greek world thrived in competition. Nearly every aspect of culture, from war and ritual to “the emergence of philosophy,” was tied to notions of agon (Hawee 15). Deborah Hawhee’s book Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece (2004) unpacked agon and the connection to rhetoric. She described the overwhelming status of agon or contest/struggle concepts in the ancient Greek world. The term agon does not translate easily in to English. Hawhee noted that limiting the term to “merely a synonym for competing” misses much of the rich meaning and history of the concept. The Greeks used a more specific word for “outcome-driven competition” concerned with a “struggle for a prize.” Agon stresses the “event of the gathering” and “the contestive encounter” and not the “division between opposing sides” (Hawhee16). She explained that an anachronistic connection between rhetoric and contest “figures prominently in the shape of rhetoric’s agonism” in the history of rhetoric (16). Hawhee
brought to light agon as a meeting place of others in a competitive spirit for and with each other not against each other. She tied this to the contest orientation of rhetoric. The term is much more open to others and a constructive spirit of dialogue than a narrowly construed to mean domination and control. Rhetorical theorists have ample ground to explore rhetoric in the history of ideas as a gathering with and for others. Rhetoric can be construed as meeting places for discussion and civil dialogue rather than the end of dominating persuasion and competition.

The connection between oral communication and competition continued to grow in the ancient world. Playful rhetoric was used in ancient times for education (Walker 13; Poulakos 32-33). The Pre-Socratics used play and competition pedagogically and “sophistry emerged in a culture of competition” (Poulakos 33). Notions of ludic pedagogy framed much of the early teaching of rhetoric. The Roman term for school is linked to play and continued to be incorporated in rhetorical education until at least Quintilian’s time in the first century CE. (Walker, Genuine Teachers, 13-25). The massive influence of the Olympic Games “normalized and institutionalized” an agonistic mindset. The Sophist’s approached rhetoric as a “competitive enterprise” (Poulakos 35). Sophists carried the competitive urgency of oral competition in the games into other areas of life. The sophists directed the attention to language. Language is potent; words can do more than “announce the world.” Rhetoric and play are complimentary. Playful competition has long been a crucial aspect of rhetorical education and in the earliest traditions it did not imply domination or manipulation but cooperation and meeting.
1.8 Heroic Wit

Homeric epics can be understood as contest between physical and rhetorical power (Zeruneith 1-9). Intellect and wit break the ten-year stalemate to end the war described in *The Iliad*. Zeruneith’s survey of primary sources from ancient Greece traced this “liberation,” wit over strength, from Homer to Plato. The Homeric epics show a shift in heroic ideals that Zeruneith helps unpack. He identified the use of the ‘Wooden Horse’ as the moment of “divide in the history of European civilization and consciousness” one in which we “witness a human being thinking discursively” (15). The discursive thinking is an attitudinal shift in the cultural approach to honor and the heroic ideal. He distinguished heroic construction between *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. The “center of gravity” shifts from *The Iliad* to *The Odyssey*. Achilles personified “the codex of heroism” in *The Iliad* (22). He was a “backward-looking hero, personifying the aristocratic-heroic culture” (35). Not all commentators agree that Achilles is necessarily as backward thinking as Zeruneith implies. William Sales argued for a more nuanced approach to Achilles.

Achilles’ heroic nature is fluid in *The Iliad*. He is depicted as the greatest warrior, but he challenged heroic culture. He was a warrior and rhapsode. He chose peace over war yet when enraged, he slaughtered his enemy. This multiplicity enhances the perspective and possibilities of the heroic ideal that emerge in Homer. Sales argued that the epics show Achilles “transform” from “a rather simple person” to a complex “man who is driven to question, and eventually reject” heroic culture (86). Sales uncovered a complexity in *The Iliad* that may minimize the distinction Zeruneith makes between Achilles and Odysseus. *The Iliad* remains critical of war and the heroic ideal. Sales
pointed out that Homer frequently “weaves” the horror of war “into the poem's fabric” (91). He contended that Homer challenged the nature of the Greek warfare mentality. The tradition tested in *The Iliad* elevated the status of warriors and was “devoted to heroism” (91). Glory and honor could be earned on the battlefield, and heroic culture “embraced or at least accepted war as the necessary means for its display.” Homer’s transformation is rooted in his Ionian “pluralistic value systems of the Asia Minor Coast” preferring “love…and the sensual life” (Sales 91). Achilles condemned the uselessness of warfare and critiqued the fabric of Heroic culture (9). Zeruneith suggested that a close read of Homer shows that *The Iliad* forecasted the trickery of the Trojan horse thereby undermining “the heroic world of war” (21). Homer’s heroes challenged physical prowess and supplanted oral skill and rhetoric as the fullest expression of honor. Odysseus was a skillful rhetor who used intellect and rhetorical skill to overcome the physical power of the enemy; his arête, rhetoric.

In contrast to Achilles, Odysseus “becomes the embodiment” of a new rhetorical consciousness; he earned glory in heroic culture, yet personified the shift in heroic complexity and “distinguishes himself with his forward-looking, rational choices and tenacity” (Zeruneith 35). Odysseus was depicted throughout the epics as “possessing classic heroic virtues.” His honor was attached to his intelligence (Zeruneith 25). On the surface, the text supplies anecdotal evidence of Odysseus’s role as part of the Embassy to Achilles in Book IX. He was a great warrior and deceptively wise. Odysseus sacked Troy with intellect and the trickery of the Trojan horse. The primary epithet used to describe Odysseus, even in his own description is “sacker of cities.” He drew some fame/kleos
from his metis/cunning not the traditional heroic code. Mind over brute force; Western consciousness pivots on this shift.

The rise of the intellect over physical violence connects rhetoric and play to the shift in consciousness. Zeruneith (20-31) called attention to the various negative descriptions of intellect in Homer. Odysseus is “often mocked” because of his intelligence. As later Greek writers distrust rhetoric’s potential, Odysseus is “considered suspect because of his disquieting intelligence” (22). Akin to the distrust of rhetoric that continues to develop in the Western tradition, cunning and intellect is often framed negatively. The ability to sway others through words is imbued with magic and distrust. The tradition continued in Plato. The tension between truth and deception is ever-present in Socrates.

1.9 Plato at Play

Plato’s aesthetics were rhetorically grounded. The oral and performative context was central to understanding Plato’s critique of poets, poetry, and rhapsodes. Meyer pointed to various ways that Plato uncovered performative issues. Considering Plato’s later work The Laws, she tied poetry, performance, and play together in context (391). Throughout Plato’s corpus, when he referenced rhapsodes and poets, the public oral performance was a key element of his critique. Plato loathes the potential of a rhetor to sway an audience. We miss much of the significance of Plato’s critique if we dismiss the context of a performer and audience. His inquiry exposed power relationships between rhetors and audiences and “our natural affinity for rhythm and melody” that makes music and the performance of the epics such an “effective medium to drive home a message” (Meyer 391). Plato provided literate inquiries into oral practices.
The influence of epic as codifier of cultural values and education did not disappear with the invasion of literacy; literacy may have accelerated the influence (Havelock, *Preface* 127-129). Plato is case and point of this claim. Nagy and others point to the significance of Homer in Plato’s writings. He explained that the Homeric epics are a standard referent in much later Greek writing in the classical period to support legal issues, philosophical questions, and pedagogy (Snodgrass 23-24; Nagy, *Plato’s Rhapsody* 9-36). Classics scholars point to Plato as a key source for understanding the role of Homer’s epics in the advancement of Greek culture and thought (Snodgrass 1-11; Nagy, *Plato’s Rhapsody* 8-36). Plato’s comments on Homer and the rhapsodes attested to the continued significance of Homer until at least 300 BCE. Plato, even in his critique of writing, provides important textual makers for understanding the role of the epic performance for the promotion and perpetuation of culture.

Platonic dialogues indicate a current of play concepts flowing through the Greek intellectual tradition. Either in critique or support, Homer’s epics loomed largely in much of Plato’s work. Plato’s “intellectual play” connected to his philosophy of art and education (D’Angour 294). Plato’s inquiry into performative nature of Homer’s epics underscored the importance of rhetoric and play. First, he considered the significance of the performer. In *The Ion*, one of Plato’s early dialogues, Socrates matched wits with Ephesian, a professional rhapsode. Rhapsodes played an important role in the survival of Greek culture. Homer was a rhapsode. Achilles was a rhapsode. Rhapsodes were the first rhetors in *The Iliad*. Rhapsodes were first and foremost performers, if for no other reason than nature of communication in pre-literate society.
Plato’s work demonstrated the changing emphasis in performative agency. Rhapsodes in the oral tradition expressed creativity lost to the pen. Ford explained that the history of the term is rife with difficulties. Much of what scholars point to “[d]espite numerous investigations into the origin and semantic history” of the term, extend from Plato’s use in the Ion (“Classical Definition” 300). In Plato’s Ion, rhapsodes were “professionals who give dramatic performances of memorized epic” (Ford “Classical Definition” 300). Plato used the term many centuries after the initial singing of the songs and he excluded some rhetorical agency found in early texts. Ford detailed a history of the term and suggested much more creativity ought to be implied than we receive from Plato (“Classical Definition” 300-304). He pointed to moments in history where the term implied both composition and recitation. The bias toward textual stability does not allow for the fluid nature present in the term. The rhapsodic role as composer diminished to reciter with the onslaught of literacy. By the time the term is commonly used by Plato, it may well have designated a reciter of Homeric verse, but the historic ludic and imaginative sense ought not to be forgotten (Ford 304). Plato’s rhapsodes demonstrated a continuing current of play from Homer to Plato. Play theories continued to develop with the spread of Greek culture.

1.10 Rhetoric and Play in the Humanities

The Hellenistic influence in the Western tradition led toward narratives of power and competition that continue to affect theorizing about rhetoric and play. During the first two world wars, play moved closer to “the center” of both natural and human sciences (Spariosu 1-2). Play concepts engage rhetoric at the center of collaboration, competition and cultural competency. The vast connections of meanings flowing from the horizon of
play open new spaces for understanding the relationship between disciplines in the
human sciences. The intellectual trajectory of play and aesthetics, since the
Enlightenment, ebbed and flowed between what Spariosu referred to as reason and
“prereason” (7). The doubt of intuition, imagination, and tradition promoted by the
Enlightenment shined a suspicious light on rhetoric, aesthetics, and play (Claxton 32;
Porter 1-3). Connected to the shift in the understanding of aesthetics, play was
“condemned” by Enlightenment thinkers as “frivolous, devoid of cognitive value and
conducive to error” (Spariosu 31). The turn toward objective science, methods, and
standards during the Enlightenment mitigated the truth value of experience that is
fundamental to play.

Philosophical studies of play brought the subjective experience to the center of the
conversation and uncovered a rhetorical agency. This approach to play, according to
Spariosu, considered an “ontological status” where play has to “reveal its intention.” The
“double nature of play” exposes a phenomenological perspective as a “confluence of
phenomenon and subjectivity” (1-3). Attention to play magnifies agency bringing the self
to a subjective center, as Henricks explained, “[p]lay is fundamentally a sense-making
activity.” He described the “broader goal” in the construction of “subjectively inhabited
sphere of operations and understandings called the Self” (209). Spariosu’s attention to the
shared linguistic and semantic history of play and power showed how these concepts
function together in culture.

1.11 Play at Play

Play theories span the academic universe. The term is used to convey such a
breadth of ideas that no single definition suits all scholars. Gwen Gordon examined the
description of play concepts from various disciplines and likened it to the story of blind men attempting to describe an elephant: “[E]ach discipline has come to a different conclusion about the nature of play” (1). Her study revealed problems in the search for a universal definition of play and contended that the “ambiguous, variable, and paradoxical nature of the play concept is so widely accepted, that most play theorists consider the search for a universal definition to be pure folly” (1). Gordon tied much of the contemporary theorizing about play to the philosophical privileging of rationality and suggested that the “mechanistic rational worldview” impacts the study of play (3). Gordon argued that a limited rational view obscures the study of play and does not “tolerate the notion of playfulness, nor consciousness” (3). She explained that the division between rational and “pre-rational” play concepts is a “2500 year battle.” For Gordon, a tension exists between “…play as the random…and a rational, orderly” concept “…that leads to beauty and progress” (3). Aesthetics and play are tied to real experience in the world with others.

German idealists provide a good starting point to explore contemporary theories of play. Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) expanded Kant’s transcendental idealism and connected the conditions necessary to know about objects in the world with our primal drives. Known in the German Literature tradition as “the German Shakespeare” his philosophy introduced a new sense of self only the aesthetic experience allows (Hinderer 47-48). Schiller extended Kant and the aesthetic experience as the only hope for moral community. Schiller reframed Kant’s aesthetics not as type of philosophy but as a way of being. Hinderer (48) explained that Schiller’s “new ontological insight into play” helped explain that “we are only truly ourselves when we
play....” Schiller’s fifteenth letter “On the Aesthetic Education of Man” pushed play to the center of being “…man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and he is only completely a man when he plays.” Schiller worked out an “aesthetic state” that brings attention to being. He did not simply restate Kant’s aesthetics as particular type of philosophy; he “recast[ed] philosophy as aesthetics” (Wertz 81). He opened new ways to understand self and a subjective experience of art emphasizing communicative issues at the center.

Play is a serious endeavor with no specific goal. Schiller’s aesthetic grounded the seriousness of play. His premise that “[i]n the aesthetic condition” we experience ourselves “in the fullness” of our “possibilities” underscored the broad categories of thought involved in play and aesthetics. He positioned aesthetics at the center of being and self-understanding where aesthetic subsumes philosophy such that “a truly philosophical mind is an aesthetic state of mind” (Wertz 81-83). His primary work on aesthetics and play On the Aesthetic Education of Man (1794) sought to bring beauty back to the soul of culture (Wertz 82). Schiller, while remaining true to the “tenor” of Kant’s aesthetics, brought a new sensibility to public life (Reis 12). The alienating effect of culture and the failed promise of civilized society can be offset only through an experience with beauty (Wessel 192; Wertz 82). His letters, directed toward a utopian future, reframed the drive of philosophy. The “subject” of philosophy must work from a perspective of beauty and art. Aesthetics and beauty are the ground of deliberation. Wertz explains that Schiller’s letters describe the root of philosophical deliberation as aesthetic such that the “subject matter of philosophy must proceed from…” an “understanding of
beauty” (82). Aesthetics is a way of being and encountering others. The seriousness of play unfolds in moment with no end in mind. Play is an end in itself.

Schiller understood being to be composed of two distinct drives existing in discord: The drive to live and the drive to organize how we live. These drives are in perpetual conflict and the “play drive” is the in-between of the “divided powers of the soul” (Hinderer 27). Being seeks harmony and play mediates between competing drives. Play does not replace or exclude, but rather is “the harmonious, reciprocal combination of the sensuous and formal drives” (Wertz 83-84). The play drive for Schiller centers on experience as “union of love and creative reason” (Wertz 84). The tension between our pull toward desires and our moral order are worked out in play. The aesthetic mind connects to hermeneutic experience.

Schiller’s breakdown of the individual into “the self and its determining attributes” underscores communicative embeddedness. Tension of the self in experience brings the dynamic relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics to the heart of the conversation (Herder 34). Reason and sense struggle toward harmony in experience and “the externalization of everything internal and the formal elaboration of everything external” points to a communicatively rooted agent in the play between reason and sense (Hinderer 36). The tension in Schiller’s “dualistic structure of human nature” explores how self internalizes other (Hinderer 34). Play is at the center of the contest between reason and nature in the expression of self in the world. Hinderer explained that Schiller brought these two distinct aspects of being together in play, “The point of unity, the synthesis, is created by a kind of aesthetic condition” (Hinderer 36). Our two drives exist in a constant state of internalizing and externalizing interpretive experiences.
Schiller was the first to “explicitly” consider the “heuristic functions” of philosophy at “play.” He tied art and aesthetics to the rational Platonic construct (Spariosu 30). The first contemporary generation influenced by Schiller moved away from the power narratives underlying play in the Hellenistic tradition and subordinated the studies of aesthetics and play to “morality, seriousness, and rationality” (Spariosu 30-33). Spariosu characterized the philosophical conversation regarding play as an “authority contest” between the “rational play group” and the “prerational play group” that began with Kant and Schiller and continued in Gadamer and Derrida (31-33). Schiller’s physicality was extended by the first wave of work of Evolution theorists.

Darwin brought a new sort of game to academic thinking (Mayr 80). His “evolutionary biology” was “largely based on…competition, female choice, selection, succession and dominance” (Mayr 81). Theories of evolution connected play to instinctive behavior and pre-civil life in human history. Proto-humans needed to expend significant sources of energy by hunting, gathering, and escaping from prey. As humans dominated nature and the physical needs of our ancestors slowly diminished, the latent “surplus energy” emerged as play. Herbert Spencer outlined this theory. The surplus theory of play can only go so far and, as Groos suggested, is not adequate to connect to all of the ideas on the horizon of play. Needs direct our energy towards seriousness; animals are “impelled to serious work by an external want but to play” by a “superfluity of energy” (Groos 3). Groos continued the study of the physical work of play, but he reversed the orientation. He construed play as a training ground for other serious activity. Play can help us perfect the demands of life. Miller deemed this way of thinking the “Coca-Cola philosophy of play.” Play in this sense is a “pause” from the toils of work–
drink more coke, become more refreshed so you can go work more. Importantly, the pause to play exists “so that” work can excel (Miller 106). The momentum to extend play beyond instinct and physicality carried in to art and aesthetics.

1.12 Play and the Aesthetic Experience

Play and aesthetics exist in tension with the scientific push toward objectivity and certainty. Spariosu detailed the to-and-fro of play in the natural sciences and suggested “play and art are intimately related activities” (168). He contended that both are subjugated to mere categories of knowing where neither serves a greater end beyond the experience. The ends of art and play are not concerned with “conduct of life” or any “ulterior benefits” (Spariosu 168-200). Aesthetics works its way into how we consider art beyond “bare exposure” (Noe 186). Noe added an additional layer to understanding the experience of play. He centered on how appreciation is driven by experience. Initial contact with art is unfamiliar, as we continue to experience and internalize it, our understanding and appreciation increases. An “[a]esthetic experience is achieved by interrogating what is before you” (186). Noe asserted that we meet a work of art armed with “the resources the world provides” to experience art in the real world. These resources relate to the universal appreciation described by Kant that will be developed at length in the next chapter. The lived experience of aesthetics sheds light on the communicative ground of play.

Play is being. Scholars attend to play both a “state of being” and “behavior.” The latter are performed and studied as events (Miracle 60). Miracle explained that play is a “voluntary and pleasurable” behavior “with a genetic basis” that “results in an altered state of consciousness” yet one remains “in control” (60). Scholars often suggest that play
is best, or can only be, understood through a negative. Play is compared to not play (Miracle 60; Bateson 69; Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet 45). Play requires understanding that one is playing (Bateson 66-70; Miracle 61; Spariosu 199). Attention to communicative aspects of play points to awareness of different and freely engaged in activities in a community with shared rules. The relegation of seriousness overwhelmed much of the intellectual development of play in the years leading up to the first world war. The second half of the twentieth century saw a turn toward a phenomenology of aesthetics and play.

Contemporary academic study of play stands on the shoulders of Dutch historian Johan Huizinga's “groundbreaking” *Homo Ludens: The Play-element of culture* (Rodriguez 1604, Miller 55). Miller traced the direction of the contemporary attention of play to the 1934 *The Care and Feeding of a Hobby Horse* and Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens* published a year earlier. He suggested that nearly all theorizing about play is tied to Huizinga’s turn toward play at the center of culture and self. Huizinga described an intrinsic nature of play, play for the sake of play. As in the Greek understanding described above, play is defined by the gathering, not the contest or victory. First published in 1938, Huizinga challenged not only the traditional understanding of play but of the ground of culture. Play is not an effect of civilization for Huizinga; play is civilizing. The elements of play that bring people together precede culture.

*Homo Ludens* is a keystone in the scholarly study of play. Huizinga examines the sense of play as “a free activity…consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious,’ but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly” (Caillious, *Man* 13). Huizinga attends to the importance of confronting others in play as the center of
human community. The earliest communities of humans worked through problems of civilizing in play. Play demands communication; working together precedes play. As agreement emerges for play, the ground for a communicatively grounded community is established. Huizinga’s groundbreaking and still reverberating claim that “civilization arises and unfolds in and as play” and “play brings meaning to action” carried communication to the center of culture (1). His understanding of a civilization at play underscored the necessity of rhetoric and play for self and culture.

Huizinga outlined an archeology of play as a cultural phenomenon coursing through a wide variety of interrelated concepts. “In reading this book” Caillois (1959) explained, “one suddenly sees law, science, poetry, wisdom, war, philosophy and arts enriched….and always profiting from the spirit of play” (Man, Play and Games 152). Huizinga traced the history of play through culture and examined multiple of characteristics of play, yielding not a “study of games, but an inquiry into the creative duality of the play principle in the domain of culture” (Caillios, Man 4). Play is distinct; it “transcends immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action” (Huizinga 1). Although play has lasting effects, the playing - the meeting with others, is primary. Caillois added that play is “pure form, activity that is an end in itself, rules that are respected for their own sake” (Caillios, Man and the Sacred 158). The meaningfulness of play is a key point scholars continue to develop. We can see that play has an intentional character different from everyday life that “avoids various biological and psychological explanations of play” that preceded his work (Caillios, Sacred 152). Caillois lauded Huizinga’s move away from the base understandings of play relegated to physical prowess, biological need, and simple competition. In Man, Play and Games (1961),
Caillois detailed the significance of Huizinga’s work for exposing a rich world of play as a set of distinct intentional acts that takes place within specified location but finds absent the “diversified forms of play and the many needs served by play activity in various cultural contexts” (ix). Caillois remarked that, though most of the “premises are debatable,” the book opens many “fruitful avenues of research” (Man 3). Play produces culture and provides a textured lens to reexamine the wide varieties of socialization, discourse, and communication.

Play is distinct from the ordinary. Caillois added an additional layer to play that emerges when we understand that in play we are “removed from reality.” Play happens in a “privileged space” (Caillois, Sacred 157-158). When we engage in play, we leave the ordinary behind and step “out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own” (Huizinga 8). Within our “carefully demarcated play area” we are free to act without consequences in the world. The arbitrary rules of play insulate us from outside and our actions only “have meaning only within that context.” Outside the world of play, life is uncertain and is “kind of a jungle in which a thousand perils await” (Caillois, Sacred 158). Huizinga untangled important play concepts related to performance, space, and time that underscore communication issues inherent in the history of play.

Rhetoric and play are a living expression of the sacred. Play is the way in which culture constituted and perpetuated. Vital moments instituting myth, community, and citizenry are bound to play. Huizinga tied play to ritual. The “most daring thesis” of the work, according to Caillois, is Huizinga’s “identification of play and the sacred” (Sacred 154). A performance is a “stepping out of common reality into a higher order” and sacred
performances, rites, rituals and the like involve a mystical, symbolic reality (Huizinga 14). Religious rituals have all of the “formal characteristics” of play. A distinct out-of-the-ordinary experience, in a specific place, at a specific time, moves us out of the now into a mystical. Caillios added that for Huizinga from a play perspective religious rituals provide a real experience, not a “merely imitative” one (15). The seriousness of play expressed in mythic and sacred ritual overwhelms claims of whimsy. If we connect this idea to the communal orientation of epics at the center of ritual, rhetoric animates ritual life. Rituals do more than symbolize action; they are action. Essentially, sacred space is a playground, a location made to be distinctly separate from ordinary, “the sanctuary, church, and liturgy fulfill an analogous function” to play that transcends the ordinary (Caillios, Sacred 126). In play, we are in a different reality and temporarily distinct space. Rhetoric and play are the living vitality of the sacred.

As the communication discipline developed, new theories of play and playing emerged. Communication scholars work with multiple concepts of play that are not limited to a single definition but a broad category of ideas. “Playing is always communication” (Ohler 1). Whether we speak of the play of a loose bolt, children’s games, or a Broadway production, the horizon of play is a rhetoric rich environment.

1.13 The Emergence of Play in Communication Studies

In this section I survey how play concepts emerged in communication scholarship from the inception of our flagship journal in 1919 until the play-themed national convention of 2018. This dissertation will show how rhetoric and play share a similar trajectory in Western thought that uncover centers of thinking dislodged by the change in values brought on by the Enlightenment. The concept of “mere rhetoric” complicates the
academic understanding of rhetoric and is akin to the relegation of play to what in German is “tacit knowledge…involving intuition rather than the rational faculty” (Sariosu 1). Play surfaces as a co-creative aspect of communication that ties to classical theories of invention and rhetoric.

Since the initial publication of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech Education* in 1919, communication scholars have explored play as general performance (Hyde and Sargent 122), a staged production (Allen 58), face to face communication (Glenn Knapp 48), games and gaming (Brummett; Kearnes 152), mass communication (Monaghanand Glancy 399; Stephenson 367), a cultural process (Conquergood 83-84) collaborative rhetoric (Baumlin 37) metaphor for engagement (Kuusisto 51), and linguistic semiotic ground for culture (Simpkins). Common to all theories discussed is the entwinement of play and communication.

1.14 Play and Drama

The term play first occurred in contemporary communication scholarship in 1919 in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education* where the discussion concerned one-act plays in high school drama programs (Bullowa 351). The ideas developed in the early essays interrogating drama, provide an interesting intersection of ideas within broader philosophies of play. Rhetorical scholars targeted pedagogy in the first wave of play theory and examined the implications for educators (Stivers 434; Whitmire 139; Drummond 216; Crafton 336), the history and craft of drama (Stivers 434; Eich 230), theater production and management (Hicks 199; Allen 58; Eich 229; Williamson 17), religious plays (Carney 138;) and actors, roles and acting (Pratt 64). Although the notion of play as a distinct theoretical concept was not the intention of these early writings,
multiple common characteristics remain consistent. Play is intentional; play is distinct from the everyday life; individuals must know they are playing; actors take on a temporary identity; play has lasting implications.

Practical pedagogical questions plague both play theory and drama courses. Ambiguity and questions of function often conceal the lasting benefits of play. As scholars attempt to answer the questions of purpose and function, educators are haunted by prejudices of seriousness and purpose. Education and development are key metaphors used in the discussion of theater and play production. Theater education is an effective tool for teaching speech (Pearson 660; Allensworth 270; Smiley 148; Crafton 336) and more specifically a tool for uncovering rhetorical techniques (Scanlan 637). Studying historical or religious drama provides social insight for contemporary students (Hubbard and Fink 632-634; Postel 69). Akin to later questions regarding the function or purpose of play, educators sought to justify drama courses by pointing to educational outcomes (Postel 69-72; Crafton 337). The apologetic emphasis on practical outcomes ties to the academic justification of rhetoric and play.

The intellectual development of studying drama and performance implicates the self and others in the process of learning. Stepping outside of oneself and taking on a new role allows students to see the world differently. As an actor imagines the scripted character, empathy for the experience is formative and educational. This “imaginative sympathy” allows new ways to experience the world that continues long after the production (Blanshard 376). The study of plays and the study of play share many similar concepts that point to agency, intellectual growth, and community. Closely related to Drama and Theater Studies is Performance Studies.
1.15 Play in Performance

Performance is tied to the uncertainty. Performance scholars added a new dimension to the connection between communication scholarship and play by attending to the interaction between the text, performer, and audience. Even in scripted and staged plays the events “manifest an emergent dimension” because “performances are never exactly the same” (Bauman 42). Hyde and Sargent expanded notions of performance to cover all of human communicative activity (123). Scholars in performance studies attend to unfolding moments of play. Play as commonly conceived in communication and performance studies, is defined through its use in the action of actors. In the broadest terms, performance is “the actual execution of an action” and more specifically a “presentational rendition” (Bauman 41). Much of the scholarship attends to scripted events “framed in a certain way” that foster a “heightened mode of communication” occurs at a limited and specific time “for an audience” (Bauman 40). The center of importance is the moment of engagement with both audience and text. Performance highlights the intentional and emergent world experienced in the expression of each renewed instance.

Generally distinguished from chance and competition, performance attends to the moments of presentation. In the inaugural issue of Text and Performance Quarterly, Wallace Bacon explained how a “word spoken, embodied” carries distinct meaning. Utterance is key. Whether or not for an audience, all speaking for Wallace, is performance, “othering” and communicative (1). Wallace attended to the voice of the text. The text remains constant yet affects the performer. He explained that the performer brings the text into the “flesh” in an “interpretive event” that is a “creative act” and
carriers with it the reflections of pre-existing acts” (2). This relates to the understanding of the ancient Greeks that the audience participates in the meaning as the epics unfold. In performance of a poem for example, the text emerges as poem (2). The next chapter connects this emergence to Kant’s structuring notion of the conditions necessary for judgement. Wallace and the tradition that followed attended to important features in communication theory that adds to our understanding of play. Locating the performance of a text on a different horizon from the text adds layers of thinking to rhetorical theory that will be developed in the following chapters. Wallace left room to consider a spectrum of human experience as both a behavior and occurrence that highlighted “the social, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of the communicative process” (Bauman 41). All communication can be understood as an element of performance.

1.16 The Play of Metaphor

The use of play language demonstrates how metaphors help share understanding. As a metaphor, play is employed as a contest (Brummet; Kuusisto 50) or loosely tied to rhetorical technique (Nofsinger 102; Giappa 281). Giappa described Martin Luther King’s rhetorical techniques as a “play of difference” (281). What Giappa emphasized was consistent with much of the metaphorical use of play in language, a purposeful juxtaposition of ideas for rhetorical effect. Similar to Kant’s use of play language, play metaphors move back and forth for a planned intent. As an abstract theoretical concept the various meanings are tied to an awareness of play activity. Kuusisto in his 2002 article in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* magnified the metaphorical use of play and game. The contest orientation of play continues in the contemporary use of communication scholarship. Kuusisto extended the work on metaphors initiated by
Lakoff and Johnson and examined the implications of competitive metaphors in war messages.

Lakoff and Johnson described the potency of ideas for the reality of our daily life in the world with others through concepts. In two articles published in 1980, they outlined important contributions to how language use affects the meaning structures of our lives. Basic units of meaning become shared by relating to others. Concepts make up the variables for meaning to progress, develop, and ultimately be shared in communication. Metaphors structure experience. The attention to metaphor showed how we can overcome ambiguities inherent in all communication where abstract ideas can be brought together and function with concrete ideas (Lakoff and Johnson, “Conceptual metaphor” 454). Allowing metaphor to structure our experience yields coherence (Lakoff and Johnson, “Metaphorical structure” 203). The term “concept” describes internal compartmentalizing of ideas to navigate the world; “concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details” (“Conceptual metaphor” 454). In the following chapter we will see that it is these concepts that Kant’s “free play of imagination” brings to life. We use concepts to understand the world and make up the full extent of our interpretive experiences.

Concrete understanding of ideas and concepts “are defined by clusters of metaphors” (Lakoff and Johnson, “Metaphorical structure” 200). Akin to Wittgenstein’s family resemblances of terms, metaphors for Lakoff and Johnson bring together loosely organized ideas, parts of the whole. “Each metaphor gives a partial definition.” Lakoff and Johnson explained that concepts “overlap in certain ways, but in general they are
inconsistent, and typically have inconsistent ontologies” (“Metaphorical structure” 200). When we understand a new concept, we reject the things it does not mean, “metaphorical organizing…always hides” difference and “plays down features that make it more difficult to incorporate into a particular explanation” (Kuuisisto 53). Concepts relate to each other in complex and often incommensurate ways. Metaphors gain traction in the similarities among difference.

Metaphors are a uniting factor in human relationships. They depend on an already agreed understanding, a common bond of knowing. Communicating accelerates this bond. The bond is brought to the center of the introduction of a new metaphor. The reliance on already fertile ground of common belief allows the introduction of a new concept, a metaphor where we have the dialogic opportunity to, “one thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson, “Conceptual Metaphor” 455). The original metaphor is reified, extended, and added to a new horizon of meaning and the relationship of common understanding grows. Choices of metaphor provide not only the information for how we know things but the very structure of our knowing. The way we know through language works out in experience through metaphor. “Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff and Johnson, “Conceptual Metaphor” 454). In this study, they outline the use of metaphor in argument as war. The use of play as a metaphor accelerates our attitude of play and structures our world through language with our understanding of play.

What we keep intellectually as concepts fuels how we experience. Importantly for this study, the collaboration necessary for a metaphor to mean is driven by how we arrange our thoughts (Lakoff and Johnson, “Metaphorical structure” 124). The structures
we build through the experience with others accumulate and “play a central role in defining our everyday realities.” They explained that the implication of a conceptual system constructed with metaphors and contended that “the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (“Conceptual metaphor” 454). The accumulated concepts and structures of everyday experience emerge in play. Play is a metaphor for the real. Where Lakoff and Johnson’s work tied general theories of metaphor to the discussion of play, other scholars demonstrate the importance of the function of play employed as a metaphor.

The use of play metaphors shapes perception and how we encode experience. Riikka Kuusisto in the 2002 Quarterly Journal of Speech article, “Heroic Tale, Game, and Business Deal? Western Metaphors in Action in Kosovo,” examined the use of play metaphors to shape public perception. Western leader’s use of war metaphors align to the study of play in two ways. First, “the meta level” looked at the way ideas are crafted and challenged for public consumption leading to a structuring of thought. Second, war metaphors utilize a broader construct of game and competition that falls under the general category of play concepts. Kuusisto did not consider a theory of play proper, but her article demonstrated the structuring power of metaphor. Play with and in metaphor structures our experience with others.

The subtle power of a metaphor to structure understanding is demonstrated in the “justify the NATO operation” (Kuusisto 50). In a context of “competing explanations” Western play/war metaphors brought coherence (50-51). War and the justification of war expressed in game metaphors helped obscure inconvenient truths, bolster Western ideals, and navigate unfamiliar terrain. Play is a framework for understanding. The premise that
we understand play metaphors well enough to understand other activities shaped the central point of the work. Western leaders shape the reaction to world events strategically with game metaphors to increase coherence and establish a common understanding. She extended Lakoff and Johnson and attended to “the general power of metaphors as cognitive tools” and “metaphorical logic” (51). Kuusisto contended that “brute facts…the missiles and mass graves” were made coherent to a worldwide audience through Western metaphors of war (51-52). Where the facts had no immediate meaning, metaphor provided a “coherent way to understand” (51). Play then is the mediating role between concepts and understanding. Multiple types of play emerge in Kuusisto’s article. The attention to the power of game metaphors to conceal and promote various ideas is balanced by the meeting of difference. Attention to the type of metaphor utilized helps uncover a game of competing truths where opposing metaphors help “recognize and accept that different accounts of the same incident can be compellingly defended” (64). Using play metaphors establishes intellectual gathering place for difference and cooperation.

1.7 Play in Language and Culture

Communication scholars also point to the playful nature of rhetoric. Hyde and Sargent (125) lamented the lack of serious consideration of play as an independent communication theory. When not directly related to play as a noun, play concepts refer to rhetorical techniques “for managing and manipulating interactive episodes” (Hyde and Sargent 125). Hyde and Sargent showed how communication scholars can attend to play as a system of communication related to multiple categories of thinking. Ohler described play as a “communicative behavior system” that is not unique to human relationships.
Animals play too but not with the same sophistication (Ohler 1). Play and communication are entwined at the most basic, pre-human level of existence.

The discursive turn in philosophy is tied to the function of language within a specified system. Play grounds engagement as a “co-constructed communicative phenomenon” that is also an “integral aspect of learning” (Eicher-Catt 259). Scott Simpkins (1988) in the *Encyclopedia of Semiotics* tied play to semiotics and communication theories through rules, “[l]ike social-semiotic conventions that bind sign users, rules produce communicable continuity in” play. Simpkins suggested that play is like “any other sign system” and ties to many semiotic elements “in terms of social engagements with encoders, decoders, codes, contexts, media, chronology, domains, and so on.” A key point connecting play and semiotics is consistency and awareness. Subjects agree to follow rules and the semiotic principle that explores the “constraints on sign use” point to an awareness of the experience. What is exposed in the semiotic interpretation of play in language is a moment of agreement; the positive dialogic implication of play is the coming together of subjective rhetorical agents.

1.18 Play in Mass Communication

Play is a respite from reality. The ease of playful distraction with media can overwhelm our experience in the world. William Stephenson’s 1967 *Play Theory of Mass Communication* attended to the basic everyday moments of choice that goes unnoticed by scholars (1-13). He explained that mass communication theory research fails to adequately acknowledge what mass communication achieves (1). This in-between status of discernment hidden under a vale of insignificance is fertile ground to understand the influence of the play of mass media. Mass media may not affect change of hearts and
minds, but in the minutia of daily lives we incline toward play. As an escape from the toils of reality, mass communication “at its best…allows people to become absorbed in subjective play” (1). Stephenson’s theory is ripe for revisiting in the era of cell phones and the twenty four hour news cycle. These ideas provide an intellectual framework to consider how progressive communication technology continually verifies Stephenson’s thesis. Stephenson’s work attended to many issues revolving around the increasing prevalence of social media and the expression of the minutia. He underscored the attitude of play as real within a blurry world of real and imagined.

1.19 Play and Human Flourishing

When we play, we play together. The attention to subjective experience of playing announces an awareness of self and others. Contemporary communication scholars attend to multiple functions of play in human society. Attending to the loss of narrative ground and the “liberating power in creative rhetorical play” is a hopeful additive in an uncertain world (Giappa 281). Miguel Sicart’s study of play and gaming explained a relational function of play both in language and lived experience. Play concepts are “the dominate way of expression” and engrained in our communication and thinking strategies (Sicart 2). When confronted with others, we think and act in terms of play. Play is a “mode of being” and grounds experience (Sicart 7). Sicart expanded the ontological implications of play and highlighted the underlying hermeneutical experience in a “tangled world of people, things, spaces and cultures.” Sicart provided a way to understand play as the ground of relationships with others. James Baumlin suggested that rhetoric thrives in relationships as a form of “imaginative play” that helps us navigate a confusing world of clashing value structures (37). As a rhetoric of play unfolds in this dissertation we see
how mutual understanding uncovers rhetoric and persuasion as a site of negotiation and collaboration.

The following chapters detail how ludic rhetoric, from Kant through Bultmann’s theology to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, expands collaboration and promotes cooperation and community. In the next chapter, I extend the history of rhetoric and play to the Enlightenment and show how the move toward scientific thinking affected the nature of rhetoric in the liberal arts. A diminished conception of rhetoric that occurred during the Enlightenment was carried into the development of contemporary rhetoric in American universities. I review recent scholarship that challenged the limited view of “mere rhetoric” in Kant and explore the wealth of communicative issues promoted in his critical work. Kant’s free play of imagination added rhetorical texture to reason in the context of others. In Kant, a rhetoric of play emerged as thought seeking understanding that fertilized ground for future research into the communicative nature of Kant’s project. The coordination of the ideas can be a helpful way to understand Kant’s philosophy and expand his contributions to rhetorical theory.

Kant’s rhetoric of reason explained how we encode experience and framed cognition and judgement within the context of discourse and scholarship. Kant’s “Transcendental Idealism” re-conceived the role of the self in production of meaning (CPR A369). Transcendental idealism established the self as a “knowing subject” actively producing knowledge in experience and reversed the subject-object construction of experience. Cognition organizes experience (Bloom 56). Reason does not constitute the natural world. Reason is the regulative and interpretive construct of our own internal active cognition. Reason is how we organize experience. Kant explained how temporal
and spatial aspects of cognition frame layers of knowing. Cognition actively sorts and organizes experience. Causality is an apparatus of the encoding capacity of our cognition. When scholars in the natural sciences apply these presuppositions about the natural world to organize research, outcomes and possibilities are limited. Kant’s move helped clarify art and artist but falls short of allowing art to speak for itself. Kant’s aesthetic consciousness stands over the experience of art as the subject. Gadamer agreed that art is significant but not as the subject of our experience. Gadamer showed how art structures experience. Art changes us.

Demythologizing is a “hermeneutical procedure” applied to mythic language in discourse and texts (Bultmann, “Problem” 95). We no longer understand the world through a mythic paradigm. Scientific thinking “eliminates the idea of miracle as an event that interrupts the causal continuum of the world process” (Bultmann, “Problem” 96). Gadamer extended from Bultmann a respect for the text. Gadamer’s constructive approach to conversation promoted the value of others. A text interacts with us as we interact with a text. Gadamer’s metaphor of play unpacked the subjective role of a text. He shifted the subject object distinction between interpreters and works of art. Gadamer emphasized the work of art as active. Art is not isolated as an object but becomes alive; the work of art is active; art works on us. What emerges in Gadamer’s reclamation of the classical tradition of rhetoric is a constructive openness to the other grounded in respect.

Conversation is a key metaphor underlying Gadamer’s hermeneutics. He explained in a series of interviews that “conversation is the essence of what I have been working on for the past thirty years” (Conversations 56). Conversation is always a fusion of horizons. Forcing scientific methods into the discourse of the humanities fails to
capture the essence of scholarship. The humanities and the natural science have a
different orientation towards truth. There is an inherent problem in scholarship that seeks
to justify the “validity of the human sciences over and against the paradigm of the natural
sciences” (“Universality” 4). Our experience within a tradition grounds our access to
meaning and is our path to understanding. The attitude of respect for others grounds the
ludic rhetoric expanded in the conclusion of this dissertation

Gadamer’s theory of play unfolded in conversation. Understanding is achieved
not in agreement but in the to and fro of ideas with others. Gadamer’s attention to the
process of understanding elevated the interaction, the event of communication. Gadamer
tied play and persuasion to subjectivity and respect for the ‘other.’ The conclusion brings
together ludic rhetoric as an approach to teaching persuasion as cooperation that engages
Calvin Schrag’s rhetorical theory and promotes communicative praxis and the revelatory
nature of conversation.
Chapter 2:
Immanuel Kant and the Rhetoric of Reason

A good starting point to trace the intellectual entwinement of rhetoric, hermeneutics, and play is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). This chapter concludes that Kant’s free play of imagination imbued his critical work with rhetorical vitality and his rhetoric of reason exposed a communicative urgency tied encountering others. Exploring Kant’s rhetoric and rhetorical theorizing demonstrates an appreciative style of persuasion that begins by standing together with others in conversation. Kant’s ludic theory of imagination helps explore a collaborative model of communication.

2.1 Kant and the German Enlightenment

Kant’s life was rhetoric rich. Born in Prussia into Lutheran family in 1724, he studied theology and physics at the University of Königsberg until he left for financial reasons. He then earned money as a private tutor for nearly a decade. He returned to academia and completed his work in Philosophy. His rhetorical prowess as a public intellectual increased his profile in the academic community. He engaged in scholarly debates both in public and publication (Zamoto 102; Gulyga 52). By the time he published his most influential work, *The Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, Kant had been actively teaching for more than three decades. He began his teaching career as an unpaid Magister: A fulltime University professor but with no salary. He derived income solely from students (Burnham 2). At forty years old, during his second decade of unpaid teaching, Kant turned down a desirable salaried professorship in Rhetoric and Poetics at the University of Königsberg. He explained that he would wait for a position Logic and Metaphysics. He waited six years.
Kant’s collected lectures in logic and metaphysics revealed his engagement with the presuppositions of knowledge. His students described an affable attentive instructor who was passionate and focused. His early scholarship is playful and poetic. We have preserved lecture notes from his students that allow us to get a glimpse of Kant as “his students and colleagues saw” him (Beck xi). Scruton’s brief survey of Kant’s student’s notes reveals a gifted instructor and a “spirited orator” that engaged students both emotionally and intellectually (4). The influence of Kant’s critiques obscures much of his intellectual life. His teaching and public life provide additional insight into Kant’s playful rhetoric. Rhetoric in Kant’s time was in transition.

2.2 Rhetoric Received by Kant

Rhetoric before the Enlightenment enjoyed an elevated status within the liberal arts. The Enlightenment was a period of revival of classical education and the “Ciceronian conception of rhetoric…became once again the foundation of rhetorical study and remained so through the seventeenth and well into the eighteenth century” (Bizzell and Herzberg 792). Rhetoric during the Middle Ages declined and fragmented. Classical “Roman” rhetoric such as “Quintillian described it, never flourished in the Middle Ages” (D’Andeli 24). Exploring the nature of rhetoric during this transitional period is important because “the rhetorical theories of the Enlightenment are intimately linked to the intellectual and social developments that shaped the modern world” (Bizzell and Herzberg 792). What is now often referred to as “mere rhetoric” or rhetorical technique encompassed only a small category rhetoric in the classical tradition. Pre-Enlightenment education was built on a foundation of rhetoric (Foss et al 8-9). Rhetoric proper included rhetorical techniques but was not limited to persuasion or manipulation.
The subjective experience of sharing information and learning in the classroom required a productive engagement. Rhetoric was “fundamental” to education and grounded the relationship between pupil and instructor (Joseph 2-10). The conclusion of this dissertation will tie this conception of pre-Enlightenment rhetoric to teaching persuasion and argumentation in the contemporary classroom. The pre-Enlightenment position highlighted constructive engagement and rhetoric was the foundation of the liberal arts.

The method centric use of the term rhetoric during the Enlightenment relegated it to mere techniques of persuasion, manipulation, and control (Enos 2-3; Good and Roberts 1-21). The boundaries of rhetoric continued to shrink during the Enlightenment. Rhetorical theory inherited by German scholars “became a victim of romantic aestheticism and the idealization of poetry” influenced primarily by Kant (Kennedy 275). The rhetoric received by Enlightenment highlighted technique and pragmatism, but recently scholars have discovered a more fundamental role of rhetoric in the Middle Ages. Lingering authority of tradition and classical Greek philosophy pervaded Kant’s European education.

Kant’s academic career and philosophy took rise within the cultural schism between reason and tradition. Tradition lost its hold on authority and scientific thinking elevated reason. He thrived in the burgeoning world of the Enlightenment and contended with the problems of freewill and reason. His early academic experience located “theology at the center of his philosophy” (Burnham 3). He confronted the seeming contradiction between philosophy and theology and suggested that “one must limit knowledge to make room for faith.” He expressed both steadfast Christian belief and “the courage to use reason” (Kant, “Response” 1). Kant’s philosophy never eclipsed his faith.
His commitment to ethics and morality is attested to not only by scholars but his students, “If Jesus would have heard your lectures on ethics, I think he would have said, ‘That is what I meant…’” (Beck x). Kant’s “life work” concerned “ethical duties to ourselves and others” (Guyer, “Introduction” 3-5). His pursuit of reason does not contradict theology but underscores the importance of morality in the context of others. Kant’s rhetoric of reason implicates morality.

The German education system in the eighteenth century bridged scholasticism and the Enlightenment. German Universities taught both classical and contemporary rhetorical theory (Erconlini, Kant’s 198-199; Vickers 281-283). Kant’s commitment to free exercise of reason is deeply embedded within a political philosophy of engagement (Erconlini, Kant’s 198-199). Much of Kant’s work belies his attacks on rhetoric. His teaching and writing demonstrate expertise in rhetoric and “combined formidable intellectual resources with great powers of expression” (Vickers 201). Camilla Serck-Hanssen’s review of contemporary commentators on Kant and his relationship to rhetoric suggests that although scholars disagree on the role or status of rhetoric in Kant, classical and contemporary rhetoric were part of his education (241). Germany proved to be an important intellectual force during the Enlightenment and “many of the concepts that were to prove pivotal to European intellectual history” took shape in Germany (Boyer 196-197). Many of these “great ideas…empiricism, rationalism, and psychology… found a place within rhetoric” (Bizzell and Herzberg 812). German and the broader European university education still embraced a basic classic trivium and quadrivium foundation but in flux; new subjects like anthropology and geography were added and classical subjects grew more specialized.
Philosophy during this transitional period narrowed its scope from the “general tableaux of the liberal arts for the higher faculties to a more focused attention on logic/metaphysics and science” (Ercolini, *Kant’s* 49). Scholars in multiple academic disciplines continue debate Kant’s work for good reason; even his straightforward seemingly clear arguments are embedded within context and controversy. His language both propels and disparages rhetoric. Why? The Enlightenment tradition. Kant’s radical re-assessment of reason and freedom both nourished and challenged the German Enlightenment.

Scholars continue to extend and develop the “contested territory of the Enlightenment (Ercolini, *Kant’s* 1). Kant’s derisive attitude toward rhetoric, especially in his *Third Critique*, needs to be understood within a broader context of German education (*Kant’s* 48-57; Stroud “Kant, Rhetoric” 181-184). One problem confronting scholars is Kant’s use of the term varied throughout his work. As a result Stroud contended that his use of the term is “inherently unstable and ambiguous” (Stroud, *Kant* 15). Kant did not disparage the sort of rhetoric implied in the classical tradition; he critiqued the negative use of rhetorical techniques. If we open the theory of rhetoric to the pre-Enlightenment use, Kant’s relation to rhetoric is vastly different. Rhetorical theory and practice in the German Enlightenment can help show not only Kant’s peculiar relationship to rhetoric but “how rhetoric adapted and endured in a period often associated with its decline” (Ercolini, *Kant’s* 49). Because the term *rhetoric* in popular and academic use had narrowed to a technique for manipulative arguing, contemporary inquiry runs toward anachronism. The German Enlightenment was marked by transitions in education,
culture, and philosophy. The transitional nature of scholarship and education complicates the way we understand the history of rhetoric during this period.

Much of the history of rhetoric teaches that Enlightenment scholars narrowly construed the meaning and practice of rhetoric, but new research reveals a deeper theory at the center of much of the philosophy (Ercolini, “Pantheism” 3-9). Ercolini (6) challenged the “conventional wisdom” that rhetorical theory diminished during the Enlightenment and uncovered a dynamic rhetoric. Her research suggested that rhetoric “flourished” both in theory and practice during the German Enlightenment; rhetoric handbooks and courses survived and thrived in German education (5). Bizzell and Herzberg (812) add that as rhetoric changed emphasis, the “influence of classical rhetoric”…“diminished,” but it “did not disappear.” Demonstration of rhetorical training and skill can help us tease out nuanced rhetorical theories (Ercolini, “Pantheism” 6).

Ultimately, attending to the use of rhetoric “provides a way to reevaluate the practices that constitutes rhetoric in accounts of its history” and brings together rhetoric and the Enlightenment in new ways. We can “operationally define” rhetorical concepts in the lively practices of scholarly debate and publication (Ercolini, “Pantheism” 5-7). Kant’s rhetoric plays a central role in his theories about reason and knowledge. “Thus not only does Kant have something to say about rhetoric and The Enlightenment, but his own rhetorical approaches provide opportunities for examining rhetoric’s Enlightenment legacy” (Ercolini, Kant’s 5). Kant’s toiling through the implications of the Enlightenment “itself performs a particular rhetoric.” He unpacked a practical aesthetics grounding “political and communicative positions” (Kant’s 4). Kant’s rhetorical practice binds his theory of reason to communicative engagement.
The ground of rhetorical scholarship includes both theory and practice. We gain insights for promoting rhetorical theory by studying rhetorical practices in the wild. Communicative action exposes rich areas for rhetorical insight beyond discussions of rhetorical theorizing; the “public practices of lively exchange” and published academic scholarship are important areas of research (Ercolini, Kant’s 5). Attending to the rhetoric of scholars adds a practical dimension to rhetorical scholarship. Much of the traditional work in the history of rhetoric stands on the received textual evidence or “treatise” about rhetoric rather than rhetorical theory demonstrated in the treatise (Ercolini, Kant’s 6). Studying the rhetoric within artifacts from the German Enlightenment may prove that rhetoric “flourished” not only as a “field of pedagogy” but is demonstrated in public and academic discourse (Ercolini, Kant’s 5). The attention to the rhetorical training and practices of scholars contributes to rhetorical theory by providing new ways to understand and unpack the distinctive nature of rhetoric embedded in texts from various time periods.

2.3 Kant the Rhetor

The life and work of Kant can help explore the deeper possibilities of Enlightenment rhetoric (Kennedy, Classical 274-276; Ercolini, Kant’s 5-7; Frierson and Guyer vii-x). Attention to Kant’s employment of rhetoric offers new insights into Kant’s corpus. Kant’s rhetorical skill is evident in all aspects of his academic life, but Kant’s role in the history of rhetoric has been overshadowed by his direct references to techniques of manipulation. Kant’s philosophical impact overwhelms his rhetorical proficiency. Ercolini explained that “Kant’s legacy in the Western intellectual history” is documented “ad infinitum…,” but “his the legacy as it relates to the history of rhetoric
has received scant attention” (Ercolini, Kant’s 5). Kant’s weaves theories of rhetoric and play throughout his work, but because of inconsistent and “ambiguous” use of the term, scholars disagree on its role in his work. Many scholars emphasize Kant’s explicit negation of rhetoric (Ercolini, Kant’s 5). Dostal suggested that Kant “forthrightly castigates rhetoric” (225). Dostal reviewed Kant’s rhetorical concepts from a “classical perspective.” He suggested that Kant’s reduced rhetoric to a “matter of style” (235). Kant often used the terms oratory, “arts of speech,” poetry, and rhetoric to refer to similar, but unexplained, ideas. Translation issues point to disagreement or at least confusion over Kant’s theory of rhetoric and oratory. A key phrase brought to the center of the Kant’s rhetorical theory is from the Critique of Judgement. Part I Section 321 illustrates the tension. Pluhar translated the key phrase in the passage as “oratory and poetry”; Guyer translated the same phrase as “arts of speech are rhetoric and poetry.” In either case, we see that communication is important in Kant. The difficulty in clarifying Kant’s rhetoric stems not only from Kant’s confusion of terms but the presuppositions of the translator.

Kant’s uses thick layers of rhetorical analysis through communicative metaphors (Pluhar xxiii-xxiv). Pluhar’s analysis of Kant’s theory of judgement uncovers Kant’s concern for discursive rules of engagement. Pluhar described judgement using discourse metaphors. “When we call something ‘beautiful’ we seem to do so on the basis …of pleasure… And yet it seems…in such a judgment we say more than ‘I like the thing.’” Pluhar’s remarks note the operative understanding of speech in Kant’s theory of judgement. The implication of using the term beauty in discourse implies a universal understanding that precedes the experience of any representation of a given object. “For in using the adjective ‘beautiful’ we talk as if beauty were some sort of property of the
thing.” Kant attended to how we discuss what we know. Kant’s analysis exposed how language use implicates us in discourse, “hence we imply that other people, too, should see that ‘property’ and hence should agree with judgment.” Judgements then are not unique to the particular “judging subject” but are universal (Pluhar xxiv). Universal communicability is the driving force of Kant’s critical project.

Kant’s critical work stressed not how we reason or judge but how we discuss reasoned ideas and judgement. Kant brought engagement to the foreground. True to Kant’s rhetoric, Pluhar described Kant’s philosophy in terms of what we “call” concepts and what we can “say” about reason and beauty. Kant’s inquiry into reason and taste explored what we can “say” to others (CJ 194). In each case regarding judgement and reason, Kant circled back to the expression of the ideas and the implications of promoting academic discourse. The binding feature of taste is an echo of others represented by Kant in communicative terms, “nothing is postulated in a judgment of taste except such a universal voice about a liking unmediated by concepts” (CJ 216). Kant expanded his emphasis on communication and reason by attending to the public use of reason.

Rhetorical theory hides in plain sight in much of Kant’s work. The attention to Kant’s rhetoric of reason uncovers multiple textured layers of communication theory. The first contends with how we account for what we can say we know about experience. His position shows how the pursuit of objectivity in the natural sciences is a farce; the methods we place upon research in the discourses of science presume conditions that are not necessarily inherent in nature “but rather critical and regulative of thought” (Bloom 56). Kant’s rhetoric of reason explored how we encode experience. He attended to the conversation that takes place in the process of reason.
Reason, for Kant, was a rhetorical act. He framed cognition and judgement within the context of discourse and scholarship. Kant’s “Transcendental Idealism” re-conceived the role of the self in production of meaning (CPR A369). He established the self as a “knowing subject” actively producing knowledge in experience. He turned the subject-object construction of experience on its head. Cognition organizes experience (Bloom 56). Reason does not constitute the natural world. Reason is the regulative and interpretive construct of our own internal active cognition. Experience is organized in the act of reason. Kant explained how temporal and spatial aspects of cognition frame layers of understanding. Cognition actively sorts and organizes experience. We shape experience through concepts of causality, time, and space. Causality is an apparatus of the encoding capacity of our cognition.

Scholars in the natural sciences organize research around reason and limit the possible outcome to pre-supposed possibilities. “When scientists use reason to organize the data of experience” they “look for causes and assume that they are there” (Bloom 56). Kant contended that cognition organizes experience. Space, time, and “causality…did not describe the world of nature” rather these are the forms and concepts or “rules according to which” we must reason to organize the “experience of nature” (Bloom 56). Kant explained that “[s]pace is not something objective and real, nor is it a substance, nor an accident, nor a relation; it is rather, subjective and ideal; it issues from the nature of the mind” (CPR 43). For Kant our mind is not simply a passive receiver of things around us; we actively encode our experience. Kant showed that “the knowing subject played an active and creative role in the production of his world picture, rather than the static and passive role” assigned by the Enlightenment scholars the preceded him (Bloom 56-57).
The implication of reversing the self to an active “knowing subject” will be hashed out further in the Neo-Kantian tradition adding historical components that affect how we organize and understand culture.

Kant also addressed “combat” of academic scholarship. Real world engagement, even among scholars, implicates the communicative agent with the responsibility of the public use of reason (CPF A423, Bxv). He explicitly drew attention to communicative thinking as he announced the connection to ongoing public academic discourse (A21). He established an explicitly rhetorical enterprise; he problematized reason, ethics, and judgement on the basis of engagement. His inquiry used metaphors of engagement and discourse; he tied the foundations of his critique directly to speech and language. In the first Critique while unpacking the meaning of the “Transcendental Aesthetic” Kant announced the importance of communication and discourse. This “revolutionary thesis” established the framework for his entire critical project and much of the academic discourse to follow (Guyer and Wood 7). A rhetorical lens applied to Kant’s critical work brings attention to his commitment to communicative action. Throughout each of his Critiques an interlocutor is assumed. He established the problems of knowing within a conversational framework. His critiques established ground for moving forward in conversation with others. He asked not simply what can be known but what can be said to others about what can be known (A2-A53). The fact that others are involved accelerates the urgency of his inquiry.

Discourse is an important metaphor in Kant’s work. The subject of his analyses in the first Critique is what we can say to others about judgements we make and what “one is able to say…about …objects that appear to the senses” (A2). The first Critique
developed rhetoric of reason that explored the limits of knowing. His inquiry centered on procedural issues of academic conversation by exploring where interlocutors necessarily meet in knowing. From a rhetorical perspective, his position aligns with persuasive appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. The first Critique can be helpful way to explore logos and consider how we support and justify arguments. The Critique of Practical Reason implicates our faulty of reason with ethics and duty. The Critique of Judgement connects emotions, feelings, and presuppositions to inquiry, engagement, and judgement.

Kant’s sense of community and the distinction between public and private reason established a broad range of communicative ground. Enlightenment thinking for Kant is public use of reason “underwritten by an underlying persistence, vigilance” (Ercolini, Kant’s 3). Community and public communicative action formed the center of concern for Kant’s inquiry into reason. Kant’s Lectures on Ethics revealed ideas and practices that are not accessible to us through his later manuscripts (Beck ix). Kant’s language use was laced with rhetoric and communicative metaphors. A barrier to understanding rhetorical theory in Kant is that there “is no coherent or consistent terminology employed” (Stroud, Kant 26). One key concept pointed to in Beck’s “Foreword” ties to rhetoric and translation. Much of the philosophy Kant contended with was written in Latin. Kant wrote in German and virtually invented the “German philosophical vocabulary” (x). The invention of new terms demonstrates a keen awareness of the importance of language from the onset of his critical work and attests to savvy application of rhetorical techniques throughout his critical enterprise.

From his engaging teaching style, to his public speaking skills and academic publications, Kant demonstrated multiple levels of rhetorical proficiency. In the opening
section of Scott Stroud’s *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric* (2014) he identified Kant’s rhetorical skill in a eulogistic letter for a friend. The letter is not only well written and heartfelt but meets the specific and proper standards of eulogistic epistle (1-5). Stroud sought to rehabilitate rhetorical reception of Kant and dug further into complexity of Kant’s communicative categories. He decried the “dismissal” Kant’s rhetorical theory and re-framed the discussion. Scholarly attention to rhetoric in Kant is important, even the attempts to negate, because they “take Kant’s comments on rhetoric seriously” (6). Stroud explained that scholars who read Kant as an “oppositional figure” or a “modern defender of Plato’s” critique of rhetoric “fall short of the sympathy and sensitivity necessary to mine” the complexity of Kant (5-6). Stroud expanded rhetoric from a “simple term” to a “complex concept” (7). Stroud and Ercolini exposed new and fertile ground to explore a deeper context of rhetoric and rhetorical theorizing present in Kant’s work.

A more positive spin on the nature of rhetoric in Kant helps understand his role as a public intellectual and scholar. Kant’s notion of public reason both affirms and critiques rhetoric (Ercolini, *Kant’s* 1-6). Kant described academic work as a “battleground” where scholar-combatants never gain even an inch of ground (*CPR*, *Bvx*). The metaphor hyperbolizes the engagement, but the center of his concern is the discourse. He considered the implications of public reason in a variety of ways. In his response to the questions about enlightenment thinking, he described a scholar in context of public reason. A scholar is not an “occupation” or necessarily an expert but an “attitude or orientation toward others” that involves “submitting ones ideas” in plain and
understandable language for “consideration and engagement” (Ercolini, *Kant’s 3-5*).

Broadly speaking, a scholar is one who engages the public on their own terms.

His early *Logic Lectures* underscored the importance of proper rhetorical education for students as “citizens of the world” (Kant, *Logic 29*). Scruton suggested that these lectures were a “reshearsal” of the themes he worked out decades later in his critical work (3). A consistent thread binding Kant’s work was not only how we know but the implications of knowledge within the reality of a shared existence with others. In these early lectures, he demonstrated the primary importance of interrogation and inquiry tied to duty and truth. Burnham (2-3) explained that morality is the “highest purpose” in Kant’s lectures and the highest end of all philosophy. The lectures contended with how we discern judgement and morals and why these issues are important. Kant’s communicative urgency exaggerated the connection between self and others. Duty and ethics are fueled by the self in community. His lectures on logic explained the importance not only of knowledge and philosophical ideas, but life’s conduct implicated by this knowledge. Play underscored his *Logic*. Setting the stage for his later description of free play of imagination, knowledge is the “purposeful joining of all cognitions and skills into unity and insight into their agreement with the highest ends of human reason” (Kant *Logic 29*). The “joining” is action of the mind is further developed in his third *Critique*.

Kant’s critical work demonstrated a playful theory of engagement. His ideas, always in a state of play, continued to develop and progress from publication to publication. The “A edition” of his first *Critique*, originally published in 1781, was followed six years later by the revised “B edition” with a detailed introduction and notes for clarification. Kant left us with a bounty of margin notes ripe for scholarly attention
(Guyer and Wood vii). Guyer and Wood in the Cambridge edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1998) reconstructed a comprehensive English translation that brings together both editions to show where Kant added new insights and clarifications. His excessively organized “Contents” demonstrate layers of detail and a deep internal consistency; they are in themselves a helpful tool to understand the relation of ideas in his *Critiques*. After publication of each of his major works, Kant continued to edit and revise. Guyer explained that “with all its appearance of systematicity, Kant’s thought was in a state of constant evolution throughout his life” (Guyer, “Introduction” 11-12). This evolution emerged as a consistent current of thought growing and clarifying through his critical work; engagement with others was always a primary concern. Kant considered his *Critique of Judgement* to be a “completion of unification of his work as a philosopher” (Burnham 6). Kant worked out an aesthetic judgement of taste in his free play of imagination.

Kant implicated freedom as the intellectual tension wedged between science and ethics. He “ultimately came to see” that science and ethics “had to be sought in the legislative power of human intellect itself” (Guyer, “Introduction” 2). The legislative activity is Kant’s ludic theory of rhetoric. Kant’s Copernican Revolution’s reframed the nature of knowledge and experience through exploring structuring capacity of the mind. He rebounded off of the empiricists and added cognitive activity. Rather than a passive repository of experience, cognition in Kant’s formation is active. His philosophy “radically and irreversibly transformed the nature of Western thought” (Guyer, “Introduction” 3). He worked with empiricism to show that experience does not account for all knowing. He established a new way of understanding the consequences of
cognition. Schrag explained the “peculiar task” of Kant’s first *Critique* “was to show how the manifold of atomized sensory experience, itself chaotic and disarrayed, required the conceptualization of an active transcendental ego to set it in order and thus determine it with respect to its proper objects of knowledge” (8). Imagination in the first *Critique* “serves understanding in the constitution of experience” (Makkreel 1). Kant accepted that “knowledge begins with perceptual experience” but does not “arise from perceptual experience” (Schrag, *Experience* 8). Just as the pitcher determines the shape of water, cognition affects how we know. Cognitive faculties precede experience. “Percepts without concepts are empty or devoid of meaning” (Schrag, *Experience* 8). Guyer explained that Kant’s exploration of reason changed how philosophers contended with experience and knowledge, “After he wrote, no one could ever again think of either science or morality as a matter of the passive reception of entirely external truth or reality” (Guyer, “Introduction” 3). Kant drew on ideas from the German tradition and the Enlightenment.

2.4 The Rhetoric of Reason

The fundamental importance of rhetoric and play emerged as the vital moment of knowing in the *Critique of Judgement*. Translation issues can complicate Kant’s rhetoric on rhetoric as the terms “rhetoric,” “oratory,” “art of speech,” and “persuasion” are employed for similar concepts in various translations. For this reason, exploring Kant’s rhetorical theorizing rather than solely his use of the term rhetoric adds important insight to Kant’s philosophy. Kant described rhetoric as both a fine art and a dangerous tool of manipulation. In a footnote he explained that “rhetorical power and excellence of speech” together constitute rhetoric and “belong to fine art.” He then explained that oral
persuasion is manipulative “oratory (ars oratoria), the art of using people's weaknesses for one's own aims” (CJ 328). Kant represented the Enlightenment view of rhetoric as a tool of manipulation and “machinery of persuasion” (327), but he also exposed the beauty of eloquence and rhetoric as a fine art (CJ 328). Fine art, for Kant, was embedded within a communicatively structured world tied to beauty, judgement, and aesthetics. “Fine art” Kant contended, “is a way of presenting that is purposive on its own and that furthers, even though without a purpose, the culture of our mental powers to [facilitate] social communication” (CJ 306). Kant’s theory of art points to an acknowledgement of others as the ground for discriminating beauty. Although our experience of beauty is immediate and subjective, our judgement of the beautiful is universal.

Until recently, rhetorical scholars have generally ignored Kant’s “derisive” framing of rhetoric (Viada 373, Danish 194-196; Abbott 273). Communication scholars traditionally held Kant’s “disdain for Rhetoric… extraordinary” and tended to dismiss or negate much of his work (Abbot 274; Vaida 373). Scholars have generally agreed that Kant distrusted the power of rhetoric (Danish 195, Vaida 373; Kennedy, “Interest” 55; Stroud, Promise 40). George Kennedy suggested that because Kant described “oratory as exploiting the weakness of hearers” that he “dismisses the art of rhetoric as worthy of no respect (275). Even though Kant engaged in rhetoric in multiple arenas, much of his specific comments on the subject are negative. This seeming contradiction is a barrier to understanding the full significance of rhetoric in his work. Kant’s description of the “public exercise of reason” is so clearly linked to rhetoric it is hard to reconcile with his rejection of rhetoric (Ercolini, Kant’s 4). Kant clearly was distrustful of a type of rhetorical technique or a specific intent of rhetoric, but not all rhetoric.
Rhetorical proficiency belies attacks on *Rhetoric* as an academic discipline. Both Kant and Plato formulate rhetorically proficient arguments against rhetoric (Vickers 201). Beyond the elevation of rhetoric at least through illustration, Vickers considered substantive issues in Kant’s apparent attack on rhetoric and praise of poetry. He contended that the “animosity” Kant “openly expresses… without proper argument” toward rhetoric reflects “the prejudices of Plato.” Kant, as Plato, exploded the violent depiction of rhetoric tied to “deception, imprisonment” and “exploitation” (Vickers 201-204). The limitless character of reason places scholars on a “dialectical battlefield” where the back and forth banter of public intellectuals gains and loses ground. The confusing and often contradictory implications of the term rhetoric obfuscate the fruitful categories of communicative action described in Kant’s work.

Kant’s critical work is embedded in discourse at every stage of development. He framed his initial inquiry in to *Pure Reason* through metaphors of discourse by testing the limits of what “can be said” (Axix); what we are “able to say” about what and “how we come to know things” (*CPR* A24/B39). He explicitly drew attention to the communication of ideas in reason, “Space is not a discursive or, as is said, general concept of relations of things in general, but a pure intuition” (A25/B39). It is no mistake that he used discourse as the metaphor. Attention to the communicative implications of reason adds levels of rich rhetorical theorizing to Kant’s first *Critique*. Kant’s self-reflexive task of addressing the “combat” of academia established a real world engagement and attaches to the responsibility of the public use of reason (*CPR* A4223/B451). Kant’s use of discourse metaphors point to an underlying importance of engagement and implicate a rhetorical theory at the center of his philosophy. He elevated
rhetoric and communicative thinking when he announced the connection to ongoing public academic discourse (A21). Although he did not announce his *Critique of Pure Reason* as an inquiry into communication, a general premise of his writing attended to rhetorical agents and the limits of reason in discourse. His first *Critique* established the limits of what public intellectuals can say, “One would therefore only be able to say that as far as has been observed to date, no space has been found that has more than three dimensions” (*CPR* A24/B39). He used metaphors of competition, engagement, and discourse to uncover the problematic nature of objective inquiry. He tied the foundations of his *Critique* directly to communication and language. As his inquiry into reason unfolded, theories of communication lingered and grew.

Kant delineated his rhetorical theory in a footnote first by comparing rhetoric to poetry (327 fn). He emphasized a utility of rhetoric versus the beauty of a poem that can give “pure enjoyment.” A poem can inspire, but even the “best speech” fails to stir us with beauty and raises the ire of suspicion. The potential of abuse and manipulation from the pulpit to parliament “has always been mixed with the disagreeable feeling of disapproval of a deceitful art.” The problem Kant exposed is rhetorical. Those imbued with rhetorical skill can manipulate others “like machines” in ways that hinder “calm reflection.” Effective public engagement potentially obscures the truth, confuses individuals, and affects decision making. In this footnote Kant clarified his use of rhetoric in this particular application as a combination of eloquence and knowledge. When employed properly, rhetoric then is a “beautiful art.” It is the potential for orators to manipulate the intellectual “weakness of people for one’s one purpose” that rhetoric is dangerous. The conceit of good intentions does not justify manipulative rhetorical
strategies, that “however well-intentioned or even really good these may be” deceitful strategies are not “worthy of any respect at all.” Rhetoric is both beautiful and dangerous in this passage. Speakers with a “lively imagination” who “feel a lively sympathy for the good,” have at their “command,…clear insight…” and use “pure and righteous language” demonstrate beautiful rhetoric (327 fn). The potential of manipulation looms behind moments of beauty. When considering the full range of Kant’s rhetoric on rhetoric, it is insufficient to collapse Kant’s rhetorical theory to purely negative. Kant is wary of the negative potential of rhetoric yet affirms the possibility of beauty. It is the potential of oppressing others in the public use of reason that Kant denounces. Exploring the beauty of rhetoric in Kant’s work may be helpful to navigate the public and political discourse in contemporary culture. He exposed the dangers and limits of unchecked public rhetoric.

Much of what Kant explained as threats to freedom and autonomy are bound to communicative agency. The famous opening lines to his “Answer to the Question ‘What is Enlightenment?’” derived their vitality from rhetorical power and expression. The footnotes to the English translation explained that Kant’s opening line “Enlightenment is mankind's exit from its self-incurred immaturity” ties to the movement away from authoritarian rule toward freedom of expression (Schmidt 64-65). Kant underscored a rhetorically crafted state of understanding; how we understand has been directed by another. Immaturity, sometimes translated as tutelage, implied the legacy of the top down knowledge. Rhetoric materialized in Kant’s description of the Enlightenment as a “release from…self-incurred tutelage/immaturity.” The movement of the Enlightenment, for Kant, was the ability to freely use one’s own reason “without the direction of
another.” Immaturity/tutelage was the direct result of engagement. Reason signaled release the shackles of ignorance. The ability to think for oneself allows one to be free (Kant, “An Answer” 58). The freedom to use reason is a necessary condition of enlightenment. Rhetorical techniques can threaten this freedom. The use of reason is a problematic feature of freedom for Kant. The nature and power of rhetoric weighs heavy on our ability to think for ourselves and Kant is wary of techniques that can mislead.

Kant tied enlightenment thinking to the “free us of reason” (Erconolini, Kant’s 3). Erconolini connected Kant’s answer to “What is the Enlightenment?” to his broader theory and practice of rhetoric and revealed a “nexus of philosophy and articulation” (Kant’s 2). Multiple layers of communicative urgency emerged in Kant’s answer. The freedom in Kant’s reply is “explicitly connected to both writing and speech” (3). One of the various uses of the term rhetoric in the Critiques was driven by the manipulation of others through the use of rhetorical techniques. Scholars in the Middle Ages distrusted tradition and intuition. The turn toward reason led to a primacy of objective claims. Science and reason countered the “inability to make use of… understanding without direction from another” that causes the oppression (Kant, “An Answer” 54). A rhetorical approach to Kant’s concept of play and his movement in the philosophy of knowing underscored the Enlightenment’s goal to free minds from the yoke of dependence for the rational autonomy and self-determination.

For Kant, rhetoric functioned in a variety of ways. “The standard take” according to Ercolini, is that when Kant used the term rhetoric “he dismisses it as pernicious, deserving no respect.” Kant depicted rhetoric as a usurper of autonomy and “deceitful in its use of others as a means to the strategic and predetermined end of persuasion” (Kant’s
5). Even though each time Kant announced the subject, it is pejorative, “there is still room for positive employments” (Stroud, Promise 41). Ercolini agrees, beyond the limited negative references to the subject, “Kant’s legacy still looms large” in rhetoric (Kant’s 5). Though Kant was wary of the power rhetorical techniques enable, rhetoric used properly is the ground of hope. In the third Critique, when Kant described rhetoric as a fine art, it means more than speaking well (321). In this instance, he emphasized a union of “[r]hetorical power and excellence of speech” which “constitute rhetoric” (Kant, Judgement 328). Stroud suggested that the depiction of rhetoric as the “deceitful art” is not “the whole of rhetoric in Kant” (Promise of Rhetoric 41). Kant disparages rhetoric that manipulates and misleads, but he also constructs of more positive fine art of rhetoric. Rhetoric bound to eloquence is a “beautiful art” (Stroud, Promise of Rhetoric 41).

Rhetoric emerged through Kant’s work as a powerful technical skill and a beautiful art. Productive work challenging the traditional view of Kant on rhetoric provides avenues for much fruitful further inquiry. His connection between rhetoric and aesthetics is a snapshot of his wider connection to communicative action.

Kant’s rhetorical theorizing echoed ancient Greek and Roman thinkers. He drew attention to the power of rhetorical choices and the art of rhetoric. Kant’s critical project paralleled the broad concept of Greek logos and the dynamic relationship between reason and language. The Critique of Pure Reason examined the role of reason in understanding and stressed “what can be said” regarding knowledge. The Critique of Judgement frequently attended to language, oratory and poetics. In a footnote to his discussion of the “The Ideal of Beauty,” he detailed why language choice is an art (232). He pointed to the unique role of language and explained that “[m]odels of taste in the arts of speech must
be composed in a language both dead and scholarly.” He indicated the instability of language. He explained that it is important to be carefully consider word choice and include both contemporary academic language and “dead” language so the ideas “will not have to undergo the changes that inevitably affect living ones.” His attention to the flexible nature language is insightful. He cautioned that words change meaning over time. The accumulated meaning of terms in discourse can lead to misunderstanding. Language is contextual and permeable, even “noble expressions become fiat; familiar ones archaic, and newly created ones enter into circulation” (“Ideal of Beauty” 232). Discourse was at the center of his concern. Lack of precision is inherent in language and instability negatively effects discourse.

2.5 Play in Kant

Kant was the first “idealist” thinker to revitalize theories of play tied to the classical Greek tradition (Spariosu 33). Play converges with rhetoric in each of Kant’s three Critiques. Kant’s concept of imagination is the basis for understanding his ludic theory of rhetoric. The “free play of imagination” introduced a new way to understand cognition tied to purpose (CPR A53). In this section I examine connection between Kant’s theories of play and imagination by considering his essays and lecture notes. Next, I unpack his ludic theory as it blossomed in his three Critiques into the rhetorically sophisticated notion of the free-play of imagination.

Although Kant did not develop a specific “concept” of play, it is an “anticoncept” that “resists conceptualization” and provides negative counter examples to his scientific approach (Spariosu 33-35). Analogous to Kant’s incongruous use of the term rhetoric, his use of the term “speil/play” was inconsistent throughout his work. Spariosu’s analysis of
Kant’s work showed that he understood “mere play” as a barrier to understanding driven by intuition and imagination. Kant aligned intuition to our use of the term perception. Knowledge and understanding are products of reason. Kant problematized scholars using ‘pseudo-rational’ claims within serious scientific work (Spariosu 31-36). Kant provided various connections to play theory: He directly discussed play and the imagination in each critique; he frequently used the German term ‘speil’ and play/contest metaphors; his described an agonistic stance in the “mock combat” of scholars (CPR Bxv). The playful metaphors used to describe scholarship tie aesthetics and judgement to his larger description of imagination and public reason.

In the decades preceding the publication of the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant’s “playful” and “elegant” essays showed a more “romantic” scholar and entertainer whose wit and style earned him fame and income (Frierson vii). The meaning and function of imagination in Kant changed from text to text, but the basic sense of a “storehouse of our representations” remained consistent (Makkreel 17). Kant added to the storehouse metaphor an active sense similar to an operating system on a computer. The mind does not only store the information, but as we will see, the organizing activity precedes the experience of representations in the world. In Kant’s “Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings” imagination is the creative space for a “world of fables” which only “understanding” can bring us back to the real world (2:14). The imagination is a respite from the toils of life and our “true fate.” It allows us to consider possibilities beyond the real. Our lot in life rarely turns out the way we plan “nevertheless the imagination goes about its business and does not tire from drawing up new plans” (2:14). Although undeveloped in the early essays, Kant established a connection between
imagination and aesthetic experience (20:125), a “lover…intoxicated by imagination” (20:133), amusement (20:188); and illusion and conjecture (2:265). Kant did not develop a theory of imagination in his pre-critical work, but he forecasted the active role of cognition, reason, and interpretation.

Ludic rhetoric began to take shape in Kant’s earliest essays. He employed the term “Speil” conventionally as a nonserious activity or game, as a drama or staged production, as a metaphor to represent people, as ideas or objects interacting, and as a broad referent for internal and external modes of communication (Nagel 51). Nagel’s (51-60) analysis of Kant’s “Observations about the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime” suggested that even though he used the term sparingly, only five times in the entire text, his use uncovered numerous important communicative ideas. Play is “the means used” to communicate. The convergence of play and rhetoric in his earliest writing demonstrated the significance of communicative action in his framework. In the context of the Kant’s essay, play described socially appropriate reaches of communication.

Kant left behind notes that point to a rhetorically sophisticated research agenda tied to playful engagement. His “Notes on Anthropology prior to 1770” showed the growing understanding of play, rhetoric, and the mental activity of the mind. He announced the significance of communication and argued that “Poetic art is an artificial play of thoughts” (15:266). The movement away from pure experience to artifice of play continued to develop rhetorical significance in Kant’s writing. Kant set out a program of scholarship that emphasized communication, reason, and engagement with others. Free play requires open engagement. “We play with thoughts if we do not labor with them, that is, are [not] necessitated by an end” (15:266-269). Ludic imagination must be free
and not coerced, even by our own presuppositions. Although fragmented in the notes, he pointed to a set rhetorically significant of ideas that he continued to promote and develop throughout his career.

Kant’s notes expressed the importance of communication in his theory of imagination where “all the powers of mind are set into an harmonious play” (15:266). It is here where the rhetoric of reason germinates. The powers of the mind, imagination, and understanding, work together. He explained that “powers of the mind” should not hinder or promote reason. Reason engages the world; it is how we observe and interpret experience the world in “[t]he play of images, of ideas, of affects and inclinations, finally of mere impressions in the division of time, of rhythm (versification) and unison (rhyme)” (15:266). For Kant “the structure of meaning resides a priori in the mind and is supplied through the activity of pure understanding” (Schrag, *Experience* 34). That we organize pre-supposes what we organize. We share common structures of meaning that enable understanding.

The structures of meaning hinted at in these notes become the center of his first *Critique*. The shared capacity for understanding binds us to community. Play and the ludic imagination connect rhetorical agency and the existentialism that will be picked up by the Neo-Kantians in the Marburg School. “The sensible play of thoughts consists in the play of speech (versification) and of words (rhyme)... It awakens the mind” (*CPR* 15:266). He unpacked the significance of encoding and decoding as the active process of reason where our ideas come to have sharable meaning in speech. He brought oral communication to the foreground and described “[o]ratory” as the “harmony of thoughts
and the imagination” (15:266). Free play of our imagination helps us navigate our shared existence with others.

Play enriched Kant’s commitment to others in communicative action. Play served as a sort of “social valorization” that characterizes moments of dialogue (Nagel 60). Social interaction and the limits for appropriate avenues of communication are contained within a game governed by taste. Play provides the opportunity to demonstrate wisdom and wit but within community approved standards (Nagel 60-61). Meaning is an ongoing active process. Play is the mediating vitality binding imagination and understanding (Gjesdal 352). The mediating function of play sheds light on the implicit communicative ground in Kant’s theories of reason.

In his more poetic early essays much of his work described “formative powers” of imagination. Our “formative faculty” or “power to coordinate representations” organizes information based on representations of objects in experience. We experience objects and cognitively classify and organize. Our imagination draws on this “storehouse” to aid in the interpretation of experience. Imaginative processes begin when we draw from previous experiences and add to this organizing process objects not given to us in immediate experience (Makkreel 9-14). Imagination works with our understanding when confronted with an unknown. Much like an optical illusion, the insatiable activity of reason relies on the imagination to create ideas when empirical evidence lacks. In the third Critique, Kant expanded the meaning of aesthetic judgement by parsing “three new concepts…taste, pleasure, and beauty” (Burnham 41-42). Kant tied imagination to “an aesthetic idea” that is both contained within a specific presentation of an object and “prompts so much thought” that it transcends instantiation (Burnham 115). Kant used
imagination to explain how our cognitive capacity precedes our experience. The structure of imagination allows for re-considering and learning.

The ambiguity of Kant’s play shrinks and swells through his three Critiques in both space and import. Akin to the scholarly reception of rhetoric, much of the research suggests Kant negates play theories (Nagel 62-64). The seeds of play are planted in his pre-critical work, grew and developed in the first two Critiques and blossomed in the final Critique of Judgement. He was consistently critical of methods for knowing derived from experience and challenged scholars who muddle knowledge in “competitive play” (Spariosu 34). Ultimately, play unifies rhetoric and aesthetics. Kant’s and Schiller’s “divergence” from the Greek play/serious opposition fueled by the rise of the middle class and the Enlightenment’s “compartamentalization” of philosophy expressed a rekindled sense of “playful leisure” (Nagel 59). Although outside the scope of this dissertation, the connection between Kantian play and leisure is an avenue for exploring additional aspects of Kant’s philosophy of communication ethics. Play concepts offered fertile ground for the development of his theory of imagination.

Kant’s ludic imagination was tied to cognition and understanding. His three critiques showed that reason is the a priori structure of experience in natural sciences, ethics, and taste. Reason, much like a mirage, is beyond our immediate control. Reason is an active cognitive capacity that structures how we know. For Kant, reason forces us to “consider questions, which it cannot decline, as they are presented by its own nature, but which it cannot answer, as they transcend every faculty of the mind” (CPR “Preface” 1). That we “cannot decline” to consider questions stirs the activity of the imagination. Play
and rhetoric lost status to the bourgeoning of science yet remained integrally tied to understanding. The conditions necessary to know must pre-exist anything we can know.

The first *Critique* challenged the inherited privilege of tradition and sought to “replace ‘mere play’ of imagination and thought (Spariosu 38). Kant hinted at nuanced notion of play as our capacity to reckon or consider new ideas as we “play with the cobwebs of the brain” (B196). In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) Kant described more than one meaning of play. Kant employed the term ‘*speil*’/play to represent “mere play of representations” (A102), playing and the play of games (B115), opposition to work (Bxxxvii), rhetorical manipulation as a “sophistical play” (A352) metaphor (A369), the mediating role of imagination (A376), “dialectical play of the cosmological ideas” (A462) and as a drama. In each of these uses, rhetorical concepts surface in argument, collaboration, and discernment. Kant’s disdain for the corruptibility of ideas through language and rhetorical techniques overwhelmed his affirmations of rhetorical theory.

Kant’s incongruent use of the term *speil*/play adds barriers to study his ludic rhetoric, but we can see both negative constricting discussions and additive expositions of play flow throughout his work. His use of the *speil*/play metaphors demonstrates the ludic nature of reason. Play grows with and toward aesthetics, from a “negative activity” that “yields no knowledge” to the mediator between judgement and reason in *The Critique of Judgement* (Spariosu 37-39; Nagel 61-67). His negative use of the term play and “mere play” in his early work underscored his attention to classical Greek thinking. Spariosu pointed to the similarities between Kant’s negative use of play and the “Platonic and Aristotelian dismissal of agonistic intellectual play of the Sophist” (37). Nagel (61-65) helps us see the wide varieties play concepts emergent in Kant. In Kant’s first *Critique*
we are left with a contradictory and ambivalent notion of play. In the third, we see play flourish as the ground of reason. Importantly for this project is the convergence, at every step, between play and rhetoric.

2.6 Voices on the Horizon

Play and rhetorical theory in Kant’s work underly the connection to others in the world of ideas. Judgements of beauty remind us we are not alone. A defining characteristic of beauty is “communicability.” He framed even our own internal unmediated reaction to art and beauty within discourse (CJ 217). Rhetorical thinking was a priori in Kant’s ludic imagination, his explanation of beauty, and in his conditions for judgement. Camilla Serck-Hanssen argued that “rhetoric has a positive and indeed indispensable function in Kant’s practical philosophy” (241). The Critique of Judgement elevated play and underscores the connection to rhetoric. He does this by describing Rhetoric proper and by highlighting rhetorical features involved in aesthetic judgement. Experience in community grounds the standards of taste. We can relate to each other only because we share similar cognitive capacity to reason (Pluhar Iv). Understanding is driven by ideas outside of experience. In the third Critique Kant explored “aesthetics not for its own sake, but to investigate knowledge claims about principles that cannot be justified by experience alone” (Kennedy, “Interest” 61n). Aesthetics emerged as a particular aspect of judgement. Rhetorically, Kant developed aesthetic philosophy as a practical example to explore a larger more general theory of judgement. Judgements then are a priori. Judgements are the result of the functioning of the structures of thought. Kant both clarified and confused his use of the rhetoric and play in the Third Critique. He explored beauty as an “expression of aesthetic ideas” (164). The capacity to judge
structures our experience; reasoning activates the ground of our decision making and understanding.

Beauty is the subjective experience of pleasure, not a feature of an object. Beauty has no objective logical or necessary referent. Kant bases this direct experience of beauty on a “special kind of feeling involved in judgments of taste” (Pluhar xxiv). Where one can describe an others eyes a blue objectively, their beauty is not so simply stated. The play of imagination is a key to Kant’s unraveling of aesthetic judgement. We experience beauty directly, not through reason. We do not examine an object, consider what makes an ideal, and then compare the object to an ideal. Kant explained that our imagination is the direct conduit of aesthetic beauty (204). “Hence a judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment and so is not a logical judgment but an aesthetic one.” An aesthetic judgement is driven by subjectivity not tied to reason; “a judgment whose determining basis cannot be other than subjective” (204). Kant explained in the first introduction of the *Critique of Judgement* that aesthetic judgment is not a “cognitive power” observed as a characteristic of a specific object, but beauty is “based on the power of judgment's own principles” as experienced “through sense-directly to the feeling of pleasure” (226). Kant eliminated the object from the determination of beauty and emphasized a community of taste, not a characteristic of an object. Judgements are an a priori capacity of cognition. In our judgements the voices of others always loom.

2.7 Rhetoric of Judgement

The *Third Critique* underscored communicative center of Kant’s theory of judgement. Even if we disagree on particular judgement, a common ground of communication must exist for even the disagreement to make sense (Burnham 32).
Kant’s “communication of judgements” relied on a transcendental principle of judgement. Our capacity to judge is innate. We may judge beauty or pleasure differently, but we share an understanding of the idea of beauty and pleasure. Structures of judgement are a priori. The conditions possible for judgement and the understanding of the implications of judgement provide room for a community of taste. An aesthetic judgment extends from an innate capacity to judge tied to our experience within a community. When multiple interpretations exist, we are forced to think rhetorically. When we interpret we justify, explain, or persuade. Kant contended that “[i]f we wish to decide whether something is beautiful or not, we do not use understanding to refer the presentation to the object so as to give rise to cognition; rather, we use imagination” (*CJ* 204). Mediation is the play of ideas that establishes the conditions necessary for judgement. Judgement is the center of aesthetics and the “mediating link” between understanding and reason” (Barnham 34). The experience of art “reflects our sense of what a work demands” and how one ought to respond” (Noe 187). The to and fro of discourse grounds reason and judgement. Understanding and judgement are joined in the action of discernment, play.

Communication was crucial for Kant. Communication and “universal communicability” are necessary conditions for aesthetics. Kant emphasized the nature of judgement and described the activity of thought as it moved toward knowing. Beauty is discerned and “we use our imagination” in “connection with understanding” (*CJ* 204). As the third *Critique* unfolds this connection between imagination and understanding is play. At the center of rhetoric and play in Kant is thought seeking understanding. Play is the mental to and fro of ideas. Our imagination, not bogged by the same sort of
intellectual restraints as reason based understanding, is free to wander and “no determinate concept restricts” it “to a particular rule of cognition” (CJ 217). This intellectual wandering of the imagination is guided by a loose collection of harmonizing rules, akin to the defining characteristic of play. Similar to the difference between writing fiction and nonfiction, we have a model of thinking that we apply to both imagination and understanding. In both fiction and nonfiction we seek clarity of ideas, organization and coherence. Our imagination applies the same basic procedures to ideas, but without the same constraints. Ginsborg (1) explained that “concepts are…rules by which imagination synthesizes or organizes the data of sense-perception.” The rules for the imagination are not structured in the same way as reason and have a freedom to function without limit of precognition, “imagination functions in a rule-governed way, but without being governed by any rule in particular” (Ginsborg 1-4). Kant’s rhetoric of reason underscored the tension between seriousness and rationality and continues to drive play concepts in contemporary theorizing. Experience with others in community tied to the pre-existing conditions for judgement exposed the rhetorical nature of aesthetics. Aesthetic ideas are communicatively tied to community. The structuring role of play and rhetoric come to fruition as the conditions necessary to make judgements.

Imagination grounds experience. In Kant’s first Critique imagination is originative; it is a “faculty of the soul” that “cannot be derived from any other faculty” (A94/B126). Kant emphasized the “free of play of imagination” as the cornerstone of judgement and how we know. In the first Critique, our ability to work a concept into perception happened in the imaginative powers of cognition. Imagination played a vital role for understanding the nature of cognition and understanding. Kant explained that it is
one of the “original sources (capacities or faculties of the soul), which contain the conditions of the possibility of all experience” (A94/B126). Kant’s attention to imagination in the first *Critique* underscored the significance for theories of play and rhetoric in his philosophy by demonstrating growth and consistency from a young professor to an acclaimed philosopher. The emphasis and development of reason helps uncover the rhetorical space created in Kant’s work.

Kant’s aesthetic judgment underscores the significance of rhetoric and play in community. Burnham described the “first approximation” of judgement in Kant as driven from a “feeling of pleasure…predicated of…or connected to…our ‘merely judging’ something.” Judgement is a rhetorical act that emerges in the “universal communicability of the mental state, in the given presentation, which underlies the judgment of taste as its subjective condition, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence” (*CJ* 217). Pluhar (lvi) explained that in aesthetic reflexive judgements “we judge the subjective purposiveness that nature displays in the empirical intuition (of something apprehended by the imagination) and that we judge this purposiveness without a determinate concept.” Schrag described the “constituting activity of the transcendental ego” in the perception process. As we perceive objects or “fragments received form the sensory manifold” our transcendental ego organizes through “ready-made categories” (8). We look beyond a specific purpose of an object limited by our pre-conceived notions. Kant made room for a sort of judgement that is not influenced by properties of an object or our predisposition toward a specific object. The judgement of beauty is tied only to the object itself not what we expect. “Hence in such judgments, imagination and understanding harmonize without the constraint that a determinate concept would introduce and thus are in ‘free play’”
(Pluhar lviii). Kant explained that “[i]f the pleasure in the given object came first, and our judgment of taste were to attribute only the pleasure's universal communicability to the presentation of the object, then this procedure would be self-contradictory” (217). The freeness of the imagination is crucial. The driving metaphor in Kant’s theory of judgement and taste is “universal communicability” (217). Kant contended that when our pleasure, enjoyment, or judgement is not dependent on our desires or interests then it follows that the object will be mutually enjoyable for all.

Pluhar in the “Translator’s Introduction” to the Critique of Judgement underscores the communicative nature embedded in the philosophical framework. The “main concern” of the third Critique is judgements of taste or “beautiful in art and nature” (Pluhar xxiii). Kant was concerned with agreement and the possibility of universal agreement at the root of beauty. Judgement’s of beauty “demand the agreement of others” (Burnham 47). In section 8 of Critique of Judgement he declared that “universality” is a “remarkable” and “special characteristic… found in judgements of taste” that reveals “a property of cognitive powers” that understanding Kant’s explanation of the cognitive powers of judgement reveal communicative urgency (214). Kant’s universal validity tied reason and judgement to a larger framework of community and communication. He often used engagement and communication as points of departure to explain his key concepts.

2.8 Ludic Rhetoric

Kant’s critical work unpacked a ludic rhetoric of reason. Reason presumes community and a precognitive ability to organize concepts. He framed cognition and judgement within the context of discourse and debate. His “Transcendental Idealism” promoted the autonomous self the production of meaning (CPR A369). Transcendental
idealism established the self as a “knowing subject” actively producing knowledge in experience. Transcendental Idealism reversed the subject-object construction of experience. Cognition organizes experience (Bloom 56). Reason does not constitute the natural world. Reason is the regulative and interpretive construct of our own internal active cognition. Reason is how we organize experience. Kant explained how temporal and spatial aspects of cognition frame layers of cognition. Cognition actively sorts and organizes experience. We shape our experiences in time and space. Causality is an apparatus of the encoding capacity of our cognition. When scholars in the natural sciences apply presuppositions about the natural world to organize research, outcomes and possibilities are limited. Kant’s move helped clarify distinctions between art and artist, but fell short of allowing art to speak for itself. Kant’s aesthetic consciousness stands over the experience of art as the subject. Neo-Kantian’s at will pick up Kant’s aesthetics and move it new directions.

This chapter explored Kant’s rhetoric of reason in both theory and practice. The work of academics is a repository of rhetorical practice. Enlightenment thinkers saw reason and rationality as weapons to combat the intellectual tyranny of tradition, superstition, and religion. The ability to usurp freedom with oral skill limited the frame of rhetoric in during the Enlightenment and continued to until the project to reclaim rhetoric in the early 20th century. Reframing Kant’s rhetoric within a context of play can help uncover valuable rhetorical theory from the beginning of the German Enlightenment. The rhetoric of scholars offers models for exploring rhetorical theory and training. The next two chapters extend the reverberations of the German Enlightenment and the ludic
imagination present in the hermeneutic turn in Rudolf Bultmann and Hans-Georg Gadamer.
Chapter 3: Rudolf Bultmann’s Rhetoric of Theology and Self-Disclosure

Rudolf Bultmann approached theology and biblical scholarship as a discourse between interpreter and text. Although he did not set out to contribute to rhetorical theory, communication formed the center of his two key metaphors: Form Criticism and Demythologizing. He connects to this project on multiple levels. His existentialist theology attended to the interplay between interpreter and text. The existential framework he established announced hope for religious communication in this age. Bultmann’s existentialism is essential for demythologizing because it moves out of the universal and makes the text relevant. His hermeneutics and Form Criticism contribute to rhetorical theory in creative ways. He developed and applied rhetorical concepts to promote his new approach to biblical exegesis and his commitment to religious communication nurtures theological ground in an age of science and reason.

3.1 Situating Bultmann within the History of Rhetoric

The association of rhetoric with mere technique and manipulation plagued our discipline from before Kant until the emergence of communication studies in American Colleges and Universities a century ago. The study of rhetoric, once dominant among the liberal arts as the center of the Trivium, had slowly fragmented and dissolved into mere technique by the time Kant began writing, but the practice of rhetoric remained “lively” (Ercolini “Pantheism”; Foss et al. 9). This section reviews a brief history of contemporary rhetoric attending to the implications of the negative connotations of the term itself. I uncover rich rhetorical theory in Bultmann’s scholarship, ripe for communication scholars to explore and extend. I review scholars that show how contemporary
communication studies emerged out of a wide variety of related disciplines that privileged social scientific perspectives and rhetorical technique.

Using the term “rhetoric” can obfuscate scholarship because of the continued negative implication of mere rhetoric as a tool for manipulation. Scholars in various disciplines resist identifying with rhetoric or rhetorical theory (Good and Roberts 1). The popular and academic denigration of rhetoric is driven by a failure to realize its “full potential…” and “facilitates the contemporary trivialization in the ‘mere rhetoric’ of media discourse” (Good and Roberts 3). Rhetoric “by its very nature…attracts interdisciplinary interests,” yet employing the term, even among communication scholars, amounts to a “Faux Paux.” Scholars prefer to use the terms “communication” or the “safest of all, discourse” (Enos 3). The negative perception of rhetorical techniques distorts much of the history of rhetoric and leaves significant rhetorical theory unexamined by rhetoricians.

In 1923, at about the time Butlmann published his first major work, Richards and Ogden noted the weight of communication theory presented by scholars from multiple disciplines. They suggested that communication scholars should look outside of the discipline to enrich and expand rhetoric. Rhetorical theory hides within multiple forms associated with “the literature of meaning” (Ogden and Richards 419). Rhetorical scholars can gain fruitful insight by attending to “strange and conflicting…languages” employed by “the most distinguished thinkers…in their attempts to deal with Signs, Symbols, Thoughts, and Things” (Ogden and Richards 419). Scholars have ignored or dismissed many fruitful rhetorical theories because of narrow interpretation of the term (Jost 52). The problem cuts both ways: Communication scholars often ignore significant
rhetorical insights from outside the discipline and scholars attending to communicative issues tend to overlook helpful rhetorical theory. Richard Enos in *Greek Rhetoric before Aristotle* (2007) explained that the terms “rhetoric” and “oratory” are not “politically correct” (3-5). Dismissing rhetoric as mere technique overlooks productive theory developed by scholars in multiple academic disciplines. It should not be surprising that we can find a wealth of research concerning rhetorical principles that does not explicitly align with rhetoric.

Scholars can gain valuable insights into rhetorical theory developed by scholars from other disciplines by attending to substantive communication theory not marked by the term. Bracketing the term ‘rhetoric’ can uncover a bounty of scholarship that contributes to communication theory and explores “creative possibilities” for the future of rhetoric (Jost 54). A productive first step for scholars is to consider broad categories of rhetoric embedded in research from scholars across the academy. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Gina Ercolini (*Kant’s* 235) and Scott Stroud (7) gained valuable insight into the rhetoric of Immanuel Kant by stepping around the distraction of the term. Scholars can “open up spaces (topoi) of meaningfulness and judgment, to indicate the gaps or absences into which new interpretations might enter” (Jost 55). Identifying and bringing to the foreground communication theory developed by scholars from outside the discipline is an important contribution to the history and future of rhetoric (Jost 54-56). Implications of mere of rhetoric in both popular and academic use chilled the use of the term in research. Communication scholars can find new space to build rhetorical theory by attending to communicative issues addressed in scholarship throughout the liberal arts and sciences.
Interdisciplinary dialogue led to the establishment of Communication Studies and rhetoric in the contemporary era. Rhetoric played a role in both constituting and promoting individual academic disciplines. The contemporary communication discipline resurfaced in the early part of last century, forged by the work of scholars from a wide variety of academic departments. Good and Roberts’ (1-21) review of the rise of disciplinariness in the last century showed how social scientists from multiple areas of specialization brought attention to the significance of communication and slowly defined the field. Because of this broad mixture of scholars, contemporary communication and rhetorical theories are fluid and continue to expand. Pat Gehrke (1-2) contended that “[t]he continuous development of the discipline is described by change and growth.” He pointed to the constructive nature of rhetoric and explained that as we learn from our partners in other fields, we often rediscover principles “already present in the history of discipline” (2). Observing rhetorical theorizing in other departments exposes the significance of communication in the human sciences, helps preserve our discipline, and may help rhetoric reclaim prominence in the liberal arts.

3.2 Rhetoric: The Discourse of the Humanities

As unique characteristics of individual disciplines evolved, the resulting fragmentation exposed a crisis in the humanities (Good and Roberts 4-7). Scholars who contributed to Good and Roberts’ project to “recover” rhetoric revealed the communicative ground in the “formation, development, and legitimation” of the distinct disciplines in the human sciences (Good and Roberts 4). They showed that rhetoric and “persuasive discourse” are essential features of “disciplining” and remain embedded in academic practices (Good and Roberts 5-9). Along with the increased fragmentation in
academia the “disabling consequences of disciplinary boundaries” can isolate scholars and lead to missed opportunities for collaboration. They explained that the “history of the field starts from a history of the academic departments that were the precursors to the departments” (Keith 345). Keith attended to those departments that merged with or became Communication Studies. Exploring the broad reach of rhetoric in history, beyond manipulation and technique, may encourage interdisciplinary scholarship and promote the growth of the discipline. Potential for future growth in our field exists in the wide variety of ways and rhetoric can provide complimentary theory to advance other disciplines.

Rhetorical theory is the ground on which the human sciences constitute and perpetuate themselves. Scholars can gain valuable insight into rhetoric by attending to “public practices” of rhetoric in the work of scholars across the humanities (Ercolini, “Pantheism” 5; Jost 54). Ercolini examined the work of Immanuel Kant and academic debates during the German Enlightenment. She noted that the academic discourse of public intellectuals provides a key indicator that rhetoric can “flourish” even in times when rhetorical theory appears to be in decline or transition (“Pantheism” 5-6). Scholars in all disciplines utilize rhetoric in a wide variety of ways including public engagement and publication. Developing and promoting new theories, in any discipline, are rhetorical acts; attending to the rhetoric of scholars promotes the vitality of rhetoric in the contemporary academic setting.

A key issue in the history of rhetoric uncovered by Enos is the reliance on customary sources. Even when scholars develop new methods to study the history of rhetoric, Enos contended, the methods are generally applied to the same traditional
sources (xix-xx). New ground is rarely broken. Institutional and disciplinary boundaries direct and limit what accounts for research into the history of rhetoric (Keith 345-349; Good and Roderts 1-9; Enos xx). As the discipline established individual identity and broader approaches to rhetoric increased, the elevated role of scientific thinking continued to affect the direction of communication scholarship.

3.3 Rhetoric in Play

A review and revision of the contemporary history of rhetoric and communication is currently in play and “any honest history will be messy” (Keith 345). As the National Communication Association approached its centennial year, the first contemporary journal of the discipline addressed the problematic nature of scholarship in the history of rhetoric. In the article “Forum: On the History of Communication Studies” in The Quarterly Journal of Speech (2007) William Keith surveyed the current discipline to consider “what we know, what we do not know, and what we ought to know about the institutional history of the communication as a field of study and why it matters” (345). He suggested that institutional and linguistic barriers limit scholarship at the most basic level. Keith hoped to open the door to a new dialogue between the past, present, and future. As we reconsider the emergence of the discipline we have an opportunity to look outside the disciplinary confines and welcome voices of scholars who attended to rhetoric and communication.

The negative connotation of the term rhetoric impacts scholarship in multiple disciplines. Scholars who dismissed rhetoric as mere technique contributed to the lack of attention to much rhetorically rich theory developed by scholars throughout the academy. Rhetoricians often miss significant rhetorical insights made by scholars who do not use
the same terminology and scholars in various disciplines attending to communicative issues often dismiss rhetoric. Jost’s article in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* contended that Kierkegaard and John Henry Newman have been generally “overlooked or ignored” by the rhetoricians, in part because they do not use the term “rhetoric” (51-52). Jost’s review of contemporary rhetorical theorists demonstrated that Kierkegaard and John Henry Newman have been left out of the history of rhetoric. He suggested “that the influence of romanticism… separated…” them both “from the realm of civic discourse historically and academically” (52). Jost revealed how a constructive approach toward rhetoric in the liberal arts family of scholars can sustain and nourish rhetorical theory and promote the full sense of rhetoric had during the pre-Enlightenment tradition.

Rhetoric is alive and well in academic research, but much of it remains outside of our discipline and eschews the term. The negative connotation discourages scholars from within Communication departments and the entire academy to identify with rhetorical theory. The rise and segregation of distinct academic disciplines inclines scholars toward myopic theory building (Good and Roberts 2-10). There is much rhetorical theory promoted using different terminology. Gehrke contended that communication scholars offer unique insight to a broad application of ideas. A constructive engagement with other disciplines is a promising avenue for growth in the field. We can engage other disciplines without “simply importing ways of thinking” (Gehrke 67). We can add new dimensions to scholarship in other disciplines and allow existing scholarship to add texture to our own. The above review of the contemporary emergence of rhetoric helps explain why theologian Rudolf Bultmann’s explicitly communicative theories have not been associated with rhetorical theory.
Bultmann’s scholarship appeared at a time when communication scholars privileged scientific methods and perpetuated the denigration of ‘mere rhetoric.’ Rhetoric, as a distinct academic discipline, was in its infancy in America when Bultmann entered academic life. He published his first book in 1921, two years before I.A. Richards and Charles Ogden published *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923). Rudolf Bultmann’s turn toward language and meaning paralleled many of the ideas being worked about in the emerging departments of rhetoric at the time. The next section attends to Bultmann’s attention to the importance of communication in the interpretation of Scripture.

3.4 Butlmann the Rhetor

Butlmann demonstrated rhetorical skill as a speaker-minister, as a teacher, and as a theologian. He was first and foremost an evangelist. By all accounts he was a “master preacher.” He was a model of skillful delivery and “knew the importance of presenting a sermon in such a manner that the recipient was compelled to make a decision” (Richards 201). Not only was he admired for his eloquent delivery, but the sermons themselves were often recorded and preserved. He identified layers of communication problems associated with contemporary religious communication and the interpretation of scripture (*FC* 1-21). He demonstrated a keen awareness that the central problem associated with interpreting ancient texts ties to communication. He problematized the conclusions contemporary audiences drew from the New Testament and pointed a communication framework to support his theory (“History of the Synoptic Tradition” 26-32). His collected sermons from Marburg were published in 1960. Much of his theories are drawn from his published sermons. His scholarship demonstrated a deep commitment to the
importance of interpreting and communicating the New Testament for contemporary audiences.

Bultmann exhibited rhetorical proficiency in both his theology and the articulation of his theory. In the Journal of Communication and Religion Mark Williams attended to Bultmann’s rhetorical technique and his use of “the common metaphor” as “stylistic device is adapted to function as both a hermeneutical tool and an argumentative trope” (170-171). His analysis is tied to general idea that “style and persuasion are interwoven within some religious rhetoric” and incorporates a “sense of hermeneutics into the discussion” (170). He contended that the use of the “common metaphor” in Bultmann’s demythologizing functioned “as both a hermeneutical tool and an argumentative trope” (171). Williams uncovered the rhetorical prowess of Bultmann and argued that he employed rhetorical techniques as “both an interpretive framework and an argument for the validity of that framework” (171-172). A key point identified by Williams is that Bultmann was concerned with religious communication on multiple levels. It is important to note that Bultmann was a minister. He questioned the interpretive framework of contemporary audiences engaging Scripture. He did this first by exploring the notion of Sitz im leben. Sitz im Leben is a German phrase that loosely translates as situation in life. It was coined by Bultmann’s teacher and mentor Hermann Gunkel. Bultmann appropriated the term in his Form Criticism to bring awareness to the sense of meaning within the text and the presuppositions of interpreters. He problematized not simply theology, but the transmission of theology (FC 8-21). Throughout his career and retirement Bultmann engaged scholars in public debates and publication.
3.5 Bultmann’s *Sitz im Leben*

Rudolf Karl Bultmann (1884-1976) was a Protestant New Testament Theologian and minister. Born in Northern Germany into a long line of Lutheran leaders that parallels the gradual shift in philosophy and theology over generations; Bultmann saw theological reflection as service to the Church (Johnson, “The Formation” 9). His grandfather was a missionary, his father a pastor, and Bultmann an academic and theologian. Two of his brothers died in war, the first in World War I and the second in a Nazi concentration camp. Bultmann’s academic and professional life brought him into contact with some of the most important thinkers of his day. In his youth, he studied with Karl Jaspers at Oldenburg’s Gymnasia with whom he would later write the influential *Myth and Christianity* (1958). While at University of Marburg, he co-taught with Heidegger, mentored Gadamer, and debated Barth. Bultmann studied theology at both the University of Tübingen and the University of Berlin before completing his dissertation at Marburg. He spent nearly his entire professional life at Marburg until he retired in 1951.

Martin Heidegger arrived at Marburg in early 1923. He and Bultmann found a mutually rewarding intellectual relationship. Heidegger helped Bultmann develop new philosophical insights and Bultmann’s “expertise” in theology was a “valuable resource” for Heidegger’s work on Paul and Luther (Johnson 21). The two worked and taught together in the five years leading up to Heidegger’s publication of *Being in Time* (1927). By the time Heidegger left Marburg in 1928, Bultmann had already incorporated existentialism into his writing.

Just two years after meeting Heidegger, Bultmann’s lecture “The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament” brought together the dialectical theology of
Barth and the philosophical existentialism of Heidegger (Johnson 21). Bultmann freely drew from Heidegger’s existentialism to augment his own way of understanding and interpreting the New Testament, but he did not simply extend Heidegger’s ideas. Johnson (22) explained that Bultmann “adapted Heidegger’s philosophy to fit his own theological purposes” and “assimilated it” into Marburg Neo-Kantianism. Bultmann’s theological expansion of Heidegger’s existentialism incorporated much of Heidegger’s philosophy, but as a new theological expression “distinctive” and “all his own” (Johnson 22). Bultmann brought existential philosophy into theology and exposed fertile communicative ground.

Bultmann drew on the wealth of genius gathered at Marburg. An important aspect of Bultmann’s legacy was his connection to the Church; Bultmann was a teacher and a minister. His theological work sought to help effectively interpret and communicate an authentic “Proclamation” of the Gospel. Much of his theological reflection survives in his published sermons. He was “first of all, a theologian of the church” (Johnson 44). Underneath his abstract existentialism was a practical goal of promoting the Gospel. He questioned the interpretive framework of contemporary audiences engaging Scripture. His work stretched into a wide variety of academic disciplines “whose reflections constantly circled the methodological problems of theology and their relationship to philosophy” (Gadamer, _PA_ 57). Over the span of fifty years he established two distinct, yet overlapping, theological movements. He is best known for his hermeneutical project to demythologize the New Testament, but his first major contribution to theological study was in Form Criticism. Three interrelated theological movements in Germany help
understand the context of Bultmann’s work: Marburg Neo-Kantianism, Liberal Theology and the History of Religions School.

3.6 The Marburg School

The Marburg School extended and redirected Kant’s theories of public knowledge in new directions. Gadamer in his *Philosophical Apprenticeships* (1985) explained the significance of Bultmann to the Marburg School. He recounted a farewell speech by a Marburg Professor who posed the question “What is Marburg?” followed by a list of names and institutions. Each scholar on the list was present and insulted by his answer, “this is not Marburg.” The speaker then stated a short list of names ending with Rudolf Bultmann and proclaimed “This is Marburg” (7). The relationship was mutual. Bultmann’s scholarship extended and promoted pieces of Marburg and Marburg scholars embraced elements of Bultmann’s ingenuity.

The Neo-Kantian logician Hermann Cohen founded the Marburg School. Ernst Cassirer’s “battle cry” that “the critique of reason becomes the critique of culture” framed Marburg Neo-Kantianism (Luft 222). The German philosophical movement endeavored to restore Kant’s philosophy and “find a solid basis for their own systematic efforts” (Hortsmann 127). The initial slogan in 1860 “back to Kant” intentionally confronted Hegel’s overpowering philosophical shadow (Gadamer, *PA* 49). They acknowledged the “limitations” of Kant’s work but “hoped that by standing on his shoulders, they would be able to see much further than he did” (Chignell 112). Neo-Kantians represented a broad range of related and sometimes incongruent ideas. Scholars consider it to be significant as a “transitional” philosophical movement between “nineteenth century Kantian philosophy and the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger” (Johnson, *Philosophical* 38). They
extended and expanded the reach of Kant’s critical work. The primary ambition of the school was to broaden Kant’s critical work in both application and subject matter (Chignell 113-114). Beyond the attention to the Kant’s theoretical philosophy, some Marburg scholars promoted aesthetics and a “synthesis of the ‘aesthetics of play’ and the ‘aesthetics of truth’” (Chignell 114). Neo-Kantianism and the new hermeneutic that emerged at Marburg extended through Bultmann to one of his most prominent students Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer “was born and raised in the Neo-Kantian ambiance of Marburg” (Chignell 119). Gadamer’s extension of hermeneutics will be developed in the next chapter. Neo-Kantianism faded as the German intellectual and cultural crisis “promised the possibility of moving a step beyond Kant” (Grondin, Hans-Georg 81). Kant’s attention to practical reason and duty remained a consistent theme in the philosophical and theological discourse at Marburg.

Neo-Kantianism was a crucial component of Bultmann’s scholarship and evangelizing. He sought to bring authentic meaning of the New Testament to contemporary audiences. The implications of Enlightenment thinking problematized the religious discourse. “Neo-Kantianism inherently excludes the possibility of the miraculous” (Richards 9). The result is an intellectual conflict between contemporary readers of the Gospel and the audience of the original proclamation. The scientific revolution changed how people understood the relationship between humanity and the world. “In any case, modern science does not believe that the course of nature can be interrupted or, so to speak, perforated by supernatural power” (Bultmann, Jesus and the Word 15). Bultmann’s commitment to both philosophy and theology did not distract him from seeking an authentic interpretation of the New Testament. In existentialism,
Bultmann found a way to bring the two worlds together. Neo-Kantianism remained active in much of Bultmann’s work. Tied to the scientific theological outlook of the Marburg School was the quest for the historical Jesus known as Liberal Theology.

Liberal Theology was the “dominant Protestant theological movement of the nineteenth century” (Johnson, “The Formation” 11). It aimed to interpret Christianity for contemporary audiences. A core of the research problematized the role Jesus in history (Bornhausen 191-204). The reliability of scripture and knowledge of the life of Jesus brought the “focus on the historical Jesus as God’s decisive revelation to humanity.” The attention to scripture and moral theology included “an identification of God with moral goodness, and confidence in humanity as God’s fit partner for the building of the Kingdom” (Johnson, “The Formation” 332fn). Johnson (332) added that the emphasis on determining an authentic history of Christianity led to a “historical-critical study of the Bible.” Bornhausen (191-204) extended Kant’s ethical implications tied to scholarly discourse and underscored the responsibilities of public intellectuals. He connected liberal theology to general ideas of interpretation, rhetoric, and history. The historical approach attempted to explain biblical narratives for contemporary audiences.

Marburg was a center for new theological inquiry during Bultmann’s lifetime. Neo-Kantianism, Liberal Theology, and The History of Religions School informed Marburg scholars. The History of Religions School promoted “religious feeling” and discussed the “supernatural Christological and cosmological manifestation, in terms of the later Jewish and pagan religions.” It emphasized the multiplicity of proto-Christian communities (Ribberdos 11). Bultmann became “immersed in the… history-of-religion school” and attended to the plurality of religious expression in the cultural context of first
generation Christians (Johnson, “The Formation” 11). Theologian Ernst Troeltsch explained that the History of Religions School “designates a certain conception of the task of religious and theological thinking” (1). The History of Religions School took the task of history seriously. They sought to understand the relationship between the received Christian tradition and other cultic practices occurring at the time. Troeltsch explained that there is not a good English “equivalent” for the term, but the “method of investigation” is closest to “comparative religion” (1fn). Troelstch contended that “as soon as one's horizon is theoretically enlarged to include the totality of human religions,” claims of exclusivity become impossible (2). He suggested that from the “scientific point of view” our “attitude toward the religious life” can no longer be an exclusive defense of “one's own religion” but must be an attitude of openness and “of a comparative, historical study of religions everywhere,” (2). The challenge to traditional religious thinking of history of religions school impacted Christian scholarship and theology in multiple ways. What emerged was a transcultural religious communication employing similar rhetorical strategies to express the unknown. They identified interpretive problems associated with the human transmission of the Gospel in a multi-religious world and pointed to the importance of mythic thinking during the time of the proto-Christian church. It is important for this study because it is a backdrop to the intellectual theorizing taking place where Bultmann both earned his doctorate and taught. Bultmann both embraced and critiqued the liberal theology he inherited.

3.7 Form Criticism

Bultmann outlined his Form Criticism in three key works, *A History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921/English 1954), *Jesus* (1926), and *Form Criticism* (1934). He
examined the smallest bits of New Testament narratives in play “during the oral, pre-literary period” (Bultmann, A history 153). His attention to the medium as an important factor in the meaning of the message remained a consistent theme through much of his scholarship. Rhetorical processes enabled the New Testament to survive from generation to generation. Bultmann emphasized practical communicative problems associated with the initial evangelic event, the limits of public speaking before writing, and interpretive problems associated with the survival of the text. The primary area of interest in the Form Criticism is the gradual development of the Gospel narratives, “that the Gospel traditions circulated orally within the church, whose religious needs they served, and were only gradually gathered together” in the form of the Gospels (Grant ix). Bultmann explored the “history of the oral tradition behind the Gospels.” Interpreting the New Testament “begins with the realization” that the Gospel narratives survived originally as separate units, which were joined together editorially by the evangelists” (Bultmann, “The Study”1-3). The rhetorical choices that allowed the Gospel to survive orally affected the form of the received text and the rhetorical techniques employed by the Gospel writers ought to affect how the stories should be understood by contemporary audiences.

Communication issues are at the root of Bultmann’s project. Bultmann’s Form Criticism brought the oral nature of the New Testament world to the foreground of research. Form Criticism assumes that the written Gospels record events that were handed down orally over many generations. It was compiled and edited by people in very different life situations from the original evangelists. Bultmann’s Form Criticism contended that the received text represents the ideas of the Palestinian church of the third century. The original stories were limited by the nature of oral communication and
comprised many small stories. Individual stories about Jesus spread long before they were developed and took the shape of the Gospels as received (FC 31-33). Form Criticism seeks to get to the authentic story behind the literate tradition by studying the “oral tradition at a stage prior to its crystallization in Gospels” (FC vii). The oral nature of the text lacks stability.

Form Criticism examines the history between the time of Jesus and the compilers who recorded the stories for the first time in writing. Each individual synoptic is made up of many little stories or pericopes that at one time existed as a separate and distinct units of information. The “central principle” guiding Form Criticism was that before the Gospels as we know them today were record, they originally existed as fragments and “the earliest Gospel traditions circulated orally within the church.” These fragmented stories served the religious needs of the early church and were “only gradually gathered into groups, blocks, or sequences –and finally Gospels” (Grant ix). Form Criticism, then, investigates the “history of the oral tradition behind the Gospels” (FC 1). That the Gospels are edited and redacted piecemeal compilations of much older stories casts doubt on any positive claims we can make about the authentic sayings or life of Jesus. The “whole framework of the history of Jesus” Bultmann contended, “must be viewed as creations of the evangelists” (FC 28). He established a new way to approach the Gospels centering on the communication of the texts over and through the small window of time “between the death of Jesus and the earliest written accounts of his life” (Grant vii). Bultmann explored the Gospels in three general categories of thought, the stories or narratives within the text, the words attributed to Jesus, and transition from oral sayings to the written text.
Bultmann pointed to other generally accepted New Testament scholarship that dated the formation of the Gospel narratives. Mark is the oldest of the three Synoptics, all of which are tied to at least one older “collection of Sayings” known as the Q-Source (Bultmann, FC 20–21). Theologians were already building an argument that the Gospels are a cumulative work compiled over time. The compilers brought their own presuppositions to the task. Form Criticism acknowledged this and was “a discipline of historians designed to uncover from written traditions underlying oral traditions” (McKnight 72). Bultmann added a specifically communicative implication. He stressed the importance of understanding the medium and the message. He identified differences in communication strategies between oral and literate cultures. The Gospels were originally spoken, thus, limited by the challenges of orality. The theories and explanations he devised in Form Criticism drew from a rhetorical well. He approached the Gospel from the medium of the message toward its theological reflection. He asked how the transmission affected the meaning. He also questioned agency in the narratives and the limits of oral composition. He brought the narrative situation out of the scripture for analysis and considered the process of telling the story. When attending to communication concerns, the “first thing we observe is that the narrators do not give us long accounts.” Limited by the reality of oral communication, the narratives unfold in “single pictures, individual scenes narrated with utmost simplicity” (FC 32). Bultmann attended to the wide variety of literary forms, the limits of oral communication, the stability of meaning over time, and the needs of the evangelists. Each of these inquiries is tied to the communication and context of the New Testament.
Context and *Sitz im Leben* are important for understanding the meaning of a text. In Bultmann’s use the ‘situation in life’ carries two different meanings. The first is “sociological” exposing a “function of the community’s life (e.g., worship, or preaching).” Bultmann also used the term to indicate how a specific context or “historical situation…gave rise to a story or saying” (Travis 154). In this framework the situation in life expands beyond the surface level of a contemporary reader attempting to understand a foreign text. He explored various stories within the Gospels. The time lag between the originative expressions of the Gospel until it was written down generations later is an important opening to question meaning. Form Criticism addressed the difference between “situation in life” of the proto-Christian church during the time of Jesus and the historical moment of the Christian Church in Palestine when the Gospel was first written.

The first textual evidence of the New Testament, recorded in Palestine, included edited stories handed down for many generations. Bultmann contended that the received text represented the needs and concerns of the Church in Palestine not the first Christian communities. The compiled text retained the original proclamation of the New Testament, but he doubted the historical accuracy. He extended the work of scholars who contended that “Mark…cannot be accepted as an exact account of the history of Jesus” and hence Mark “revised” the narratives “in accordance with his own ideas” (*FC* 22). The compiled and edited stories included the prejudice and agenda of the editor. From this point, Bultmann examined the culture of the first Christians against the culture of the time of compiling. The received biblical narratives emerged as document of the early Christian church not the people depicted in the text or the original audience of the Gospel.
Bultmann analyzed how the medium of communication impacted New Testament narratives. The orality-literacy transition, he contended, problematized the reliability of the New Testament as a historical document. His second book *Jesus* (1926) was translated fourteen years later to English with an edited title *Jesus and The Word* (1934). His analysis accelerated the urgency of understanding how communication affected contemporary theological reflection and interpreting Scripture. He continued to question the connection between history and Christian belief, but diverged from the liberal theology. He famously argued that “theology grounded in an historical Jesus was a fraud” (Johnson, “The Formation” 11). Interpreters of the New Testament, he contended, need to attend to the sources of the Gospels within their own understanding. He extended the practical problems associated with the oral tradition and “the laws governing the formulation of popular narrative” (*FC* 32). Bultmann contributed to both rhetoric and theological reflection by unpacking why we cannot know the theology of the New Testament without knowing the rhetoric of theology.

Bultmann identified two different types of history recorded in the New Testament. Form History helps explore how religious communication promotes an enduring meaningfulness of historic events. The German terms *Historie* and *Geschichte* are both generally translated into English as history, but the distinction Bultmann drew is important for understanding the significance of communication in his theory. We lose a little of the rhetorical nuance in Bultmann’s position because each of the terms etymologically are tied to storytelling and narration. When we talk about the past we can simply describe facts or we can explain how the events of the past retain significance for contemporary audiences. Each shows how history is a process of observing facts and
providing an interpretive framework in a meaningful way to understand the facts. The terms “differentiate between the history told in traditional myths and the history reconstructed by the historians” (Congdon, Bultmann 90). Historie refers to simplified “bare” facts of history and Geschichte roughly refers to how the past remains meaningful. Liberal theology locates their belief in Jesus as a model for human life on the historie of the Gospel and Bultmann contended the significance of the Gospel is the in continuous significance of Geschichte of the Kerygma.

Bultmann’s analysis of the synoptic Gospels helps demonstrate the significance of rhetorical theory for understanding theology. He stressed that a literal interpretation does not allow for a full understanding. He did not mitigate the stories as meaningless or substitute a new text. He problematized the possibility of truth through doubting the stability of an original text. He pointed to a distinction “between constitutive and ornamental motifs” (The History 70). He argued that when the oral stories were eventually put together, the bits and pieces of Jesus’ sayings were embellished by a Hellenized compiler. Special attention to the use of metaphor, hyperbole, and analogy show how the form of the story affects the interpretive possibilities (The History 166-167). He attended to the language and detailed specific rhetorical devices that affected the meaning of the stories.

Bultmann continued to update and clarify Form Criticism throughout his career. In his essay “The Study of the Synoptic Gospels” published nearly two decades after his first book on the subject, he reviewed the problems with New Testament research that originate with the dating of the oldest texts and various “source” theories (FC 11-13). Basic realities of biblical scholarship promoted by historical-critical method suggested
that we cannot know what the first evangelist actually said; we cannot know when they first transitioned from oral communication to the written form; we do not have original texts of the New Testament but copies of copies reporting incidents many generations in the past. He considered the scholarship concerning the received text (FC 11-16). The synoptic Gospels “recount the same events and sayings in different form” (FC 12). He contended that both the similarities and differences point to an editing process. He brought together inquiries into the sources for the Gospels to help explain why we have only limited knowledge about Jesus. He claimed that “The Gospels…are not concerned with Jesus, but with the faith and the preaching of the church with respect to Jesus” (FC 12-16). He examined not simply the received text but the communication strategies that enabled the texts to survive. “Along what way or in what manner has this preaching grown up or developed into our Gospel accounts?” (Ribberdos 12). He stressed how the author of the Gospels edited the sayings for a specific audience that affected context, conditions, and commands. He examined what we can say and know about Jesus. A central line of thinking developed that questioned the validity of the historical Jesus and promotes a textured Kerygma or public proclamation of Christ resurrected.

Bultmann’s extension and revision of Form Criticism points to the role of rhetoric in theological reflection and his attention to imagination and rhetorical theory magnifies his theological position. He explained that we are implicated in our experience with theology. The encounter with the Gospel is personal. Our experience with the “Word” is not rational nor do we judge it by a philosophical system; “[w]hen we encounter the words of Jesus in history…they meet us with the question of how we are to interpret our own existence” (Jesus 11). This personal experience of the Gospel, for Bultmann, was a
“dialogue with history” that presumed our presuppositions participate in meaning and
“…the problem of our own life is therefore the indispensable condition of our inquiry.” A
personal encounter with history is subjective and highlights the audiences “existential
encounter with history” driven by simply “choosing a viewpoint” (Jesus and the Word
11). The subjective orientation of the audience/interpreter determines limits of the
meaning available. Reading history demands interpreters to stand “within history” and
take “part in history” (Bultmann, History and Eschatology 119). We cannot shed the
fore-structuring role of experience. Meaning takes place not in spite of our perspective
but because of it.

Bultmann’s Form Criticism anticipated the later development of his existential
theology and the new hermeneutic. Self-disclosure and self-understanding are the texture
that binds Bultmann’s perspectives on rhetoric, philosophy, and theology. “Just as self-
understanding was the pedagogical aim of the teacher Bultmann, so self-understanding
was the sign under which he placed his entire scholarly work” (Gadamer, PA 58). This
section explores how Butlmann’s existential theology announced rhetorical agency by
bringing the self as subject to the center of inquiry.

3.8 Existential Theology and the Communication of Being

Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) is often described as the
“father of existentialism” (Marino 3). He presumed a communicatively embedded self as
a starting point to examine religious communication and experience. He stressed the
limits of meaning, “his entire authorship was from beginning to end taken up with the
question of what it means to have faith” (235). He asked questions that drove the
individual to the center of meaning. Communication grounded much of Kierkegaard’s
philosophical and theological insight. Kierkegaard’s mastery of rhetorical techniques exaggerated the ethical implications in theological discussion (Robinson 71-72). His “rhetorical strategy” presumed a “holistic conception of human nature…that goes hand in glove with the ethical-religious ideal he promotes” (Robinson 72). For Kierkegaard faith is a unique and unmediated personal experience that “addresses itself to the whole person…the presentation or communication of faith must do likewise.” Faith is an existentially communicative experience. Nicholson (349-370) examined the rhetorical nature of Kierkegaard and tied his communicative theory to existentialist theories of self and the divine Word. In religious discourse, the rhetor is tasked “not to merely thrash out a convincing argument but to lead….to a right personal relationship with the subject of the discourse” and…the divine (Nicholson 350). His analysis established that culture affects theological understanding and religious communication. Kierkegaard’s attention to the individual experience of the word of God initiated a philosophy of existence and experience that will be extended and reworked by Heidegger and Bultmann. Kierkegaard’s connection to rhetorical theory helps explore the communicative features of the existentialism that Bultmann inherited.

Existential philosophy begins inward with the “basic premise is that existence precedes essence” (Emery 5). We have to consider pre-existing of the individual as a premise for all interpretation. All questions are driven from self and the “individual’s existing is antecedent to any other understanding.” Meaning originates “within the individual and all are unique with the individual” (Emery 5). The choices made in the process of understanding are defined and contained within the limits of our experience. Individual experience is always the ground of understanding and explaining.
Existentialist philosophy did not discount science but found room for faith, hope, and freedom in the subjective experience “at the level of personal meaning in contrast to general theory” (Marino 144). The sort of knowledge obtained by scientific methods is but one of many avenues to find answers and is not “privileged but specialized.” In the large frame of self in the world, the limits of scientific knowledge are “subordinate to the fundamental knowledge, which is knowledge of existence” (Macquerrie, *An Existentialist* 5). Existentialist philosophy centers on the subjective experience of finding meaning in life.

Bultmann’s first existential move centered on the Greek term σῶμα/soma. Most scholars translated the term as body, but Bultmann argued that “the whole person” is a more faithful translation in many passages (Grundy 3-5). Simply put, Bultmann’s existentialism contended not that we have bodies but we are our bodies; our body/soma constitutes who we are as a whole person. He employed “existentialist categories” to interpret Paul and the body (Thiselton 6). Since Bultmann’s promotion of the “holistic” meaning of σῶμα/soma virtually all contemporary theology shares this view. What began as Bultmann’s challenge to the tradition grew to become “orthodoxy among New Testament theologians” (Grundy 5). The position has so effectively replaced the previous meaning that “virtually all handbooks, dictionaries, and Pauline studies” take the position for granted with little or no felt need for argumentative justification” (Grundy 5).

Thiselton explained how Bultmann used existentialism to interpret Paul in a way that speaks to a more authentic connection to the original meaning. This is the first step in the process for Bultmann to show how the religious communication of the first evangelist can have meaning to a contemporary audience. The existential interpretation of the New
Testament provides a way to understand how the meaning can survive and have significance for all interpreters. As we seek to understand the message not the story the message is embedded in, we see the Gospel speaks directly to each person. The Gospel survives because it is significant to each encounter. The turn toward the word as a self-disclosure between the Word of God mediated through language of the New Testament allows the proclamation to become a realizable concrete experience for everyone.

Bultmann’s “close association” with Heidegger while he was writing Being and Time impacted his theological enterprise. He explained that “the hermeneutic principle which underlies my interpretation of the New Testament arises out of the existential analysis of man’s being, given by Martin Heidegger in his work Being and Time” (Bultmann, “Foreword” vii). Palmer’s analysis of Bultmann’s demythologizing shows how communication and language are central themes in his theology. God confronts us as “Word, as language” (Palmer 49). The proclamation or “…kerygma as Word in words speaks to existential self-understanding” (Palmer 50). In language we are disclosed as part of a tradition and the Word of God speaks to us in existential self-understanding. The attention to history and the future-oriented existence of being brings the transmission of ideas to play. He questioned the “character of historical knowledge” that have been “delivered by tradition” because each interpretation is “guided by a certain interest” which is “based on a certain preliminary understanding of the subject” (Palmer 51). Palmer is pointing to the turn toward the self in the experience of Kerygma that necessarily transcends time. “All interpretation, then, is guided by an interpreters ‘preunderstanding’” (Palmer 51). The stories from two thousand years ago had different meaning than they do today. The context of the stories affects the theological import. For
Bultmann only that Jesus existed, died, and was crucified survives as meaningful.

Bultmann stressed the importance of present state of cultural understanding applied to ancient texts. Our interpretive ground is limited by the questions that organize our understanding (New Testament 106). Experience determines interpretive distance, “Bultmann’s central contention is clear: Objective meaning in history cannot be spoken of, for history cannot be known except through the subjectivity of the historian…” (Palmer 52). Bultmann drew out of the interpretive process the subjective experience. We cannot distance ourselves from history “for a neutral observation of an object.” We are always subjected by our own place in the transmission of history. We cannot “stand outside of historical time” and form an objective “historical picture” because the “historical processes is always conditioned by the individuality of the observer” (Bultmann, “Problem” 97). Jean Grondin expanded Palmer’s analysis and explained how this subjectivity plays out in the structure of understanding. Bultmann gave the “definitive formulation of the “fore-structure of understanding” (Bultmann, “Problem” 97). The rhetorical strategies that ensured the survival of the New Testament are themselves products of history.

Bultmann’s existential theology added multiple layers of communicative inquiry to engaging Scripture. Bultmann drew from Heidegger’s hermeneutics an interpretive framework to understand the New Testament centered on language referred to in German as Begrifflichkeit (Lonergan and Doran 69). The term does not have a good English translation but implies jargon or the limits of a somewhat specialized vocabulary. MacQuarrie explained that it is the “context of ideas expressed in terminology” (13). The idea is larger than simply the language; it is the entire system of “concepts” and
“categories” used to navigate experience (MacQuarrie 13). Each individual’s understanding is limited by the rhetorical framework brought to bear in the text. Butlmann explained how language affects understanding and research. The presuppositions that form questions of inquiry are limited by language and “the fundamental set of terms in which all answers are conceived” (Lonergan and Doran 69). Each interpretive event begins with the presuppositions of the interpreter. Rhetoric without presuppositions is impossible.

Demythologizing is a process that protects and promotes religious communication driven by mutual respect for the text, interpreter, and audience. The hermeneutical process he described provides a constructive way to contend with ancient texts for contemporary audiences that acknowledges both historical distance and subject. He identified rhetorical problems with interpreting history and religious communication. The existential framework he established is essential for demythologizing because it moves out of the universal and makes the text relevant.

3.9 The New Hermeneutic: Demythologizing

Butlmann’s hermeneutics began with the assumption that the Gospel’s message is inaccessible to contemporary audiences. The term hermeneutics demands a moment of pause as it creates confusion, tension and is in “disfavor in some quarters” (Thiselton 10). In general, hermeneutics refers to the scholarly conversation and the “formulation of rules for understanding” and interpreting Scripture or any ancient text (Thiselton 10-11). The following chapter provides a more extensive history of hermeneutics that shows a bridge between Bultmann and Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics. The tradition that Bultmann followed was method centric and sought to identify the proper procedure to
interpret the correct understanding of Scripture. The key point was the “recognition that a
text was conditioned by a given historical context.” Rules and methods for interpreting
the language, grammar, and historical moment of the text sought to achieve the proper
understanding (Thiselton 11). Bultmann and others extended this approach and added the
experience of the interpreter to the process. The distance between the past and the text is
mutual. Interpreters cannot escape “pre-understanding” (Palmer 24). The “historical
conditioning is two sided: the modern interpreter, no less than the text, stands in a given
historical context and tradition” (Thiselton 11). Bultmann’s hermeneutics expanded the
tradition. He constructed, refined, and explained his hermeneutical method,
demythologizing, throughout the course of his life.

Bultmann’s addition to hermeneutics began by understanding that the Bible ought
to be studied as any other ancient text. In his essay “The problem of hermeneutics”
(1950) he explained that interpreters need to apply the same sort of scientific paradigm to
the Bible as any other artifact. The “conditions of understanding” are no different than
any other literature. The problem of understanding takes the center of his discussion. The
traditional hermeneutic tools need to be employed cognizant of “contemporary
conditions.” The “presupposition of understanding is the bond between the text and the
interpreter, which is established by the interpreter’s prior relation to the subject mediated
by the text” (86). The distance between the text and the interpreter requires awareness of
the questions brought to bear. The text speaks to the interpreter in the context of distance
and preunderstanding. The distance between contemporary audiences and the Gospel
stories are expressed in his key metaphor, demythologizing.
Demythologizing follows a basic rhetorical pattern of development: problem, cause, solution. The problem is that contemporary audiences cannot understand the genuine message of the Gospel. The cause is that the plain text of the New Testament message is cloaked in mythic language. The solution is to demythologize Scripture to uncover the message beneath the stories with an awareness of interpretive distance and the scientific preunderstanding contemporary audiences bring to the text. The Proclamation or Kerygma of the New Testament is obscured by the mythical stories used to convey the message. In Bultmann’s essay “New Testament and Mythology” (1941), he explained the basic problem confronting contemporary interpreters of the Gospel. The original audience of the Gospel understood existence significantly different than post-Enlightenment audiences. The audience of the Gospel understood their world to be a three-tiered existence with God above in heaven, the devil in hell below, and human’s existence on earth was in the middle. The people during New Testament times experienced a different relationship with God and nature than contemporary audiences. They understood that nature was controlled not by laws of physics or science but Supernatural beings who intervened in nature and “human beings are not their own masters.” The course of history is “guided by supernatural powers” (Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology” 1). Mythic understanding framed the entire experience of culture. Ideas expressed in historic documents from this period present challenges for contemporary audiences that demythologizing confronts.

Contemporary audiences experience nature differently. The Enlightenment replaced tradition and religious authority with reason and scientific objectivity. Scientific thinking “excludes the working of supernatural powers about which myth speaks”
(Bultmann, “Problem” 96). The function of myth eroded during the Enlightenment; mytic rhetoric distorts meaning and makes New Testament stories unbelievable. When contemporary audiences “find impossible things” in Scripture they tend “to reject the Bible as untrustworthy” and they do not “grasp the religious truth the biblical account was attempting to communicate” (Swidler 10). Much of Enlightenment thinking is effectively a systemic deconstruction of religious communication. “A thorough going natural science has no need of the “God hypothesis” because it understands the forces that govern natural processes to be immanent within them” (Laplace 42). The natural sciences stand over nature, contain it and “eliminates the idea of miracle as an event that interrupts the causal continuum of the world process” (96). The two significant interpretive steps necessary for “evangelizing modern” audiences are to “distill the truth...out of the Bible and state it in modern language” (Swidler 9-11). He pointed to the central role of language and meaning in “The term demythologizing indicates the elimination of mythological language, but it unfortunately does not transmit the other essential factor: the translation into the modern idiom” (Swidler 8-10). Bultmann attended to context and suggested that mythic language and the stories used to express the ideas were “widespread” (Jesus Christ and Mythology 292). Demythologizing regains the meaning embedded beneath the mythic language. The center of the project, then, is how the substance of the Gospel is communicated. The rhetorical choices of the evangelists were determined by the presuppositions of the writers and the connection to the historical moment.

Bultmann directed a corrective to scholars who used his theory to limit the mythic character of Scripture. Demythologizing is a “hermeneutical procedure that inquires
about the reality referred to by mythological statements or texts” (“Problem” 96). Mythic language does not limit the mythic character of the Gospels. Demythologizing is a common rhetorical practice employed when we try to articulate an unfamiliar concept through the use of reason. Because contemporary audiences do not understand the world through a mythic lens and use objectivity and reason to explain and control our environment, we demythologize (“Problem” 95-99). Demythologizing the Gospels is an attempt to open the text for contemporary audiences. The stories contained in the New Testament addressed an audience who understood the world in mythic terms.

Interpretation of any text begins with the interpreter from the most basic level. He explained that “…every text speaks in the language of its time and of its historical setting” (Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 291). Bultmann introduced a new way to work with Christian myths in his important essay “New Testament and Mythology” (1941). This essay crystalized his ideas that began with his connection to the history of religions school discussed above (Johnson, “Interpreting” 40). In this essay he outlined his project to “retain the validity” of the proclamation of the New Testament (9). Demythologizing is “a task of preservation” (Williams 174). Bultmann’s analysis pointed to the change in thinking ushered in by the Enlightenment as a barrier to understanding the Gospel. The “objectifying vision” by which we orient ourselves “by standing over against” the world frames our interpretive experience (Bultmann, “Problem” 96). The use of mythic language for a text targeting a scientific oriented language user loses layers of meaning.

Demythologizing does not limit or mute scripture; it enables access to understanding for contemporary audiences. Bultmann wanted contemporary audiences to “know once again what Christian faith involves” (Gorgarten 10). Ancient audiences
understood the world through a mythic lens and the language of myth had a different connotative meaning that we no longer have direct access to understand. Bultmann wanted help see the relevance of the New Testament for a contemporary audience. “To demythologize is to deny that the message of Scripture…is bound to an ancient worldview which is obsolete” (Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* 36). Mythic language is a type of religious communication that explains a world that is unimaginable from a scientific understanding of reality. Williams (173) explained that “mythical concepts require translation into contemporary thought, just as the Greek requires translation into contemporary language.” Concern for outlining a proper way of engaging the word of God underlies awareness of the tension between a critique of the word of God and the proper understanding.

A myth is a larger truth than can be contained in specific events of individuals but stories of universal truths that have always already presented tense truths. Bultmann’s elaboration of myth shows how mythic thinking is complimentary to reason. For us to understand myth embedded narratives we first have to understand the *Sitz en laben*. The supernatural-natural world disconnect of the Enlightenment is an incorrect arbiter of meaning. The starting point for the hearers of Jesus’ message was mythic. The supernatural and active presence of a God in the world was not a separate category from reality and science in the same way as it emerges after Kant. In *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1960) he explained that “The whole conception of the world which is presupposed in the preaching of Jesus as in the New Testament generally is mythological” (15). The audience of the message understood the stories of the supernatural differently than we do today. The way people communicated in the day was
embedded in mythology. The presuppositions of the audience concerns not just attitudes about the text, but the entire communicative perspective. The New Testament “proclaims in the language of myth” (Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth* 2). The key to the Gospels is not the method of delivery, but the message, the proclamation. Demythologizing considers myth as the way the Gospels are communicated, not what is being communicated. It is not a limit on meaning; it is not substitute. Demythologizing uncovers the infinite and eternal meaning of the gospels obscured by the limits of human construction of the message.

3.10 Demythologizing: An Expression of Ludic Rhetoric

Bultmann’s hermeneutic attended to the full texture of communication in the interpretive event. Interpreting the Gospel for contemporary audiences adds layers of complications that he brought to light. His attention to presupposition expressed ludic rhetoric; each layer of the interpretive journey is a subject and given a voice. He turned away from objectifying the text, interpreter, or audience. Preunderstanding creates access to the text and cannot be avoided. Rather than minimize the role of the interpreter for the sake of objectivity, Bultmann embraces subjectivity. His analysis imbues both the text and the interpreter with agency and promotes the value of subjectivity. The “demand that interpreter[s]...” must “silence...subjectivity and quench any individuality in order to achieve objective knowledge could not be more absurd” (*New Testament and Mythology* 83-85). He explained that the attempt to establish an objective constraint on historic texts objectifies not only the interpreter but the text itself. “It makes sense and is justified only insofar as it means that the interpreter must silence his or her personal wishes with respect to the results of the interpretation” (*New Testament and Mythology* 85).
Contemporary audiences and interpreters gain access to the Word by hearing the proclamation from within the mythic construction (New Testament and Mythology 85). Bultmann understood the “Word of God” as a universal immutable truth expressed in human language. For Bultmann myth is a language, a way of thinking, a communication technology that must be interpreted to understand the meaning of the narratives. The text is brought into play during the interpretive event. The interplay between interpreter and text is the condition of understanding.

Problems with the communication and transmission of Gospel ground his two most significant metaphors. Form Criticism attended to the transmission of the Gospel as it was initially constituted. Demythologizing attended to the transmission of the Gospel over time. The word of God is a constant. The salvific truth is immutable; it only becomes confused in the transmission of the message in language. The truth is embedded within mythic stories. Bultmann directed his project toward not just academics and theologians but working evangelist, preachers, and teachers. How the Gospel was first communicated and how the gospel is being communicated in the present form the center of his work. He wanted to help uncover the meaning of the original proclamation of the New Testament that both preserved the integrity of the text and allowed access for contemporary audiences. He was concerned with the active religious discourse in the contemporary setting. In Kerygma and Myth (1961) he asked “Can Christian preaching expect the modern man to accept the mythical worldview as true?” (3). Although his ideas can be broadly applied by anyone encountering the Gospel, demythologizing was designed for the working evangelist. He was concerned with how the evangelists understand their audience in the contemporary world. Preachers of the Gospel need to
address contemporary audiences in a way that can be understood; to ignore the difference between contemporary audiences and pre-scientific audiences of the New Testament distorts the significance of the proclamation. For a preacher to assume a contemporary audience can understand the meaning of a message explained from a pre-scientific worldview “would be both senseless and impossible.” He uncovers basic communication issues at the root of the experience of the Gospel. Contemporary audiences need the text translated into an understandable language, demythologizing concerns the process of communicating the Gospel. At a basic level, we can think of demythologizing akin to translating. Translating the New Testament from the original language to English or German does not mitigate Gospel. Just as there is nothing inherently Christian in the original language of the New Testament, “there is nothing specifically Christian in the mythical view of the world as such.” The mythological framework presented in the New Testament “is simply the cosmology of a pre-scientific age” (3-4). Bultmann’s advice to interpreters of the Gospel addressed communication issues for understanding the needs of the audience, interpreting the text, and professing the text. His contributions to rhetorical theory move beyond the pulpit.

Bultmann’s two key metaphors contribute to rhetoric multiple levels. Form Criticism attended to the transmission of the Gospel as it was constituted. Much of Form Criticism resonates with theories developed in Media Ecology. Where he aligns significantly is important to consider his work as an addition to the discipline. His creative insights provide fertile ground for future scholarship. His methods can be applied to any historic text. Demythologizing promoted a communication centered approach to explore the humanities. Bultmann’s approach to difference constituted a constructive
engagement between interpreter, text, and others. Both Form Criticism and Demythologizing offer the potential for scholars in rhetoric to contribute to the work in other disciplines and work towards reclaiming the elevated status within the liberal arts.

His attention to communication and philosophy demonstrated his place in the reconfigured Kantian attention to the public use of reason. His articulation of Kerygma, the proclamation, embedded his project firmly on communicative ground. The next chapter continues to attend to the convergence of rhetoric and play in Philosophical Hermeneutics. Bultmann’s theories add new dimensions to rhetorical theory and adding him to the history of rhetoric proper increases the potential for new rhetorical theories to emerge.

Rudolf Bultmann and the Marburg School provide a link between Kant to Gadamer. He demonstrated ludic rhetoric in his respect for the audience, interpreter, and text. He hermeneutic is constructive and attempts to open the texts for greater understanding. He re-positioned the text as a subject that speaks to and with the interpreter. His biblical scholarship brought attention to the importance of context and communication strategies. He provided a model to explore why the message of Scripture is distorted by differences in the rhetorical demands of the historical moment of the originative text. His existentialist theology attended to the interplay between interpreter and text that announces hope for religious communication in a multi-religious world.
Chapter 4:  
Hans-Georg Gadamer was a German philosopher that sought to rehabilitate classical theories of rhetoric in the human sciences. He promoted an understanding of rhetoric as common human attitude (Gadamer, “Universality” 5-6). In his most influential book *Truth and Method* (1960), Gadamer uncovered varieties of authentic truths hidden by the promotion of methods in the natural sciences. He announced “the significance of the revelatory character of philosophical hermeneutics in the shaping and understanding of the humanities” (Arnett, “Hans-Georg” 241). He demonstrated that human sciences reveal different and meaningful truths that cannot be contained within methods. Gadamer contended that the “ideal of method” was the “universal claim of the modern era” that “sought to eliminate any prejudice” or “predetermination of experience from the standpoint of the observer.” Philosophical hermeneutics confronted this view as both “an attitude of methodological interpretation in the humanities” and the “basic structure of the experience of reality” (Gadamer, “Universality” 6). He helped expand the dynamic process of understanding through an interpretive move by reversing the subject/object dichotomy that characterized scholarship in the natural sciences. His project looked to the pre-modern theory of rhetoric as the larger framework in which the human sciences reside (Arthos, “Hermeneutic” 71). Gadamer problematized the stability of meaning in communication and provided a constructive approach to interpretation that emphasized a dialogic process by which understanding grows and forges relationships of meaning in the moments of expression. Two of Gadamer’s key metaphors, play and conversation, contribute to ludic rhetoric by promoting cooperative discourse open to difference.
Gadamer expanded the concept of conversation to include the interpretive experiences with texts (TM 383). Gadamer’s expansion of conversation loosens the objective hold on texts and exposes a new relationship between items of experience and interpreters. In conversation, when “a subject matter is placed before us” we engage a text with respect and seek to open and learn from it. Language is a meeting place where partners stand together in conversation. Gadamer’s interpretation of traditional rhetoric contributes to teaching rhetoric and persuasion as a cooperative venture. Conflict and disagreement emerge as opportunities for growth rather than barriers to cooperation. Partners in conversation stand together. Rhetoric and a dialogue of mutual respect uncover new possibilities for teaching persuasion. Conversation enables us to attend to voices on the horizon with an attitude of mutual respect and hope.

4. 1 Gadamer and the Horizon of Hermeneutics

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) spanned of three centuries, though he only stepped briefly in the nineteenth and twenty-first. He was born in Marburg, the German city where he later encountered some of the great minds of his generation. Gadamer taught as an unsalaried Privatdocent for the better half of his career (Palmer, “Preface” viii). He spent the first thirty years of his academic life in relative obscurity. During this time, he worked out the problems addressed in his most influential work Truth and Method, published when he was sixty years old. His later work emphasized the importance of tradition and dialogue.

Gadamer’s childhood studies began in Breslau where the “unrelieved nationalism and militaristic furor engendered by the war…had taken over all of the schools” (Grondin, Hans-Georg 43-44). The German education system was transitioning to
accommodate the social and economic changes brought on by industrialization and “new needs of the upwardly mobile middle class” (39). He enrolled in The University of Breslau in 1918, a time of unparalleled intellectual and cultural crisis in Germany; the failure of modernity and “the narrative of modern science’s success and the civilization that depended on it” loomed largely in the psyche of the German people. “Modernity...” and the “unbridled science as pure technology” had failed (Grondin, Hans-Georg 56). Germans lost faith and optimism in science and progress.

At Breslau, Gadamer discovered new ways to find meaning outside the narrowly construed walls of science. He was introduced to Neo-Kantianism initially through the philosopher of language Richard Hönigswald (Gadamer, PA 5). Hönigswald’s lectures on “The Basic Problems of Epistemology” and “Scientific Philosophy” introduced him to transcendental philosophy and convinced him to “choose the path of philosophy for his life” (Grondin, Hans-Georg 62-63). The ideas he developed in his Philosophical Hermeneutics drew on his experience with Neo-Kantianism and Marburg theologians (Gadamer PA; Grondin, Hans-Georg 1-11). In the retrospective intellectual autobiography Philosophical Apprenticeships (1977/1985), Gadamer explained that his days as a young university student at the University of Breslau led him toward Marburg (PA 5-6). Gadamer came of age academically at a time when robust philosophical conversations filled the halls of Marburg led by some of the most influential academics of the twentieth century.

While at Marburg, Gadamer worked with both Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Heidegger as they each completed their most important manuscripts and redefined ways to appreciate meaning, being, and understanding (PA 45-54; Johnson 4; Grondin, Hans-
George 2). He studied with Bultmann as the questions of language and meaning were being developed in the project to demythologize the New Testament (55-60). Gadamer reached into the framework established by Bultmann throughout much of his work. Although not always explicit, the linguistic ground fertilized in Bultmann’s *Form History* and *Demythologizing* provided ample space for Gadamer’s detailed description of the process of understanding. In his book *Reason in the Age of Science* (1981) Gadamer activated Bultmann’s charge; “[o]nly by the demythologization of science” does our knowledge lead to “self-mastery” necessary for a freedom. He contended that self-knowledge alone could guard against intellectual oppression and “the domination and dependence that issue from everything we think we control” (150). Gadamer’s hermeneutics “share[d] much in common with Bultmann’s demythologizing” (Palmer, *Conversations* 3). He took it in new directions; he made it his own. Gadamer found an intellectually creative home in Marburg, but the rest of Germany during the rise of fascism was not as welcoming. In an interview with Richard Palmer in 1992, Gadamer explained how he maneuvered the oppressive intellectual climate during his early years in academia (*Conversations* 3). As Hitler rose to power, many German intellectuals underestimated his appeal and did not see him as a legitimate threat.

Gadamer’s rehabilitation and expansion of rhetoric stood on the shoulders of the hermeneutic tradition in the Neo-Kantian Marburg School. Gadamer brought his own perspective and a fertile combination of these ideas to life. He uncovered the task of “restoration of historical and traditional prejudices to their pivotal position as the conditions of possibility of whatever understanding we can have” (Sullivan vii). Gadamer’s attention to classical Greek rhetoric and philosophy appeared in his post-
doctoral or habilitation thesis on Plato’s dialectical ethics written under the supervision of Martin Heidegger (PA 45-50). His work on Plato, Sullivan explained, attended to the dialogue of philosophy and ethics. Heidegger saw that Gadamer was “giving basic form to what would become his Philosophical Hermeneutics” (Sullivan x-xvii; Conversation 1-14; Lectures 1-2). Philosophical hermeneutics owes much to philosophy, but there remains a linguistic orientation. He attended to the rhetorical and philosophical frameworks of conversation and unpacked communicative ground embedded in experience.

Gadamer’s time at Marburg exposed him to the first “true apostles” of phenomenology. The continuing conversation regarding Husserl’s ideas blossomed in Marburg. One key introduction to phenomenology came from Max Scheler (1874-1928) “who had begun a dialogue with the sciences” (Grondin, Hans-Georg 130). Schelers’ “phenomenological probing” had a lasting effect on Gadamer (PA 30). Scheler’s way of pursuing phenomenological questions tested the “abstract constructions” and “intuitive insights into essential truths” (Gadamer, PA 30). Scheler advanced a phenomenological perspective that moved away from method. He explored experience directly. He brought the phenomena to the center of philosophy. Method centric work stood outside experience. Phenomenology for Scheler was “in the first place” an “attitude of spiritual seeing” (Mohr 137). He explained that “attitude” is not “method.” Methods limit intellectual reach, “a method is a goal directed procedure of thinking about facts.” In contrast, he conceived phenomenology as “first, of new facts themselves before they have been fixed” (Scheler 137). Scheler’s break from the methodological approach of Husserl marks an important rift between the natural sciences and the human sciences.
Where Husserl worked to align philosophy and science, Scheler ruptured the bond (Mohr 227-228). Scheler contended that philosophy must be “strict” and “rigorous” in Husserl’s sense, but insisted that philosophy and science are distinct. He denied that philosophy “belongs among the sciences” (Mohr 228). Adhering to philosophical methods presupposes “important preconditions of knowledge which pertain more to the philosopher… than to the method which the philosopher merely applies” (Mohr 219). The significance of the new insight added to Husserl’s approach is that the “[p]henomenological method must be based upon the foundation of a ‘phenomenological attitude’” (Mohr 219). The openness to the immediate experience is not first bogged by presupposing questions that the conditions of the experience might answer.

Gadamer’s academic experience brought him into contact with some of the most influential people of the last century. He was a longtime friend of Pope John Paul II, who upon hearing of Gadamer’s death sent a letter of condolence to the German Episcopal Conference. Pope John Paul II, himself a phenomenologist, applauded Gadamer’s hermeneutics and “sincerity in the search for truth.” The Pontiff commended Gadamer for his work to ground all understanding in tradition. He appreciated Gadamer’s respect for others as the ground of civility. He lauded Gadamer for his “acuity of thought” and “respect for the interlocutor.” He explained that Gadamer helped see the value in the “roots of tradition” that “enable us to ‘express today original, new thought…,’” (John Paul II 1). Gadamer’s rehabilitation of tradition and emphasis on respect for the value of others in dialogue helped elevate his status and appealed to scholars throughout the academy.
Gadamer’s study of ethics grew through an attention to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and a desire to reclaim the heritage of rhetoric in the classical Greek education. Rhetoric in the classical tradition is not limited to technique or “even primarily a specialized tradition of trained speakers, but rather a common human attitude” (Gadamer, “Universality” 2). Gadamer’s turn to language fell within a long tradition and “[p]rofusion of meanings attached to the idea of the Word in ancient Western history” (Arthos, *The Inner Word* 31). He drew on the pre-modern conception of the ‘Word’ that expressed an ethereal connection to others and the divine. Akin to the turn to the ‘Word’ Bultmann’s existential theology, Gadamer offered a theological connection to language use, “the human relationship between thought and speech corresponds, despite its imperfections, to the divine relationship of the Trinity” (*TM* 421). The Greek and Hebrew tradition imbued language with divine characteristics. The significance of the language, especially the spoken word “grew out of a stream of thought that was fed by the Talmud and the New Testament, the Stoics and the Church Fathers, medieval scholasticism and German mysticism, Lutheranism and the counter Enlightenment” (Arthos, *Inner Word* 31). Language and conversation ground “[w]hat hermeneutics says in its appropriation of the theology of the word.” Unity emerges “in language.” Language binds us in conversation to a story already taking place that each is already part of “the world that emerges from a story” (Arthos *Inner Word* 31). Gadamer expanded the spoken word as a meeting place that grounds his theory of play.

4. 2 Gadamer in Communication Studies

Gadamer brought attention to language that grounded rhetoric as an instrument of experience. This section reviews general lines of thought developed by communication
scholars attending to philosophical hermeneutics. Scholars sought to develop new ground from communication research that escaped the limits of social science, research methods, and frameworks for scholarship.

Hermeneutics first entered the discipline in a 1977 essay by Thomas Seebohm in *Philosophy and Rhetoric*. He outlined a brief contemporary history of hermeneutics as it emerged in philosophy. He pointed to Dilthey’s reconstitution of interpretation as an initial framework for Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. Hermeneutics and the human sciences that emerged out of Dilthey were an “essential component of the foundation of the human studies. . .” (Seebohm 182). Deetz (54) suggested that the ideas unpacked in hermeneutics can add more to communication scholarship than “logic, methodology, and systematization of the human studies.” Hermeneutics can help expand the field of meaning and the very “foundation” of rhetorical theory.” Dilthey revolutionized interpretive research and “saw in hermeneutics a foundation for the human sciences and a distinctive method for humanistic studies” (Deetz, “Interpretive Research in Communication” 54). He prepared the way for Gadamer’s critique of method and the expansion of hermeneutic thinking beyond method to get to the center of meaningfulness.

Walter Ong contributed to the link between hermeneutics and communication. Toward the end of Ong’s career, he turned to hermeneutics. Zlatic in *The Review of Communication* suggested that Ong developed a specific niche on the horizon of hermeneutics and his work can be a framework for future work. Ong extended and expanded “oral hermeneutics” (371-373). Ong contended that the hermeneutic approach “situated within a visualist, textual tradition” ignored multiple avenues of discovery. Ong’s constructive approach added to the discussion an “an oral hermeneutic” that
uncovered important ideas by shifting the thrust of interpretation from the text to “voice and dialogue” (Zlatic 371). Zlatic’s review of Ong pointed to an interesting connection between Ong and the hermeneutics. Ong’s theory of interpretation helped understand his outlook on philosophy as not “an academic discipline.” He tied it to his earlier work on Cicero as “a general approach to existence, philosophia, love of wisdom” (Zlatic 358).

Moving away from disciplinarity and schools of thought, Ong emphasized the “lived environment” of the interpreter (Zlatic 358). Ong brought attention to the context of the rhetor/interpreter of a text and “milieu, something in you and around you” (Ong 43).

Zlatic explained that for Ong, milieu is both the “external locale or environment” and “implies an oral hermeneutic—a communal understanding of what knowledge is, how it might be approached, and why it matters” (373). Ong attended to the expressive experience of hermeneutics as it occurred.

A driving concern in the early communication scholars attention to Gadamer was to “appropriate Gadamer’s notions of play, linguisticality, understanding, and hermeneutical listening to explain communication phenomena” (Abhik and Starosta 6).

Thomas Sloan’s review of Palmer’s Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer (1969) and E. E. Hirsch’s Validity in Interpretation (1967) brought hermeneutics into the conversation. Sloan (“Hermeneutics” 107) suggested that Palmer’s text ought to be “read widely” and Hirsch has “much to teach us.” Leonard Hawes considered how communication can be enriched by phenomenology and hermeneutics. He worked with “communication as human works-in-progress whose ontological properties and status in the world are to be ascertained” (34).

Although Hawes did not review Gadamer, his work with Heidegger opened
communicative ground to understand the significance of philosophical hermeneutics. It was not until 1979 that Gadamer’s work specifically was interrogated by communication scholars.

Gadamer’s work is relevant for communication studies and “simply too important to be left to professional philosophers” (Campbell 101). John Angus Campbell reviewed Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 1979. In the Spring of the same year, Stanley Deetz in *Communication Quarterly* sought to use Gadamer’s hermeneutics to “reconceptualize the process of understanding in communication” (12). Gadamer “provides a rationale for “human sciences” research grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology” (Stewart 101). Campbell explained that his review was to “urge…communication scholar” to “include…Gadamer among our partners as we explore the nature of our studies and the questions appropriate to them” (101). Hyde and Smith echoed this call and identified breadth of hermeneutics in a 1979 essay in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Hyde and Smith drew connections between philosophical hermeneutics and multiple categories of rhetorical theory. They highlighted the variety of epistemic and ontological theories on the rhetorical horizon and the “overlooked relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics.” Their work uncovered “ontological” similarities between rhetoric and hermeneutics (347-349). Rhetorical theory and hermeneutic theory share a similar concern for unpacking meaning. Gadamer’s hermeneutics brought a new way to understand and articulate experience from a communicative perspective. He showed how meaning and interpretation are everyday experiences “derived…in and through the interpretive understanding of reality” (Hyde and Smith 348). Communication is a dynamic process where the “primordial function of
rhetoric” in the “hermeneutic situation” comes to the foreground (347-348). The linguistic structure of experience cultivates a fruitful connection between the ontological framework of hermeneutics and communicative necessity that grounds engagement with others and texts.

The ideas unpacked in philosophical hermeneutics can help expand theories developed by rhetorical critics. Philosophical hermeneutics “provides important directives” that encourage “a change in perspective” by exposing the “hermeneutical nature” embedded in the “ontological connections between hermeneutics and rhetoric” (Hyde and Smith 357). Rhetorical criticism allows for accurate and rigorous attention to the text and the bias critics bring (356-357). Hermeneutical thinking demands self-reflexive awareness and respect for the text. Interpretation occurs within a horizon of understanding and a specific cultural and hermeneutic situation. A critic is always already tied to a perspective that guides interpretive work.

Communication scholars point to Gadamer’s shift away from methods to improve understanding to the broader questions of how understanding occurs. *Truth and Method* explored important communicative questions, “how understanding takes place” and “how…. meaning is passed on” (Campbell 106). Arnett and Holba (88-89) explained that Gadamer’s “existential understanding of interpretation begins with what is before us, not pristine abstract truth.” Gadamer’s hermeneutics can help communication scholars avoid and correct the methodological problems related to the phenomenon of understanding (Deetz, “Conceptualizing 12, Kinser 11). Arnett and Holba (88) pointed to a key distinction between meaning and truth. Where the objective methods of natural sciences seek truth, Gadamer embraced the reality and “messiness of the human condition.” He
was concerned with meaning “not certainty” or truth. Gadamer’s hermeneutics helped fortify meaningfulness in everyday encounters with others.

Gadamer’s attention to the experience of language and dialogue yielded a new way to approach understanding. “Language is the real medium of the human being…the realm of human being-together, the realm of common understanding” (RB 68). Deetz drew from Gadamer a rejection of the scientific pursuit of objectivity. He added that communication scholars generally have “difficulty in productively analyzing everyday interaction experience” and ignore performative and methodological bias (“Conceptualizing” 14). Communication scholarship that explores how to “produce understanding” and avoid misunderstanding “parallel” the problems of science. Traditional communication scholarship works toward correct or perfect understanding and promotes a stagnant conception of meaning (Deetz, “Conceptualizing” 17-19).

Gadamer “rejected certainty” and “eschewed authorial intent” (Arnett and Holba 88). He reframed subjectivity as the natural ground of engagement. Gadamer’s work to explore how understanding happens offers a constructive alternative that does not negate but expands subjectivity (Deetz, “Conceptualizing” 17). Understanding grows in the “in-between” space of understanding and misunderstanding. Deetz showed how Gadamer’s hermeneutics mitigated the traditional emphasis on correcting misunderstanding by exposing the “incompleteness of all understanding” (18). Gadamer’s return to the classical understanding of rhetoric uncovered new possibilities for communication scholars to open discourse beyond the parameters of perceived certainty.

The new directions for research brought to communication scholarship by Gadamer’s hermeneutics expanded the communicative foundation in the process
understanding. Gadamer reconfigured conflict and disagreement as opportunities to stand together in the pursuit of growth and wisdom. His approach aligned difference and opposition with opportunity. His move toward wisdom through meeting of opposites is akin to the revitalized construct of stasis that will be developed in the conclusion of this dissertation. Difference creates opportunity for mutual growth. When “multiple and competing traditions” come into conflict, Gadamer’s hermeneutics uncovered a path toward wisdom (Arnett and Holba 89). Understanding is necessarily “historic, linguistic, and dialectic” (Deetz, “Conceptualizing” 18; Palmer 215). Gadamer highlighted our embeddedness in a particular moment. Understanding is always preceded by our connection to the historic reality of the event of communication. We bring our prejudice to bear on all interpretive moments.

Prejudice is an unavoidable variable that opens “our ability to understand” (Arnett and Holba 86-88; Deetz, “Conceptualizing” 18). Gadamer’s move to bring prejudice to light represents a “pragmatic recognition of bias that one publically brings to a given text” (Arnett and Holba 88). Counter to the Enlightenment pursuit of objectivity by trying to eliminate prejudice, scholars can make bias more visible. Research can “distinguish between productive and unproductive prejudice” (Deetz, “Conceptualizing” 18). Communication scholars found new space by attending to the role of prejudice and tradition in understanding. Deetz contended that Gadamer expanded the relationship constructed in dialogue. By seeking more “complete understanding… of what is said in such a way that it fuses with the hearers own tradition rather than trying to objectively reconstruct what the other meant” (Deetz, “Conceptualizing” 19). We cannot escape prejudice. Our experience with language binds us to others in conversation. Using
language itself is a step toward communion. “Tradition is gathered and expressed in language” (Deetz, “Conceptualizing” 18). The linguistic character of understanding draws from the central role language in being. Our access to understanding others is grounded in tradition and brought to life in language.

Campbell drew attention to key metaphors that bring Gadamer into our conversation. He contended that Gadamer’s work addressed basic rhetorical questions that scholars across the human sciences consider (101-105). Campbell pointed to the significance of play as a leading factor in the connection to communication studies. He explained that the “event character of knowledge which is illustrated in play…is essential to understanding his perspective on the world and his potential significance for…communication scholars” (104-105). Each of these steps is important to understand how Gadamer’s theories can explore rhetorical theory. Gadamer’s approach to understanding and meaning align to central questions communication scholars ask. Campbell explained that Gadamer’s key insight for communication scholars is that “the world is already meaningful” and “comes to us in the only way” that it can “through language” (107). We experience and interpret an “already meaningful world” (Campbell 107). Gadamer’s expanded construction of text embues interpretation with subjectivity. Our embeddedness in a tradition forms our possible interpretive choices.

Gadamer’s hermeneutics can help explore religious communication (Kisner 10). Kisner brought hermeneutics back to its theological home, but with the expanded philosophical description added by Gadamer. He showed how Gadamer’s enlargement of hermeneutics helped promote homiletics. He explained that although “preaching and biblical interpretation are not his primary concerns, Gadamer finds in those tasks models
for all interpretation theory” (Kinser 10). Importantly, for Kinser, was the extension of Gadamer’s hermeneutics into homiletic theory. Scholars can tie Gadamer’s hermeneutics to theology and religious communication in multiple ways. Although he “did not consider himself a theologian” he worked with “some of the great theological minds of our era” (Kinser 22). Gadamer explained the significant influence of Marburg Theologians in his *Philosophical Apprenticeships* (39). Kinser (22-23), in a footnote, reviewed the growing legacy of Gadamer in theology from systematic theology and biblical interpretation to homiletics. Gadamer’s attention to the meaning exposed new and helpful ways to access biblical texts.

Gadamer’s hermeneutics helps explore the Bible as meaningful conversation. Key metaphors in Gadamer’s text promote a constructive approach to homiletics. His description of language as “conversational in character” emphasized a “dialogical” and “connective logic” that allowed for a basic understanding of how preaching interacts with audiences. The conversational quality is playful and moves back and forth within a “series of moves within a larger movement” (Kinser 12). He showed how homiletic scholar David Buttrick applied Gadamer to the homiletic tradition by bringing his communal orientation of language to the center of meaning. This “conversationality” helped demonstrate a “dialogical, connective logic” that promoted hermeneutics and attended to the event of preaching (Kinser 12-14). The conversation brought together the preacher and the audience; meaning occurs in the event of the homily.

Communication scholars use Gadamer’s hermeneutics to explore multiple levels of being in understanding and practical applications. Gadamer tied to communication scholarship at a meta-level of understanding and his “lifelong struggle opposing methodic
consciousness” (Chen 183). This is an important concept for communication scholars to explore. The mindset brought to an interpretive event is a part of the rhetorical landscape and Gadamer’s work helped bring this to the center of the conversation. “Gadamer liberate[d] the human sciences from the confinement of methodic consciousness by displacing it with the priority of "die Sache" (in the process of dialogue) over method” (Chen 184). Gadamer did not critique or replace methods; he centered not on the methods themselves, but the premise of the methods. The problematic for communication scholars is how to “account for the ‘objectives’ of knowledge which are prior to the question of method” (183-184). Chen lauded the constructive use of Gadamer’s theories in the field and added a new dimension. Theories of “praxis” are the “basis” of his whole project, and its subsequent moral/practical/political implication” (Chen 184). He drew from this argument that “Philosophical Hermeneutics is a moral/practical project.” Chen engaged Gadamer’s work in play. He contended that communication scholars have overlooked the praxical dimension of Gadamer’s work. He urged scholars to add to the study of philosophical hermeneutics a practical conception of meaning and understanding. Arthos tied this praxical component to Gadamer’s revitalization of classical rhetoric (“Who are We and Who am I?” 19-21). Gadamer’s hermeneutics is “fundamentally grounded in the classical tradition of rhetoric” of ancient Greece and “Renaissance humanism.” He suggested it was a philosophical and practical “movement that took its direction from the recovery of the rhetorical tradition.” Gadamer’s work to expand hermeneutics beyond method to a universal approach to reality helped reclaim traditional rhetoric.

The state of knowledge during the Renaissance “was fundamentally social, and their conception of education linked intellectual activity to praxis” (Arthos, *Inner Word*
20). By reconfiguring understanding as an experience that takes place in community, Arthos contended that Gadamer drew the “Judeo Christian achievement back into the humanist tradition” (*Inner Word* 25). Sharing is the event horizon. Sharing is the space where meeting resides. The event of communication is the urgent moment of understanding. Arthos suggested that Gadamer reframed understanding as an event and tied it to practical knowledge and the *sensis communis*. Chen showed how philosophical hermeneutics can be read as a way to enhance rhetorical agency. Chen explained that Gadamer’s “model of dialogue” enabled us to rethink communication. He realigned the subject/object relation orientation to a subject/subject relation (196). Chen added that Gadamer’s attention to context “stresses the necessity of historicizing communicative action in concrete social, cultural, and political context” (196-197). The reversal of the subject/object relationship promotes engagement. The co-creation of understanding, the sharing, is the key point to draw from Gadamer’s model. Arthos explained that for Gadamer “[s]ubjectivity is not the end-all, but only part of a participatory structure in which destiny plays an equal role” (*Inner Word* 25). Chen’s contention that praxis is fundamental to philosophical hermeneutics engaged freedom and communication ethics.

Gadamer’s attention to praxis urged communication scholars to attend to broader possibilities of engagement. Roy Abhik and William J. Starosta built on Chen’s explanation of praxis as a way to establish a moral ground in communication scholarship. They extended the “praxical hermeneutics” unpacked by Chen and pointed to Gadamer’s distinction between *techne* and *praxis* for clarity. The “moral dimension” derived from Gadamer’s attention to engagement with others is especially important for construing intercultural communications. Gadamer’s “praxis involves knowledge about human
beings, especially human action, and carries a moral dimension to it since individual action connects researchers with other human beings to open intercultural communication” (7). Gadamer’s attention to moral implications “offers a method to interpret other cultures” with awareness of bias (12). Abhik and Oludaja were concerned with social justice and urged communication scholars to take an active role in social issues (257). They sought to show how communication scholars might “appropriate” Gadamer’s theory of praxis “to engage in genuine dialogical relationships that produce understanding, which, in turn, can be put to good use through appropriate measures of intervention.” Gadamer’s hermeneutic requires self-understanding combined with “praxis” that “seeks an understanding” and is open to “experiencing change in one’s position” (Abhik and Oludaja 259). Gadamer’s attention to the problems of translation and respect for others can promote openness. Chen described the practical ethical demands of Gadamer’s hermeneutics as a good starting point to begin intercultural dialogue.

4. 3 Hermeneutics and Rhetoric in Play

Gadamer framed the humanities within a rhetorical sphere. He revitalized the pre-modern approach to human sciences as an ongoing conversation. Gadamer’s contention that “[h]ermeneutics is fundamentally grounded in the classical tradition of rhetoric” helped rehabilitate rhetoric and resurrect a tradition. The philosophical orientation of hermeneutics began with “Aristotle and Cicero… to Renaissance humanism, a movement that took its direction from the recovery of the rhetorical tradition” (Arthos, Inner Word 19). Gadamer’s turn from how to understand to the process of understanding highlighted the connection between rhetoric and play as the ground of his project. Language is the
medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people” (*TM* 385-386). The play of language in conversation binds the participants to a tradition and provides access to mutual understanding.

Gadamer exposed prejudice as structural variable in communication. Gadamer’s insight adds layers to communication theory. Prejudice is a variable that affects understanding and impacts the experience of communication. Gadamer looked to the theories of colleagues from Marburg to develop his primary hermeneutical claim. Prejudice is both inescapable and the key to our own access to understanding history. He explained that Bultmann’s hermeneutics provided the initial ground for his position. Exploring history is always already a process of self-disclosure. He explained that Bultmann “constantly emphasized that “self-understanding refers to a historical decision and not to something one possesses and controls” (*TM* 522). Our place within history affects our possibilities for understanding history and historical texts. Bultmann constantly emphasized this point. Gadamer explained that Bultmann developed this “purely hermeneutical concept.” He added “Heidegger’s analysis of the hermeneutic circle and the general for-structure of human Dasein.” Prejudice allows us to be open to difference and the possibility of understanding. “It refers to the openness of the horizon of inquiry within which alone understanding is possible” (*TM* 522). Prejudice affects the entirety of communicative interaction and grounds the production of meaning and understanding. Prejudice opens the possibility of dialogue. Arnett and Holba (89) explained that “[w]hat makes dialogue or the fusion of horizons possible is not neutrality, but the prejudice of a given tradition that situates the interpreter and the meaning of a given.” New insights and cooperation emerge in “interplay of prejudices” (Arnett and
Holba 89). Gadamer’s extension and expansion of Heidegger’s “for-structure of understanding” added to our understanding of the self within an already present tradition of ideas. It is inescapable that Gadamer’s conception brought prejudice to the center of understanding (TM 277). It is because we have experience within a given tradition that understanding is possible (Warnke 114-115). Prejudice is inherent in all encounters with others. The respectful interplay of differences is the ground of cooperation, community, and hope.

Gadamer showed how rhetoric and hermeneutics share a common history and intellectual trajectory. Gadamer contended that they nourish each other and “there is a deep inner convergence with rhetoric and hermeneutics” (Gadamer, “Hermeneutics of Suspicion” 55). They each fluctuate in public perception. Each term is flexible and meanings evolve and contract. They are complimentary and cultivate each other in practice “the rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects of human linguisticality completely interpenetrate each other” (Gadamer, “Scope and Function” 25). Each are tethered to understanding, “rhetoric and hermeneutics are joined by their attention to the activity of overcoming localized disruptions in shared understandings” (Mootz 84-85). Rhetoric and hermeneutics are beyond mere technique and “the special problematic of understanding and the attempt to master it as an art concern of hermeneutics—belongs traditionally to the sphere of grammar and rhetoric” (TM 385-386). Rhetoric includes speaking and hermeneutics includes interpretation, but each is much more. Hermeneutics and rhetoric each have practical dimension, but they are not limited to methods or technique.

Philosophical hermeneutics does not a critique the methods of the natural sciences only to substitute new methods. Gadamer’s approach was much more nuanced. The
general thrust of his energy was to establish new ways to meet difference in language. Language is meeting. Gadamer’s was not critical of the methods of the natural sciences, but the importation of these methods to humanities. The avenues of reasoning that question the methods in the natural sciences lead toward new means of discovering and articulating multiple truths. Gadamer reframed hermeneutics beyond methods; it is the larger set of attitudes and beliefs that make it possible to actualize strategies for interpretive action in experience. He was wary of merely substituting one method centric approach for another, “hermeneutics is philosophy and not simply a methodology for the…human sciences” (“Universality” 2). Hermeneutics is not just another method or approach to standing over a voice on the horizon. Hermeneutics nourishes the ground of rhetoric.

4.3 Hermeneutics in the History of Ideas

Hermeneutics first emerged in ancient Greece. The term hermaneia simply meant “translation and interpretation” and was a tool of rhetoric (Gadamer, Conversation 36). The term is tied to the Greek god Hermes who gave us the alphabet and interpreted the messages of the gods for humanity. Early Christian communities aligned hermeneutics and rhetoric in attempts to make Christian concepts make sense in terms of Greek philosophy. Augustinian hermeneutics can be understood as translating scripture into conceptual terms (Gadamer, Conversation 36-40). During the Protestant Reformation following Luther, hermeneutics emerged as a framework to explore the Bible according to Aristotle’s “rhetorical principles” (Gadamer, Conversation 37). Martin Luther’s critique of authority residing in tradition of the Catholic Church and his directive to free the word of God initiated a new biblical hermeneutics (Gadamer “Universality” 4).
Contemporary hermeneutics reaches back to the work of Martin Luther Luther’s turn to the text, accelerated the urgency of understanding, and promoted proper interpretive methods. “Thus,…hermeneutics began with Luther’s pronouncement that Scripture was its own interpreter” (Grondin, Gadamer 14). Biblical hermeneutics in contemporary discourse is a continuation of Luther.

The hermeneutics Gadamer received grew from an intellectual lineage that included Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, Rudolf Bultmann, and Martin Heidegger. Scholars acknowledge the initial contributions Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) made to reframe interpretive methods as universal hermeneutics (Gadamer, Relevance 141; Palmer, Hermeneutics 88; Grondin, Hans-Georg 14; Sims 1). Hermeneutics before Schleiermacher “consisted exclusively of sundry rules and regulations for interpreting texts” (Grondin, Hans-Georg 14). Biblical scholars devised and employed methods to draw out a predetermined understanding of the text. Schleiermacher sought to clarify methods for proper and objective understanding to help readers “reconstruct the intentions of the authors of the text” (Gadamer, TM 158; Simms 1). He generalized the ground biblical scholars established for interpreting the Bible. Palmer suggested that Schleiermacher moved away from biblical hermeneutic tradition, claiming it to be a study of understanding (Philosophical Hermeneutics 88-91).

Expanding the interpretive stance beyond theological reflection provided news ways to approach scholarship in the humanities and “projected the possibility of a universal hermeneutics comprehending all interpretive processes” (Grondin, Gadamer 14). He accounted for difference and moved “us toward multiplicity of interpretation” (Arnett, “Interplay” 243). This multiplicity not only acknowledged difference, but grounded all
encounters. The interpretive framework re-visioned by Schleiermacher nurtured the ground for “meaningful disagreement.” He explained that hermeneutics is not a method to “eliminate disagreement, nor can it” (Schleiermacher xxvii). He exposed the significance of language and discourse in the constitution of meaning. Schleiermacher’s position that in “all understanding is always already interpretation” established a new way to explore hermeneutics and brought together the “power of understanding” and the power of interpretation” (Palmer, *Hermeneutics* 88). Language carries meaning in use. The experience of language indicates an already present connection between people and texts.

Following Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) used hermeneutics to engage new ways to explore human sciences. Dilthey extended and expanded hermeneutics as the “scientific” and “methodological” foundation of all humanities scholarship (Grondin, *Gadamer* 14; Palmer, *Hermeneutics* 97-99; Johnson 11). “Hermeneutics is, after Dilthey and not before, a general theory of interpretation, including all fields in which interpretation is necessary” (Seebohm 183). He added to Schleiermacher’s attention to context. The historical moment of the interpreter plays a role in the understanding of a text. “Humans understand themselves in terms of a past and a future…and what they create” (Johnson 12-13). Dilthey’s work to bring history into interpretation enabled “Gadamer to turn to the traditional understanding…on its head” (Palmer 122; Simms 26). History is not a stagnant “archive of facts” and experience is not a “collection of things” that we have done.

Martin Heidegger added an awareness of self to the horizon of hermeneutic thinking. Heidegger’s hermeneutics extended the German tradition and added self.
Gadamer explained that an important contribution to his own sense of hermeneutics was informed by Heidegger. Heidegger’s “decisive step” according to Gadamer, “asserted that understanding” involved the “understanding of self.” Gadamer extended from Heidegger’s inclusion of understanding oneself to show the “limits of the scientific concepts of understanding” (Gadamer, *Conversation 37*). Understanding transcends objective standards and methods. Understanding reaches us in a personal experiential way.

4.4 Play in Play

Play is a metaphor to help articulate the unpredictability of experience in the life world. Where the scientific method seeks to eliminate unknown variables, Gadamer used play to articulate how we discuss the chaotic experience of life. In the life world, play is the fluid ground for ethical choices in the face of others. He challenged the theories of play he received at a subjective level. For Gadamer, play is not something we do; it is a mode of being. Gadamer developed his theory of play tied to the experience of art and it extended into the center of his hermeneutics (Grondin, “Ritual, Festival, Play” 43; Johnson 20). Gadamer used play to explain how we can understand “the dynamic of human existence” (Johnson 20-12). We meet others in the play of conversation.

His most influential text, *Truth and Method*, only devotes a small section to play proper, but this does not diminish the significance of play for his overall project. Play is a defining concept of Gadamer’s thought (Johnson 20). The lack of attention devoted explicitly to play does not mitigate it’s breadth in his philosophy of engagement. Jean Grondin, a student and biographer of Gadamer, explained that play is a “central theme” in philosophical hermeneutics. Play “has an essential function” in Gadamer’s hermeneutics.
and his extended philosophy of engagement (Spariosu 133). He continued to develop and extend play and playfulness in his later works. Play “should have been given more prominence” as an “integrating role” in his earlier work (Lawn 21). Scholars from multiple disciplines demonstrate the significance of play at the core of his theory of hermeneutics (Spariosu 133). In his later work, Gadamer enhanced the significance of play. He explained that “play is so elementary a function of human life that culture is quite inconceivable without this element” (RB 22). Gadamer used play as a metaphor to describe the “way in which the truth of Being occurs through hermeneutical activity and as the groundless…grounding of Gadamer’s own thought” (Spariousu 133). Although limited in space, play is a significant metaphor in Gadamer’s thought that brings together his hermeneutics and aesthetics.

Play concepts preceding Gadamer described how we play; Gadamer exposed how play plays us. In Truth and Method, Gadamer introduced play in the context of interpreting art in the section titled “Play as the clue of the Ontological Explication.” He immediately announced a distinction between his “concept of play” and the “subjective meaning” promoted by Kant and Schiller. The notion of play that “dominates the whole of modern aesthetics” subordinates playing to the player (TM 102). He explained that “players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation (Dartsellung) through the players” (TM 103). Play is not an activity we undertake rather play undertakes us.

Play is a key metaphor in Gadamer’s attempt to “reclaim and reinvigorate a lost pre-Enlightenment hermeneutic dimension” in humanities scholarship (Lawn 22). He described the hermeneutic implication of the “aesthetic situation” and explained “that
conceiving aesthetic consciousness as something that confronts an object does not do justice to the real situation” (TM 102). The “striking feature” of play in Gadamer is “it’s dynamic for constant change” (Lawn 22). The fluid nature engagement underscores Gadamer’s initial exploration of play. Change is the key. Play changes us yet we do not change play.

Play is not limited to games and playing but provides a way to understand a dynamic interchange of ideas. Gadamer unpacked the various uses of the word play. In Truth and Method, he explained how the term play functions practically to articulate multiple concepts, “we find talk of the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of gears or parts of machinery, the interplay of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats, even a play on words” (TM 102-103). Importantly, in Gadamer’s description the common feature of the term in use is tied how we articulate the back and forth flow of ideas and things in the world but not the ends. “In each case what is intended is to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end (TM 102-103). Play has no specific goal other than play; it is purposeless, but not futile.

Play encompasses the full texture of an aesthetic experience. Understanding thrives in the encounter between interpreter/observer and text/artwork. “Understanding” emerged as a “dynamic interchange” between and observer and a work of art “not a subjective response” (Lawn 23). As one observes a work of art they are “interwoven into an event” out of their control which they “cannot freely dispose… normal horizons of experience and expectations” (Grondin, “Ritual, Festival, and Play” 43). Play is the absorbing experience between the “individual consciousnesses” of the observer and the work of art. Play is not limited to an activity or simply “something a person does.” Thus,
“as far as language is concerned,” the subject of play is not the player but the play itself (TM 104). The movement of ideas unpacked in the general sense of the term occurs in games, but in Gadamer’s description it has important distinctions.

The revelatory experience of play engulfs the players such that participants belong to the play (RB 26). Play is all consuming. Lawn (22-23) explained that Gadamer’s emphasis on the “to-and-fro” is not limited to the experience of the players in the game, but “more pertinently it is the relation between the players and the game played.” Fundamental to understanding Gadamer’s revolutionary approach to play is not found in the “individual subjectivity of the players.” The play of the game gathers new meaning for Gadamer in the “dialectical open future” and the “dynamic oscillation between the players and the game” (Lawn 23). Play can be understood as movement of ideas and the to and fro language in conversation.

In his effort to “tease out the meaning of play” Gadamer took experience to task and looked for “clues within everyday usage” (Lawn 22). Play pushes beyond the limits of games and playing. His starting point reversed the way play had been understood and put the subject/object dichotomy in play. He described the hermeneutic implication of the “aesthetic situation” and “that conceiving aesthetic consciousness as something that confronts an object does not do justice to the real situation” (TM 102). Play is an experience of being played.

Gadamer explored play initially in the context of aesthetic consciousness (TM 102-110). He introduced the concept in Truth and Method and it continued to blossom throughout the rest of his career. Toward the end of Truth and Method he employed playfulness to describe how the “universality of language makes hermeneutical play a
dimension of linguistic understanding.” Play for Gadamer is a “central metaphor for disclosing the ontological structure of language and it becomes a central feature of the dialogical fusion of horizons and historicity” (Lawn 22). Play functions as a central metaphor.

Gadamer extended the aesthetic framework outlined by Kant and challenged the “subjectivization of aesthetics” and “the reduction of art to feeling” (Lawn 21). The move by Kant to explain aesthetic reflection as “oriented…toward the power of imagination and the human capacity for image building” is Kant’s “great achievement” (RB 17-18). Kant brought the experience of art and beauty into the rigor of philosophy. He explored the experience beauty beyond the limits of subjective taste (RB 18). Gadamer landed on Kant’s significant communicative claim that the judgement of beauty binds us to others and universal agreement.

4.7 Play of Art

Gadamer showed how art stands as an exemplar for broader truths that the methods in the natural sciences lack. “In a work of art there is a statement, a truth that one can only understand if one allows oneself to be lifted into its play.” Art plays with us. Although we experience art, art is not an object of our experience. Gadamer contended that “play is not… the subjective playing with the art, but rather of the playing of the work with us” (Grondin; “Ritual, Festival, Play” 44). This expansion of play broadens his initial notion as “the relationship between the individual consciousness and the artwork claiming that understanding here is a dynamic interchange not a subjective response” (Lawn 23). Art contains truth not accessible to scientific methods.
Gadamer pointed to the unnecessary limits imposed by the “conceptual knowledge” and the privileging of methods (TM 36). When scholars turn to methods as the source for understanding, multiple avenues of meaning are ignored. Scientific methods and conceptual knowledge limit the possible questions and conceptions of truth. Gadamer argued that meaningful experiences are silenced by the pursuit of scientific methods. Gadamer explored play through a detailed description of art and the aesthetic consciousness.

Gadamer construed a co-productive mode of being for art and the audience. A work of art presents itself to, and is constructed by, the viewer. Meaningfulness of the experience depends on engagement. In his essay “The Play of Art,” Gadamer explained how the meaningfulness of art is distinct from the material truths of the natural sciences. Where the objective methods seek to yield a stable and repeatable meaning, art is co-productive and its meaning requires participation for completion. Art “demands to be constructed by the viewer to whom it is presented.” The utility of art is not tangible “it is not something that is, rather something that is not.” The being of the work of art takes form in the experience of the viewer. It is not a “thing we can use for a particular purpose” or a “materiel thing from which we might fabricate some other thing.” The mode of being of a work of art exhibits meaning only when confronted by others, “it is something that only manifests and displays itself when it is constituted by the viewer” (Gadamer, “The Play of Art”126). The co-productive unity in the experience of art and play help ground the ludic rhetoric developed in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Play is a metaphor for the structuring capacity of language and culture. Gadamer brought immediacy to play as performance. Games precede the players. Gadamer’s key
metaphor helps develop a ludic rhetoric by exposing how game plays us. Language is not an empty set of symbols put into use, but an active productive source of understanding that affects us in our use of it. His analysis brought communication to the center of meaning and being. Play is not, in Gadamer’s sense, merely the attitude of playing. Rather players are caught up in the shaped activity of the game itself. “In playing we are not as much the ones playing as the ones played” (Grondin, “Ritual” 44). In play, we do not merely express ourselves, but rather the game itself “presents itself” (Weinsheimer and Marshall xiv). Lawn (23) explained that the “to-and-fro-ness of play, the subordination of the player to the game, is a process and a structure ceaselessly at work in our daily encounters with language.” Play is beyond the individuals playing. It is the structuring and the meeting of self and others.

Play confronts us in experience with others. Placing play at the center of experience of the process of understanding implies “crucial ethical conditions” necessary for “genuine dialogic play” (Vilhauer x-xii). In Gadamer’s hermeneutics “authentic engagement in play with the other[s] is crucial for our education, development, and our very existence as human beings” (Vilhauer xii). Play is the center of Gadamer’s alternative to the natural sciences. Vilhauer’s analysis shows that play exposes the “very process of understanding” (25-29). Play is co-productive.

Gadamer developed the mutuality of the experience of art. Gadamer attended to the cognitive and existential implications of interacting with art. Art produces a persistent repetitive echo that, when encountered, forces a cognitive response. Art comes to life and has meaning in the event of interpretation, it “demands to be constructed” by the interpreter. The artist and interpreter both are enjoined in the structure of art. A work of
art is not a thing we use; “it is something that only manifests and displays itself when it is constituted” by the interpreter (RB 126). He drew a line to the problems of method and meaning. From a natural science perspective, a piece of art is an object to be interpreted by the subjective taste of an interpreter. The natural sciences seek to stand over the objects of experience. Scholars seek new methods to draw conclusions, to subordinate art to something experienced. Art is something labeled, defined, judged and owned. Gadamer showed that play is an avenue of truth beyond the limits of science. Gadamer showed that there are truths in the human sciences that the methods of the natural sciences are unable to discover.

Gadamer changed the experience of art to the experience with art. He reframed the encounter with art and challenged the notion that art is a “static object.” He contended that the experience with art changes the player/interpreter. Play is a mode of being not something that we do, but something happens to us. He allowed for Kant’s work to bolster art as a serious medium of communication, but breaks from the subjective interpretation of art as an aesthetic experience (TM 101-103). Kant brought art toward the light of truth and he left it in the personal experience as a feeling. Kant’s move helped clarify art and artist, but he fell short of allowing art to speak for itself. Kant’s aesthetic consciousness stood over the experience of art as the subject. Gadamer agrees that art is significant but not as the subject of our experience. Art changes us. Art works.

The work of art demands our attention. Understanding occurs in experience; the interpreter is affect by art. Art has a voice in the conversation. Art draws us in to it as a subject. Gadamer showed how the “spectator plays crucial interpretive role” in the meaning of art. Meaningfulness is only completed in the “back and forth play of
communication” (Vilhauer 31). Thus, standing over art and objectifying it does not adequately express the work of art. Both play and art are not subjects of a player or interpreter; they engulf us as a mode of being. Both play and art structure our experience. Gadamer explained that “all play is playing something.” Playing means adapting to play, becoming a player, “A person playing is... someone who comports himself” to the game. The game affects us and we become players (TM 107). The play itself never ceases. Play is the mode of being the player experiences. The next section turns to Gadamer’s expression of play in conversation. What emerges in Gadamer’s reclamation of the classical tradition of rhetoric is a constructive openness to others grounded in respect.

4. 4 Conversation is Always a Fusion of Horizons

Conversation is a second significant metaphor underlying Gadamer’s hermeneutics. He explained in a series of interviews that “conversation is the essence of what I have been working on for the past thirty years” (Conversations 56). Hermeneutics centers meaning in conversation. Conversation is a meeting place of mutual respect. “Our willingness to engage the voice of the others, to listen and to speak is a crucial condition of understanding” (Vilhauer 83). In conversation, “something is placed in the center” of discourse as a shared concept about which partners exchange ideas. Reaching understanding is “not merely as matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (TM 371). Like play, conversation is transformative. We are changed in and through conversation. The change occurs not by winning points or reaching agreement; simply by being in conversation changes us. Understanding is not
found in consensus, but in the meeting others who share a common concern.

Conversation is always a fusion of horizons.

Conversation and play are connected on multiple levels in Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Like play, conversation absorbs. For Gadamer both play and conversation “rest on a common willingness of the participants…to lend themselves to the emergence of something else.” Only in the freely entered safe place of mutual respect of conversation does the “subject matter…comes to presence and presentation” (*TM* xvii). Gadamer’s metaphor of play unpacked the subjective role of a text. He shifted the subject object distinction between interpreters of a work of art. Gadamer showed how the work of art draws in and the text becomes alive; the work of art is active; art works on us.

Philosophical hermeneutics “understands itself not as an absolute position, but as a way of experience. It insists that there is no higher principle than holding oneself open in a conversation” (*PH* 189). Conversation is always “something of living value” (*PH*, 94). Philosophical hermeneutics frames us communities “together in community is living together in language and language only exists in conversation” (Gadamer, *Conversation* 56). Gadamer’s hermeneutics exploded the “universal role of language.” Understanding does not precede language. Language is not a simple vessel through which meaning travels. We do not maintain a “linguistic storeroom” of “interpretive concepts” to apply to “things to be understood.” He explained, “…language does not reach out and take hold of language; it is carried out within language” (Gadamer, *Conversation* 37). Using common language is a community act. Conversation is communal and “something is expressed that is not only mine or my author's, but common” (*TM* 390). Conversation is standing together where individuals open themselves to each other.
Gadamer’s emphasis on conversation not only attended to speech and language, but the encounter, the happening of understanding as it takes place. In the introduction to Gadamer’s *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Gadamer’s contended that the “principal contribution to hermeneutics” is the shift toward understanding as an “event” (Linge xxviii). Gadamer moved away from the methodological emphasis of scientific inquiry which presumed understanding to be “a deliberate product of self-couscous reflection” and re-worked the process of understanding that “in its very nature is episodic and trans-subjective” (Linge xxviii). Understanding that emerges in conversation is not tied to production of knowledge but to the event, the meeting. The involvement in conversation is the end. “The keys to understanding are not manipulation…but participation and openness, not knowledge but experience, not methodology but dialectic” (Palmer 215). Understanding occurs in conversation as conversation.

In conversation, difference is not an obstacle but an opportunity. Each participant “truly accepts” the other’s perspective and “transposes himself into the Other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says” (*TM* 385). Conversation presupposes common ground in language, and participants are “far less leaders…than led.” Participants do not know ahead what will emerge in conversation. Gadamer likens understanding in genuine conversation to an “event that happens to us.” A conversation has a “spirit of its own” (*TM* 385). United through language, participants are transformed and something new emerges.

Gadamer’s connection to language brings together the significance of self and others in conversation. Understanding self plays out in language and “Language is a we” (Gadamer, *Conversation* 56). Our use of language embeds us within a tradition and
brings together the participants in conversation, language is “the communicative mediation which establishes common ground” (Weisheimer and Marshall xvii).

Conversation is a mode being. From the model of Socrates, Gadamer showed that engaging in “authentic dialogue means comporting oneself with both openness and directedness toward the Other” (Vilhauer 101). The co-productive model of dialogue establishes hope in a divided world.

4.8 Texts in Conversation

Gadamer explained that translation is an interpretive act (TM 388-390). The task of overcoming difference in language is a model of crucial concepts unpacked in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. How a translator approaches a text will affect the meaning derived. A translation is not “re-awakening the processes” of the author. A translator brings experience and prejudice to bear on a text and the translation is always “necessarily a re-creation of the text” driven by the understanding and predisposition of the translator (TM 387). All translations will inevitably “lack some of the overtones that vibrate in the original” (TM 388). Translators must make choices to overcome difference. The choices are always interpretive and grounded in the experience of the translator.

Gadamer relates the experience of translation to the “effort to come to understanding” in conversation. As in the exchange of ideas in dialogue, translators consider different possibilities and the result is always an interpretive choice. A translator must be aware of the inherent interpretive choices made and “preserve the character of his own language, the language into which he is translating, while still recognizing the value of the alien, even antagonistic character of the text and its expression” (TM 388-389). Understanding is always separated by a “gulf between the two languages.” Authentic conversation opens
us to the ideas of other but does not require agreement. Each participant seeks to understand from the others perspective and is changed but a purely subjective self remains.

Conversation is akin to play. Conversation engulfs us. It is productive in the sense that each interlocutor has an opportunity to expand their own horizon of understanding, and new truths emerge. “The otherness of the Other’s horizon serves to enrich one’s own horizon.” Gadamer’s hermeneutical attitude sees this as an opportunity for growth. He always tried to “appreciate the otherness of the Other’s horizon of understanding” and “found common ground” (Dutt 11). In every encounter with others we experience a new and different horizon of ideas. Conversation brings the context of difference to the fore. Dutt explained that Gadamer saw engagement as a fusion of difference.

We do not ground the text in our own ideological perspective; we allow the text to speak to us. Gadamer brought the text to life, “the text is a thou with whom we are engaged in conversation” (Aylesworth 62-63). Gadamer provided a different way to understand engagement with texts and others. A text interacts with us as we interact with it. Like a response, a text stands in an already occurring conversation evoking understanding driven by what has preceded. As a text speaks to us, we are armed with preceding experience that enables access to understanding and defuses potential objectivity. Language functionally brings us together with a text in experience. Rather than suppose a persuasive stance of domination seeking compliance, Gadamer emphasized the meeting place. The shared history and culture comes forth in language and the text “is inalienable from its tradition” and interpreter (Aylesworth 64).

Hermeneutics from this viewpoint carries on the dialogic perspectives of Plato that
embraces the pursuit of understanding. Aylesworth (63-65) contended that Gadamer presents a model of engagement between interpreter and text that “does not alienate the affinity of belonging between the text and the reader, but preserves it from any objectifying moment.” Engagement with a given text takes place within a given moment where the text and interpreter meet.

4.9 Conclusion

Gadamer’s lifelong project sought to reclaim the ancient Greek tradition of rhetoric. The move toward reason and science during the Enlightenment silenced alternative avenues for seeking truth. In rehabilitating rhetoric, a new open co-operative communication based on mutual respect and openness emerged. In the play of conversation, participants embrace change and seek to work with others toward truth. The long tradition that relegated rhetoric to an agonist method of domination in the pursuit of a single truth is reframed as playful spirit of caring.

The final chapter of this dissertation draws on Gadamer’s notion of conversation to help unpack early theories of stasis and explore a co-creative theory of rhetoric in the classroom. Gadamer’s reconstituted rhetoric grounds a ludic theory of rhetoric where participants embrace others in a fusion of horizons.
Chapter 5:
Rhetoric at play

The dissertation advances persuasion as cooperative enterprise with hopeful prospects for constructive civic engagement. Ludic rhetoric emerges as an appreciative praxis for the enrichment of others in discourse and encourages cooperation over consensus. The communicative ground exposed by attending to rhetoric, hermeneutics, and play in the history of ideas reveals positive possibilities for teaching cooperative rhetoric and persuasion. A historical account of the intersection of rhetoric and play in the earliest stories of Greek philosophy and culture brings a new light to the cooperative nature of rhetoric in its originative form. Before writing, oral communicative action fused audience and performers in the production and perpetuation of cultural memory. Literacy and progress led to fragmentation of rhetoric and the intrusion of the methods of the natural sciences into the humanities during the Enlightenment.

Immanuel Kant was a leading figure of the Enlightenment. The life and work of Kant can help explore the deeper significance of rhetoric during the Enlightenment (Kennedy, *Classical* 274-276; Ercolini, “Pantheism” 5-7; Frierson and Guyer vii-x). Attention to Kant’s employment of rhetoric offers new insights into Kant’s corpus. Kant’s rhetoric of reason uncovers how reason establishes knowledge. Cognition and judgement are rhetorically framed. Transcendental idealism established the self as a “knowing subject” actively producing knowledge in experience. Reason imbues us with ethical demands. Imagination allows reason to move beyond objective or experiential knowledge to creatively seek new ways to interpret experience. Kant underscored the ethical implications of engaged rhetorical agents. Kant’s writing revealed a commitment
to discourse, the public use of reason, and a “deeply rhetorical understanding of public philosophical examination and communal inquiry” (Ercolini, *Kant’s* 198). Kant’s work was revived by Neo-Kantian’s at the Marburg School and reframed by Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann’s *Hermeneutics* and *Form Criticism* contribute to rhetorical theory in creative ways that provide fertile ground for future research in both rhetoric and theology. Myth emerged in Bultmann’s work as communication technology employed for a specific audience that is no longer accessible to a contemporary audience. Ancient audiences understood the world through a mythic lens and rhetors used myths to communicate important ideas. Demythologizing attends to the problems of the Universal and opens possibilities of understanding for contemporary audiences. Bultmann invited demythologizing beyond theological reflection and Gadamer’s development of philosophical hermeneutics echoed, extended, and expanded Bultmann’s insights.

Gadamer’s rehabilitation and enlargement of rhetoric stood on the shoulders of the hermeneutic tradition of Bultmann and the Neo-Kantian Marburg School. Gadamer’s theory of play unfolds in conversation. Understanding is achieved not in agreement, but in the to and fro of ideas with and for others. Gadamer’s attention to the process of understanding elevates interaction and the event of communication. Gadamer tied play and persuasion to a subjectivity and respect for the others. This final chapter explores ludic rhetoric as an approach to teaching persuasion that engages Calvin Schrag’s communicative praxis and promotes constructive civic engagement.

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how ludic rhetoric may help reclaim the respectful ground of rhetoric and help educators promote engaged civic discourse by
applying a new lens to old traditions. Ultimately, play as the ground of argument provides for productive civic engagement and promotes agency and respect. I begin by discussing the oppositional nature of persuasion and the absence the canon of memory in contemporary teaching of rhetoric and public speaking. Next, I review the history of stasis and memory in the ancient world. I then follow the evolution of memory and show that is has been virtually eliminated from the canon and classroom. I attempt to uncover why it has lost is place of privilege in the communication canon. I do this by exploring the impact of the move from orality to literacy on rhetorical theory. I conclude that ludic rhetoric may be fruitful for communication education to help students contend with the postmodern condition by considering rhetoric with and for others. This cooperative approach may open new spaces for engaged discussion, discovery, and dialogue. Ludic rhetoric helps explore the to and fro of conversation as equal part of the process.

5.2 Losing Our Memoria

The move from orality to literacy affected the practice and teaching of rhetoric. Writing drifted into culture and rhetoric became a distinct discipline. As rhetoric expanded, writing replaced memoria; a new individualistic pragmatism replaced the traditionally inventive theory of stasis with an oppositional and confrontational view. Persuasive discourse moved to strategic opposition where refutation is destructive rather than constructive. These changes in the nature and philosophy of rhetoric invite, as Schrag (CP 181) suggested, a “dismantling of rhetoric.” The Enlightenment’s privileging of specialization continued to reify distinctions between academic units. The move toward “disciplinarity” led to the slow denigration of rhetoric.
Since the Enlightenment, much of the public and academic use rhetoric has narrowed to “mere rhetoric” diminishing traditional meaning of the term and role of its ideas in academic life. Even in contemporary academic circles, a century after the re-birth of the discipline, some scholars refuse to accept even the existence of rhetoric as a distinct field of study (Mountiford 32-34). The theories and techniques of rhetoric continue to flow through academia, but often discussed or applied with different terminology. Mountiford explained that we “must look for rhetoric where it has not been found—in many cultural locations” (Octalog II 33). Her discussion pointed to a key problematic for teachers of rhetoric. Scholars continue to parse the meaning of rhetoric in contemporary scholarship. Awareness of the tradition of rhetoric has virtually disappeared in many contemporary universities. The ambiguity of the term in academia led some scholars to presume that rhetoric is not subject in its own and if it is a subject, it does not have a history (Mountiford 33). Jeffrey Walker’s *The Genuine Teachers of this Art* (2011) outlined four primary “valid” definitions “in wide spread use” and distinguished between popular use of the term and academic study (1-3). The segregation of modes of thought leads to illusive biases in academic scholarship. This “cluster of prejudices” distilled the significance and nature of rhetoric to a mere technique. He argued that this privileges philosophy and other “core disciplines.” Rhetoric is conceived as essentially a benign set of skills to be applied when the intellectual work of “validity, reference, and meaning” is complete (*CP* 181). Compartmentalization affects how rhetoric is taught. Rhetorical education follows a long line of interpreting Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric as “finding all the available means of persuasion” from the speakers perspective (Burnyeats, 88-90, Crem 240-242). Rhetoric in this construction is a one way
movement of ideas intended to move, change, or nullify and audience’s differences. The contemporary approach to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* conflates rhetoric and persuasion. Golden et al contended that Aristotle’s influence in the history of rhetoric is “so comprehensive and fundamental” that his *Rhetoric* “is the single most important work on persuasion ever written” (67). Rhetoric as a tool of persuasion limits the possibilities for community and individual growth.

5.3 Rhetoric Standing Over Persuasion

Rhetoric in contemporary discourse is frequently used as a “pejorative” implying “empty bombastic words with no substance or trivial talk.” This contemporary negative baggage belies the positive “distinguished” tradition of the discipline (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 1). Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is the most common model for teaching rhetoric in the contemporary classroom (Foss, et al *Readings* 7; Kennedy “Introduction” ii; Lucas 5).

“Most teachers of composition, communication, and speech regard it as seminal work that organizes its subject into essential parts…and illustrates and applies its teachings so that they can be used in society” (Kennedy, “Introduction” ix). Although Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* was written nearly twenty-five hundred years ago, “it has been more studied in modern times than it ever was in antiquity or the Middle Ages” (Kennedy, “Introduction” xi) It is “still considered the most important work on the subject” (Lucas 8). Aristotle tied rhetoric to persuasion as the ability to find what is persuasive in any situation (*Rhet.*, I.2). Contemporary courses in composition, persuasion, and argumentation that employ Aristotle’s methodology often construct an “agonistic model of rhetoric” where “persuasion is a deliberate…attempt on the part of a rhetor to change” the audience’s mind (Ryan and Natalie 71). Traditional rhetorical scholars, even those attempting to find
new safer alternatives, presume that rhetoric has always been a persuasive tool (Foss et al “Invitational Rhetoric” 3-4). Foss et al outlined a history of rhetoric as a site patriarchal reification and aligned traditional rhetoric with persuasion. The goal of persuasion is it to find the point of conflict and marshal support to “change people’s beliefs and actions” and to “get the listeners to agree with you and…act” (Lucas 324). Rhetoric, in this frame, is a tool of persuasion used to establish control, domination, and change (Fos et al 2-5). The move toward consensus dominates the contemporary approach to persuasion. The continued relevance of classical rhetoric is also evident in the texts used in college and university oral communication courses.

Persuasion and argumentation are essentially interchangeable in the contemporary discussion of rhetoric (Schrag, CP 181-182; Foss et al “Invitational” 3-4). Schrag suggested this inclination is embedded in our social practices and “persuasion is construed as argumentation struggling for agreement and consensus” (CP 182). The move to build consensus subordinates persuasion to argumentative strategies as “debating, winning points…with the intention of obliterating the beliefs of the opponent” (CP 182-183). This emphasis of ‘other’ as opponent in contemporary scholarship is a reflection of the construal of persuasion as necessarily forensic in nature. The ‘other’ is not a resource for mutual discovery, but an obstacle. Persuasion seeks not what the audience can offer to solve the problem or move the discussion forward, but how to change their way of thinking. The audience, then, is not a subject within the discourse, but an object to be turned, changed, or manipulated.

The ‘other’ is an obstacle to be forged anew by the speaker’s dazzling persuasive prowess. The emphasis on consensus, change, and agreement frames stasis as tool to
promote an individual perspective. The oppositional view of rhetoric is based on the idea that “stasis grows out the conflict of opposing forces” (Carter 99). This notion of stasis reverberates throughout the description of persuasive speaking. The goal of persuasion is it to find the point of conflict and marshal support to “change people’s beliefs and actions” and prove one point at the expense of the other. Arguers apply rhetorical techniques as a means to disprove other perspectives and promote a single correct point. The conclusion precedes the communicative event (324). Lucas described a hierarchy of mental stasis labeled as “audience analysis” (186). Audience analysis in the contemporary tradition was introduced in a 1935 collection of essays by H.L. Hollingsworth, *The Psychology of Audience*. He explained the necessity of understanding audiences as a pragmatic move toward effective persuasion. Audiences gather for multiple reasons “to be entertained, instructed, exhorted; to observe merely, to participate, or to dominate” (7-9). The audience’s beliefs should be measured in terms of agreement so the speaker can determine how far to attempt to push the argument. A hostile audience probably will not be convinced to act, but they may change their mind. If an audience is predisposed to agree with the speaker, the speaker is encouraged to advocate action. The text attended to the audience as an object to be moved (Hollingsworth 141-159). Speakers were encouraged to anticipate and obliterate the audience’s objections. The speech should be considered from the audience’s view only so “everywhere you see a hole in your argument, fill it. Leave nothing to chance” (Lucas 328). In a chapter titled “The Psychology of Persuasion” Hollingsworth continued to establish an adversarial orientation for persuasion based on identifying a point of conflict, isolating the audience’s “conviction” or weakness regarding this conflict, and how to
impress change (109-137). The text constructs an oppositional view of persuasion based on argumentative technique grounded in stasis. Hollingsworth’s reconstruction of stasis indicated agonistic perspective. In the classical tradition, there was much more nuance in the theories. Stasis and lines of argument were initially taught as inventive questions to bring audience and rhetor together.

The contemporary term stasis is related to the Greek *staseis* meaning ‘set of questions or issues’ that indicated a broad category of ideas. The lines of reasoning can be employed to identify disagreement, but this is only one function. Stasis points to a sort of stillness in conversation and the questions are designed to open possibilities to move forward. Stasis was inventive. The contemporary tradition resonates more closely with a limited view of the Roman/Latin *status or constitutio* which in the Roman tradition was borrowed from Greek term ‘stand.” Stasis in the contemporary interpretation of the Roman tradition means to take a stand, but the recollection of the past is missing the full complement of the term. The implication of the Roman perspective construed stasis as the “place where two opposing forces come together.” Rather than agonistic then, even the Roman use was cooperative. Difference meets at the point of stasis and “[t]he term can be translated as ‘co-standing or ‘standing together’” (Crowley and Hawhee 71-74). Cicero’s stasis theory presumed an engaged audience not merely a strategy of one rhetor against another, but rhetors ‘standing together’ in the face of difference. The classical construction of stasis was not necessarily a one-sided approach to promote the speakers view in competition with the audience. Stasis, rooted in productive cooperation, “defined what the rhetor needed to discover, not by his own choice but by virtue of a conflict between what he already knew and the knowledge of others” (Crowley and Hawhee 159).
Stasis can be read from the Roman perspective as asking socially relevant questions that furthers civic discourse for the good of the community, rather than a single minded approach to outwit the opposition to win an argument. Classical stasis encouraged students to stand together with audience in conversation.

Reconsidering the pre-modern notion of stasis as standing together in conversation opens the possibility to teach our students that “there is no higher principle than holding oneself open in a conversation” which means we “always recognize in advance the possible correctness, even the superiority of the conversation partner’s position” (Gadamer, PA 198). Stasis theory can be taught, from the traditional perspective, as a unifying theory. Difference is met head on and speakers engage the audience with questions to grow the common ground already established. Stasis connects the audience and speaker through dialogue grounded in questions. In the classical tradition, stasis was an appreciative theory designed to generate constructive questions and stand together with and for others. Courses in rhetoric and rhetorical theory are an opportunity to teach that dialogue matters and that meaningfulness occurs in conversation with and for others. Where stasis theory has changed over the centuries, one community driven concept from traditional rhetoric that has been virtually forgotten is memory.

5.3 Stasis: From Standing together to Falling Apart

Ancient theory at its best emphasized that the possibilities of interaction between a maker of “spoken rhetoric” and “the interactions actually generated by speaking would determine the social consequences of the discourse” (Arnold 51). Memory as an art developed within a period of participatory rhetoric where the heroic great leaders of legend solved disputes with gentle argument (Theogony 90-92). Stasis was articulated as
barriers to understanding and was the location of questions for rhetor’s attempt to stand together with the ‘other’. Rhetoric, persuasion, and argument evolved in the Western tradition as power struggle, domination, and point counter point; the primary tool of refutation is to disprove not extend; arguments are shaped to further a predisposed conclusion (Foss, et al., “Proposal” 2-5). Stasis is a point of conflict where two opposing views reach a stalemate and the goal of argument is to forge ahead to claim prescribed notions. This is problematic because the underlying theme in this framework is a goal to establish consensus. Engagement is not the end, but the beginning of the challenge. These strategies encourage the rhetor to identify wrongness in others perspective. The premise of the contemporary conception of stasis then is not only that the rhetor is already correct but that the others involved in the conversation are wrong and need to be changed. Stasis serves the larger goal of consensus.

5.4 Memoria in the Classical Tradition

Communication is rooted in memory in two distinct ways. First, our ability to arrange and access our storehouse of ideas, forms of arguments, and images as described by Cicero and Quintilian form the root of our inventive process. We rely on our memory to discern and arrange the information we already know. Communication is not possible without our ability to recall information. In the classical pre-literate tradition memory had an elevated role in culture. It brought people together and was the only lasting social bond. “Memory enables us to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities enables us to build memory” (Assman 110). The pursuit of truth within our own memory involved discovery and invention. The articulation of the structures of arguments in Aristotle’s Rhetoric provided groundwork to assemble this knowledge.
Memory is not an isolated experience of the individual. Memory draws us to a common meeting place. Communicative action both draws on and builds memories collectively. Memorization was an important tool for ancient pre-literate cultures. Memory implied a shared lived experience. Memory was the intellect, the primary tool of gaining, perpetuating and maintaining society. Memory structures our identity and “enables us to form an awareness of selfhood…both on the personal and on the collective level” (Assman 109). Primary oral cultures perpetuated themselves through narratives, as Connors explained, “all cultural tradition….could only be transmitted by constant repetition and memorization” (39). The language technologies in the ‘poetic’ evolved from rhetoric and have become what we now know as poetry. The pre-literate Greek education established elaborate memorization techniques and centered on reciting the works of Homer and Hesiod (Augustine 2.24, Connors 38-39, Haveloc 34-37). Ong added that “formulaic thought patterns were essential for wisdom and administration” (23). These formulaic thought patterns involved more than committing words to memory; it involved the comprehension of concepts and the arrangement of ideas, the storing and recalling of the structures of arguments and the basis of invention (Connors 44-45, Hoogestraat 142, Ong 25). Cicero described memory as the “treasure-house of the ideas supplied by Invention, to the guardian of all the parts of rhetoric” (Rhetorica ad Herennium 3.16-24). For Cicero, memory reflected the move from orality to what Ong (1982) referred to as "chirographic" thinking.

Memory in the classical tradition reflected the oral nature of communication. The concepts of memory developed and expanded during the transitional period between primary oral culture and chirographic thinking. “The ancients’ concern with their
rhetorical "canon" memoria and modem talk of "stage fright" and "speech reticence" both reflect awareness that a unique set of problems affects the making of rhetorical communications that are oral” (Arnold 53). Rhetorical education and texts provided strategies to aid and develop memory. One aid that slowly emerged was writing.

References to writing, images, and visual space in the Rhetorica ad Herennium pointed to a shifting chirographic consciousness that was already dependent on an external apparatus to store information. The shift also revealed the move from the sound based acoustic psychology to a visual medium (Ong, The Presence of the Word 33-35). The author relies on the reader to already know the function of writing. The specificity in the type of writing points to a deeper meaning. Writing on wax or wet clay was the earliest way to develop a permanent record. The explanation of how to access images in the mind’s eye for use while speaking reveals an image-based audience inclining toward literacy in the ad Herennium. Mnemonic devices, rhythmic word organization, “cunning verbal and metrical patterns” developed in the poetic were “the only possible verbal technology available to guarantee the preservation and fixity of transmission. This is the historical genesis, the moving cause of that phenomenon we still call 'poetry” (Connors 54). The lack of discernment and discussion is what concerned Socrates in the Phaedrus. He argued that writing like the “offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent” (Plato, Phaedrus 257c–279c). Passive audience acceptance of ideas troubled Socrates. “The enemy for Socrates and Plato was the authoritarianism of one-way discourse” (Connors 54). In writing there is no conversation. There is no to and fro. This attitude toward one-way communication underscored Socrates’ disdain for writing. Truth, for Socrates, suggested Connors (55)
was found in a “shared process and nowhere else.” Conversation is an end in itself; communication is communion. To communicate we enter into a preceding language culture. Conversation and dialogue bring us together. The strategic use of dialogue demonstrates the necessity for discussion over recitation.

Our ideas about classical rhetoric are necessarily “biased in a literate direction” (Connors 41). The essential attribute of speaking has melted over the centuries. As we glance back to reconsider the broad category of rhetoric and its influence in the Greco-Roman world we can include in our consideration the animating nature imbued with the power of speech. Speech was derived at the core of our being, the use of reason and its expression. “Legitimate discourse is discovered by its speaker; it has as its primary goal self-instruction and its secondary goal the generation of similar discourses in the souls of others” (Griswold 211). Language use is a defining characteristic of human existence; we are “living beings having logos” (Shrag 1). Augustine worked in this direction in The Trinity connecting memory with human intelligence drawn from the parallel between human condition as Imago Dei and the Trinity (308). Memory also connects us to each other. The employment of rhetorical techniques often presumes a shared collective memory.

The networks of ideas marshaled by the use of figural rhetoric begin by attending to the ‘other’ and presuppose the audience’s ability to recall ideas for completion. The categories and formulas described by Aristotle in the Rhetoric presumed the capacity of the audience to draw from the memory to participate in the discussion. The classical theorists did not limit memory to the basic skill of memorization. Memory is an engaged process of organizing, storing, and recalling ideas, but memoria included the generative
inventive function of assimilating the stored ideas and finding new connections and relationships among ideas. Welch added that ideas led by this type of discourse are easy to remember and transmit, “[t]he nature of memory made this way of thinking and communicating especially effective” (23). Memory stores not only images of things, but the ‘forms’ of things. Concepts like maxims, enthymeme, and examples “deal with the rhetor’s relation to the audience” (Connors 56). This connection to the audience is bound by the appeal to memory. An enthymeme relies on the audience to complete the formula by drawing on their memory.

Cicero and Quintilian articulated the art of memory in the Roman tradition. Cicero credited the elevation of memory to an art to Simonides. McKeon explained the role of memory in the Roman tradition. The art of memory, for Simonides, was formed by images. Here again we see the move away from an oral acoustic way of thinking to a visual image construction of thought. Simonides discovered this art after a banquet hall collapsed and killed the guests. He reconstructed the scene to identify the unfortunate attendees by mentally recreating the image of the order of the guests around the table. In the process, Simonides recognized that order and arrangement of things in spatial arrangement to each other aided his memory. He construed that this skill can be enhanced and an art of memory develops by placing mental images in the “form the constructed order of his memory” (Kalin and Frith 5-7). In this tradition it is evident that the chirographic culture is already impacting the development of memory. The exemplar of memory referenced by Cicero is writing.

Quintilian extended the same narrative of Simonides in The Institutes of Orator, but as McKeon explained, commingles memory with invention. The act of storing the
images and then recalling them at the appropriate time in an order different from the original experience is inventive. Arnold agreed that Quintilian's psychological concept of memory is co-creative and inventive, “he fastened on one of an oral communicator's peculiar conditions of creativity: intellectual, emotional, and overt behavioral processes must be managed as part of a plan during personal interaction with those on whose judgments the speaker's own purposes depend” (55). The art of memory for Quintilian was experimental. The images we collect in our memory are based on our experience. The mind is the “seat of the images” saving and construing our interpretations of places and things so that when we return to a place through the memory of our experience “we not only recognize the place but also recollect the persons we met there and even the unuttered thoughts that occurred to us”(730). Augustine continued in this tradition. He agreed that memory is more than recollection. Memory for Augustine holds images of material things as well as the ideas of things, “we see with the eyes of the body, and think about even when absent through their images which we hold in the memory” (Confessions 343). Quintilian identified the temporal challenges of oral communication. Speakers need to remember their strategy, what they have already said and what they are planning. By looking “ahead to what is required in instants to come” and maintain an “intellectual, personal, and emotional” connection with the audience (Arnold 51-54). The need to remember diminished with the advent of writing.

5.5 Writing Extends Memory and Silences Memoria

Socrates in Plato’s Phaedrus denounced the use of writing to replace intelligence. When the Egyptians “received letters” it was supposed to make them “wiser and give them better memories.” Socrates warned that we should be wary of our own inventions.
The use of writing will allow citizens to stop using their intellect and memory which “will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls” (257c). Forgetfulness is not the only problem recognized by this new invention that Socrates warned Phaedrus to consider; intelligence will deteriorate. Memory, for Socrates, involved more the memorization. Memory is the use of recall, the intellect the repository of truth. Passive memorization and reciting words does not further the charge toward truth, writing is not an aid “to memory, but to reminiscence…you get only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing” (256c). Plato warned against the use of writing; he feared it will disturb the proper use of memory. He did not necessarily presume the sort of habituated memory which the Western tradition has remembered memory. Havelock suggested Plato understood memory as an active inventive process. Connors (1992) extended Havelock’s ideas and suggested that Plato’s criticism of rhetoric was at least in part because of the mechanisms of oral persuasion take on a technical form.

As literacy supplanted orality the techne/art of rhetoric evolved away from the mutual discovery of question and deliberation. Rationalism turned to individualism and “gnawed away at the old communality” (Connors 56). Ong reviewed the wealth of commentary that charted the effects of the transition from orality to literacy and the cumulative psychological and sociological impacts. He suggested that the transitions are never total or complete. Sediments of orality travel with literacy, but the inclusion of literacy in an oral culture had a measurable effect. Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is a transitional work; it balanced on the verge of orality and literacy and was a “mixture of…critical rationalism and of older terms of art that must have been more meaningful” to his
audience (55-56). The transition did not end orality, but extend and enhanced it “making it possible to organize the principles or ‘constituents’ of oratory into a scientific art” (Ong 9). The entire post-Socratic western tradition was constructed by literate minds. Rhetoric has survived as a discipline “migrated from the oral to the chirographic world” (Ong, Orality and Literacy 114). During this migration the nuances and concepts have modernized, tending toward the pragmatic and efficient. The skills of the orator are co-opted by the writer. The quagmiric term “rhetoric” implies much more than the speaking. The slow drift of the classical canons of Greco-Roman rhetoric, “as early as the sixteen hundreds textbooks commonly omitted…memory which was not applicable to writing” (Ong, Orality and Literacy 114). The changes Ong suggests were made with little or no explanation. The gradual elimination of memory from the classical canon is related to the cultural shift caused by proliferation of writing.

5.6 Memory Loss

Our ideas about classical rhetoric are necessarily “biased in a literate direction” (Connors 41). The essential attribute of speaking has melted over the centuries. As we glance back to reconsider the broad category of rhetoric and its influence in the Greco-Roman world we can include in our consideration the animating nature imbued with the power of speech as derived at the core of being. Reason, for Schrag, is “operative in and through the transversal play of discourse and action, word and deed, speaking and writing, hearing and reading” (CP 8-10). Memory has in some cases disappeared entirely from rhetoric instruction and texts. Training in memory has all but disappeared. The increasing reliance on writing as an extension of memory slowly began to privilege writing as a form of rhetoric in its own. This rhetorical discourse that was once oral or
was intended for oral presentation constitutes troublesome material for literary historians when all that remains is the printed matter. The distinction between literary and rhetorical features of communication causes problems for scholars. As Socrates warned, a written text is missing the conversational quality. There is a long history of studying rhetoric as an oral act of delivering speeches and the role of the written word blurred the discipline. As the study of written texts emerged within the discipline, memory continued to be reframed and relegated to recollections and rote memorization. Scholars began to approach to the ‘rhetorical’ or ‘persuasive’ as not fundamentally ‘literary’. In the process the central meanings of memory shifted, rhetoric and persuasion changed. Memory was forgotten and became a relic of the past; rhetoric had broadened to a point of near meaninglessness and became linked to persuasion. Persuasion, centered on argument and opposition, lost it initial cooperative potential and emerged in the twentieth century as an adversarial method (Arnold 49-54). The shift in consciousness from orality to literacy impacted the nature of rhetoric and persuasion.

There is an occasional move to appeal the memory in the context of extemporaneous delivery, but rarely as a separate canon. Ong in the Presence of the Word (1967) suggested that this loss of memory resulted from a drift away from orality to chirographic culture. The move was inevitable as writing entered the curriculum; verbal skills learned from the classical rhetorical tradition began to be applied to various forms of writing and literature analysis. As writing gradually grew into a larger and larger extension of our memory, memoria evaporated from the canon. Ong explained that because of the increased emphasis on writing, memory slowly slipped away from the canon; rhetoric texts early as early as the sixteenth century omitted memoria entirely
from the canon (114). At the beginning of the twentieth century memory found its way back to public speaking texts, but in a severely limited fashion. Wayne Hoogestraat’s “Memory the lost canon?” suggested that memory appeared with “considerable frequency” in a random reading of rhetoric texts. In the first few decades of the last century rhetoric and composition found distinct homes in the academy (145). When memory was mentioned though, it was not brought back to the elevated status as a canon proper, but continued to be relegated to the technique of memorization.

The emphasis in the history of rhetoric is generally located on the shift itself, “the transition from oral modes of communication to writing is assigned the leading part” in most rhetorical scholarship (Haskins 158). As the narratives of pragmatism and efficiency dominated the field, memoria diluted to memorization. Bromley Smith in a 1926 essay in Quarterly Journal of Speech traced the history of memory in the rhetorical tradition. He examined the earliest handbooks and texts; he reported that memory enjoyed a privileged status in ancient rhetoric, but by the eighteenth century memory was dropped from the canon. Smith concluded that memory and “the principles taught by Hippias had vanished from public speaking” (136). Though we still find the term memory in public speaking texts, it is the intellectually empty notion feared by Socrates. Memoria in the Greek sense is lost.

5.7 Memory is Gone but not Forgotten.

Trying to access our memory after such a long and winding road may be a hard drive. Culture is a social creation and for a culture to thrive a continuous narrative must evolve from generation to generation. Havelock (46) referred to the necessity of a “cultural book” to store important information for culture to perpetuate itself. Before
writing, pre-literate societies used memory as this storehouse of ideas. The great epics of the ancient world passed down from generation to generation in poems and songs contained an encyclopedic account of history and knowledge. The events of the stories were meaningful and public. The generations fed by this type of oral history evolved into an “oral state of mind” (Havelock, Preface 45-47). The shift from orality to literacy affected self-awareness and our oral consciousness. Cultural tension percolated as one class attended to a new way of thinking and the other resists. Akin to how “poetry itself, as long as it reigned supreme, constituted the chief obstacle to the achievement of effective prose,” so to did the “poetic state of mind…constitute the chief obstacle to scientific rationalism” (Havelock, Preface 44). Contemporary culture expresses a similar disconnect; those with access to new communication technology and those without experience very different worlds.

Research into the earliest evidence of literacy suggests that writing was a practical extension of memory and was not widely used as a persuasive force. The emphasis in the history of rhetoric is generally located on the shift itself, “the transition from oral modes of communication to writing is assigned the leading part” in most rhetorical scholarship (Haskins 158). The evolution of rhetoric into a distinct disciple is related to the transition from orality to literacy in the ancient Greek world. No plan or conspiracy led to the “written economy”; it just developed with technology and mechanization. Writing introduced the notion of “study” as we know it. The written word added new avenues of learning. Rhetoric emerged in this “chirographic” (writing) culture, but it did not replace the spoken word, it “enhanced” it. Writing enabled ordering principles of public speaking into specific and distinct science (Ong, The Presence 114). Writing strategies
reconfigured the process moving oral communication from a communal event to an individualistic enterprise. Rationality led toward individualism which in turn privileged pragmatism and efficiency. The movement towards an individualistic psychology ultimately affected our communication and new methods of communication affected our psychology (Arnold 1992; Haveloc 1963; Ong 1967). Thus, the artistry of Aristotelian rhetoric developed into technique and collections of vacuous skills adapted for efficient persuasion and manipulation. The technologically progressive paradigm of contemporary consciousness accelerates the disintegration of the study and promotion of rhetoric.

5.8 Ludic Rhetoric and the Pre-Modern

The liberal arts in contemporary academia are the extension of tradition that dates to the classical period and refers to “branches of knowledge that initiate the young into a life of learning” (Joseph 3). In classical education, rhetoric played a significant role within the Trivium. The seven liberal arts, divided by ties to mind and matter, were denoted as the Trivium and Quadrivium. The Trivium is the umbrella term to indicate the qualitative arts of language and the mind. Rhetoric formed the “foundation of a basic liberal education” (Foss et al 9). Rhetoric is not limited to oral technique, but is fundamental to all of the liberal arts. In Joseph’s (6-7) analysis of the classical conception of rhetoric and communication, rhetoric in the Trivium was a positive constructive engagement. Her work provides additional ground to revisit a ludic understanding of rhetoric. She explained that the Trivium consists of the “fundamental arts of education, teaching” and “being taught.” Key in her discussion is a productive understanding of rhetoric as both teaching and being taught. Rhetoric is not limited to a one-side notion of giving information; rather, it describes the constructive character of exchange. In her
analysis we see the importance of attending to the to and fro of dialogue. A constructive theory of rhetoric, inherent in classical pedagogy, emerged. Her assessment of the arts of the Trivium imbued teacher and student, rhetor and audience, with rhetorical agency and “must be practiced simultaneously by both the teacher and the pupil.” A student is not a passive receptacle of knowledge but must “cooperate with the teacher” (7). Rhetoric and communication are historically is rooted in fusing horizons as she explained “the etymology of the word signifies” communication and only occurs when “something” is “possessed in common” (7). Her breakdown of the liberal arts and the role of rhetoric brought a pre-modern understanding to the center of the study; communication takes on a cooperative spirit. “Communication takes place only when two minds really meet” (Joseph 7-9). Akin to constructive stasis, communication is standing together in the void of difference, enriched by the experience, receptive to difference yet not seeking consensus. Stasis ties to ludic rhetoric by highlighting the dwelling place for constructive difference.

Ludic rhetoric allows students to become engaged in the event of communication and creatively question the status quo. Kennedy’s work on rhetorical education during the classical period addressed playfulness in meaningful ways. Sophistic education playfully challenged students and encouraged creativity (Classical Rhetoric 38). He explored the use of games and playful exercises described by the Sophists and showed how educators used play to help reinforce memory specifically and rhetorical education in general (Kennedy, “The Earliest Rhetorical Handbooks” 169-178). Writing helped students to learn and memorize Homer’s classic texts and games helped them creatively apply the ideas to contemporary situations. He explained that a “recurrent theme of sophistic
rhetoric is a love of paradox and playing with ideas and words” (*Classical Rhetoric* 36-37). The fundamental feature of play in classical education allows teachers to engage students on their own terms and make course concepts relevant to them. Meaningful play enriches student engagement and encourages cooperative rhetorical strategies. Sophist taught that rhetorical skill can be enhanced by engaging “serious subjects” in exaggerated unrealistic ways. Students respond favorably to topics that interest them. Establishing a safe place to learn and practice rhetorical techniques allows students to step outside of the dullness of real life (*Kennedy, Classical Rhetoric* 37). Kennedy’s research concluded that not only the Sophist but rhetorical education in the Hellenistic and Roman periods engaged students with “unrealistic” but “exciting themes” (37). Playful approaches to the status quo allows for students to question cultural norms while learning basic rhetorical skills. “Playfulness in Sophistry” was often driven by a “disillusion” with self-righteous. Complacent leaders refused to question “traditional values and practices” (*Classical Rhetoric* 37). Kennedy drew a parallel to the use of playfulness to engage contemporary students. From the classical tradition then we see that play enhanced the rhetorical education and rhetorical education enhanced the broader liberal arts. Rhetoric is the conversation of the humanities and it occurs in play.

5.10 Appreciative Rhetoric

Schrag introduced a rhetorical theory that can forge an addition to the contemporary conception of rhetoric as “argumentative techniques of disputation” (*Schrag, CP* 182). If we approach rhetoric as an appreciative process of cooperation we may be able to take Schrag’s advice and heed the warning of Ricouer that “rhetoric cannot become an empty and formal technique” (Qtd. In Schrag *CP*). Schrag pointed
rhetoric toward an understanding of argument that can help develop skills of civic engagement and open new possibilities for deliberative rhetoric, advocacy, and debate. The starting point in rhetoric for Schrag is “the for someone” nature of discourse (CP 11). He decentered the subject and established a reciprocal relationship between the rhetor and ‘Other’ emphasizing the role of others in the generation of meaning.

Schrag’s “rhetorical turn” in Communicative Praxis and the Space of Subjectivity attended to the “performance of persuasion” and shows “paths of reflection, deliberation and action” that are “nonargumentative” (183). His approach revealed a cooperative substance in the event of persuasion that is “made to stand in the service of understanding” and does not denigrate into a “coercive technique” (183). He explored the specific instance of communication as defined by originating with the existence and experience of the other. His restorative hermeneutic attended to the full spectrum of experiences of meaning generation. Truth seeking for Schrag was an appreciative process; the discovery of truth through praxis was a communal event. Most importantly truth seeking is variable. He rejected foundationalism and highlighted the means over the ends. Truth as a consensus requires “wrongness” and he rejected this objectification of others by privileging one truth over another. We must embrace the possibility of being wrong and be encouraged by the benefit of others in conversation. The intentionality “being-for-someone is the indelible feature of the creation and preservation of meaning” (180). He tore down the static notion of truth as something that is advocated for something, against something, and perpetually reified. Schrag’s rhetorical turn developed shared reality; communicative praxis incorporated the experience of the other in the inception of the communicative experience.
The ‘toward’ someone nature of the rhetorical act forces the ‘other’ to be incorporated as a subject of the experience. De-centering the subject allows the ‘other’ full capacity in the communication event and blurs the direction of the discussion. This brings engagement to the center of being. The contemporary construction of stasis as lines of argument that establishes a presumptive bias toward a particular truth melts away in Schrag’s turn to the other. Eliminating the privilege of presumption encourages a wider range of ideas in discourse. A “de-centered subject” challenges the oppositional construal of stasis. The questions that help guide a conversation are not directed at the deficiencies of the ‘other’ and promote a “new horizon of subjectivity” (CP 139). Schrag extended this power of the moment and suggested that “thought is co-present with speech. It is in the act of speaking that thought is accomplished and approximates completion” (“Phenomenon” 2-27). For Schrag, discourse is the interplay of communicative praxis with the other. The connection between the communicative act and audience are central to meaning; context matters (CP 180-181). Meaning emerges during the interplay between individuals; communication involves others both intellectually and emotively. “Communication is a fulfillment of expression” (Schrag, “Thesis” 69). The necessity for interaction is a key component of the meaning generation process. The experience of discourse affects the dynamic of the entire rhetorical process; meeting others in conversation exposes the self in a “personalized relationship with another.” The meeting affects the “creative and responsive experiences” of both actors involved in conversation (Arnold 52). The context of meeting matters. The embedded nature of real people in conversation highlights Schrag’s distinction between practice and praxis.

5.11 Persuasion as Cooperation
Communicative praxis draws on Aristotle’s practical philosophy. Aristotle’s praxis directed us toward others and the “achievement and maintenance of the virtuous life” (CP 20). Schrag’s communicative praxis is an active process that involves the full texture of the experience with others. Strategies of civic engagement need not be directed toward a univocal decision. In the postmodern world, rhetoric can be essential to help articulate and negotiate difference without the implicit need to seek agreement; “hegemonic force in reason is not measured by my attempt to prove my piece right.” He suggested that “it is the acceptance that wrongness is valid” (Schrag, CP189-193) Rhetoric does not have to work toward consensus. Persuasion can be reframed as a productive shared experience.

The primacy of persuasion as a form of forensic discourse limits rhetoric to consensus building and change. Aristotle’s Rhetoric in contemporary education functions essentially as “an arsenal of persuasive means which are external to the rhetors and their situation” (Haskins 17). Schrag suggested this is one reason why rhetoric has “denigrated into a coercive technique” (“Thesis” 98). Schrag posed an alternative to negation and refutation by expanding the “performance of persuasion” highlighted deliberation that is “nonargumentative” (CP 183). This opens the rhetorical space of persuasion to include the communicative praxis attending to the ‘Other’ and construes argumentation to work in service “of understanding and deliberative action” (CP 183). What stood at the fore of his thought was not necessarily the text of the message proper, but the direction of the message, the occasion of it, the where the text of the message is going. He provided tools to consider how the message was construed from the perspective of the audience and implicated the speaker and audience in a dialogue. The audience is presumed in the
communicative act (Schrag, CP 180-181). Schrag’s starting point of persuasion, then, was that the “inaugural moment” of the communicative praxis is “for someone.” This opens a lens on the creation of meaning in a persuasive context to include the audience at the “genesis of meaning” (CP 181). The fact that communication is ‘for’ and ‘toward’ an audience establishes the ‘other’ in the central act of meaning creation. This “for someone” feature of persuasive rhetoric is “ubiquitously illustrated” in the classical rhetoric. Rhetoric, for Schrag, was always ‘for’ someone. “A rhetorical consciousness is stitched onto the very warp and woof of the multiple forms of discourse and action” (CP 180). Ludic rhetoric embraces the meeting place with others that Schrag brought forward from antiquity.

Schrag’s insight into the possibility of a nonargumentative rhetoric opens the door for a new vision of a teaching persuasion. Re-situating persuasion and a praxical event with and for an audience rather to an audience enriches the possibility of establishing “understanding rather than change as a fundamental rhetorical goal” (Ryan and Natalie 71). Stasis can be reconsidered as an opportunity for questions, a place to stand together in discourse not in competition, but in respect for ideas. Stasis can be the pivot of cooperation. Shrag’s theory of communicative praxis can help us encourage an engaged awareness of the others as we teach persuasion. Persuasion can be resituated as an art that encourages the openness of difference rather than a hegemonic discourse of competition. Rhetorical theory is restated as an appreciative praxis for the enrichment of others in discourse and encourages cooperation over consensus. This ludic rhetoric.
5.12 Conclusion

The introduction examined convergences of rhetoric, hermeneutics, and play in the history of ideas. The following three chapters developed further an aesthetic rhetoric of play that builds from the turn toward the “word” in the hermeneutic tradition. Enriched communicative ground is exposed by attending to rhetoric, hermeneutics, and play as they intersect in the public domain. This final chapter considers the implications and possibilities presented in ludic rhetoric for a constructive rhetorical theory for and with others in conversation as the ground for teaching rhetoric. The goal of this chapter was to explore how a ludic rhetoric can help provide an additional voice in contemporary rhetorical education by promoting respect for the others.

In this chapter I have attempted to open new ways to promote civic engagement in rhetorical education. Advocates can invite difference and escape the presumption of ‘wrongness’ in persuasion. Civic engagement can be encouraged to acknowledge the ‘other’ as integral to communicative praxis. I explored the development of rhetoric from the pre-Socratics to the contemporary classroom. Along the way I showed that as literacy promoted new ways of understanding the world, rhetoric attended to these changes by eliminating *memoria* from the canon and skewed persuasion toward a competition and technique. We have forgotten memory as an inventive process and excluded the ‘other’ from the generative capacity articulated by the classical theorists. Memory reconsidered repositions the role of the audience in the creative process. Schrag attended to the ‘other’ in the communicative praxis. His rhetorical turn re-negotiates rhetoric. Allowing for epistemic assumptions of the traditional construction of rhetoric, he established new rhetorical space by moving away from epistemology toward communicative practice. He
emphasized ‘the for the other’ quality of discourse. If we begin with the ‘other’ as subject and construe stasis as opportunity for engagement, rhetoric as negation may foster a more open engaged classroom.

Gadamer’s efforts to reclaim the traditional heritage of rhetoric helped prepare the way to consider multiple ways of introducing persuasion in the classroom. Rhetorical theory is an opportunity for appreciative engagement with others that is both self-affirming and co-productive. His attention to conversation promoted the understanding that “one does not try to argue the other person down, but that one really considers the weight of the other’s opinion” (TM 367). We can offer a way to engage opposition and difference without seeking to change and underscore meeting and community as the primary concern.

This dissertation is significant to rhetoric because it underscores the broader understanding of rhetoric as an engagement with and for others. Repositioning rhetoric within the full experience of communicative praxis attends to the ‘other’ in the generation of knowledge. We hope to prepare our students with the necessary skills for productive civic engagement. The communicative implications of reconsidering the modernist oppositional construal of rhetoric and persuasion may provide the ground for further explorations of communication.

The first chapter of this dissertation explored ludic rhetoric in the history of ideas from the Homeric epics to contemporary communication scholarship. In the Western tradition rhetoric, hermeneutics, and play converge in key points. Rhetoric in the earliest texts emerged as a playful exchange of ideas. Rhetorical education used games to promote cooperation understanding. Chapter two examined the impact of the
Enlightenment in the history of rhetoric. Although he appeared critical of rhetoric, Kant’s free play of imagination added rhetorical texture to his critical work. In Kant, ludic rhetoric emerged as thought seeking understanding and fertilized the ground for future research into the communicative nature of reason. The coordination of the ideas can be a helpful way to understand Kant’s free play of imagination in the public domain. The practical implications of public speech are grounded by his categorical imperative. The third chapter explored Rudolf Bultmann’s claim that “There is no exegesis without presupposition” and his New Hermeneutics. Bultmann’s turn to the word brought a new sense of self in history. Bultmann’s hermeneutics implicated both the self and other in the event of interpretation. In chapter four I explored how play is unpacked in conversation. Understanding is achieved not in agreement, but in the to and fro of ideas with others. Gadamer’s attention to the process of understanding elevated the interaction, the event of communication. For Gadamer “to understand something is to reach an understanding with another” and is achieved in the to and fro of a “conversation that sustains the interplay of question and answer” (Marshal 123). Gadamer tied play and persuasion to a subjectivity and respect for the ‘other.’ This final chapter brings together ludic rhetoric as an approach to teaching persuasion that engages Calvin Schrag’s philosophy of communication and promotes the revelatory nature of conversation.

How we employ play metaphors reveals the significance of ludic imagination in judgement and engagement. Kant’s ludic theory of imagination helps explore a collaborative model of communication. Miller contended that when “‘game’ and ‘play’ are…used metaphorically to describe serious nonplay and real-life, nongame events and situations” makes “an impact.” Using play metaphors affects how we know and engage
others “not only on everyday thinking and speaking but especially on theory-making in traditional academic disciplines” (Miller 515-517). Miller attempted to clarify the function of play. He explained that his book was as an inquiry into “ludic imagination” (Miller, “Forward” 5). The ludic imagination opens space for collaborative and constructive encounters between empowered rhetorical agents. In Christine Downing’s *Preludes: Essays on the Ludic Imagination, 1961-1981* (2005) the ludic imagination expresses a “playful and celebratory aspect” of imagination (xv). Play is a meeting place.

Play concepts reflect a similar sense of space. As Downing’s essays unfold, ludic theory is akin to what Gadamer refers to as ‘speilraum’ “the space necessary for the wheel to turn soulfully” (Miller, “Foreword” vii). The in-between nature of play adds layers to how we discuss encountering others. Downing showed that we are always already in a state of play “whether we are aware of it or not. We live in this play, this interplay. We *are* in-between” (Miller, “Foreword” viii-ix). Huizinga drew attention to similarities of play in multiple cultures and significant uses of the terms connecting to play, to life, death, sex and more. Play concepts and metaphors are used variously to describe war, love and life in all varieties of language. He pointed to the absence of a ‘not play’ term in any language. From this linguistic lack lays the claim that “the play concepts must be more important than its’ opposite” (44-45). Play, as Miller explained it, is a “category lying beyond the dichotomy of serious/nonserious” (608). Terms used to show nonplay or seriousness, are by their nature aspects of play. Play is a “higher order than seriousness” Huizinga explains, “For serious seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness” (45). Play is the extraordinary. The extraordinary nature of the imagination emerged in Kant.
Kant’s rhetoric of reason created space to understand how we encode experience. Both his rhetorical technique and rhetorical theory attended to meaning in a community. He provided away to examine the process of understanding and established limits about what we can claim to be universally accepted knowledge. To establish these limits he framed cognition and judgement within the context of discourse and scholarship. Kant’s “Transcendental Idealism” explored the production of meaning. His attention to how we organize experience attended to our experience with others. The “self” emerged as a “knowing subject” actively producing knowledge and reversing the subject-object construction of experience. Cognition organizes experience (Bloom 56). Reason is not of nature. Reason organizes experiences and allows us to make sense of them. Kant explained how temporal and spatial aspects of cognition frames layer of understanding. Kant argued that the methods of scholars presuppose reason into the conclusions their research. The presuppositions limit possible objective outcomes.

The work of Rudolf Bultmann extended Kant and grounded Gadamer. He brought the text to life. Texts speak to us. Study and interpretation emerged as a discourse between interpreter and text. Akin to a key point in contemporary Homeric scholarship is that the received text demonstrates literate thinking. The original stories survived orally over generations as fragments used for specific purposes for specific occasions. Attention to the transmission of the story opens up many fruitful avenues of research into the history of rhetoric and Western culture. A literate bias grounds much of the work occurring at the same time in biblical hermeneutics. Bultmann’s *Form Criticism* centered on the transmission of the Gospel and the consequences of communicative action for the meaning of New Testament stories for contemporary audiences. His existentialist
theology attended to the interplay between interpreter and text. In the current age of metanarrative decline, Bultmann’s existential framework announced hope for religious communication. Demythologizing becomes possible as his existentialism shifts out of the Universal and brings meaning to a personal level. Scripture is only accessible to and through the language of a contemporary audience. His *Hermeneutics* and *Form Criticism* dwell in rhetorical space. His work is ripe for rhetorical scholarship. Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics drew from Bultmann’s well. This chapter continues to develop the deeply rhetorical philosophies growing from studies in theology.

Teaching rhetoric in the classroom is an opportunity to explore civic engagement. We have a rich tradition that dates back to the beginning of Western culture that framed rhetoric as a cooperative enterprise. Ludic rhetoric incorporates the classical perspective of rhetoric and play as a respectful gathering place. We can incorporate the respectful for someone nature of rhetoric described by Gadamer and Schrag into traditional rhetorical education. We can approach the teach rhetorical event from a perspective of respect that favors discourse over consensus and remain true to the rich tradition we have received.
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