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## Rhetoric and Its Discontents

John S. Nelson  
University of Iowa, [john-nelson@uiowa.edu](mailto:john-nelson@uiowa.edu)

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*Conspectus*

## Rhetoric and Its Discontents

John S. Nelson

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In truth the work of science was a communal thing.  
. . . So public, so explicit.<sup>1</sup>

People gave talks, asked questions, debated details of fact, discussed implications . . . as if they were in a world outside of time and space, in the imaginary space of pure science, surely one of the greatest achievements of the human spirit— a kind of utopian community, cozy and bright and protected.<sup>2</sup>

— Kim Stanley Robinson

- 1 Prior to this final offering for 2003, *Poroi* has published only special issues, focused on a single topic at a time. More will follow intermittently. But the milestone of the month has *Poroi* entering the territory where submissions over the transom determine the contents. Our transom is electronic, rather than wooden, but this can make *Poroi* particularly accommodating for diverse exercises in scholarship. An inclusive concern for rhetoric in culture, inquiry, and politics means that, as submissions warrant, *Poroi* will track intellectual developments in many directions. With this issue, *Poroi* becomes a scholarly journal in the most open and ambitious way: publishing sets of articles on assorted topics.
- 2 All senses of *assorted* apply. Fitting the most familiar definition, this issue consists of “various or miscellaneous kinds” of articles. The first article to cross the transom came from **Susan Zickmund** at Pittsburgh. It parses the Ayatollah Khomeini’s rhetoric to specify how he tapped Islamic myths and concepts in creating an Iranian identity powerful enough to unseat the Shah. Zickmund’s account of the construction of this anti-western movement provides a back story for our previous issue’s interest in the rhetorics of response to terrorist atrocities on 9/11.
- 3 But the next submission shifts topics, settings, and politics. Iowa’s **Kembrew McLeod** is well on the way to becoming America’s

agent provocateur for Freedom of Expression. Indeed he has trademarked the term to show how perverse laws of intellectual property are taking the United States into litigious territories of corporate control that undo our liberties of public and private speech. McLeod inventories a range of outrages, recounts several of his own exploits in ironizing the institutional results, and ponders responses available in the popular culture. Again there are telling ties to the journal's preceding issue, where Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Sheena Molhotra trace the militarizing of popular culture in America after September 11, while Thomas Shevory skewers post-9/11 efforts to censor radio music and suppress popular resources of irony.

- 4 For something completely different, as Monty Python used to say, **Thom Swiss** and **Seb Chevrel** collaborate on a multimedia poem that readers invent for themselves. More engaging than a video game, it turns into a multitude of images, feelings, and logics as the anticipations of writers and readers interact. Then, from a wholly separate postmodern planet, comes a template for *Poroi* myth scapes. In homage to the "mythologies" of Roland Barthes, it romps through a playful rebuttal to complaints that the second Bush Administration conducts foreign affairs as cowboy politics. Instead, argues the intrepid rhetorician of myth, preparations by the President and Defense Secretary for war in Iraq reveal the politics of vampire hunters.
- 5 Beginning with this issue, *Poroi* also satisfies a second sense of *assorted*. It publishes "selected kinds, arranged in sorts or varieties." In August, *Poroi* announced a number of such "sorts," in the form of occasional features. Now in November, the features are starting to recur, turning singular contributions into continuing kinds. These features amount to open forums on rhetoric in films, words, multimedia, inventions, strategies, myths, and, we expect, more. With the present issue, in fact, the sorting gains additional dimensions through the *Poroi* Symposium. We introduce this device as an occasional feature that enables two or more authors to address the same topics in tandem.
- 6 The ambition is for some of the symposia to link articles across, as well as within, issues. Always the symposium contributions complement each other, to approach their shared concerns more adventurously and diversely than individual articles can manage on their own. Sometimes the symposiasts cover different facets of a topic. Typically they pursue disparate perspectives on some questions in common. Often they debate one another directly. In

principle, just about any article could provoke a symposium, whenever a later submission comments specifically on an earlier one. Yet the symposia that begin specifically as debates are overt invitations for readers to become writers. They encourage you – yes, you – to provide responses that can develop the controversy, by increasing what we can learn from it.

- 7 In this issue, the *Poroi* Symposium on the Scope of Rhetoric extends a debate begun in earlier books and journals. It arises on the contested boundaries between rhetoric as an academic discipline, rhetoric of inquiry as an interdisciplinary field, rhetoric of culture as a movement in postmodern scholarship, and rhetoric in politics as a family of civic practices. To inaugurate the symposium, **Herbert Simons** of Temple advances his case for “globalizing” rhetoric. He argues that rhetoric includes far more than civic oratory and deliberation, and he defends the diffusion of rhetorical studies by almost any means throughout the academy. Here he answers counter-arguments that foresee bad consequences for rhetoric as a discipline from including rhetoric of science, allying with cultural studies, opening to narratologies, and the like. Instead for Simons, “expansion of rhetoric’s scope beyond the civic arena” can mean interdisciplinary interactions that enhance the discipline while improving not only the many studies but especially the diverse practices of rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> To globalize rhetoric, Simons says, is to promote the intellectual free trade that can maximize learning across specialties and inform deliberation about policies.
- 8 Writing from Warwick, **Steve Fuller** rejoins that critics of encompassing rhetoric are right to fear the eclipse of the traditional discipline. Precisely because he pursues rhetoric of science, Fuller explains, he experiences how science policy needs rhetoric as a discipline to stay focused on public speech in the civic arena. For Fuller, disciplinary rhetoric must reclaim its traditional role as custodian for arts crucial to the democratic public, where concerns of the commonwealth can be brought before all citizens for discussion and decision. Like globalizing trade, globalizing rhetoric underbids and overwhelms small, regional, traditional operations – such as the discipline that emphasizes oratory for a classic or democratic public. Better than “naïve free trade” among innumerable enterprises of rhetoric is “strategic protection” for a disciplinary rhetoric that would reclaim its intellectual legacy of a public sphere for citizens to participate in making policies.<sup>4</sup>
- 9 Here, as in every *Poroi* conspectus, the ambition is to explore the

mutual implications of the surrounding contributions. Even when the articles in an issue are *assorted*, in both of the first two senses, its conspectus considers how they are “matched or suited” to one another. This is the word’s third main meaning. Accordingly a conspectus addresses how the individual pieces fit into an intriguing issue of some coherence, and not just into diverse sorts of continuing features. The coherence is not as tight or intentional as the themes for special issues or the questions for specific symposia. When the contents track individual submissions, after all, the pieces remain assorted. Yet a mark of a cogent journal is that its issues can sustain significant patterns.

- 10 For the present issue, the symposium on the scope of rhetoric suggests itself as a loose rubric for further reflections on all the submissions, and not only those by Simons and Fuller. In a way, that treats the whole journal a set of test cases, and it turns this conspectus into a third contribution to the symposium. It also makes this the place to specify the general invitation that readers submit their own offerings to extend symposia of greatest personal interest. The scope of rhetoric can be a vital topic for *Poroi*, and the journal would welcome opportunities to publish additional views on it from readers in the issues ahead.
- 11 Like *Poroi*, rhetoric of inquiry has been launched as an intrinsically interdisciplinary field. The idea is not to replace philosophy of science as an established field. Nor is it to begin outside acknowledged disciplines but eventually become paradigmatic and institutionalized as a discrete discipline. As comparative epistemology, it works across boundaries among fields and disciplines, rather than lodge itself in a single home. As immanent epistemology, it proceeds as an aspect of many inquiries, rather than dictate to any as an outside authority on how to learn.<sup>5</sup> And as commerce among the archipelagos of learning that academic disciplines can become, it encourages greater intellectual trade than some of the human sciences practice of late.<sup>6</sup>
- 12 This need not keep rhetoric of inquiry from cultivation at specific sites in the academy. It has become a familiar enterprise in sociology of science, history of economics, studies of science and technology, rhetoric of science, and elsewhere. Yet it prospers especially in the midst of the learning done by myriad practices of inquiry. When Murray Edelman began his deconstruction of the American political spectacle by explaining how its dynamics elude detection by surveys and economic modeling, his rhetoric of

inquiry instructed his analysis of the liberal symbolism that pervades news in the United States.<sup>7</sup> When Stephen Jay Gould made criticisms of methods by biologists and psychologists into cornerstones for his own studies of evolution, learning, and time, his rhetoric of inquiry informed his ideas about punctuated equilibria, human intelligence, and natural history.<sup>8</sup> When Michael Pollan grounded his studies of virtue in gardening, truth in architecture, and desire in botany, his rhetorical invention was part, if not parcel, of his research strategy.<sup>9</sup> Even when Hannah Arendt revived republicanism and theorized totalitarianism, her rhetorical analysis of social science and history fed her accounts of how scholars European and American could misconceive almost altogether the beginnings and ends of western civilization.<sup>10</sup>

- 13 These models for rhetorical work of significance to scholars and larger publics have no programmatic connection to rhetoric of inquiry as an interdisciplinary project or to civic rhetoric as a disciplinary tradition. When asked about the family resemblance of principles and devices, Gould and Edelman acknowledged to me some kinship with rhetoric of inquiry as an emerging constellation of topics and tropes. But Arendt drew crucially from classical rhetoric without ever saying so; and Pollan's inspiration seems to come from Nietzschean sources in literature, culture, and ecology rather than anything academically rhetorical. To revive and advance their sorts of rhetoric, Kenneth Burke and Wayne Booth have done literary theory, whereas Robert Pirsig has produced popular novels, and Pollan has been publishing journalistic essays.<sup>11</sup> How might these forms, ties, or matter? When a post-classical enterprise such as rhetoric of inquiry launches itself in alliance with stars such as Stephen Toulmin, Thomas Kuhn, Jean Elshaint, Richard Rorty, and Clifford Geertz, does this torpedo a traditional discipline of rhetoric? Legitimate it? Enlarge it?
- 14 The exchange between Simons and Fuller turns in part on what is good for disciplinized rhetoricians. Principles of ethos suggest that I stand aside from such questions, and I proffer no advice on them, but I would share an observation. The main glimpses of insider experience that have been open to me for the fields of rhetoric and communication studies arise from teaching Ph.D. students and attending conferences linked with disciplinized rhetoric. These experiences reverberate with surprising discontents by specialists in the field.<sup>12</sup>
- 15 The discontents seem endemic, but they assume different forms from one generation of scholars to the next. When a host of

academicians who were doing rhetorical analysis but not exactly recognizing this gathered in 1984 with several specialists from the traditional discipline, the specialists raised most of the objections. Unsurprisingly they worried (with Fuller) that interlopers might hijack or overwhelm rhetoric: distorting and destroying it almost unaware. But the surprise was the warning to outsiders that sustained, detailed attention to rhetoric could and probably would harm their separate studies: discrediting, distracting, or distorting them.<sup>13</sup>

- 16 A decade later, it was the disciplinary rhetoricians among the graduate students in Iowa's early courses on rhetoric of inquiry who held that rhetorical analysis is awkward or impossible to perform on their fields, because rhetorical scholarship somehow has no substance or object of the sorts defining for disciplines of history, economy, literature, or biology. Rhetoric is intrinsically secondary and parasitic, these disciplinarians were insisting, with no subject matter in the sense that helps to demarcate other inquiries.
- 17 In the ten years between, Robert Hariman had investigated the "marginality" of rhetoric; and Dilip Gaonkar had explained how rhetoric could not escape its "mereness," its status as the Derridean "supplement" to other inquiries and practices.<sup>14</sup> The Gaonkar stricture seemed to me particularly strange, or sly, since the Derridean supplement is the "mere" addition that changes everything.<sup>15</sup> Still this has not seemed the spin that most specialists sense in the move. If such largely agreeable ideas about rhetoric could exhilarate a marginal sophist like me, by helping to explain the powers and limits of traditional, civic rhetoric, similar notions seem to distress and depress all too many in the discipline.<sup>16</sup> Yet the discipline appears to take a tenacious pride in its discontents; and they can strike an interloper as sometime virtues, if not competitive advantages.
- 18 One message from the margins, where rhetoric of inquiry compares various fields, is that rhetoric is not alone in its discontents. Nor is it unique in the grandiose ambitions that several of the discontents double and shadow. Rhetoric of inquiry makes some disciplinary rhetoricians uneasy because it contests the usual disdain for rhetoric as "mere," "secondary," or "seductive." Rhetoric matters, it maintains, and rhetoric of inquiry details how from one situation to another. But this is not to set up rhetoric for a fall, by exalting it as royalty among the sciences. Instead it is to appreciate what the distinctive tools, topics,

institutions, and perspectives from rhetoric can teach us about inquiries, cultures, politics, and more. It is to learn what we can from analyzing rhetoric all over.

- 19 Need that be disciplinary rhetoric? There are many rhetorics. Most of these studies of principles and devices for persuasion appear in the discipline, even though not all are obvious offshoots of classical oratory. To do rhetoric of inquiry, the analyst needs to know at least one rhetoric inside and out. Introducing graduate students to rhetoric of inquiry, Deirdre McCloskey and I asked each to learn one as a platform for proceeding. With some twenty students, we had no trouble identifying that many rhetorics of interest. Only a few are overtly classical, but all tie in some important way to the classical preoccupation with public persuasion, and all have much to contribute: Aristotle,<sup>17</sup> Cicero,<sup>18</sup> Quintilian,<sup>19</sup> George Campbell,<sup>20</sup> Richard Lanham,<sup>21</sup> Chaim Perelman,<sup>22</sup> Paul Ricoeur,<sup>23</sup> Wayne Booth,<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Burke,<sup>25</sup> Hayden White,<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche,<sup>27</sup> Jacques Derrida,<sup>28</sup> Michael Shapiro,<sup>29</sup> Roland Barthes,<sup>30</sup> Umberto Eco,<sup>31</sup> Fredric Jameson,<sup>32</sup> Michael McGee,<sup>33</sup> Stanley Fish,<sup>34</sup> Northrop Frye,<sup>35</sup> and Walter Fisher.<sup>36</sup> These days, moreover, even a first seminar on rhetoric of inquiry would do well in addition to encompass digital and visual rhetorics.<sup>37</sup> How is that for a learning environment rich in resources?
- 20 The proliferation of rhetorics seems in some quarters a source of disciplinary discontent. By the lights of Kuhn, it can be a sign that the would-be discipline of rhetoric lacks a crowning and controlling paradigm. By the fears of Fuller, it can be a door that other fields open to take away legitimacy and power from the public interest promoted by traditional rhetoric. Yet this also can be a door for the instructive trade in learning that Simons sees, and it can be a sign that rhetoric is relevant far beyond the classical public.
- 21 Can this become an intellectual imperialism? Sort of, sometimes . . . . But more precisely, it is apt to be akin (as Simons and Fuller agree) to the ambition for expansion that characterizes a globalizing capitalism. Again, though, this is an endeavor not only of rhetoric but of many other fields and disciplines. We can do worse than compare current scholars, especially the stars that multiversities seek, to entrepreneurs – and their fields to firms intent on entering new markets while expanding their shares in existing ones. Gary Becker and rational-choice theorists have bestowed on us the decidedly mixed blessing of the economics of



everything.<sup>38</sup> Often these scholars take their distinctive principles and devices for analysis too far to stay plausible, but we can still learn a lot from their adventures in rethinking the world. The same goes for Derridean, Marxian, psychoanalytic, evolutionary, cybernetic, and other prospectively imperial projects of inquiry, some disciplined and some not.

- 22 Even to comprehend their topics, fields and methods must reach beyond familiar regions. Eventually these must push into strange places, even territories long claimed by other inquiries, to learn what does and does not provoke frissons of recognition and remapping. One of our main protections against proto-hegemonies is a continuing competition among explanatory principles and emerging explanations. Another is our postmodern skepticism for meta-narratives. A third is our increasing, specifically rhetorical, capacity to engage and compare diverse epistemologies.
- 23 A related discontent identified by Fuller is the supposedly ensuing disjunction between graduate and undergraduate courses on rhetoric.<sup>39</sup> Undergraduates learn public speaking and technical writing; graduate students learn discourse analysis that dispels myths of public speech and accurate communication.<sup>40</sup> Again, similar disjunctions of curricula – whether good, bad, or indifferent – pervade the humanities and social sciences. Fuller thinks the sanity of professors can depend on the graduate seminars. Notoriously, however, these dismay many students who loved as undergraduates to study economies, politics, literatures, or speeches only to find their graduate seminars turning instead into mathematics, statistics, hermeneutics, and semiotics.<sup>41</sup> Do the disconnections come from unfettered intellectual trade? From undue protectionism? Not exactly, although the wages of specialization deserve closer scrutiny on another occasion.
- 24 Fuller's specific concerns in this connection are a "shrinkage of the public sphere" within current politics plus an eclipse of the classical public within the distended rhetorical studies that result from globalizing rhetoric in the Simons sense.<sup>42</sup> The shrinking sphere of public decision is a discontent among academicians in many disciplines, and discontent at the eclipse of classically public rhetoric is especially prominent among scholars of public address. Both these discontents suppose the current salience of the classical public: central, singular, deliberative, quietly elite, and empowered to coordinate (rather than conduct) all sorts of activities in a free and responsible commonwealth. Both assume

that the classical public can be, must be, perhaps already has been democratized to open it to virtually everybody. Notwithstanding the drive to protect rhetoric as a specialty, both even presume that specialists are public enemy number one, at least for the classic yet somehow democratized public.

- 25 Here I am more on home ground as a scholar of politics; and to me, both discontents are somewhat misbegotten. Their presuppositions are more wrong than right, leaving their practical implications unfortunate for politics, education, and scholarship.
- 26 In overly stark terms, we could say that classical publics have less to do with democracies than many scholars suppose, whether we are talking about modern theory or present practice. As a principle of political realism, this has been the disciplinary judgment of political science for the last century. It holds that the political tradition of democracy is recent rather than ancient, and it is not readily compatible with the republican-rhetorical tradition that springs from the Romans or perhaps even the Sophists in classical Greece. As Alexis de Tocqueville noticed, democracy is more a nineteenth-century invention that involves equality, inclusion, participation, and popular rule.<sup>43</sup> It distrusts republican principles such as leadership, exclusion, ambition, and virtuosity.
- 27 The liberal-democratic device of representation does not eradicate the contrast or split the difference so much as it generates oxymorons like mass publics, aristocracies of merit, national self-determination, and nations by creed rather than birth. These are not impossibilities, and they need not be perversities. Eventually they might become parts of what we mean by “democracy.” But they are not particularly republican. They mean voting more than voicing, log-rolling more than deliberation, values more than virtues, and far more emphasis on private than public affairs.
- 28 They also open and pluralize the classical public. To staunch republicans, this is to deny or dissolve the one true public responsible for managing the commonwealth. Yet democrats and postmodernists see plural and partial publics disseminated all around us rather than some single, central, and (in principle) all-powerful “public sphere.”<sup>44</sup> Fuller argues that “Literary criticism, cultural studies, and social theory can all survive without a foundational sense of ‘the public,’ but it is not clear that rhetoric can.”<sup>45</sup> Even were this right, and I have doubts in both directions, the question would remain how much to pack into that definite article. Should disciplinary rhetoric let it singularize and

centralize “public speech,” to the point of irrelevance to most of our actual politics, cultures, or inquiries? The republican tradition of rhetoric is more resourceful than that. After all, it didn’t exactly spring whole from “the classical public” in practice. Indeed specialists in public address have every reason to recognize that few ancient settings for oratory embody the idols of the public that emerge later in the academy.

- 29 In this connection, Fuller slams the limited ambition implicit in the Simons celebration of the Temple Issues Forum. It has no prospect of impact on “the public sphere.” The same could be said of the AARST Science Policy Forum that Fuller promotes. “Cynics may dismiss such an exercise as ultimately ineffectual,” he concedes, “in a political culture where issues like global warming are ultimately decided by legislators several degrees of separation from the rhetorical activists.”<sup>46</sup> To notice the lack of effect hardly seems to require cynicism; merely facing facts should suffice. (Of course, there might be better reasons than public impact for such initiatives.)
- 30 Fuller seems to think that scientists and other specialists shrink “the public sphere” by turning properly public issues into privately technical questions for address by experts only. He says of Intelligent Design Theory that “it would be difficult to point to another movement with such explicit links to the rhetorical tradition that in recent years has done so much to reclaim for public deliberation matters previously ceded to technical expertise.”<sup>47</sup> The scholars are legion who think that experts dictate policy to public representatives. ’Taint so. To study policymaking is to find politicians using experts, far more than the other way around, and to watch politicians prevail when experts dissent. Fuller talks about the American lack of policy response to global warming. Could there be a clearer case of politicians trumping experts in making public policy? The trouble here is not some technical takeover of truly public issues; it is that we fail so far to heed politically what we learn technically. In instances where something like Fuller’s “public sphere” does “shrink,” the main American causes are interest politics of economic sorts, not power grabs by experts and technicians.<sup>48</sup> Rhetorical analysts might pay more attention to what experts on politics learn about the actual arenas for debate, deliberation, decision, and action.<sup>49</sup>
- 31 “With global warming,” says Fuller, “the main obstacles to effective rhetorical activism involve the status of the activists as relatively minor players in the U.S. Congressional arena. Hence rhetorical

activists have a better chance of influencing aspects of governance devolved to state and local levels.”<sup>50</sup> But why focus on Congress? Arguably the presidency and the courts have been and can be much more important – even rhetorically – for attention to global warming and other environmental concerns. To treat Congress as *the* public arena or forum is manifestly inadequate for American politics – from the beginning, let alone for the present.<sup>51</sup>

32 Notice, too, the public-democratic naïveté on state and local government in the United States. To devolve environmental (or other) policies to the state and local levels, as Fuller wants, is to do what industrial foes of green politics have sought assiduously. These anti-environmental interests dominate state and local politics even more effectively than national politics. At state and local levels, the media coverage crucial to green politics is more spotty and subject to local boosterism. As green activists know, dynamics of NIMBY, races to the bottom, environmental racism and classism, erratic expertise, and the proliferation of the venues needed for victory all recommend national over state and local settings for the pursuit of environmental persuasion in America.<sup>52</sup> Idolize the public and miss the politics?

33 More baffling still is why anyone who privileges the republican tradition of civic rhetoric would want to de-emphasize or delegitimize rhetoric of inquiry in general or rhetoric of science in particular. The classical public might not exactly exist in current politics, and it might never have been practiced precisely as such in ancient Greece or Rome, but the ideals of discourse and action celebrated by civic republicans do find rough embodiments in “the republic of science.”<sup>53</sup> The epigraphs from Kim Stanley Robinson say it in a nutshell, but some of the details of modern sciences as institutionalized inquiries are worth comparing to the dream that is Fuller’s public:

for any given problem in science, the people who were actually out there on the edge making progress constituted a special group, of a few hundred at most – often with a core group of synthesists and innovators that was no more than a dozen people – inventing a new jargon of their dialect to convey their new insights, arguing over results, suggesting new avenues of investigation, giving each other jobs in labs, meeting at conferences specially devoted to the topic – talking to each other, in all the media there

were. And there in the labs and the conference bars the work went forward, as a dialogue of people who understood the issues, and did the sheer hard work of experimentation, and of thinking about experiments. And all this vast articulated structure of a culture stood out in the open sun of day, accessible to anyone who wanted to join, who was willing and able to do the work; there were no secrets, there were no closed shops, and if every lab and every specialization had its politics, that was just politics . . . . Science was a social construct, but it was also and most importantly its own space, conforming to reality only; that was its beauty. Truth is beauty, as the poet had said, speaking of science.<sup>54</sup>

These politics of science are “just politics” in the same sense that the rhetorics of science – or of anything else – can be “mere.” They are neither the ends sought nor the enterprises in their own right so much as the ways and means arranged as we proceed. Our scholarly inquiries proceed principally as republics. In evoking “the public sphere,” Fuller says less about governments than sciences, where “the very activity of constructing public things can sweep up large numbers of people and ideas, transforming them into a whole somewhat greater than the parts. This has been the traditional argument for participatory democracy: not that it generates the best outcomes most efficiently but that it improves the society’s individual and collective intelligence.”<sup>55</sup> A rueful irony about the laments that rhetoric of inquiry or rhetoric of science might displace the civic tradition is that republican principles of speech-in-action might never find more suitable and productive settings than the sciences.

- 34 This is why, to probe learning as a human (let alone an academic) activity, a philosopher of science like me would turn from the modern emphasis on logic toward the classical tradition of rhetoric. It is also why a philosopher of science like Fuller would fault above all the influence of Thomas Kuhn’s largely anti-republican tale of paradigmatic sciences.<sup>56</sup> Kuhn legitimated the imposition of intellectual hegemonies in one discipline after another, and Fuller rightly decries this as dubious history become bad policy.<sup>57</sup> It can dumb down disciplines and stultify sciences. Another irony is that Fuller seems to endorse paradigmatic hegemony for classical oratory as the exclusive intellectual core for disciplined rhetoric. At other moments, he knows better.

- 35 Fuller worries that “rhetoric could turn into the chemistry of the humanities: denying all intellectual pretension and happy to say, ‘Let us begin with some false assumptions for practical purposes: suppose there were a public sphere . . .’”<sup>58</sup> If the issue were disciplinary prosperity, as Simons faults some anti-globalists for assuming, we do well to notice that this path has not meant instant disaster for economics.<sup>59</sup> Hegemonic, neo-classical economists suppose counter to fact that most individuals are almost entirely rational and most markets can be almost fully free. Far from facing their demise as a discipline, as Fuller implies chemists might be doing someday soon, economists have worked with impressive (if perverse) effectiveness to expand their studies as the physics of the social sciences. Fuller’s work seems influenced productively in many ways by his supposition that there is a public sphere; and even though I bring the disconcerting news that it ‘taint necessarily so, I would not deny any inquiries recourse to ideals and other counter-factual constructs.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, rhetoricians can improve disciplinary as well as other inquiries when they learn from the historical and social sciences about departures or alternatives for the classical public.
- 36 Notwithstanding the approved rhetorics, it is unclear how many neo-classical economists – or classically inspired rhetoricians – actually face the implausibility of their ideals.<sup>61</sup> Some are (not so secretly) true believers. Fuller defends this for disciplinary rhetoricians. “How can you teach public speaking,” he asks, “if you do not believe that the public exists?”<sup>62</sup> Well, you might try believing that there are many publics, mostly partial. These challenge speakers and teachers to learn the distinctive properties of the publics they address. This is why details about Iran and Islam loom large in Zickmund’s account of the Khomeini rhetoric. It is why McLeod tells us so much about malls, courts, and trademarks. It is why we may compare popular horror to westerns in making sense of Bush policies. This can even illuminate what we each do with the Swiss and Chevrel engine for rhetorical invention. Of these five authors, I am the only one who is parsing specifically civic rhetoric in the republican sense, let alone with distinctively classical concepts. Yet the family resemblances – and dependences – among all seven contributions to this issue of *Poroi* are strong. They share topics, principles, virtues, and devices. The family can be called rhetorical analysis and invention. It is not exactly a discipline, but any discipline might do well to marry into it, and every inquiry might get better by coming to know it.

## Notes

- 1 Kim Stanley Robinson, *Blue Mars*, New York, Bantam Books, 1996, pp. 527-528.
- 2 Kim Stanley Robinson, *Green Mars*, New York, Bantam Books, 1994, p. 182.
- 3 Herbert W. Simons, "The Globalization of Rhetoric and the Argument from Disciplinary Consequence," *Poroi*, 2, 2, November, 2003, p. 2.
- 4 See Steve Fuller, "The Globalization of Rhetoric and Its Discontents," *Poroi*, 2, 2, November, 2003, p. 1.
- 5 See John S. Nelson, Allan Megill, and D. N. McCloskey, eds., *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1987; Nelson and Megill, "Rhetoric of Inquiry: Projects and Prospects," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 72, 1, February, 1986, pp. 20-37.
- 6 See John S. Nelson, "Commerce among the Archipelagos: Rhetoric of Inquiry as a Practice of Coherent Education," *The Core and the Canon*, L. Robert Stevens, G. L. Seligmann, and Julian Long, eds., Denton, TX, University of North Texas Press, 1993, pp. 78-100.
- 7 See Murray Edelman: *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 1-11; *The Politics of Misinformation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- 8 See Stephen Jay Gould: *Ever Since Darwin*, New York, Norton, 1977; *The Panda's Thumb*, New York, Norton, 1980; *Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes*, New York, Norton, 1983; *Wonderful Life*, New York, Norton, 1989; *The Mismeasure of Man*, New York, Norton, 1981; *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1987.
- 9 See Michael Pollan: *Second Nature*, New York, Dell, 1991; *A Place of My Own*, New York, Dell, 1997; *The Botany of Desire*, New York, Random House, 2001.
- 10 See Hannah Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, (1951, 1958), fourth edition,

1973; Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," *Partisan Review*, 20, 4, July-August, 1953, pp. 377-392; *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958; *On Revolution*, New York, Viking Press, 1963; *Between Past and Future*, New York, Viking Press, (1963), enlarged edition, 1968;

**11** See Robert M. Pirsig: *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, New York, Bantam Books, (1974), second edition, 1984; *Lila*, New York, Bantam Books, 1991. Also see John S. Nelson, "A Turn Toward Rhetoric," *North Dakota Quarterly*, 56, 3, Summer, 1988, pp. 53-59.

**12** That I continue to be surprised by the discontents marks me as a slow learner for experiences that sap enthusiasm, but a compensating advantage might be a decent feel for avoiding what Pirsig calls gumption traps: *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, pp. 270-294.

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