

Introduction

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Kenneth Burke's imaginative and creative criticism earned for him the 1981 National Medal for Literature for his "distinguished and continuing contribution to American letters." Challenging the established ideas of his day, Burke's criticisms made him an influential writer and gave him the reputation for being a "truly speculative thinker." Celebrating and extending this tradition, the Kenneth Burke Society held its second triennial conference in Airlie, Virginia, in May 1993. The conference theme, "Extensions of the Burkean System," created the dialogue that brought forth this volume, *Kenneth Burke and the 21st Century*.

Even though Kenneth Burke died on November 19, 1993, his work lives on through his many books and articles as well as in the activities of the Kenneth Burke Society and the many scholars he influenced. One important reason why the Burke project will continue to grow is that ideas inherent to his theory of dramatism are central to the conversation that is launching the twenty-first century.

The Evolution of Burke's Critical Thought

Kenneth Burke's critical thought, as it evolved over a seventy-year period through his many articles and books, made him an influential thinker in the transition between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Understanding this evolution will help us see the role he has and will play in this important period. Throughout his entire life Burke attacked the conventional wisdom of his time as he reflected a concern for both micro- and macroscopic issues. As a critic, he microscopically focused on individual texts to gain insight into the author's ideas and/or life, as he did with Coleridge's writing. He also analyzed the symbolic nature of

institutions, as he did with capitalism and technology; or he projected symbolic systems into the future, as in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" his criticism of *Mein Kampf*. Then, macroscopically, he transcended individual thought, and, from a critical perspective, constructed a theory of the evolution of society. Always assuming the stance of the critic, he shifted his attention in three fairly clear stages from epistemology to ontology until he had not only discussed the important issues of his day, but also had developed a series of rhetorical methods into a complete rhetorical system or theory.¹

Burke as Critical Realist

In Burke's first stage, which included his early essays and his first four books on rhetoric, he acted as a critical realist. Generally using specific literary texts as a springboard, Burke commented on the work itself, society, and the nature of language or communication. Always proceeding inductively, Burke built insight upon insight as he discovered specific principles and methods for understanding human symbolic action.

In his first book of this period, *Counter-Statement*, Burke starts by examining the life, thought, and techniques of three writers (Flaubert, Pater, and de Gourmont) and concludes by outlining and illustrating "principles underlying the appeal of literature" (123). In his discussion of these principles, Burke makes two important points that undermine the positivist assumptions of his time. First, when experience is converted into a symbolic equivalent, the symbol itself "becomes the guiding principle" (157). Second, magic, religion, and science are all ideological "in that they foster a body of thought concerning the nature of the universe and man's [*sic*] relation to it" (163). At this point, through his commentary on literary texts, Burke gains insight into the nature of symbolic action.

Burke's next two books, *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Toward History*, can be considered companion volumes. These works extend the nature of symbolic action by, again, using literary texts in an examination of the world and its problems. Also, in these books Burke makes his strongest attacks on capitalism and technology, as he articulates a theory of the evolution of Western thought. In these volumes Burke assumes the role of a social as well as a literary critic.

In *Permanence and Change*, Burke starts from the perspective of the individual as he argues that all living organisms are critics. He then, again inductively, presents a general critical method around framing or "perspective" as a procedure for discovering motives within human

symbolic action. Employing terms like “trained incapacity” and “scape-goat mechanism,” Burke constructs the following critical method:

(a) There is a sense of relationships, developed by the contingencies of experience; (b) this sense of relationships is our orientation; (c) our orientation largely involves matters of expectancy, and affects our choice of means with reference to the future; (d) in the human sphere, the subject of expectancy and the judgment as to what is proper in conduct is largely bound up with the subject of motives for if we know *why* people do as they do we feel that we know *what* to expect of them and of ourselves, and we shape our decisions and judgments and policies to take such expectancies into account. (18)

Having constructed a general critical method, Burke transcends the individual perspective to present three societal rationalizations as self-sustaining means of control—magic, “control over the primitive forces of nature”; religion, “attempts to control the specifically *human* forces”; and science, “the attempt to control for our purposes the forces of technology, or machinery” (44). He then explains how “philosophic correctives” arose from outside each rationalization, which in turn combined with and transcended the original one to form a new orientation. In this orderly fashion Burke presents Western thought as religion replacing magic and science supplanting religion as societal rationalizations (59–65).

Burke’s analysis of the evolution of Western thought does not stop with science because he predicts that correctives arising out of the weaknesses of technology and overspecialization within capitalism will result in the new orientation called poetic humanism that will be characterized by subjective, poetic thought, decentralization or pluralism, spirituality, and humanism. Burke describes it as an “art of living” (66).

Attitudes Toward History is a companion volume because Burke applies the societal rationalizations established in *Permanence and Change* to Western culture and describes the “curve of history.” Consistent with his abiding concern for symbolic action, before charting the curve of history, Burke integrates into his general critical method the concepts of frames of acceptance, rejection, and passivity and poetic categories. In his analysis of acceptance and rejection, Burke develops experience or reality as being essentially symbolic, and his poetic categories reveal comic thought as essential to human cooperation. In his curve of history, Burke emphasizes the weaknesses of capitalism and treats collectivism as salvation.²

The final book from this first stage is *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. In this volume Burke advances understanding of the nature of symbolic action itself. The lead article and title of the book departs from his earlier, more inductive approach and starts by presenting a sophisticated analysis of symbolic action, which stands as a strong attack on a scientific, positivist approach to language. Burke argues that “critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose . . . they are *strategic* answers, *stylized* answers” (3). He extends his position when he indicates that “facts” of historical assertion “are but a strategy of inducement . . . they are themselves a dramatic act” (6). Essentially, Burke argues that “the symbolic act is the *dancing of an attitude*” (9). In the remaining essays, Burke critically responds to the important people and ideas like Mead, Freud, and Dewey as well as pragmatism and liberalism, including one of his most acclaimed essays, “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle.’” During this first period of critical realism, Burke attacks the reigning beliefs of logical positivism, capitalism, and technology, advances understanding of symbolic action, and develops a theory of the stages for the evolution of society.

Burke as Conceptualist

In Burke’s second stage, which also includes four major works on rhetoric, he can best be described as a conceptualist. Burke continues his role as critic and his interest in symbolic action and epistemology, but he reverses his pattern of thought from induction to deduction as he presents three major critical methods.

In this second stage Burke focuses single works on the deductive development of a single critical concept—*A Grammar of Motives* to the pentad, *A Rhetoric of Motives* to identification, and *The Rhetoric of Religion* to terms for order. His fourth work, *Language as Symbolic Action*, is a collection of diverse essays and serves as a transition to his third stage.

A Grammar of Motives develops and applies the pentad, Burke’s most widely understood and applied critical method. Burke argues that the pentad is a tool for discovering motive: “What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (xv). His definition of the pentad is very brief: “any complete statement about motives will offer *some kind of* answer to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how it he did it (agency), and why (purpose)” (xv). The rest of the book is devoted to brilliantly explicating and illustrating this concept from literature and society in general.

A *Rhetoric of Motives* develops and applies the concept identification which, Burke argues, should become the key term in rhetoric and replace the traditional term, *persuasion* (xiv). Again, early in the work Burke establishes the nature of identification: "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests as joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so" (20). The rest of the book applies identification, first, by relating it to the traditional principles of rhetoric, and, second, by locating it within the symbols used to "order" society. In contrast with the *pentad* which is a tool for microscopic analysis through transcendence upward, identification is a tool for either micro- or macroscopic analysis. Burke illustrates this use for identification in the conclusion to the book when he explains "ultimate order" (328).

In *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke extends his discussion of transcendence upward and his consideration of "order" by presenting and applying his logological "terms for order." In an extended comparison of theology and logology, Burke argues that the terms taken from the creation myth in the biblical book of Genesis are "intrinsic to the idea of Order" as well as disorder (4). He presents the terms in the form of a poem:

Here are the steps
In the Iron Law of History
That welds Order and Sacrifice:

Order leads to Guilt
(for who can keep commandments!)
Guilt needs Redemption

(for who would not be cleansed!)
Redemption needs Redeemer
which is to say, a Victim).

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(hence: Cult of the Kill). (4-5)

This symbolic Cult of the Kill can be simplified into the terms *order*, *pollution*, *guilt*, *purification*, and *redemption*. Humans order their experience by symbolically establishing hierarchies. Pollution results when either intentionally or unintentionally the order is rejected. Then, guilt must be assigned to purify the pollution and gain redemption.

Burke presents these terms for order as a cyclical, psychologically balanced process.³

Burke establishes a context for understanding these terms for order by developing six analogies for “the word” (wholly naturalistic, empirical references) and “The Word” (references to the “supernatural”) (7). These analogies highlight the tendency of symbol-using to transcend the natural into the supernatural. This comparison between God or “The Word” and language or “the word” enables Burke to distinguish between two strikingly different uses of language—“dramatism” based on human action and form and “scientism” rooted in motion and knowledge (38). Out of this distinction Burke presents his four-clause definition of human beings:

Man is

- (1) The symbol-using animal
- (2) inventor of the negative
- (3) Separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making
- (4) And goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (40)

This definition is perfectly compatible with the other elements of Burke’s critical perspective. Throughout the rest of the book he critically demonstrates that his “terms for order” and definition of humans are consistent with the Bible and Christian theology in general. The final application of Burke’s “terms for order” is found in a dialogue between the Lord and Satan that illustrates beautifully his logological analysis.

The final and transitional book in this period is *Language as Symbolic Action*, a collection of previously published essays. This volume extends Burke’s thinking in such areas as his definition of humans, where he adds a fifth clause “rotten with perfection” (16), but, more important, this volume provides greater unity to his rhetorical system.

The essay “What Are the Signs of What?” illustrates Burke’s movement toward unifying his rhetorical theory and methods. By focusing on the concept of context, Burke is able “to reverse the usual realistic view of the relationship between words and things” (362). He identifies three stages of enlarging contexts: “factual certainty,” “equations,” and “entitlements.” The first stage “is the perfect certainty that ranges from sheer word-counting to a comparison of all the contexts in which a given word appears.” The second stage is the “radiations of a term” that “begin to build up equations whereby the terms are treated as overlapping . . . and maybe even identical” (369). The third stage is the series of titles assigned to steps or stages in a work (369–70). What makes this a

unifying article is that the three stages parallel Burke's three special methods—pentad, identification, and terms for order. This correlation means that the pentad can be used to establish identification(s) for the terms for order within the process of pollution, guilt, purification, and redemption. In the second conceptual period of his career, Burke presents his special methods as independent of each other, but he also moves toward unifying them as he continues his interest in critiquing language and epistemology.

Burke as a Coherentist

In the third period of his career, starting in the late 1960s, Burke's interest, reflected in a series of articles, continued to shift from epistemology to ontology. Burke distanced himself from traditional, dualist philosophies and moved toward a more coherent philosophy of rhetoric. This move essentially gave Burke two rhetorical systems that required two distinct labels. He called his early epistemology "logology" and his later ontology "dramatism." In describing the two systems, Chesebro argues that they functioned dialectically.

Burke's article, "Dramatism" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* launched his philosophy of symbolic coherence. This article is really the first time he presents his rhetorical theory as a unified system.

This article becomes significant partially because it is his first complete statement, but also because Burke modifies a number of his basic rhetorical concepts—pentad, metaphor, substance, and definition of humans.⁴ The pentad, initially in his epistemic system of logology, is a tool for microscopic motive analysis that allows any of the five elements to be featured or dominate. In his ontological system of dramatism, the pentad is still a tool for assessing motives, but "act" becomes the central term from which the other four terms radiate. Additionally, Burke adds a sixth term, *attitude*, to make it a hexad.

In "Dramatism" Burke also modifies his attitude toward metaphor. In the earlier work, *Permanence and Change*, metaphor is equated with "orientation" and "perspective" as a general view of reality (89). However, in "Dramatism" metaphor loses its stance as reality when Burke answers "no" to the question, "Is dramatism merely metaphorical?" At this point, language is no longer metaphorical; it is "literal." Burke argues that the human being "is defined literally as an animal characterized by his special aptitude for 'symbolic action,' which is itself a literal term. And from there on, drama is employed, not as a metaphor but as a fixed form that helps us discover what the implications of the

terms 'act' and 'person' *really are*" (448). The shift from "reality" to "literal" allows symbolic action to remain an internal system while also accepting the existence of something external.

Another important modification in Burke's "Dramatism" is that he drops the term *substance* and replaces its function with attitude. In *A Grammar of Motives*, substance is what is beneath or the context in a pentadic analysis. In this approach, substance ties symbol-using to an external reality, making Burke's rhetorical system dualistic: "The transformations which we here study as a Grammar are not 'illusions,' but citable realities. The structural relations involved are observable realities" (57). In "Dramatism" substance is never mentioned; however, attitude is introduced as the *incipient* action that replaces substance as the internal link to an external world of experience.

Burke also modifies his definition of human being. Earlier Burke had made more complex his four-clause definition of humans as symbol-using animals separated from their natural condition by adding that they were "rotten with perfection." In "Dramatism," he reduces the definition to "man is defined literally as an animal characterized by his special aptitude for 'symbolic action,' which is itself a literal term" (448). Later, he simplifies the definition even further to "bodies that learn language" (Brock et al., 32). These revisions in Burke's definition of the human being are another move away from a dualistic rhetorical system toward a more unified one.

In his article "(Nonsymbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action," Burke completes the process of unifying his rhetorical system as symbolic coherence. First, he argues that "symbolic action" unifies these concepts: "I have said that the only transcending of the permanent 'split' between the two realms (of symbol and nonsymbol) would be as in some ultimate condition like that which orthodox Western religions imagine, in promising that the virtuous dead will regain their 'purified' bodies in heaven. . . . And the merger with 'symbolic action' is embedded in the very constitution of the poetic medium that celebrates her [Lucy's] oneness with nature as the ground of all physiologic bodies. . . . hence all is as *verbal* as with God's creative word in Genesis" (830–31). Then Burke describes how "symbolicity" transcends all polar divisions. He achieves this unity by merging "Self," a person as an individual, with "Culture": "The Self, like its corresponding Culture, thus has two sources of reference for its symbolic identity: its nature as a physiological organism, and its nature as a symbol-using animal responsive to the potentialities of symbolicity that have a nature of their own not reducible to a sheerly physiological dimension" (815). Finally, Burke explains how "symbolic-action" transcends and unifies the "two realms (of symbol

and nonsymbol)" (830) and makes them one "with nature as the ground of all physiologic bodies" (831). In this third period, in which Burke focuses on the ontological nature of symbolic-action, he creates a symbolically coherent rhetorical system. Throughout his career as a critic, Burke focused on symbolic-action even though his interest shifted from epistemology to ontology as he constructed two rhetorical systems—the first he labeled "logology," and the second "dramatism."

Issues Ushering in the Twenty-first Century

Just as Kenneth Burke challenged the conventional wisdom of his time, the postmodern critics are challenging the conventional wisdom of today. The conversation initiated by the postmodernists has raised issues central to ushering in the twenty-first century. Throughout his career, Burke anticipated many of these issues, and his writing may continue to be influential and even point the way for the future of postmodernism.

The debate that has raged for more than two decades now is over whether modern theories and methods are dead and what ideas will succeed them.⁵ The new postmodern critics, associated with Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Rorty, Lyotard, and others, react against the industrialization, commodification, rationalization, and secularization of modern society. They argue that capitalist industry divides the world into "haves" and "have-nots," resulting in the oppression of its victims, ranging from peasants, the proletariat, artisans, and minority cultures to women. They, further, argue that this control takes the form of establishing rules, practices, and institutions that reverse reason into a form of domination (Best and Kellner, 3). Beneath these surface conditions is the postmodern rejection of modern theories of knowledge and notions of causality in favor of concepts of multiplicity, plurality, fragmentation, and indeterminacy.

Defenders of modernity argue from the work of Descartes and the Enlightenment to the social theory of Comte, Marx, and Weber as they point to the progress made in the human condition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scholars such as Habermas and Grassi acknowledge problems with modern thought based on reason and accumulation of knowledge, but they offer programs to salvage modern thought. Modernists also attack postmodernism for its relativism, irrationality, and nihilism as a theoretical dead-end.

Rhetorical scholars place Kenneth Burke near the center of this postmodern-modern debate. In fact, debates have been held on whether Burke is postmodern even though he himself rejected the label. Cary Nelson acknowledges two Burkes—one humanist (modern) and the

other poststructuralist (leaning toward postmodern). Williams discusses Burke as a deconstructionist; Chesebro compares Burke's debunking to Derrida's deconstruction; and Brown argues that a postmodern rhetoric should consider Burke's poetic-metaphoric view of language. Burke places symbol-using and postmodernists place language as central to the study of the human condition, providing a comparable focus of interests.

Not only does their interest in language throw them together, but the postmodern perspectivist and relativist positions do as well. In *Permanence and Change*, Burke introduces "orientation," which he argues is synonymous with "perspective" as the foundation for symbol-using. He also coins the terms *perspective through incongruity*, *trained incapacity*, and *impiety*, which could be viewed as specific forms of deconstruction. In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke develops "acceptance," "rejection," and "passivity" as alternative frames for language use. This approach is consistent with a postmodern relativist position. Extending the concept of framing, Burke introduces a variety of poetic and comic frames as strategies for deflecting the world in less oppressive ways than the traditional frame of tragedy. These concepts, likewise, could be viewed as deconstructive strategies. Burke's relativism extends into *A Grammar of Motives*, where he presents metaphors of a molten mass of ore and a fluid party conversation as models for continual change in symbol-using.

These similarities between Burke and postmodern thought place his work as central to the conversation launching the twenty-first century, but they do not necessarily make Burke postmodern. It is important to note that most examples of Burke's similarities to postmodern come from his epistemic writing when he was attacking the positivist, conventional wisdom of his day and establishing his critical methods—which is essentially what postmodernists are doing today. As his thinking and writing evolved, Burke shifted from an attack strategy to the construction of a symbolically coherent theory that could be viewed as an alternative to positivism.

Burke's evolution in thought could foreshadow the direction for postmodern thinking. This more constructive position can be seen in Steven Seidman's *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*, particularly in the definition he presents from Lyotard: "I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives" (27). This suggests acceptance of local theories in contrast to modernist grand ones. Seidman also argues that postmodern social analysis would "consider social, moral, and political consequences, the practical purposes of knowledge, and their situational impact" rather than the nature of knowledge and empirical or interpretive conflicts (17). Postmodernism

appears to be moving away from its earlier anti-theoretical posture associated with Derrida toward a plurality of approaches and conceptual strategies, which is similar to the evolution of Burke's thought.

Certainly, Burke anticipated many of the issues central to the conversation with either old and new postmoderns, but are there issues in this conversation he did not anticipate? Two important postmodern issues Burke does not address directly are feminism and multiculturalism. Burke's use of language reflects that of a patriarchal society, and he never spoke to the oppression resulting from the gender framing/roles in society. More recently, Burkean scholars have addressed the issue, and this volume will speak to the issue of the adaptability of Burke's theory to feminist concerns.

Multiculturalism is an even more recent issue in the postmodern conversation. Again, Burke does not address the issue directly, probably because he accepted the conventional wisdom of his day that society had a fairly unified, single culture. Today, people are beginning to accept that society is made up of a variety of cultures—thus multiculturalism. Even though Burke does not address cultural pluralism, his perspectivist approach to symbol-using could provide some basis for future Burkean scholars to deal with this issue. One essay in this volume will consider multiculturalism in Burke's rhetorical system directly, while others will treat the issue more indirectly.

Pattern of the Book

This book is divided into four sections that include significant issues for rhetoric as we enter the twenty-first century: Symbolic Action, Burke and Feminism, Postmodern and Multiculturalism, and The Burkean System. The essays within these areas will make it evident that not only did Kenneth Burke anticipate many of the issues leading into the twenty-first century, but also his dramaturgic theory and method will remain strong during this period.

Symbolic action is the central concern of Burke's dramaturgism and was the focus of his writing throughout his entire career. Three essays draw heavily on Burke's earlier critical realist writing as they label and position dramaturgism for the twenty-first century. Richard Thames, in "Nature's Physician: The Metabiology of Kenneth Burke," presents Burke from an organic perspective as a balance to our current mechanistic orientation. Thames argues that the Burkean system is a metabiology that can restore health to both individuals and the earth. Star Muir's "Toward an Ecology of Language" also sees an organic metaphor as an alternative to a scientific one and as possessing the appropriate

balance for the requirements of language in the twenty-first century. Both essays raise issues that are now identified with the New Age. David Blakesley, in "Kenneth Burke's Pragmatism—Old and New," focuses on Burke's ideas of the "unending conversation," analogy, and comic as he describes the Burkean system and places it at the juncture between the old and new pragmatists. Blakesley also clarifies the Burkean system's relationship to the current poststructural and postmodern approaches.

The second section of the book focuses on feminism, an important issue in the twenty-first century that Burke did not anticipate. Because he addressed issues of technology, ideology, and the epistemic nature of language, Burke's failure to comment on the patriarchal nature of language is quite noticeable. In this respect Burke's writing reflects the social values of his time. Two essays consider the usefulness of Burke's dramatism for feminist scholarship. Karen Foss and Cindy White, in "'Being' and the Promise of Trinity: A Feminist Addition to Burke's Theory of Dramatism," see Burke's motion-action duality as too hierarchical and suggest a motion-being-action trinity, which disrupts the polarity of the terms and thus softens the implicit hierarchy to make it more compatible with a feminist perspective. They also see this addition as consistent with the triadic tendencies in Burke's later writing. Then, Phyllis Japp in "'Can This Marriage Be Saved?': Reclaiming Burke for Feminist Scholarship" examines Burke's male orientation to assess if dramatism is salvageable for feminist use or whether it needs to be cast aside. Her tentative conclusion is that Burke's discussion of the four master tropes, from his middle conceptual period, are quite compatible with feminist thinking. In an essay later in this book, James Klumpp speaks indirectly to the issue of feminism as he describes the complexity of hierarchy and argues that sexism is not inherent to the Burkean system.

The third section, three essays on postmodern and multiculturalism, deals with two issues central to the discussion of rhetoric leading into the twenty-first century. Burke anticipated postmodernism, but never mentioned multiculturalism. George Cheney, Kathy Garvin-Doxas, and Kathleen Torrens, in "Kenneth Burke's Implicit Theory of Power," focus on the postmodern concept of "power." They argue, drawing primarily on Burke's middle conceptual period, that he has a fully developed language system for talk about both individual and societal power. Then, Greig Henderson, in "Dramatism and Deconstruction: Burke, de Man, and the Rhetorical Motive," compares the interaction of Burke's grammar and rhetoric to de Man's deconstruction. Henderson, relying most heavily on Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* in his conceptual period, argues that Burke goes beyond deconstruction to the demonstration of the suasive power of representation. He also suggests that Burke antici-

pates deconstruction but is not himself a postmodernist. Finally, James Chesebro, in "Multiculturalism and the Burkean System: Limitations and Extensions," analyzes Burke's concept of form from his early critical realist writing, and argues that his system is monocultural and thus less effective in dealing with multicultural contexts.

In the fourth and final section, three essays present the Burkean system as a more unified theory as they underscore the complexity of dramatism. These essays rely heavily on Burke's later writing. Burke's concern that language is tied to action, not just attitude or motion, places him in the company of the European philosophers who are currently raising critical issues for the future of rhetoric. Dina Stevenson, in "Lacan, Burke, and Human Motive," opens this section by reinforcing the importance of Burke's "terms for order" as a unified language system. Stevenson provides a theoretical and psychological grounding for the terms from Lacanian and Saussurian theory. James Klumpp, in "Burkean Social Hierarchy and the Ironic Investment of Martin Luther King," focuses on "hierarchy" and creatively applies it in a criticism of King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Klumpp takes a sociological perspective as he also responds to the issues of racism, feminism, and multiculturalism and defends the relevance of Burke's dramatism in the twenty-first century. Finally, Dennis Ciesielski, in "'Secular Pragmatism': Kenneth Burke and the [Re]Socialization of Literature and Theory," explains how Burke's emphasis on "text," his observation that all action is symbolic, and his concept of "terministic screens" anticipate the post-modern concepts of "transcendent signifier" and "philosophical hermeneutics." He also focuses on *A Rhetoric of Motives* in describing Burke's identification as a tool for the [post]modern critic's action as an investigation and a sociopolitically revealing process.

These essays taken together make a strong argument that even though Kenneth Burke did not anticipate all the important issues that are moving us into the twenty-first century, his ideas will continue to be taken seriously. They suggest that Burke's dramatism will remain a force in the "unending conversation" about rhetoric.

Notes

1. For a more detailed discussion of Burke's evolution, see Bernard L. Brock, "Evolution of Kenneth Burke's Criticism and Philosophy of Language," in *Kenneth Burke and Contemporary European Thought: Rhetoric in Transition* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).
2. For an analysis of these stages, see Bernard L. Brock, "Kenneth Burke and the 21st Century," *Kenneth Burke Society Newsletter* 6 (1990): 4-9.

3. For a discussion of these terms, see Bernard L. Brock, "Dramatism," in *Method of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1990).

4. For a more detailed discussion of Burke's modification of basic concepts, see Brock, "Evolution."

5. A more detailed development of this debate may be found in Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford, 1991).

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