

Introduction

Toward an Analytic Conception of *Metanoia*

We speak so often of “changing our mind” that the phrase seems totally ordinary—even banal. But in the most literal sense, it carries an unacknowledged gravity. Whether undertaken as an intentional act of reason or experienced passively as a spiritual event, to change one’s mind or, similarly, to have a “change of heart” is not merely to think differently: it is to become someone else. How we live and what we believe are central to our identity. Our habits and beliefs are at the core of who we are. Thus to change one’s mind is to experience a transformation of being—a renovation of one’s personal ethos.

Changing minds is the central aim of rhetoric. Since the emergence of rhetorical theory in Ancient Greece, rhetorical theorists have sought to systemize the practice of persuasion. Not coincidentally, ethos was a primary concern of the first rhetors. In his fourth-century B.C.E. treatise *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle writes that “there is persuasion through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way to make the speaker worthy of credence. . . . And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person.”¹ This idea may have been common sense in the ancient world, but it seems strange to modern minds that who we know a speaker to be should not play a role in how the speech is received. And yet Aristotle’s assertion that one’s ethos, that is, who one is, comes into being *as one speaks* sounds similar to the claims of postmodern and post-structural thinkers who argue that identity and the self are not “preexisting” parts of our personhood but are, rather, products of routinized rhetorical performances and interactions.

This idea that ethos is an effect of rhetoric has a profound explanatory power in our era, an era in which people are accomplishing personal transformations that would have been dismissed as impossible only decades ago. One need look no further than Olympic champion decathlete Caitlyn Jenner, formerly Bruce Jenner, who underwent a public transformation from man to woman in 2015. There is nothing new about gender dysphoria or someone's will to live as a sex other than the one given at birth. But there is a new insistence on the authenticity of the transformation. Twenty years ago, many people would have said a person like Jenner is "living as a woman." Today, such a statement would be viewed as an attack because it hints at a kind of *persona manqué*, a belief that the new ethos is inauthentic. Now, the public cultural ethic asks us to replace "Bruce is living as a woman" with "Caitlyn is a woman." Despite the anti-essentialist tendencies in modern thought, this shift is oddly Aristotelian: when Caitlyn spoke with Diane Sawyer on *20/20* about her transformation,² we were told that our reception of her speech was not to be informed by our memories of the years she went by "Bruce," nor by images of her legendary victory in the 1976 Men's Olympic Decathlon. Rather, Caitlyn's new ethos as a woman is extemporaneously authenticated through her speech—speech that rejects her life as Bruce and testifies to the always-latent femininity at the core of her being. If anyone doubts the power of the cultural ethic that accommodates these transformations, consider that after Caitlyn's interview, a bot was active on Twitter that automatically corrected or shamed authors of tweets that referred to "Bruce" or his former ethos as a man.³ But today's popular conceptions of ethos and personal identity differ from Aristotle's in one critical way. Aristotle conceived of ethos as deriving from the audience—the listeners formulated the identity of the speaker as they listened to the speech. Today, ethos is thought to reside in the speaker: the identity that the audience attributes to the speaker is less important than who the speaker understands himself to be. Further, there is a growing sense that audiences are obligated to recognize the legitimacy of the speaker's self-conception. This distinction between the Aristotelian audience-centered conception of ethos and the modern self-centered notion of identity resonates throughout this text.

It is not possible to offer an adequate review of all the recent (and voluminous) research on the concept of ethos, but there is scant scholarship that tries to elaborate a general theory of how ethos transforms. Given the fluidity of personal identity in the contemporary period, this is a shortcoming of

modern rhetorical theory that needs to be addressed. Fortunately, there is a concept that dates to the earliest period of the rhetorical tradition that elucidates both how ethos transforms and how such transformations are signified in a variety of discursive contexts. That concept is *metanoia* (μετάνοια). Literally, metanoia means “afterthought” and is frequently rendered as “change of heart” or “change of mind,” but English translations of the word do not do justice to the richness of the idea. In the following pages, I demonstrate that a broader investigation of the concept shows that metanoia itself has undergone some profound transformations over the course of its history. The central premise of this book is that by exploring metanoia’s conceptual transformations, a more complete understanding of ethos will emerge—a deeper appreciation of how personal identity changes, how such changes are dependent on audiences, and how people testifying to personal conversions successfully establish (or fail to establish) the authenticity of their new ethos.

The earliest references to metanoia in ancient rhetorical theory represent it as a figure of speech: metanoia was understood as a particular strategy for persuading audiences. By enacting metanoia, a speaker “took back” an earlier statement and often replaced it with a different one. In so doing, the rhetor typically performed some measure of regret for the earlier claim. The persuasive power of this metanoic performance was rooted in the way that it reconfigures the speaker’s ethos in the minds of the audience: it is a certain type of person who reflects upon earlier statements as he speaks, and a certain type of person who is honest and humble enough to publicly recant defective ones. After the peak of Greek society, metanoia rapidly became a key concept in a variety of rhetorical milieus, contexts that will be more fully described later. Given the remarkable versatility of metanoia, it is puzzling that modern rhetoricians have been virtually silent on the topic. Despite substantial research in philosophy, religious studies, classical studies, psychology, and even political science, those studying the art of persuasion have ignored metanoia. The reason is unclear.

In the following chapters, I try to establish metanoia as a key concept in the rhetorical tradition, no less important than pathos, or kairos, or doxa, or epideictic speech, or any other tool in the analytic toolbox. At the risk of overpromising the potential of this project, I go a step further: I argue that metanoia, understood as a “change of mind,” is *the* rhetorical figure *par excellence*. The aim of rhetoric is persuasion: persuasion is about changing minds: metanoia is a theory of how minds are changed, one’s own mind and the

minds of others. At the outset of the twenty-first century, metanoia is essential for understanding ethos, identity, authenticity, signification, and how these concepts interact. In our cultural moment, metanoia is the essence of rhetoric.

Three Types of Metanoia: Rhetorical, Spiritual, and Modern

In his book on rhetorical invention, John Muckelbauer tackles the problem of how the “new” and “different” emerge from within the context of dialectical negation.⁴ The central issue is that change (as the means by which the new is invented) is inherently reactionary—that is, change comes only through a negation of the same, the old, or the status quo. Given that this dialectical mechanism of change is the one thing that never changes, the possibilities for novelty and difference to emerge are fairly limited. Thus what we call “the new” is only a different iteration of the old. Muckelbauer also notes that the driving force of deconstructionism and most cultural critique is a will to create the conditions for the truly new to emerge, whether that is “a new concept, a different social structure, a divergent form of subjectivity, a fresh reading, or an innovative technology.”⁵ And yet, despite the great appetite for new subjectivities, Muckelbauer provocatively claims that “although postmodern critiques have had a definite impact on the field of rhetoric, they have also met with a great deal of resistance—especially on questions concerning the status of the subject [or the self].”⁶ In part, this book responds to this concern: my case studies examine how the self changes, what conditions allow for new subjectivities, and how those subjectivities are authenticated in discursive contexts. As the rhetorical figure of change, metanoia has a unique potential to address these issues.

In the following chapters, I offer analysis of three discrete models of metanoia: rhetorical metanoia, spiritual metanoia, and what I call modern metanoia. The first two types may be familiar to some readers, but I propose the third as a new theory of the concept. We can observe various forms of metanoia because different groups of people have found divergent uses for the idea over the course of history. Indeed, just as metanoia explains personal transformation, the concept itself has transformed over time. I argue that in the present moment, we can observe metanoia undergoing another reinvention. I refer to this new version as “modern metanoia.” The theorization of this new model is enabled by a rhetorical description of the older ones.

Unquestionably, these three types of metanoia are not the only ones. It is my hope that this project spurs people working in rhetoric and communication to identify other forms of metanoia and other analytic applications of the concept. Before discussing the methodological orientation of this project, a further explanation of the three models of metanoia is in order.

The first type, rhetorical metanoia, is the most common. It is virtually indistinguishable from *epanorthosis*, another Greek rhetorical figure. The concept may be more familiar to some when called by its name in the Roman catalog of figures: *correctio*. All of these terms denote a verbal gambit by which a speaker substitutes, amends, or “takes back” an earlier statement and replaces it with a new claim, usually as a means to either amplify or mitigate the force of the earlier proposition. A basic example of rhetorical metanoia is a statement like “Earlier I said that he was the least qualified candidate for the job, but having looked at his résumé, that’s not true. He is just lacking a few critical skills for the position.” The first sentence recants the earlier claim, while the second replaces it with a similar (but less forceful) assertion. This strategy can be put to many uses, but as noted earlier, a large part of its persuasive power is the way it configures the ethos of the speaker. The simple substitution of a claim may seem relatively unrelated to such a grandiose idea as the reinvention of the self, but the rhetorical model of metanoia informs the other two varieties in important ways.

The second type of metanoia is spiritual metanoia (also referred to as religious metanoia). This kind was elaborated in the foundational documents of Christianity. Variations of the word *metanoia* appear dozens of times in the Greek New Testament. In English translations of the Bible, the term is usually rendered as “repentance,” although some modern scholars of the New Testament translate it as “change of heart” or “change of mind,” as these phrases hew more closely to “afterthought,” the literal translation of the Greek.⁷ The transformation of Paul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus is often cited as the prime embodiment of Christian metanoia. Like rhetorical metanoia, spiritual metanoia depends on a substitutive movement: the convert, recognizing the sinful nature of his life, rejects his old ways and takes on a new life in Christ, marked by regret, penance, and worship. Because this spiritual revelation is an interior phenomenon, ensuring that others recognize the transformation depends on a rhetorical performance—converts give a narrative testimony of their metanoic experience. The Christian call for repentance begins in the missionary work of John the Baptist and the directives of Jesus Christ, but there are numerous examples of Christian metanoic

testimony: Paul's epistles, Tertullian's "On Penitence," Augustine's *Confessions*, John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, and the women's conversion testimonies analyzed in Virginia Lieson Brereton's *From Sin to Salvation* all showcase the implications that religious metanoia has for personal ethos. The rhetorical hallmarks of Christian transformation can also be observed in some unexpected places—for example, Ohiyesa's (Charles Alexander Eastman) *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, which chronicles his transition from his American Indian boyhood to living in white society, or contemporary prison writing in which convicts repent their criminal lives.⁸ Even something as bland as academic writing on expressivist approaches to teaching composition consistently demands that students perform a kind of personal conversion in their writing. The ways that scholars describe these transformations are strikingly similar to Christian metanoic testimony.⁹

Modern metanoia, a third type of metanoia, is the emerging type found today in the secular, progressive West. Embracing the deconstructionist critique of essentialism, advocates and converts of this type of metanoia assert that ethos (identity) is a product of discourse rather than a constellation of inborn traits. The earlier example of Caitlyn Jenner serves as one instance of modern metanoia, in which identity depends on the self's experience of the self and the personal testimony that the convert offers regarding the new (and the old) ethos. This model has key similarities to both of the other two varieties, but one distinguishing characteristic is the way that modern metanoic testimony utilizes Christian tropes while eschewing the self-rejection and despair that mark the properly religious transformation. On the contrary, modern metanoia reinvents the Christian model in such a way that metanoia becomes an act of self-affirmation. Further, it incorporates features of another ancient rhetorical figure: *epistrophe*, which represents a kind of "return" to self. Epistrophe allows the convert to authenticate the transformation by rejecting the earlier ethos as mere performance and positioning the new identity as one that was always repressed but authentic. As an example, these themes of self-discovery, self-affirmation, and transformation are the basis of most contemporary self-help writing—a thoroughly metanoic genre, in the modern mold.

All forms of metanoia are transformations of the self, but each type has a very different character. In rhetorical metanoia, what the speaker "takes back" is speech. The conversion is of a fairly limited scope; there is no existential or spiritual dimension to replacing one claim with another. The linguistic substitution is not something that the speaker "experiences" but is rather the

product of some rational reflection. The motives that precipitate the taking back of the earlier statement are less important than the effects of doing so.¹⁰

But in religious metanoia, the metaphysical aspects of the transformation are central. To call religious metanoia a type of experience is to underscore the passive role of the convert. The transformation is not the product of an intellectual decision. This conversion is an *event* rather than an *act*. The religious convert does not replace one claim with another but is “born again” through the replacement of the sinful self with a new sanctified one. Michel Foucault puts the terms of this replacement in stark contrast: Christian metanoia is “a transition from one type of being to another, from death to life, from mortality to immortality, from darkness to light.”¹¹ Therefore, it is a total “renunciation of oneself, dying to oneself, and being reborn in a different self and a new form which, as it were, no longer has anything to do with the earlier self in its being.”¹² The scope of this conversion lies in opposition to the narrow purview of rhetorical metanoia.

Rhetorical metanoia modifies personal ethos in the eyes of the audience but only through a prior, agentive, and discursive act on the part of the rhetor. Religious metanoia is typically a momentary, private, unanticipated, passive, and nondiscursive movement of the spirit—an event that totally supplants personal ethos. Speech does play a role in religious metanoia but only as a post hoc means to externalize or represent what is largely an ineffable internal experience. The resulting metanoic testimony is the primary means of authenticating the new identity. As I show in this book, modern metanoia synthesizes aspects of the other two forms—in today’s secular transformations, the convert undertakes a rhetorical process by which he rejects both earlier speech and a prior ethos.

Regardless of context, the audience plays a critical role in the function of metanoia. The observers and listeners must decide on the authenticity of these transformations. As shown by thinkers such as Kenneth Burke¹³ and Erving Goffman,¹⁴ the habitability of personal identity depends on the recognition of the other. In other words, when a new identity or characteristic is advanced by the speaker, the validity of that identity hinges on whether the audience believes that it is genuine. In most instances of rhetorical metanoia,¹⁵ the figure of speech can only accomplish its objectives if the audience is convinced that the speaker is earnest in recanting the earlier claim. An example of this is an apology for some offending remark: if the hearer of the apology does not believe that the apologist truly regrets the earlier statement, the apology usually cannot achieve its reconciliatory goals. Similarly, religious

communities have always been critical of an inauthentic conversion—the “deathbed confession” of faith, for instance, has met with skepticism throughout the history of Christianity because of the convert’s ambiguous motives. Needless to say, if Christians do not believe that the professed convert shares the true faith, her membership in the Christian community will be uncertain. Finally, modern metanoia is usually animated by the convert’s belief in some essential truth about the self. Modern metanoic testimony addresses the public’s ignorance of this truth: its aim is a kind of entelechy, a belief that the potential of the self must be realized. Of course, this entelechy is only achieved if the audience concedes the validity of the transformation. Without the recognition of the other, the “true” ethos remains inchoate and unfulfilled because of the disparity between one’s self-image and one’s public image: one cannot live as the person one claims to be. Given that authenticity is such an important element of metanoic testimony, and because the stakes are existential, converts of all types have developed recurring tropes and strategies for achieving public recognition of the transformation. The following chapters contrast not only these three different types of metanoia but also the means by which they are successfully signified in a variety of contexts.

Terminology, Methods, and Objects of Analysis

Metanoia is an integral concept for the study of rhetoric and communication, and thus there is a great diversity of objects for the analysis of personal transformation. Among them are political speeches, spiritual biographies, prison writings, self-help books, theories of composition pedagogy, and events in celebrity culture. It is true that because most of these examples are public forms of discourse, the picture of personal transformation that they give may not accurately represent the dynamics of transformation in private contexts. But there is rarely a record of private transformations, and therefore there is a dearth of such artifacts for analysis. This means that public communications allow a type of analysis that grants a generalized theory of how personal transformation works on a discursive level. My analyses do not give a picture of the experience of conversion. Rather, they provide a rhetorical portrait of how we talk about and negotiate that experience.

Although I offer much consideration of first-person accounts of metanoia, I also give equal analysis to *theories* of metanoia (texts that explicitly

describe the concept from various disciplinary orientations). Given the obvious divergences in these materials, one may have reservations regarding a unified study under the umbrella of a single idea: metanoia. I propose *metanoia* as the preferred term for understanding personal conversion for three reasons. First, because metanoia means “afterthought” in English, the word applies to a wide range of rhetorical phenomena. Secondly, most contemporary audiences will be unfamiliar with the term *metanoia*. This makes it a more malleable idea, one that I can reshape and transform without doing much violence to preexisting notions of metanoia. Finally, I prefer the Greek term because it is easily integrated to the largely Greek and Latin vocabularies of rhetorical theory. But I also use many other terms with similar connotations: *repentance*, *reformation*, *renovation*, *transformation*, *reinvention*, and *conversion*. I do not justify my word choice in relation to any specific usage. As I show, each of these terms means more or less the same thing in terms of identity formation, but I do sometimes use one word rather than another in an attempt to capture some nuance of a given instance of metanoia. For example, in referring to a “renovation” of one’s identity, I may wish to draw attention to the speaker’s role in the “constructedness” of the self and its demolition. Some audiences might bristle at the use of the term *conversion* in secular contexts. Yet Pierre Hadot notes that the literal meaning of the Latin term *conversio* is simply “a reversal,” and therefore it can be used to “designate every kind of turn or transposition.”¹⁶ In any case, most secular testimonies of personal transformation are so shot through with the features of religious metanoia that they are properly called *conversions*, even with the spiritual implications of the term.

This book is not intended to be a theological study or a history of personal transformation in the West. Rather, I aim to show the versatility of metanoia and indicate how adopting a broader understanding of the concept (one that is not strictly limited to theology or history or psychology or philosophy) can provide the basis for a richer description of the role of rhetoric in identity (re)formation. Toward this end, I employ an approach that could be called “paratactical rhetorical analysis.” Given that the relation between rhetorical analysis and parataxis is not immediately apparent, I discuss them each in turn. Rhetorical analysis is fairly straightforward: it explains a particular instance of discourse with an eye to how it makes use of persuasive strategies. Further, rhetorical analysis is uniquely attuned to the effects of speech and action. That is, the force and power of speech or action can be assessed by looking at the ways that audiences respond to it. Some readers may notice

that I offer little discussion of the motives and intentions of the converts that I analyze. Motives are relegated to the periphery for two reasons. First, it is very difficult to correctly assess why people do or say anything—it is a speculative exercise that shifts attention from what is known to what might have been and thus invites faulty conclusions. Secondly, in terms of understanding how personal transformation works, the motives of the convert are less important than the responses that conversion rhetoric elicits from audiences: what happens as a result of rhetoric is more readily observable than the reasons that a particular rhetorical act was undertaken. Because metanoia depends on whether the audience recognizes the transformation as legitimate, this concern with the effects of rhetoric is especially important. So, the objects of my analysis are theories of metanoia and examples of metanoic testimony. Parataxis is more complicated, and it relates to how I approach these theories and examples.

Like metanoia, parataxis was also conceived as a rhetorical figure of speech. The term itself combines Greek roots meaning “to arrange” and “adjacent.” Thus parataxis is a placing of things side by side, whether those things are words, images, or objects. Classical rhetoric gave a special emphasis to orality, and parataxis was usually understood as a linguistic strategy of putting clauses next to each other without additional verbiage to connect them. A famous example is “I came, I saw, I conquered.” On the semantic level of the phrase, the coming and the seeing have a key relation to the conquering. But the speaker does not spell out this relation. Instead, it is the audience who generates an idea of how the clauses relate to one another. James Wierzbicki contrasts parataxis with syntax and hypotaxis. The syntactical phrase clearly connects the articles placed side by side and the hypotactical phrase indicates how “one item is subordinate to another,” but parataxis “offers no connection whatsoever.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, simply because no connection is *offered* does not mean that no connection exists. I argue that these connections are always implied through the mechanics of parataxis itself.

Today, parataxis often operates nonverbally, given the prevalence of text and image in modern communication. For example, many internet memes work paratactically: the creator places two images next to each other without indicating to the audience how those images are related. Paratactical meaning comes from two sources: it is partly generated from the “in-between” of the images as a logical effect of their similarities and differences, but it is also a product of an interpretive act by the audience, who explicates the ambiguous meaning of the “in-between.” The interpretive role of the audience

shows that parataxis is a uniquely participatory mode of rhetoric. N. Katherine Hayles sees parataxis as a postmodern mode of expression,¹⁸ not only because it reflects the discontinuity of contemporary life¹⁹ but also because interpreting paratactical discourse requires a “rearrangement of consciousness.”²⁰ In other words, like metanoia, parataxis is a strategy that relates to personal identity. As such, Hayles asserts that this technique of juxtaposition can be used analytically as “a cultural seismograph, extraordinarily sensitive to rifts, tremors, and realignments in bodies of discourse, as well as in bodies constituted through discourse and cultural practices.”²¹ Perhaps a nebulous figure such as metanoia can only be understood in paratactical terms.

In my approach to understanding personal reinvention, I utilize parataxis as a mode of cultural seismography that maps the constant renovation of the possible types of individual transformation and shows how those conversions are authenticated through the use of rhetorical testimony. By placing various conceptions of metanoia (and various instances of each type) side by side, I facilitate a clearer understanding of personal transformation as a rhetorical phenomenon that is intimately related to ethos. Parataxis is ultimately a figure of arrangement, and this book is arranged so as to provide a juxtapositional analysis of three “images” of metanoia: the operation of rhetorical metanoia in the ancient world, the emergence of religious metanoia in the context of Christianity, and the recent development of modern metanoia in the secular liberal societies of the West. The chronological treatment of these three moments is a deliberate choice, but I do not seek to provide a linear history of the concept. While each of the three moments certainly informs my understanding of the others, I resist narrating *how* metanoia transformed “from” one model “to” another. For example, I do not argue that rhetorical metanoia “turned into” religious metanoia. Instead, I propose a versatility that allows for different articulations of metanoia over time (or even simultaneously), and I occasionally compare varieties of metanoia when it aids the description of one particular model. These three moments that I place side by side are not the only three varieties of metanoia worth talking about. There are many more, and I hope my paratactical analysis allows for readers to draw their own conclusions and offer their own elaborations of the concept. Below, I offer a brief summary of the following chapters.

Chapter 1 focuses on metanoia as a rhetorical figure that takes back or amends earlier speech. Of central concern is how this strategy allows amplifications and reductions in the suasive force of a claim, and how these amplifications and reductions correlate to enhancements and diminishments

in the speaker's ethos. I begin by explicating a handful of closely related rhetorical figures (*epanorthosis*, *correctio*, *epistrophe*, *metameleia*, and *metamelomai*) in order to give a fuller picture of metanoia's function in discourse. I also catalog some important references to these concepts in classical literature and rhetorical theory. In order to demonstrate the ongoing vitality of rhetorical metanoia, I take up two cases of public apology to illustrate how taking back earlier speech entails some reconfigurations of the ethos, or personal identity. By analyzing the apologies of Michael Richards and Mel Gibson, I argue that the speech genre of apology at large can only be properly understood as a particular mode of metanoic performance (one with features that are much intensified in the religious metanoia of Christianity). I conclude with a brief characterization of the differences between the rhetorical metanoia of the ancient world and the religious metanoia that took shape in the context of early Christianity.

Chapter 2 addresses the Christian rhetoric of conversion (or repentance) as a prime example of religious metanoia. I begin by developing the characteristics of religious metanoia by looking at the rhetorical history of repentance in the Judeo-Christian tradition. This spiritual mode of personal transformation has endured with surprisingly little modification since the emergence of the Christian faith: we see metanoia as a central aspect of the Christian ethos in the letters of Paul the Apostle, an emphasis on regret and rebirth that is continued in Tertullian and Augustine, described in detail in the work of Bunyan and repeated in the Far East in conversions such as those of Dzing Sinsang²² and Wong Ming-Dao.²³ Today, popular examples such as the conversion narratives of members of the nu-metal band Korn show that Christian metanoic testimony remains at the center of Western life.²⁴ Through rhetorical analysis of these conversion testimonies and others, I show how religious metanoia entails a much more rigorous engagement with the self than earlier modes of transformation. Further, I demonstrate how concern over the authenticity of conversion was intensified, with powerful implications for the convert's personal identity and role in the community at large. Finally, I describe the unique role that speech and discourse play in authenticating the inward experience of spiritual metanoia.

Chapter 3 introduces modern metanoia and shows how secular society allows new transformations of personal ethos by reinventing some aspects of both the rhetorical and the spiritual modes of conversion. In contemporary contexts, what appears to audiences as a reinvention of ethos is framed by the speaker as anything but a transformation. Rather, the speaker claims

that what others saw as the earlier, authentic identity was, in fact, a *performance*, in the most pejorative sense of the term. Put differently, the subject testifies that what looks to be a conversion is actually the emergence of the “true self” that was previously hidden by an inauthentic mask. This means that the inward change that occurs is not a decision to “become someone else” but a decision to finally be honest about who one is. This “return to self” is called *epistrophe*, a concept that is sometimes opposed to *metanoia*, but one that I argue is a central dimension of *metanoia* in the modern register. Given that modern *metanoia* often asserts an identity that is anathema to traditional norms, the speaker must undertake some symbolic risk in laying claim to the new ethos.²⁵ This willingness to risk public rejection of the new identity is one factor that works to authenticate the metanoic testimony. By comparing the public testimony of Caitlyn Jenner and Rachel Dolezal (a woman who claims a transracial identity), I offer a portrait of the salient features of modern *metanoia* and show how this variety is uniquely dependent on language to establish authenticity and secure the recognition of the audience.

The conclusion synthesizes the three modes of *metanoia* to offer a generalized notion of the concept. More importantly, I describe the uses of *metanoia* in rhetorical theory and analysis, a task achieved by discussing personal transformation in three different types of discourse: contemporary prison writing, academic scholarship from the field of composition studies, and the popular genre of self-help books. These three forms of writing show that each variety of *metanoia* is not necessarily bound to any particular historical period. That is, rhetorical *metanoia* did not end with antiquity; the spiritual forms of metanoic testimony have not been marginalized by the decline of Christianity in the West; and even “modern” *metanoia* is not solely a modern phenomenon. Further, my examples prove that two different models of *metanoia* can be operative in a single form of discourse. The three case studies in the conclusion also demonstrate that just as timing and *kairos* play key roles in the unfolding of any transformation, the place and space in which self-testimony unfolds have a major influence on how audiences view a specific instance of *metanoia*. Ultimately, the concluding chapter serves to point out a few directions that future researchers might take in applying *metanoia* as a tool for rhetorical analysis.

The twenty-first century has already brought significant shifts in cultural mores—particularly in Europe and the United States, which assign a very high value to the individual. The needs and expectations of society at large are

increasingly subordinated to the desires and perceptions of the self. Secular society advocates a special deference to the self's perception of the self: this can be observed in countless contexts, but the prevalence of "self-esteem" as a guiding force in contemporary education is a familiar example. Technological developments in biomedical engineering and augmented reality hint at even more profound personal transformations on the horizon. Further, breakthroughs in surgery and pharmacology will continue to alter the ways that we understand the self, the body, and personal ethos. Not only will these alterations change the way we talk about ourselves, but they will lead to new models of transformation that will demand new rhetorical strategies for presenting the self to the public gaze. Personal transformation is a central theme of our age. In the context of this trans moment, metanoia is an invaluable tool for understanding the rhetoric of personal transformation.