

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
YORK COLLEGE

PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION:  
A STUDY OF THE WORK OF  
THE COMMITTEE TO FRAME A WORLD CONSTITUTION  
1945 TO 1949

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

ALBERTO BRAVO

QUEENS, NEW YORK  
MAY 2009

Philosophical examinations of the processes of conflict resolution in international affairs have seldom been undertaken in more pressing circumstances, when globalization has brought the differences between enormous numbers of cultures into stark contrast while encouraging the reshaping of domestic policies through international political compromises, uprooting the common experiences and values that once influenced large associations of humanity. In this factional existence of pervasive insecurity, the importance of intelligent discussion and effective negotiation remains paramount. I say remains because this assessment of the trends in the development and interrelations of mankind is not new; it is in fact a perennial evaluation of society that we all stand on the brink of doom or at the edge of an abyss, but this does not detract from the lasting importance of cooperative communication.

Traditionally, an accurate assessment of where we stand in the present begins with a review of the path we have traveled in the past. In this light, I would like to focus upon some little known American history from the post World War II period. It is common knowledge that to end the Second World War, President Roosevelt decided to drop two atomic bombs on the island nation of Japan in early August of 1945. It is less common knowledge that the first Fermi artificial nuclear reactor, a necessary precursor in the development of our atomic weapons, was in operation underneath the football field at the University of Chicago as early as December of 1942. And, it is even less well known that in September of 1945, a group of scholars at the University of Chicago came together, under the belief that the crisis of their era necessitated the unification of the nations of the world, to form the Committee to Frame a World Constitution.

The only reason I came to learn of this fact was because of my mentor at York College, of the City University of New York, Dr. Howard Ruttenberg. Early on in my studies with him, Dr. Ruttenberg gave me various essays to read that were written by his own mentor, Dr. Richard

McKeon, and shared some anecdotes and memories from his time at the University of Chicago. The difficulty I encountered in digesting those first few essays, combined with a sense that there was a great store of knowledge to be acquired if I persevered through the initial perplexity, enticed me to begin looking into the life and work of McKeon. I eventually came across the online guide for the Special Collections at the University of Chicago Library, where McKeon's collected papers are archived, and read the biographical note for him. At the age of 34, he left lecturing at Columbia University to teach as visiting professor of History at Chicago. He took up residence as professor of Greek and Philosophy, and shortly thereafter was appointed Dean of the Humanities Division. From just this quick summary of accomplishments, one could tell that he was an exemplary scholar of various talents and capacities. I then came upon the single sentence in that biography which set into motion all of my work over the last year; "McKeon also worked with the Committee to Frame a World Constitution, although he refused to sign the final document, citing philosophical differences with the decisions the Committee had reached."

My mind raced, and I immediately began wondering about every aspect of this Committee's work. I wanted to know why I had never heard of this daring proposition, to secure future peace by uniting the entire world under one political constitution. I recognized that today the United Nations is a household name, also established in the wake of World War II, as a body of delegates representing global interests, addressing inhumane grievances, and striving to preserve human rights. But why was this group never mentioned in any of my history textbooks, or those of anyone I knew? What was the nature of McKeon's involvement with the Committee? And, most importantly, what were those philosophical differences that kept him from endorsing the final draft he had collaborated on?

The only information I could find was a brief journal article reviewing a book entitled *Foundations of the World Republic*. It was written by G.A. Borgese as an explanation of the philosophical motives for the Committee's work, and was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1953. The book concluded with a reprint of that final draft which McKeon refused to sign, and, sure enough, made not a single mention in the entire text of McKeon's name, not even as a former Committee member. Riddled with even more questions as to why that would be the case, I decided to formally investigate the matter and took a trip to the University of Chicago last summer to find as many answers as I could. Over the course of a week that July, I read over 4,000 pages of Committee meeting transcripts and records, and 2,000 pages more of the archived correspondence and papers of Richard McKeon. The following work is a presentation of the information I gathered from that research, and my subsequent querying.

This paper is the product of the author's inherent disdain for armed conflict, which his country has been engaged in, in one region of the world or another, essentially since the day of his birth, and his hope that one day rigorous argumentation and diplomatic finesse may replace the recourse to violence for the attainment of any ideal. This work has various aims, but they are rooted in the fundamental convictions that the work of the Committee to Frame a World Constitution should not be lost to history and that this information should not be restricted to brief summaries in university magazines or specialized texts on constitutional instruments because the Committee's analysis of the problems and possibilities associated with global governance can be utilized today as a means of furthering the currently stagnant development of binding international legislation.

In that vein, this work will revisit the particular attempt of the CFWC to establish universal concord in a time of complete acrimony by focusing upon the philosophical debates at

the heart of the Committee's work, arguments which were paradoxically recorded for posterity, but not public dissemination. This examination of the thoughtful conflict within a small group formed in response to the bleak political panorama of its day lends itself to drawing out some of the parallels and intersections with the diplomatic failings of the post-war era of the 1940s, and, consequently, a fuller grasp of the highly polarized perspectives and debates of the period, especially if there is any credence to the theories stating that there is more variance within a subgroup than between groups. Lastly, this work will connect Richard McKeon's distinct proposals for a world constitution, as a resolute minority-faction of one within the Committee, to elements of his broader, pluralistic system of thought in an effort to record his personal effort to put philosophy into action through a two-year-long project of significant import, mention of which is curiously absent from even his own "Spiritual Autobiography."\* I hope that this work, taken in its entirety, will rescue the successes imbedded in the failure of the Committee to come to unanimous agreement or transform the political landscape, impress upon the reader the magnitude of the work these men engaged in, and validate my contention that this practical application of McKeon's thought on the discussion and resolution of conflicts in society still bears upon the present-day attempts to communicate effectively with respect to the diversities that define the common human experience.

Since the loftiest of goals and best of intentions can rarely be realized without the aid of an expert guide, I must acknowledge Dr. Howard Ruttenger for his singularly tireless advisement and insightful instruction throughout the fulfillment of this project. I will forever be indebted to him for sharing his wealth and love of wisdom with me. Thank you.

Alberto Bravo

---

\* Reprinted as the first chapter of *Freedom and History and Other Essays: An Introduction to the Thought of Richard McKeon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

## Chapter 1

### The Crucible of War

*Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed; leaving the only path to be by way of crucible of war. We have had our last chance. If we do not now devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door.*

-- General Douglas A. MacArthur,  
02 September 1945

In 1939, the United States' political foreign policy was that of isolationism and accordingly appropriated only a small portion of human and other resources toward maintaining her military, but this would change with the dawning and burgeoning of World War II. Once she felt her security threatened by the seemingly indefatigable potency of the Axis war-machine, America developed her own powerful military-industrial complex to meet the demands of the war, even supplying the other Allies of Great Britain, China, France, and the Soviet Union with materiel through the practice of lend-lease. This rapid military mobilization and fortification initially re-established her security from foreign threats and ultimately secured the Allied path to victory. The United States' military might became the keystone of her post-war prosperity: she enjoyed a strong domestic economy and surplus capital while other nations were physically and economically ravaged; occupied the only industrially viable nation in the Pacific, Japan; exerted great influence upon the nations of Western Europe and their industrial reorganization; and held a monopoly on the atomic bomb and the methods of delivering it. Furthermore, America prospered in terms of prestige as she "was almost universally regarded as the disinterested champion of justice, freedom, and democracy."<sup>1</sup> The most notable dissenter to this generalized characterization of the United States' graciousness was the Soviet Union, which held an almost entirely contrary opinion. This discrepancy was just one of many points of divergence between the perspectives of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., which amounted to an ideological opposition of sufficient magnitude to transform the relationship between the two nations from one of allies with a common cause to that of bitter enemies.

The opposition between the two countries has its origins in the long-standing struggle between East and West over the land stretching from the Baltic to the Balkans, or East Europe. The United States became directly involved with this territory in 1919 when President Woodrow

---

<sup>1</sup> Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938* (New York: Penguin Group, 1997), 51.

Wilson attempted to deconstruct the Austro-Hungarian Empire and set up various capitalist democracies in its place. The U.S. implemented these governments, in part, to contain the communist influence of the Soviet Union, but the endeavor ultimately failed because of the fledgling regimes' lack of cooperation with one another. In addition, the United States in accordance with its neutral isolationist foreign policy did nothing to delay or prevent their collapse. Twenty short years later, even after Hitler had taken the Sudetenland, the United States maintained its formally neutral position, and Britain and France failed to take action against the Nazis at the Munich Conference. Shortly thereafter Hitler took the rest of Czechoslovakia, forcing the Soviet Union to sign the mutually beneficial Nazi-Soviet Pact: the non-aggression provisions protected Hitler's eastern front and kept the U.S.S.R. from having to fight Hitler alone, while other provisions were made for the division of East Europe between the Germans and Soviets.

Three months after forging his alliance with Russia, Hitler invaded Poland, and while the British and French did declare war on Germany, marking the beginning of World War II, they made no significant contribution to the liberation of East Europe. In turn, the Soviets invaded Poland from the east, fulfilling the Nazi-Soviet Pact by occupying the remainder of the country. When Germany decided to push eastward in the summer of 1941, effectively invading Soviet territory and engaging the Soviet Union in war, the Red Army was forced to repel the Nazis practically single-handedly. By the end of the war in 1945, the Soviets had fought the Nazis all the way back to Berlin, thereby emerging as the sole occupant of all East Europe, albeit at the cost of extremely heavy casualties. All told, Russia suffered approximately ten million casualties by the war's end. This figure is especially severe in contrast with combined American and

British losses, totaling 1.6 million, out of similar total population figures.<sup>2</sup> Given the mutual distrust arising from their opposed political philosophies, differing perspectives on which nation had contributed more to the Allied victory, and divergent positions on what this contribution merited in post-war authority and influence, these disparities contributed to the eventual collapse of the Grand Alliance and thrust the United States and Soviet Union into the Cold War.

Although much of the debate focused upon the future of East Europe, the Cold War brought to light two very distinct conceptualizations of the lines along which the postwar world should be reconstructed, along with the differences in history and political philosophy that informed those conflicting perspectives. The Yalta Conference of January 1945 focused upon two main issues: the establishment of boundaries and government structure in Poland and the extension of the Red Army into the Pacific theatre to help subdue Japan. Since American forces had rooted out the Japanese from the vast expanse of the Pacific and driven them back to their homeland, but could not secure the unconditional surrender it sought, the United States repeatedly pressed the Soviet Union through July to mobilize its forces against the Japanese. This is, of course, until the Americans successfully tested the first atomic bomb. Viewing the A-bomb as an incomparable military weapon, the American leadership was quickly won over by the idea that the weapon alone was sufficient to force Japan's surrender and save the lives of the countless American servicemen who would certainly perish in an offensive against the proud island-nation of Japan. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima and on the 9<sup>th</sup> the second bomb on Nagasaki, in anticipation of the pending Russian deployment on the Asian mainland. Less than a month later, realizing that fighting against an enemy with such an awesome weapon was futile, the Japanese surrendered and the war was over. Thereafter, in analyzing the American use of atomic weapons, although it was predominantly

---

<sup>2</sup> Blackett, *Atomic Weapons and East-West Relations* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 69.

considered the most expedient course of action for ending the war, some people also viewed the hasty deployment of the atomic bomb as a demonstration of American might and a statement of emancipation from Soviet alliance, calling it “the first major operation of the cold diplomatic war with Russia.”<sup>3</sup>

The issues surrounding Polish restructuring proved to be a great strain upon the diplomatic endeavors of both nations as well, contributing to the dissolution of the relationship between the two superpowers. At Yalta, Stalin agreed to permit free elections throughout East Europe, including Poland, whose government he also agreed to reorganize upon a broad base utilizing Poles from the London-based leadership in exile. From the American perspective, Poland was a necessary buffer keeping the Red Army at bay and out of the rest of Europe, and so the United States insisted on the development of a democratic capitalist state, friendly to Western interests, under her influence. Stalin’s position was precisely the opposite: throughout history, and specifically twice within the previous thirty years, Russia’s enemies have had to pass through Polish territory in an attempt to reach her, so Poland was an important buffer region that ought to remain in Soviet control for her own security. Furthermore, Stalin viewed the Polish industrial base as an important resource for him to utilize in restoring and revitalizing the war-ravaged Soviet economy and industrial sector.

Stalin never followed through on the Yalta agreements, although the United States expected him to, because doing so would have meant putting future Soviet security and prosperity at risk. In response to these dashed expectations, Americans took to Stalin with hostility, as a dictator with plans for world conquest steeped in his Marxist Communist philosophy. President Truman thereafter assumed a very hard line in diplomatic relations with the Soviets, insisted that his program for post-war reform was self-evidently good unlike that of

---

<sup>3</sup> Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, 47.

the oppressive Russian regime, and expected the Russians to eventually concede to his demands out of a need for American money or fear of American atomic power. Stalin refused to compromise on his position, utterly baffled that the Americans never attempted “to consider the interests of the Soviet Union in terms of security as well.”<sup>4</sup>

Each nation thereafter distrusted the other, suspicious of the other’s intentions or motives, and sought to strengthen its position, in part, by undermining elements of the other’s political philosophy. For example, at the London-based Council of Foreign Ministers in September 1945, a Soviet Foreign Service official by the name of Ivan M. Maisky sensed the British and American frustration with the Russian proposals for Eastern European governance and attempted an explanation of what Soviets meant by the term democracy. He implied that a major barrier to the Allies forming consensus and moving forward lay in the West’s confused understanding and utilization of the term. Maisky contrasted the Western demand for political democracies in the restructuring of Eastern Europe with the Soviet expectation for social democracies, and cited this as a continued source of friction. He furthered the proposal that, “for the sake of international harmony,” the West should cease objecting to the social democracies of the East and embrace the development of governments open to Soviet influence and guidance.<sup>5</sup>

Signs of the growing rift between the superpowers became apparent in the United States’ deliberately sabotaging the Soviet Union’s economic development. In May of 1945, Truman terminated the policy of lend-lease with her allies, and specifically placed an embargo on every shipment to the Soviets: forcing some ships bound for Russia to turn around mid-trip to be unloaded. Although this policy was promptly reversed, it indicated the American intention to cripple Soviet post-war reconstruction, which relied upon the continuation of American aid.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, 60

<sup>5</sup> Gormly, *The Collapse of the Grand Alliance: 1945-1948* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 29.

Earlier in the year, Stalin had called for a \$6 billion loan, but the United States refused to even acknowledge the request unless Stalin became more pliant in diplomatic relations. Later, Stalin appealed for a \$1 billion loan, but the State Department stalled for a few months until it proposed an exchange: the United States would loan the Soviets the money if they were willing to allow American industry and production in East Europe. Stalin swiftly rejected the proposal and implemented a drastic plan to hastily secure technical and economic independence from the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Despite their growing split, the two nations convened again at Potsdam in July of 1945 to discuss the occupation and redevelopment of Germany, but irreconcilable differences immediately surfaced and no important matters were settled. At Yalta, the United States, Great Britain, and Soviet Union had agreed to split Germany into four areas, one of which went to France, to be governed by a military commander as each nation saw fit. Together the commanders constituted the Allied Control Council, which would jointly decide, on the basis of unanimous decision, the appropriate procedure for restoring Germany. The British and Americans sought the reestablishment of a self-sufficient government and industry in Germany, while the French and Russians insisted upon maintaining Germany dismembered and impotent. Such divergent views could not be reconciled into anything remotely resembling a unanimous decision, leading Truman to decide that cooperation with the Soviets would be impossible and that he would have to rely more heavily upon the threat of American atomic retaliation to make the Soviet Union more sympathetic to American purposes. Predictably, this only fueled Soviet distrust of American aspirations and intentions, and, subsequently, both nations came to accept the reality of an ideologically divided world and the necessity of engaging in the Cold War.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, 63.

Although there is no reliable information regarding precisely when the Soviet atomic energy program commenced, given Stalin's resolve to achieve independence from American influence, technology, and money, Russian misgivings with American diplomacy, and the vast destructive capability of the atom bomb as demonstrated in Japan, it can be safely assumed that it began as early as 1945. The first successful Soviet test explosion was conducted approximately four years later in August of 1949: only a year longer than it took the Americans to achieve the same results, but at least a couple of years sooner than the most conservative American estimate of Soviet atomic proficiency.<sup>7</sup> This time span not only marked the end of the American monopoly on atomic arms, it also witnessed the rapid disintegration of the mutual support upholding the Grand Alliance, and thus the bitter dawn of the Cold War.

It was within this unstable post-war atmosphere of diminishing diplomatic relations and increasing international tensions that Giuseppe Antonio Borgese and Richard Peter McKeon, on 16 September 1945, wrote to their Chancellor at the University of Chicago, Robert Maynard Hutchins, concerning the prospect of an imminent nuclear holocaust and proposing their solution: a Preliminary Project of a World Constitution.<sup>8</sup> In their letter, they foreshadowed the proliferation of atomic armaments that would characterize the progression of the Cold War, the futility of using atomic weapons as deterrents to war in the place of skillful negotiation, and the absolute catastrophe that would ensue if they were to be utilized in reciprocal massive retaliation. Fearing they had little time before the situation escalated to such a level, Borgese and McKeon proposed undertaking the task of drafting a constitution which would be amenable to both the American and Russian perspective, thus securing stability and peace between the great powers, their spheres of influence, and the world. Hopeful that the two men could accomplish this

---

<sup>7</sup> Blackett, *Atomic Weapons and East-West Relations*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Borgese and McKeon to Hutchins, 16 September 1945, *Collected Papers of Richard P. McKeon*, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL. See Appendix I: Initial Correspondence.

proposed project, Hutchins immediately approved and provided Borgese and McKeon with University funding.

It would turn out to be quite the undertaking, because some of the same issues that beleaguered the international attempts to restore peaceful relations among nations would overwhelm the Committee to Frame a World Constitution at Chicago in less than two years. Borgese and McKeon would have to contend with their own divergent definitions of justice, freedom, democracy, and peace; distinct conceptualizations of the particular functions that a world government should have and the precise formulation of the organs of government that would enact those purposes; and the war of words into which their conciliatory dialogue would collapse.

## Chapter 2

### The Committee to Frame a World Constitution

*Truth does not win over error just on its merits. It, too, must be assiduously propagated.*

-- George F. Kennan in *Russia, the Atom, and the West*.

Men have conceived of and disputed various forms of governance, including world government, for as long as they have recognized the necessity of living together in some sort of community. In the Western tradition, world government has found fervent advocates, as well as ardent dissenters, throughout the ages. The Stoics of antiquity believed in the fraternity of men, contrasted the pettiness of local or national issues with the importance of the concerns that pertain to all mankind, and, accordingly, promoted the development of cosmopolitan men and a single world-state.<sup>9</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, horrified by the repercussions of national wars, endorsed the establishment of a world federal government to unite the nations under law and secure lasting concord.<sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant, believing in the fundamental dignity of all men and detesting the immorality of warfare, argued for the establishment of a global republican federation to attain perpetual peace.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, St. Augustine held that only the universal governance of God over the community of saints would establish true peace and justice, not any form of temporal human authority.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Reinhold Niebuhr believed that the faults of human nature tend to elaborate themselves in the organization of governments, and consequently the formation of an international world power would hinder the development of true communities as it encroached upon the authority of God.<sup>13</sup>

Proposals for world government have typically been propagated as a solution to the problem of securing lasting peace between nations, modeled upon the established institutions of authority that have organized peace among men within states, and expected to unite all individuals on the basis of their shared humanity. A common government, by drawing upon the powers the distinct nations would cede to it, would align the disparate political entities of the

---

<sup>9</sup> Seneca, *De Otio*; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

<sup>10</sup> *A Lasting Peace through the Federation of Europe*

<sup>11</sup> *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*

<sup>12</sup> *City of God*

<sup>13</sup> *The Irony of American History*

world and direct its efforts, by means of universal legislation and enforcement, toward simultaneously freeing all of mankind from the violence of the Hobbesian state of nature and establishing irenic human relations as the new status quo.

The demand for such enduring, positive international peace intensified in the years immediately following the vast destruction caused by World War II, when the prospect of nuclear holocaust and global demise seemed, to many, more of a grave eventuality than a despairing possibility. By the end of the 1940s, there were approximately seventy organizations around the globe committed to the formulation of a practical means of implementing world government. Collectively, these groups counted hundreds of thousands of members and, along with nearly a quarter of the representatives from the British Parliament and United States Congress who supported resolutions that favored a global federation, garnered widespread popular interest in the movement to establish world government.<sup>14</sup>

The foremost organization in the world government movement was the United World Federalists, which envisioned the formation of a global federal authority that would assert political and military power beyond national boundaries through a contractual agreement among the extant sovereign nations. They held that a single world state or empire established through any form of power politicking or conquest could only provide a provisional truce at best, if at all. At the University of Chicago, the World Federalists joined forces with the Atomic Scientists of Chicago, which sought to establish international control of atomic weapons and nuclear energy as a means of averting the threat of nuclear war and stabilizing post-war diplomacy, and were exceedingly vocal in reaction to the University's direct involvement in the development of the atomic bomb. Together, these two activist organizations exerted a great deal of influence upon campus discourse, and, consequently, upon Chancellor Hutchins' decision to approve, fund, and

---

<sup>14</sup> Wapner, *Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 27.

preside over the Committee to Frame a World Constitution as an expression of his own convictions regarding the necessity of a world government.<sup>15</sup>

Cohesion was lacking, however, within the World Federalist organization because of divergent views on the kind of world government they ought to pursue. There existed two factions, for which the media coined the terms *maximalist* and *minimalist*. The distinction hinged upon the scope and powers of the central authority to be established, where the former group insisted upon a complete and comprehensive federation while the latter sought a form of authority that only maintained peace between the nations. The opposed formulation of ends characterizing the debate within the World Federalists organization, as a fundamental problem with which the Committee to Frame a World Constitution also had to contend, was eventually imputed to the distinct views and intense disputes within the CFWC at Chicago.<sup>16</sup>

The CFWC brought together thirteen of the intelligentsia from the faculties of prestigious North American universities under two key beliefs: first, that the organization of a world government was possible precisely because it was necessary, and, second, that the formulation of a constitution amenable to all nation-states was an instrumental prerequisite for such a global organization. They were: Mortimer Adler, Professor of Philosophy of Law at the University of Chicago; Stringfellow Barr, President of St. John's College; Albert Guerard, Professor of Humanities from Stanford University; Harold Innis, Chair of the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto; Erich Kahler, from the New School for Social Research in New York; Wilber G. Katz, Dean of the School of Law at the University of Chicago; James McCauley Landis, former Dean of the School of Law from Harvard University; Charles H. McIlwain, Professor Emeritus of the Science of Government at Harvard University; Robert

---

<sup>15</sup> Wilcox, *Robert Redfield and the Development of American Anthropology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 84.

<sup>16</sup> Cessna, Ralph W. "Government Mapped for 'One World'," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18 July 1946.

Redfield, Dean of the Social Sciences Division at the University of Chicago; and Rexford G. Tugwell, Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago.<sup>17</sup> They were led by the Chancellor of the University of Chicago, Robert Maynard Hutchins, as President of the Committee; Richard Peter McKeon, Dean of the Humanities Division at the University of Chicago, as acting Chairman of the Committee; and Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, Professor in the Humanities Division at the University of Chicago, as Secretary of the Committee.<sup>18</sup>

From November of 1945 to July of 1947, the CFWC held thirteen conferences, meeting either in New York City or in Chicago.<sup>19</sup> As was decided within the organizational correspondence between Committee members prior to, and during, the first conference, the Committee would initiate its work with the adumbration of general principles, objectives, questions, and problems to be resolved, refraining from precisely deciding such issues. Accordingly, on the first day of the second conference, two reports were presented to the Committee: the McKeon/Adler Report, which disambiguated the various forms of world government that the group could seek to implement, and the Landis Report, which examined the minimum quantity of authority that must be delegated to a central federal government to ensure it can function effectively and achieve its objectives. The issue of the sovereignty to provide to the central government vis-à-vis the autonomy of the various states, nations, or regions would be debated thoroughly for the next year, but the Committee unanimously agreed from the outset that their aim should be drafting a constitution framing a “world federal government” which would

---

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> William E. Hocking, emeritus professor of Natural Religion, Moral Philosophy, and Civil Polity from Harvard; Beardsley Ruml, Treasurer of R.H. Macy and Co. and Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York; and Reinhold Niebuhr, professor of applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary, were also committee members. They withdrew, at different points for various reasons, shortly after the inaugural phase. – G.A. Borgese, “Document #127: Brief History of the Committee,” 24 March 1947, Series II: Box 18; Folder 8, Pages 4-5. *Records of the Committee to Frame a World Constitution*, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix II: CFWC Conferences.

facilitate “progressive political changes” while avoiding the promulgation of hostility and bloodshed.<sup>20</sup>

Despite their plan to focus upon the enumeration of issues to be resolved later, the Committee entered its first heated debate on the second day of the second conference, reaching such an impasse that a motion to postpone ended the session. Early on in the meeting, Borgese submitted for the Committee’s consideration a complete preliminary draft of a world constitution, which he took the liberty of preparing on his own over the preceding three months, effectively creating a problem of how to continue for the Committee. Seeing the problem as a matter of procedure and thus his duty to rectify, Chairman McKeon attempted to lead the group to a resolution. However, while he tried to reconcile the Committee’s original arrangement with a prompt consideration of Borgese’s work, the group became entangled in a philosophical debate regarding what a practical constitution would entail in contrast with an ideal one and which set of principles the world was ready to accept. The Committee began to splinter in the ensuing argument along the lines of individual preferences for or against a *minimalist* or *maximalist* Constitution, and McKeon had no choice but to forward a motion to adjourn which carried, concluding the inaugural conference of the CFWC.

This fragmentation of the Committee according to theoretical approaches was both the first hurdle as well as the perennial impediment to the Committee’s attempts at productive collaboration, and it incited the development of subsequent divergences that culminated with McKeon’s refusal to endorse the Committee’s conclusions. By March of 1946, the differences of opinion on the theoretical bases of the constitution within the group peaked as the Committee moved toward materializing their ideas in a concrete document. The controversy reached a frenzy during discussion of specific proposals for the development of the Legislative branch of

---

<sup>20</sup> Borgese, “Document #127: Brief History of the Committee 1945-1947”, 6.

the government, where the majority in the Committee, led by Borgese, insisted upon a federal union approximating a single world state with a powerful central government and the reorganization of extant nations into nine regional districts, while McKeon preferred a federation organized as a sort of compromise between a league and a strict federal union with no prescription for regional realignment. Further differences were hashed out over the power and responsibility of the Executive, the basis for representation in legislative bodies and the criteria for citizenship and suffrage, and the articulation of values or ideals throughout the instrument. Because of just how antithetical these distinct views were on so many critical issues, the Committee decided that whichever members felt up to the task should draw up their own draft constitutions, and they would subsequently be evaluated and compared.

By May of 1946, Adler, Borgese, Guerard, McKeon, and Tugwell had written up either sketches or full drafts of a world constitution according to their particular principles and preferences. The differences and concordances between the various works were studied in turn, and each author had the opportunity to justify the formulations contained in his proprietary draft by articulating the ideas and methods framing his work. This approach to the task led the Committee to realize that there were now five rather distinct positions on the table, a marked increase over the two generic differences previously dividing the group, inspiring the group to again change procedural methods and debate the distinct organs of a world government; Legislative, Judiciary, and Executive. By January of 1947, after having submitted five drafts of a constitution on his own, Borgese collaborated with Adler to create a compromise document, Constitution One Hundred Thirteen. This became the sole draft in consideration, over McKeon's objections, in respect to which all varying perspectives would be examined and subsequent compromises amended.

While the Committee's consensus upon the merits of the basic principles and instrumentalities of Constitution 113 grew, McKeon outspokenly contested this development because he was at odds with the procedural regression to consideration of a single document and was of a completely different mind regarding certain fundamental elements of Constitution 113, such as the "muscle-bound" Executive branch and the artificially implemented division of the world into nine regions.<sup>21</sup> McKeon's single approach stood in antithetical opposition to the majority of the Committee's approval of the document, and in subsequent meetings the tension between Committee members became overt. Some members held that only McKeon could understand McKeon, McKeon remarked that certain members lacked the intellectual wherewithal to comprehend his methods,<sup>22</sup> and McKeon was increasingly barred from sharing his thoughts, which were characterized on the whole as an "attack."<sup>23</sup> Consequently, McKeon's point of view was not incorporated into Constitution 113, or its revision, Constitution 141. As a point of fact, McKeon was not even in attendance for the thirteenth conference of July 1947, when the Committee approved Constitution One Hundred Forty Four, its final draft of a preliminary constitution, which was essentially the second revision of Constitution 113. Either unable or unwilling to resolve the differences between them, in August of 1947 Borgese and McKeon exchanged correspondence wherein the latter refused to endorse the former's work<sup>24</sup> and, in turn, the former formally excludes the latter from further participation in the Committee.<sup>25</sup>

Constitution 144, which came to be called either the "Preliminary Draft" or the "Chicago Draft", was published by the University of Chicago Press for the first time in the March 1948

---

<sup>21</sup> Series VI: Box 55; Folder 2, Page 229. *Records of the Committee to Frame a World Constitution*.

<sup>22</sup> Borgese, "Document 127: Brief History of the Committee 1945-1947", 11a.

<sup>23</sup> VI: 55; 3, 252. *Records of the C.F.W.C.*

<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that Landis also refused to endorse the Committee's final draft.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix III: Final Correspondence.

edition of its journal, *Common Cause*. The Draft was reproduced in the *Bulletin of The Atomic Scientists* as well as the *Saturday Review of Literature*,<sup>26</sup> and eventually circulated over a million copies in 40 different languages. However, it was vehemently censured by both American and Russian press outlets,<sup>27</sup> exercised little direct political influence, and was never taken into serious consideration by the United Nations, which the Draft called upon to make the model plan into concrete reality. Furthermore, the University of Chicago Press ceased funding *Common Cause* after June of 1951, coinciding with the end of Hutchins' term as University Chancellor, and the Chicago Draft faded from prominence as the Cold War between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. escalated, and became, to use John W. Boyer's expression, "little more than an interesting historic footnote."

---

<sup>26</sup> Wilcox, Robert Redfield and the Development of American Anthropology, 85.

<sup>27</sup> Boyer, John W. "Drafting Salvation," *University of Chicago Magazine*, Vol. 88, No. 2, December 1995.

### Chapter 3

Borgese *contra* McKeon

*Accordingly, those who are to join in some discussion must understand each other to some extent. And if this does not happen, how will they join in a common discussion?*

-- Aristotle, Metaphysics XI, v

The brevity of the letter McKeon wrote to Borgese on 26 August 1947, wherein McKeon refuses to endorse the work of the Committee and induces Borgese to formally exclude him from the group's further activities, conceals the variety and complexity of the disagreements which led McKeon to express, "the stenotyped records of our [Committee] meetings are full of reasons why I should find it impossible to sign."<sup>28</sup> In his memorandum, McKeon takes issue with particular elements of the draft constitution, such as the utilization of the language of Natural Law and the implementation of a strong Executive, as well as the general character of the document, especially in its tendency toward a single unitary state and in failing to adequately address the economic and ideological issues upon which McKeon felt future global legal problems would turn. However, this summary is situated between two references back to the transcripts of the group's meetings, which record intact the arguments of all Committee members over the matters pertaining to their common task and reveal the distinctness of McKeon's thought on the articulation of a world constitution. The stenotyped records of those meetings show that McKeon was of a different mind from the majority of the group on the preponderance of the issues considered, spanning problems such as the definition and priority of the principles of justice, peace, and security, the representation or suffrage of citizens, the objectives which inform the essential organization and functionality of a federal union, the scope of the Legislative, power of the Executive, and rationale of the Judiciary branches, and the nature of the constitution as an instrument as well as the ends to which it should be oriented. To make sense of the many particular differences between the principles, means, and ends in the documents which Borgese and McKeon respectively wrote and defended, an examination of the philosophic bases of their opposed approaches and thought will become necessary to determine the source of the systematic antagonism which defined the work of the Committee to Frame a World Constitution.

---

<sup>28</sup> McKeon to Borgese, 26 August 1947. *Records of the C.F.W.C.* II: 18; 8.

As stated above, the different members of the Committee were initially united under certain tenets regarding the task that lay ahead of them, including the necessity of drafting a constitution that develops a world federal government aimed at staving off an impending nuclear war and cataclysm. Accordingly, Adler and McKeon were tasked with drafting the first report presented to the Committee in December of 1945, which adequately defined and disambiguated the essential features of a world federal government from the other varieties of governmental structuring that could be pursued so that the group could develop a frame of reference and vocabulary with which to proceed. The Adler-McKeon report isolated four principal forms of international governance with three subtypes: A) an alliance formed by coalitional treaty of a plurality of independent states; B) a league of independent sovereign states, whether universal or B1) less than all nations; C) a world federal union, whether unrestricted or C1) restricted along lines of geographical and economic unity or C2) lines of political uniformity; and D) a world unitary state. Alliances by treaty are agreements between states for the accomplishment of a specific purpose through concerted action, without the institution of extra-national authorities or powers. Leagues by charter are contracts between states to create a non-sovereign political institution, international to the extent of its authority, for the regulation of international relationships or activities. A league does not necessarily prevent the formation of alliances between league members, so alliances and leagues are not mutually exclusive forms of world governance. On the other hand, the federal union and unitary state *are* exclusive forms of government because of a fundamental difference in the source of derivation of sovereignty and authority, not necessarily internal structure. This is because the federal union would divide the governmental authority between units which enter the federation and the world government such that both the federating units and central government have limited sovereignty and that

sovereignty is popularly derived in both cases. The unitary state is of the same foundational structure as the federal union, excepting the derivation of sovereignty because it entails popular origination of the central government but the subsidiary or dependent authority of the penultimate units. In the federal structure these largest units of local government would operate according to proprietary constitutional charters and have publically elected officials, while in the unitary structure the central government creates the subunits by grant or charter, appoints officials to those subsidiary divisions, and retains the power to alter or abolish a subdivision through legislative action. The report ended with an assessment that the most probable course of action, given the previous and current failures of alliances between states and the tentative potential of a nascent United Nations, would be the gradual transition from a partial league to a complete federal union, with the possibility of the latter eventually developing into a world unitary state.

What the discussion of the Adler-McKeon report made explicit is that in developing a constitution, the objectives or purposes and functions of government chosen as essential by the Committee in its initial phase would have a direct bearing upon the selection of one form of government over the others thereafter, which in turn would inform the indispensable features and content of the final constitutional instrument. However, just as the group was ready to discuss the general problems to be addressed regarding the selection of necessary functions and purposes in reference to the common lexicon of forms and terms established by the report, Borgese submitted his constitutional draft of forty one articles for the Committee to consider, stating that he hoped the draft could serve as a stimulus for further discussion and elaboration. Apart from encountering difficulties on issues of definition and usage in the previous discussion regarding distinct forms of government, which is in fact a good sign given that disputes indicate fertile

ground for further dialogue, the Committee was not lacking in either direction or content for discussion or elaboration, so it is difficult to understand why Borgese would submit an independently developed instrument under the guise of a catalyst.<sup>29</sup> This maneuver had an immediate adverse effect upon the Committee's progress, precipitating an argument that forced the group to adjourn the session early, and also affected the eventual outcome of the Committee's work, since the final draft constitution which the majority of the group endorsed in July of 1947 can be directly traced back through its various evolutions to Borgese's first draft of December 1945.

Another development prompted by Borgese's submission was the articulation of competing constitutional drafts, whether complete or in outline form, by Adler, Guerard, McKeon, and Tugwell through May of 1946. On one hand, the Committee could be commended for the historic flurry of productivity this entails, since it is a rare occurrence for humanity to entertain five concurrent, coherent, competing proposals for the attainment of world peace. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that this formal fractioning of the group led to the immense obstacles the Committee thereafter faced in trying to compare and combine such distinct formulations of organization and function. Adler eventually collaborated with Borgese in penning a single constitution that won over Guerard, Tugwell, and all the other members excepting Landis; leaving McKeon's complete draft, in revised short and long forms, in sole opposition to the Adler-Borgese draft.

McKeon himself stated that the main frame of his constitution was quite similar to the other structure in consideration, but that there were differences of organization resulting from

---

<sup>29</sup> It is possible that Borgese felt the pressure of producing a preliminary constitution within a year as he had initially proposed, and therefore was motivated to foster discussion in the sense of pressing the Committee's pace. See *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 55; 1, 69-70.

quite distinct enumerations of purposes.<sup>30</sup> McKeon was more concerned with establishing the minimum objectives of inter-national and intra-national peace and security through the diplomatic dialogue spurred and guided by his constitution than with enumerating and prescribing the various ideals and responsibilities which any nation would have to adopt in order to join the world government, as Borgese's draft did. For McKeon, agreement upon these minimum objectives would open channels of discourse and communication bearing on the gradual development, promotion, provision, and enactment of international legislation, judicial arbitration, and plans for the amelioration of disputes, suppression of breaches of peace, and improvement of living conditions through the equitable protection of human rights and basic freedoms: the essential purposes of a world government. In comparison, Borgese held to an idealistic line, insisting that fraternal justice is the prerequisite of peace, and peace, in turn, the precondition for the advancement of man, which led him to develop a constitution that listed an homogenous set of beliefs and values which every nation-state would have to adhere to in order to enter into the central power of the world government as a constituent area of a derivatively sovereign region, thereby controlling the formal development of the world government. These norms prescribed the variety of justice and kinds of rights that all regions would be responsible for instituting and protecting for their citizens, and dictated the organization of, and relationship between, states insofar as it demanded the immediate consolidation of previously sovereign nations into nine regional associations.

The antagonism between the broad sweep of Borgese's and McKeon's approaches could be taken as a manifestation of the *maximalist* versus *minimalist* dilemma, but such terms oversimplify the variance over issues at hand by expressing distinctness in respect to the statement of ideals, specifically those of the Western democratic bent. In that sense, Borgese's constitution

---

<sup>30</sup> *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 52; 3, 4.

did embody a maximum of stated ideals for nations and peoples to recognize and adhere to, while McKeon's did so at a bare minimum. If the same terms were utilized in reference to the articulation of means for coming to consensus, or realistic practicability in a world of tense ideological opposition, McKeon's constitution was maximal and Borgese's virtually non-existent. Therefore, the proper sense in which to view their differences would be as a continuation of the historically prevalent dispute between the use of the utopian ideals of Plato and the particular ideals of Aristotle, or the creation of a strict unitary state like Machiavelli's in contrast to the permissive plurality Spinoza envisioned. The varieties of philosophical ideals and ends of organization in political considerations are not necessarily in opposition, and can be accommodated in the conception or reform of national and international political constitutions, as will be shown in the next chapter.

Borgese's constitution, by directing the structural manifestation of the world government into a unitary state, was of a more coercive nature in both form and purpose than McKeon's, which sought to "effect a compromise between a federation and a confederation," a league and a federal union in the language of the Adler-McKeon report, that created a framework for the elaboration of fundamental agreements by providing ample latitude for varying interpretations of values.<sup>31</sup> This freedom of interpretation, along with the necessity of ever-evolving dialogue, was critical to McKeon's conceptualization of a constitution as an instrument that could guide the nations in coming to concurrence upon the precise nature of the world government they would erect for themselves and the particular conditions to be satisfied for entry into this federation. The consensus which McKeon sought, grounded in human sensibilities and the basic similarities

---

<sup>31</sup> *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 52; 3, 4. McKeon's insistence against a unitary government, having only one point of contact with the public in its attainment of power and defined by the derivation of local powers from the central government, in part stemmed from his belief in the "inefficiency of large-scale government, even on the scale of the United States, and more so on the scale of the world," and the "necessity of cultural diversification." *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 54; 2, 43a-44a.

between men that are obscured by the labels of communist or democrat,<sup>32</sup> would avert the bifurcation of the world according to distinct economic or political lines and encourage reform modifications in each group which would create reciprocal acceptance and further likenesses between the ideologies of the East and the West.<sup>33</sup>

The disparity between the forms of Borgese's and McKeon's respective drafts extended into the constituent functions, organs, and articles of their documents, including the preamble, rights and duties, grant of powers, federal convention, legislative, executive, and judiciary. Both Borgese and McKeon wrote preambles that articulated the general spirit and intent behind the scope and purpose of the government they sought to establish, embodying their mutual desires to institute justice, peace, and security in the world for all of mankind. Where the two men and their preambles differed was on the order in which these principles were to be implemented, and the means by which to do so. For Borgese, who believed that justice was a necessary condition for true peace and that peace in turn was essential to the excellence of mankind, these ends were to be attained through the agreement of the disparate nation-states to order themselves under his notion of justice as fraternal love, wherein all nations would surrender their arms, into a single government. In contrast, McKeon sought the attainment of an initial armistice that could develop into global security and peace in justice as well as the advancement of living conditions for mankind, through the communication which the mechanisms of his constitution would facilitate.

The question that looms large in a reading of Borgese's preamble is precisely how Borgese expected the nation-states to come to agreement upon his constitution. We know there

---

<sup>32</sup> McKeon articulates his belief in a universal philosophy, embodying the fundamental values that manifest in common themes of discussion and rights to which every individual *qua* human being is entitled, in various essays on human rights, mankind, and rhetoric. See, for instance, "A Philosophy for UNESCO" and "The Philosophic Bases and Material Circumstances of the Rights of Man" of 1948, "Communication, Truth, and Society" of 1957, "Mankind: The Relation of Reason to Action" and "Philosophy and Human Rights" of 1964, "Knowledge, Community and Communication" of 1971, *et al.*

<sup>33</sup> This approach to the development of a world constitution, grounded in communication as generative of innovative governmental organs and operations, is markedly distinct from the approaches that rely exclusively upon either the reconciliation of existing nation-states or the translation of intellectual ideals in the political realm. For more on McKeon's operational method, see *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 52; 3, 155-156; VI: 53; 1, 84; VI: 53; 2, 11-17; and VI: 55; 1, 84-98.

were other difficulties, such as the ones indicated by the doubts McKeon articulated in his letter of 26 August 1947 regarding the excessive ambiguity of the notion of justice and the tendency toward a unitary government. Furthermore, McKeon had expressed his opposition to the proposal for the complete and immediate submission of national armaments to the world government, although he was in favor of the diminution of munitions, because he thought that such a decision would be imprudent on the behalf of any national leader, and therefore a definite point of contention if included in their constitution.<sup>34</sup> If the creation of Borgese's world government rested upon the consent of the nations to participate in this radically new organization, then it remains to be seen how he intended to reconcile, at the very least, the increasingly hostile positions of the United States and the Soviet Union to his proposal without relying upon his belief in the self-evident necessity or enlightenment of his formulation. In contrast, McKeon's sensitivity to the difficulty of producing a document that was both practicable and salable led him to formulate a federal union which would simultaneously create a world government while also preserving the political power of regional governments over pertinent jurisdictional matters. Such a constitution, by respecting the historical autonomy of sovereign states and the necessity of a world government to prevent a relapse into global conflict, would have enabled the nations to enter into a new dialogue for developing points of synergy, voluntary associations, and eventual ratification.<sup>35</sup> It is from this point of view that McKeon criticized Borgese's work for being "oriented too closely to a single ideology to elicit the sympathy and support of all the philosophies of the world."<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 53; 3, 115-133.

<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that before Borgese was nominated by Hutchins for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1952 on account of his work with the Committee to Frame a World Constitution, McKeon advised the American delegations to first three sessions of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), co-founded its International Institute of Philosophy, and helped synthesize the prerequisite agreement for the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

<sup>36</sup> McKeon to Borgese, 26 August 1947. *Records of the C.F.W.C.*

In the article on the rights and duties of the world government, the principal debate was over the issue of introducing mention of a Natural law in reference to which the government would operate. While Borgese utilized such language in his draft as a guiding principle for the advancement of mankind, McKeon said that “there is no such thing as natural law” and therefore such a moral law, as a controversial philosophical doctrine, had no place in his constitution.<sup>37</sup> While the Committee members conceived of this as a historical reference to the formulation of immanent principles that would help shape the future development of jurisprudence in their world government on a universal basis according to principles of justice, McKeon conceived of it as a supposition of a vague pre-existing rule which would introduce avoidable conflicts in the necessary formulation of a new conception of positive law to guide an historically unprecedented form of international governance in achieving the specific ends of the Twentieth century. For the fulfillment of such a meta-purpose, McKeon proposed the formal statement of essential accomplishments for the federation to achieve through an enumeration of the specific rights it would recognize and protect, and the addition of a function to the government which would charge it with creating or integrating institutions that facilitate the articulation of and provision for varying conceptualizations of freedom which can be understood as inherent in any right.<sup>38</sup> In this scheme, assuming a federal structure, some of the responsibility for achieving these common ends would fall upon the constituent nation-states, permitting them to retain their respective techniques while also setting objective standards by which to judge their progress in establishing and protecting fundamental rights and freedoms. From McKeon’s perspective, characterized as an “entirely different approach to the problem of constitution-making” in Hutchins’ estimation,<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 54; 3, 3c.

<sup>38</sup> See the various treatments McKeon gives to the notion of freedom in both “Discussion and Resolution in Political Conflicts” and “Freedom and History: The Semantics of Philosophical Controversies and Ideological Conflicts”.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* VI: 55; 3, 268.

the language of Natural law was “an incongruous excrescence” upon a revolutionary constitution. Moreover, it was language which he would not use “to express confidence in human rights in the twentieth century,” since it did not facilitate or allow for “differences of interpretation concerning [the] philosophic bases” of a constitution.<sup>40</sup>

On the question of the grant of powers, the allowance of distinct potencies to the federal government generally and the legislative particularly, Borgese advocated an unrestricted, broad sweep of power on most measures of a wide-ranging or enduring nature, while McKeon preferred an initially limited grant of powers in relation to the specific purposes of establishing peace and security. For Borgese, this approach entailed permitting the central government of the unitary state to prescribe the administration of, relations between, and activities within local communities, insofar as any nation or group considered non-compliant with the spirit or letter of the constitution in the just advancement of mankind would stand judicial judgment. If the nation were to continue its unconstitutional activities, the central government also enjoyed the power to utilize either police force to impose compliance or legal recourse to dissolve that state or group.<sup>41</sup> In short, the central government would retain ultimate say over all activities in Borgese’s world state. McKeon’s restricted approach, in contrast, would declare a specific function and permit the federal government to accrue funds by means of taxation, loans, or possibly coining money, in order to see that purpose through to its fulfillment. Likewise, it could raise the armed forces, assume command of all atomic weapons and materiel, and create federal tribunals. By focusing upon the provision of specific legislative functions and sufficient monetary means, McKeon

---

<sup>40</sup> McKeon to Borgese, 26 August 1947, *Records of the C.F.W.C.* This position may have been baffling to his confreres on the Committee, given McKeon’s renown as an Aristotelian and medievalist, who might have expected him to support the language of natural law in the same vein as he appreciated the philosophers to which the tradition is attributed. Yet, McKeon’s position on natural law might not have been surprising, novel, or antithetical to them if they were familiar with McKeon’s distinctive understanding of Aristotle instead of following a neo-Aristotelian interpretation, or his analysis of Aristotle’s political methodology, in “Discussion and Resolution in Political Conflicts”, as circumstantial, which does not lend itself well to the utopian ideal of a single, rational, universal law such as natural law. This will be treated in the subsequent chapter of this work.

<sup>41</sup> *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 53; 2, 86.

hoped to found the government upon an operational basis that would develop with time to address the various tasks necessary for improving national and international conditions and relations. He thought that an initially restricted grant of powers would sidestep the problems associated with attempting to predict all of the powers that an effective, mature government could need or the precise nature of the activities it ought to sanction in a blanket grant. McKeon expected that his proposal would also avoid the “great difficulties” involved in bringing the distinct nation-states to agree over the precise enumeration of various extensive potencies as articulated in Borgese’s grant of powers.<sup>42</sup>

The debate regarding the grant of powers was also closely interconnected with the dispute over the desirability and feasibility of a unitary state as opposed to a federal government, since the Committee’s selection of one form of authority over another has direct implications for the organization and procedure of the founding convention it would establish. Further, this critical decision would have a bearing on the kind and extent of powers said convention would bestow upon the government it put into effect, and therefore on the rights and responsibilities of every individual on earth. McKeon expressed his disapproval of antecedently and dogmatically reorganizing the world into regional associations according to arbitrary criteria by arguing that, among other issues, it would introduce a fundamental problem that the members themselves could not come to unanimous agreement upon.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the unitary state that the Committee was leaning toward, by circumventing popular suffrage in selecting the representatives of the regional governments and the chief representatives of the principal organs of the central government, undermined McKeon’s belief in upholding the principles of self-

---

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* VI: 53; 2, 88.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* VI: 54; 3, 26-28c.

determination and justice.<sup>44</sup> McKeon instead argued for the creation of a federal union out of the voluntary agreements and associations of individual nations, or areas therein, through the constitutional articulation of devices for regional developments, and insisted upon the protection of universal suffrage rights for the election of local, national, and federal representatives and leaders.

As indicated above, the scope of powers to be attributed to the legislative branch in both men's drafts was quite distinct; moreover, the proposed structures and composition of this pivotal governmental organ were also in complete opposition. From the first draft of his constitution, Borgese sought to devise criteria of citizenship or suffrage allotments that would be explicitly stated in his constitution to ensure certain proportions of representatives in the legislative assembly. He did this out of fear that, in an un-weighted scheme, the sheer numbers of other peoples would crush Anglo-American influence and that such influence would thereafter fail to exercise its "tradition" of political "contribution."<sup>45</sup> The expression of this bias in his final draft can be found in both the partition of the world into nine regional associations, manifestly dividing the northern hemisphere from the southern, and, the "fanciful mathematics" as McKeon put it,<sup>46</sup> in qualifications of population and sovereignty dictating the entitlement to representation in the first federal convention.<sup>47</sup> Thereafter the convention delegates would elect the President, the representatives of the legislative Council, the minority interest Tribune, and most of the armed forces' Guardians.

McKeon proposed, to counter the discrimination of artificially imposed inequalities of peoples, a plural approach to the composition of the federal convention and the functional

---

<sup>44</sup> McKeon to Borgese, 26 August 1947. *Records of the C.F.W.C.*

<sup>45</sup> *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 53; 1

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* VI: 52; 3, 26.

<sup>47</sup> "Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution" (revised), Appendix, *Foundations of the World Republic*, G.A. Borgese.

interrelation of a bicameral legislative assembly, both founded upon the rule of universal suffrage, one vote per person. His constitution articulated the mechanisms by which extant nations could either federate or federalize to participate in the federal government, where the former term denotes amalgamation with another nation while the latter signifies the division of a nation into various states, based on population figures. He envisioned that the extant nations could thereby reorganize themselves into the associations they saw as most expedient or natural, which would simultaneously serve as the basis for future voluntary development into larger regions and the basis for a bicameral legislative body consisting of directly elected representatives. In this fundamental governmental body, the upper house would further the interests of the larger associations of states and hold the strict legislative power of drafting and passing laws, but the lower house, defending the interests of the various minority associations, would serve a deliberative or consultative function and, consequently, retain the power of a restricted veto. This would enable the legislature to discuss and resolve complex issues from distinct perspectives to ensure that whatever legislation passed would satisfy, in some fashion, the competing political notions of improvement in social, economic, and cultural conditions as a foundation for the rapid amelioration of conflicts and the achievement of peace. McKeon was open to the modification of the precise numbers needed for federation, federalization, the passage of legislation, and the veto thereof; but always insisted upon the direct election of representatives through popular appointment. He did so out of a conviction that universal suffrage was the ideal toward which human interests and rights have historically tended, and was therefore an appropriate principle for inclusion in a revolutionary constitution around which the world could rally. Given Borgese's insistence against the inclusion of a legislative body according to McKeon's scheme as a "racket,"<sup>48</sup> and the close interconnection of the appointment

---

<sup>48</sup> *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 54; 3, 34d.

of the executive with that of the legislative in his own, a concurrent issue of contention was over the nature of the executive to be instituted.

Borgese called for the establishment of a strong executive consisting of a President, who would, in turn, choose his Chancellor and Cabinet, independent of the legislative body and with wide-ranging powers of appointment, legislative initiative, and veto. As an alternative, McKeon proposed a plural executive, a presidium headed by a Prime Minister, which would deliberate on urgent issues of security and peace in a responsible relation to the legislature insofar as it would advise the legislative body on policy, remain subject to removal by a vote of diffidence, and exercise no veto of its own. The differences of formulation on this single organ of government were expressions of the difference between Borgese and McKeon on the necessity of a powerful, symbolic figurehead that could understand and lead the world. Borgese was convinced of the historical necessity, and desirability, of such a leader, who would embody and represent the principles of mankind as a whole. McKeon, in stark contrast, believed this to be a fiction with no place in a world constitution since, in principle, cultural diversity is best preserved by a representative plurality, and, in practice, a powerful, independent executive tends either to deadlock with, or take on “tyrannical powers” against, an opposed legislature.<sup>49</sup> McKeon therefore insisted upon a separation of powers that distinguished the intellectual functions of creating amenable plans of action, implementing those plans, and presiding over their arbitration, into the legislative, executive, and judiciary organs, respectively. Borgese argued that McKeon’s approach would make the executive practically powerless, but McKeon countered by indicating that a constitution primarily confers real power upon an organ of government through the

---

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* VI: 54; 1, 128.

specific grant of power giving it access to or control of the governmental purse-strings, and by that criterion Borgese's president was effectively impotent.<sup>50</sup>

Inherent in his proposition for a novel separation of powers, and sustaining his criticism of the utilization of the notion and language of Natural law, McKeon envisioned the discovery of contemporary principles to guide the adjudicative functions of the judiciary in his global federal union. He ultimately posited the necessity of a new, comprehensive notion of law to guide all of the organs of government in responding to the disputes between associations of citizens that result from their varying interpretations of valid legal principles.<sup>51</sup> The Committee either failed to follow McKeon's thinking on the matter or did not believe that a single constitution could adequately articulate or achieve such a grand, architectonic purpose,<sup>52</sup> and the conversation thereafter devolved into a quarrel over the utility of any reference to Natural Law in a modern constitution.

In May of 1946, during a discussion of the general problems of drafting a constitution, McKeon shared with the Committee an unshakable concern. He feared that if they failed to produce a constitution that could galvanize the distinct nations of the world, humanity would inevitably fall headlong into a terrible situation. He described it as "a place in which the forces of economic decision, the prejudices, the propaganda, the way in which we talk, will force a competition between the dictatorial states and the democracies which will be armed."<sup>53</sup> McKeon had expressed a similar trepidation in the letter to Hutchins that started them on their work in 1945, but this time, in a single breath, he anticipated the open weapons race and overt ideological

---

<sup>50</sup> *Records of the C.F.W.C.* VI: 55; 1, 40.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* VI: 55; 2, 227-231.

<sup>52</sup> For more on the adequate means for articulating and achieving the architectonic purpose of new concepts of jurisprudence, see the posthumous publication of a collection of McKeon's essays on rhetoric, entitled *Rhetoric: Essays in Invention and Discovery* (Woodbridge, Connecticut: Ox Box Press, 1987). Most pertinent are the reprint of "The Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age: Architectonic Productive Arts" from 1971, and "A Philosopher Meditates on Discovery" from 1952.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* VI: 52; 3, 155.

hostility between Russia and the United States that would seize the world for the next forty-three and one-half years.

## Chapter 4

### The Philosophy of Richard McKeon

*The greatest hope for the survival and advancement of civilization lies not in founding a world society on the solution of economic problems or in seeking its conditions in a preliminary moral community, but in the strengthening of an international organization and in the institution of a world state, for it is conceivable that men may agree upon actions, within stipulated limitations, when they have not agreed about theories or creeds.*

-- Richard McKeon in "Economic, Political, and Moral Communities in the World Society"  
*Ethics*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Jan., 1947), pp. 79-91.

There are various ways of initiating and dispelling political discord. The *de facto* or formal declaration of war, as a means of either abnegating or establishing peace, reveals both the overt and subtle forms of aggression that blend together in any clash of differences. The threat of warfare is made explicit in the covert stockpiling of armaments while upsetting propaganda battles are hashed out in newsprint and through devastating military campaigns. Hostile diplomatic conventions of obstinate ambassadors can be the cause of, or, just as easily, the result of national and international conflict. What is common to all of the varieties and causes of conflict is the lack of positive, constructive communication between the distinct associations of men in disparate political, religious, cultural, or philosophical groups. Given the essential role of effective communication in the building of communities between people of differing experiences, perspectives, and objectives, McKeon focused upon the exposition and resolution of difficulties in philosophical and practical communication in his work with the Committee to Frame a World Constitution, as he did in almost all of his political essays.

As presented in the previous chapter, in the drafting of a constitutional instrument, the utilization of specific organs and the articulation of their functional interrelation is ultimately dependent upon the general purposes of the government to be instituted as envisioned and expressed by its drafters. If a function or purpose is understood as an end and therefore one of many related causes or principles to be preferred, the invention of a practical plan for action necessarily occurs in reference to at least one philosophical framework, including an interpretation of ultimate truths and their bearing upon the immediate reality of a situation and its exigencies. Consequently, the problems of collaborating upon a common course of action are extensions of the difficulties inherent in enabling opposed ideological or theoretical positions to understand and formulate consensus between one another. This connection speaks to the

complexity of developing agreement between diplomats on the world stage and also among CFWC members meeting in privacy, and reveals that the conflict in the CFWC was a both a result and microcosm of the antagonism of viewpoints in the broader geo-political sphere.

The primary dichotomy within the CFWC was between the constitutional drafts of Borgese and McKeon, yet if this competition is elaborated and put into the context of the group, where Borgese's perspective on the whole earned more support than McKeon's positions did, the struggle is cast in a new light. From this vantage point, the work of the CFWC takes on the semblance of a consensus of like-minded men, directly opposed by McKeon's singular political perspective. This characterization is unmistakable in the final exchanges between Borgese and McKeon, and was evident to Committee members during their collaboration, to the extent that the conflict hashed out in the CFWC appears to be the inevitable result of placing the distinct judgments of different men into critical application toward a shared but complex goal such as that of world peace. Yet, even with an understanding of what McKeon's positions were in reference to various issues, questions remain regarding why his political preferences are consistent with the philosophical bases of his thinking, and how the insights of his philosophical system could help sober, collaborative efforts like the CFWC from devolving into frivolous arguments and impasse.

From the outset of the Committee's work, McKeon expressed a conviction that the constitution which the world most needed, and which the Committee should therefore direct itself to, was a document which facilitated communication by opening new lines of dialogue between previously unreceptive nation-states. These new avenues for discussion would differentiate the convergences of practical ends from the divergences of theoretical principles in opposed ideologies, and develop mutually acceptable means of attaining those common aims.

This would build, over time, a reciprocal faith and confidence that would ease tensions, facilitate future collaboration, and ameliorate the severities of living conditions that motivate men to find recourse in armed conflict.

In October of 1946, McKeon spoke at the Princeton University Bicentennial celebration, and presented an argument for the priority of establishing political institutions over the emphasizing of either economic or moral organizations, to guide the disparate nation states toward developing and adhering to common international law and a global society.<sup>54</sup> Although he did not state it, McKeon was publicly articulating the positions and arguments he had thus far expressed in his work behind closed-doors with the Committee to Frame a World Constitution. He began generally by speaking to the futility of discussing problems in terms of ends, means, or facts when a group is not of the same mindset, and related the problems of economic, political, and moral communities to the issues of communication insofar as the key terms of any debate within or between associations are ambiguous. Such ambiguities are not only verbal ones of unexamined definition; the differences of meaning attached to words are rooted in the changes and developments of a group or nation over time. The ambiguities in a modern discussion can be clarified by exploring these distinct historical uses of terminology, without homogenizing the various social perspectives they are rooted in, as the first step in reconciling opposed political perspectives to the single purpose of mutually adumbrating and fulfilling the form and functions of an international state. By utilizing the techniques of historical semantics to facilitate communication and by providing other methods of achieving consensus, the nations could first collaborate to distinguish particular material, economic, and military problems to address, and then clarify the heterogeneous ends and ideas of their perspectives, in order to create a community of understanding and peace.

---

<sup>54</sup> As related in the footnote to “Economic, Moral, and Political Communities in the World Society”, *Ethics*, 1947.

Having briefly discussed the means and conditions in which the various nations could acquiesce to the creation of a world government directed to the single objective of establishing common understanding and peace, McKeon elaborated upon the form such an authority must assume to achieve this, and proposed a federal union structure, as he had in the Committee. Since this international society would be akin to a meta-association of mankind, but people are already organized into different associations that share disparate needs and purposes, some of which would be detrimental to the creation of an all-inclusive society, the critical consideration in developing an international government would be the organization of its constituent parts. Given that the extant nation-states would be relied upon to utilize their autonomy to create a governmental authority above their own, which they would thereafter relinquish sovereign powers to, the nation-states should be the essential units of the world state. In such a scenario, the pressing problem is the implementation of a form of government that can account for the tensions dividing the states as well as resolve the common problems in the constituent units.

McKeon then introduces language from the Adler-McKeon report he had co-prepared approximately a year prior for the Committee. He excludes the unitary state from further practical consideration because it justifies the utilization of coercive force with the promise of future peace and justice, and presumes the existence of moral universals that bind all of humanity, among other reasons. In comparison, McKeon expresses little faith in the league because it would not possess enough power to enforce its decisions or proclamations on the international level. The golden mean between the impotent league and the omnipotent unitary government is the federal union structure, because it engenders both authority over and the autonomy of the constituent nation-states. The remaining points regarding the suitability of the federal structure would be a summary treatment of the positions McKeon would defend

throughout his tenure as chair of the Committee. The federal structure would provide for a genuine legislative function, which creates a strict rule of jurisprudence for the enactment and adjudication of laws, thus clearly demarcating three specific functions and branches of government. Another implication was that, with a strict rule of law in place, the world state would not have to rely upon either fragile agreements or arbitration according to Natural Law.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the federal government would exercise power directly on world federal citizens, as appropriated in a limited grant of powers, without impinging upon the sovereignty of the constituent nation-states after the initial obligation to delegate their power of legislation over the creation and utilization of atomic weapons. However, the nations may either federate or federalize as they saw fit in order to join the union, and advisory organs would be constituted to represent the various interests of the citizenry to the legislature. Overall, McKeon's federal structure was a pragmatic proposal for creating the voluntary associations that would stave off nuclear holocaust and permit the new world government to ameliorate the social and cultural ills of the international community.

This insight into the origins of McKeon's lecture and essay situates the work in the context of his concurrent concerns with the development of the fledgling United Nations league and the refutation of Borgese's insistence on a unitary state in the Committee, and confirms his expanding professional commitment to the necessity of effective communication in political conflicts.

---

<sup>55</sup> Historical justification for McKeon's disapproval of the utilization of Natural Law in a revolutionary constitution may be found in his earlier essay, "The Development of the Concept of Property in Political Philosophy: A Study of the Background of the Constitution", wherein he refers to Alexander Hamilton's arguments against the use of such notions in formulating the American Constitution as having "the savor of a preferred realism." McKeon goes on to point out that "many of the fundamental terms of eighteenth-century political thought have lost their central place in the vocabulary of later philosophy, and it may seem improper to treat natural right, liberty, natural law, equality, in any other fashion than as symbols of power, as, indeed, Hamilton and many other participants in the discussion viewed them, manipulated by men seeking their own advantage, but without proper content and application in practice." (*Ethics*, Vol. 48, No. 3, April 1938, page 301.) The reference to Natural or Universal Law, given its contested place even in the American Federal Convention, would be, as McKeon stressed, a definite point of controversy in the ratification of an international constitution, especially for nations without a similar concept in their philosophical tradition or those with different interpretations of how it translates into the creation of positive law.

McKeon's first essay explicitly treating the intricacies of philosophical and practical dialogue in modern political contexts was the aptly titled, "Discussion and Resolution in Political Conflicts," published approximately a year prior to beginning his involvement with the Committee to Frame a World Constitution. In that essay, McKeon excises the difficulties involved in philosophically treating practical problems of ethics or community from the modern dilemma of the "curious irrelevance" of one proposal for post-war peace to another.<sup>56</sup> By squaring the real difficulty of conflict resolution in the proper assessment of the problem at hand and the transformation of stated objectives into practicable ends through an apt plan of action, McKeon sets the groundwork for an examination of the relationship between theory and practice. This examination, in turn, will inform the subsequent comparison of the distinct ends, methods and principles comprising historically opposed systems currently competing for, and complicating, the establishment of peace.

In the modern discussion, there are two closely interrelated conceptions of the connection between theory and practice that are implicit in the senses of the term 'practical,' where one notion does sharply distinguish between knowledge and conduct, while the other does not harshly separate abstract from concrete. The latter tendency has its origins in Plato's conceptualization of the single, all-encompassing science of dialectic, which expresses itself in the ideas and activities of all subordinate sciences, and therefore theory and practice are in a perpendicular relation. In contrast, the former inclination is rooted in Aristotle's distinction of theoretical and practical sciences according to their respective ends, knowledge or action, and places theory in a coordinate relation to practice. The difference between these conceptualizations has consequences today, as it has since the ancients, for the ideas and events in human history which must be considered, and the method according to which that subject

---

<sup>56</sup> McKeon, "Discussion and Resolution in Political Conflicts", *Ethics*, Vol. 54, No. 4, July 1944, Page 236.

matter is to be understood, in the resolution of ethical-political issues. However, over time these initial distinctions, and their mutual competition with the rhetorical devices oriented toward achieving compelling results, have collapsed or been reduced in such fashion as to hinder the effective analysis and selection of the appropriate ends, methods, and principles from which to establish international peace.

McKeon then begins his original analysis of various ideals and methods, a modernization and enlargement of those enumerated in Aristotle's *Politics*,<sup>57</sup> potentially serviceable in solving the complex problem of turning objectives into accomplishments. First, the 'practical' is bifurcated into ends and action. Ends are born of affinity to ideals that may guide action and situational assessments isolating practicable ideals. Actions likewise manifest in two ways, as communications that achieve agreement and movements that attain their purposes. The notion of what is good may be conceived of in one of four ways: absolute, particular, general, or operational ideals. These ideals inform and correspond to four modes of analysis, which are, respectively, the utopian, circumstantial, constitutional, and revolutionary. In the utopian approach to absolute ideals, means are sought to generally implement the conditions that make for wholly virtuous and intelligent persons. In the circumstantial pursuit of particular ideals, facts are examined to draw out the practicable ends from a specific situation. In the constitutional establishment of general ideals, institutions permitting gradual interpretive modification and circumstantial provision are implemented with a steadfast dedication to solving problems and achieving agreements in response to distinct perspectives and changing circumstances. Finally, in the revolutionary advancement of operational ideals, actions are initiated to reorganize extant political and social structures into new associations that truly satisfy the various needs and desires of humanity.

---

<sup>57</sup> For illustration of the temporal precedence in isolating ideals and varieties, see Aristotle's *Politics*: Book IV; Chapters I and II.

Although McKeon has sharply distinguished them, these ideals and methodologies can operate concurrently in the solution of common problems, and are concomitant in a complete philosophical system.<sup>58</sup> McKeon goes on to explicate how the emphases on and interconnection of these four relations of political ideals and methods vary and shift within four complete philosophical systems distinguished on the basis of their fundamental principles and architectonic methods. The first two classifications, those of Plato and Aristotle, place primary emphasis on thought and wisdom. Plato's philosophical system primarily relies upon the utopian mode to dialectically isolate The Good and translate it into the ideal polity, but is supplemented (and occasionally supplanted) by the circumstantial in dealing with historical facts and processes of social change, the constitutional in establishing the jurisprudence guiding the second-best state, and the revolutionary in providing against change or dissent in either. The philosophy of Aristotle is exemplified by his use of the circumstantial mode to differentiate forms of procedure based on a study of actual state constitutions, but it is supplemented by the utopian in isolating monarchical or aristocratic ideals, the constitutional in expressing the division of powers in democracies and oligarchies, and the revolutionary in examining tyrannies or any change that alters the constitution or head of power in the state.

The subsequent two arrangements, those of Spinoza and Machiavelli, advance the importance of sovereignty and the legislation derived from said power. Spinoza's philosophical system, founded upon an examination in the constitutional mode of the grant of powers of a state in relation to the citizens' freedoms, is supplemented by the revolutionary analysis of causes of political uprising threatening individuals' rights, the circumstantial analysis of the relation

---

<sup>58</sup> McKeon, "Discussion and Resolution in Political Conflicts", 247.

between faith, reason, and consent, and the utopian study of the best constituted state.<sup>59</sup> Finally, Machiavelli's philosophical system, typifying the revolutionary mode of analyzing the force and controls of political rulers, is supplemented by the constitutional examination of legislative frameworks for the institution of sovereign dominion, the circumstantial analysis of methods of power acquisition, and the utopian consideration of princely excellences.

To conclude the work, McKeon expresses his conviction that the constitutional method of achieving general ideals is best suited to the modern resolution of ideologically based political conflicts. The paradox inherent in the application of either the utopian or revolutionary methods for squelching political debates, wherein the demand for the institution of a single truth and the imposition of one set of ideals threatens divergent notions of liberties and freedom, makes their acceptance unlikely. The intricacies in acquiring and digesting all relevant facts in the circumstantial analysis of international problems and their potential solutions make this method impractical in the face of the exigencies of an impending crisis situation. The basis for a prompt and equitable resolution to a political conflict must therefore be the use of the constitutional method of analysis, which establishes an instrument of communication that can be adapted to changing conditions, objectives, and principles, and lends itself to the inquiry into doctrines, examination of circumstances, and attainment of aspirations, as a means of fostering agreement.<sup>60</sup> Within this constitutional frame, for it to serve as a functional, complete political philosophy, there must be a place for the utopian method to pursue nuanced ideals, the circumstantial to affect the disparity between actual circumstances and model conditions, and the revolutionary to give expression to novel interpretations thereof. Since these three modes and

---

<sup>59</sup> The study of the constitutional method provides another instance wherein McKeon subtly criticizes the incorporation of the language of Natural Law or Natural Rights into a constitution as problematic, and, consequently, instigative. He writes, "The isolated use of the constitutional analysis [...] consists sometimes in the rhetorical assertion of natural rights which have been written into modern constitutions without consideration of the generality of their actual exercise, the dangers to which they are exposed, or the powers necessary to secure them effectively." *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

their respective ends must be subordinated to the constitutional method and its general ideals, the relationship defined between ends and means in the conclusion of “Discussion and Resolution” is tacitly analogous to, and articulates the philosophical frame of reference upon which McKeon will build, the functional interrelation of organs and nations in the federal union recommended to the Committee to Frame a World Constitution more than fourteen months later.

A secondary effect of McKeon’s “Discussion and Resolution,” besides the feat of enumerating in concrete terms the means of establishing international government and peace that mankind has at its disposal, is a demonstration of the productive potential usually hidden in the imprecision of the modern discussions on such matters. While vagueness is typically held to be a detriment to understanding in a conversation or achievement in a course of action, McKeon also saw the ambiguity inherent in any communication as a fertile field of indeterminacy to mine for precise terms, interpretations, and principles in the pursuit of tolerance and cooperation between conflicting philosophies. This is apparent in the section on the distinct notions of freedom that correspond to the four modes of political analysis and the ways in which those principle notions may be corrupted, anticipating his thorough treatment of differing definitions of freedom according to various philosophical methods in *Freedom and History: The Semantics of Philosophical Controversies and Ideological Conflicts*.

In *Freedom and History*, McKeon undertakes an exposition of three basic modes or methods of philosophizing that have persisted throughout the passing trends or fashions in philosophy. By comparing and contrasting the methods of dialectic, logistic, and inquiry in relation to the concepts of ‘freedom’ and ‘history’, McKeon demonstrates how distinct philosophical systems can be mutually intelligible, share common attributes, and facilitate communication despite the apparent differences of definition, interpretation, and principles.

The dialectic method utilizes comprehensive principles and analogical word meanings to make comparisons, reconcile oppositions, and unify all things and thoughts into an organic whole. The meaning of a term develops in dialectic, slowly taking on shades of significance that eventually create a complete definition, as the argument itself develops and evolves to its resolution. Accordingly, the dialectical conception of history is one where historical evolution and the development of demonstration not only parallel one another, but also are essentially one. The foundation of reason is identified as the basis for action, and just as an argument progresses in stages through the antagonism and reconciliation of contraries, history itself is an epochal progression of opposed periods, cultures, and values, wherein such particulars are ascribed meaning in reference to the universal characteristics of history itself. The dialectic notion of freedom is therefore one where man lives in accordance with, or conformity to, the rational organization of the cosmos.

The logistic method utilizes simple terms with univocal meanings, makes simple connections between them, and deduces long chains of reasoning to construct complex wholes. The meaning of a term in logistic thought is constructed from elemental significances according to a corresponding logic that regulates the combination of those elements into a univocal value. Fittingly, the logistic conception of history is founded upon an examination of particular events of a narrow scope, related to one another in contingent contiguity to form sequences of complex events of a broader import, for which causes must be discovered and enumerated according to some scientific method. Thus, logistic history traces lines of causal influence from the particular to the general, analyzing historical data according to a scientific methodology, and deduces laws according to which history has progressed and will advance. The logistic idea of freedom is therefore that of self-rule, wherein the individual operates according to his character.

The method of inquiry utilizes reflexive principles and word meanings relative to the problem in question, and the circumstances thereof, to resolve dilemmas. The meaning of a term in inquiry takes its significance from reflection upon the implications utilized in the formulation of solutions to prior problems, and develops further in response to the particular circumstances of the current problem. Correspondingly, history itself is conceived of in the problematic method as the progression of man responding to and resolving sequences of problems; entailing the interaction between the reflective thought, communication, and action of man with the solutions to, and subsequent dilemmas of, conditions and situations themselves. Therefore, the problematic conception of freedom entails the association of men with toleration for the freedoms of action of others within a framework of legislation that protects such freedoms and association.

Although the idea of freedom has a central notion of the absence of external restraint, and history one of recounting the facts of a given occurrence, different methods of interpreting reality and its processes will lead philosophers to assign distinct significances to the ideas of freedom and history. Once these distinct meanings of such terms come into contact with one another in a dialogue, the stress that each party and mode of thought places upon its own conclusions as more valid than the others manifests as the reciprocal distortion of opposed positions or intentions, and what typically ensues is diremptive mutual criticism. To put this process into context, McKeon points to the fact that despite the common concerns of people around the world with issues of natural and technological resources, propagandist language, and the translation of knowledge into action, because of the distinct lines of philosophical influence prevalent in the East and West, “communication is difficult between Americans and other people, since all forms of dialectic sound the same to American ears, and all are suspect alike on theoretic and on practical grounds, while to men who have accepted something of the dialectical method and who have

credited its presuppositions, American propositions make a dubious appeal both to the sciences on which it is professed they are based and the practical objectives to which it is professed they are directed.”<sup>61</sup> In sharp contrast with the constant disputations of scholars and statesmen, the majority of people throughout history have found ways to reconcile their differences and peaceably coexist. This indicates that the resolution of conflicts is not contingent upon the attainment of some esoteric knowledge, and effective communication should not be characterized by a progression in complexity. On the contrary, effective dialogue depends upon the clarification of the difficulties inherent in the dialogue between distinctive thinkers through the articulation of the particular meanings of shared and special terms, as well as the methods of investigation or proof, which each party uses and accepts. By establishing the working definitions of a common vocabulary and an appreciation for the principles from which they are derived, a diverse group can distinguish the contradictions which are merely verbal from those which are fundamental, and that may lead to the discovery of a common course of action that each member finds rational and practical, and thus amenable, from his respective perspective.

It is important to underscore the fact that McKeon’s sophisticated philosophical analysis of the various contrasting modes of thought, and their distinctive methods and statements, had as its end securing understanding and agreements in conflicts in the service of the improvement of the very lives of those individuals adversely impacted by the fallout consequent upon political polemics. This is the end and context for McKeon’s treatment of the notion of responsibility in “The Concept of Responsibility,” which traces the use of aspects and varieties of the term from the ancient Greek and classical Latin up to its first modern use in 1787 in France and by Alexander Hamilton in America. From this historical treatment of the many concepts that

---

<sup>61</sup> The title essay of McKeon’s publication of *Freedom and History* in 1952 was reprinted as the seventh chapter in *Freedom and History and Other Essays: An Introduction to the Thought of Richard McKeon*, edited by Zahava K. McKeon, introduction by Howard Rutenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). This quote is from page 169 of the latter text.

intersect in the modern use of the word, McKeon isolates an external dimension in legal and political analysis, an internal dimension in moral and ethical analysis, and a comprehensive dimension in social and cultural analysis. The political use of responsibility refers to the imposition of legal sanctions upon citizens, and the accountability of governments and their officials for legislating. The moral utilization of the notion is in reference to an individual's reckoning of the conditions and consequences of his choices. The comprehensive use of responsibility refers to the reciprocal ordering of values in the structures of both autonomous individuals and cultures. These three distinct dimensions in or applications of the concept of responsibility turn upon the relation of the problems of imputation and accountability -- where the former refers to causation and intention, the latter refers to consequence and indemnity, and both impinge upon absolute freedom -- which take on various meanings and treatments in connection to differing notions of justice, duty, and natural law. McKeon traces the changes in thought that have occurred over the centuries in these primary and secondary principles to the elaboration of a science of morals, nature, and human understanding, leading to the modern recognition of and expectations for responsible government, self-government, and self-determination.

A government is considered responsible if it fulfills two criteria: the regular functioning of official duties within a legislative framework, and the institutional expression or representation of the popular will and sentiment. For McKeon, this latter requirement of political responsibility cannot be fulfilled without the universal suffrage of nationals or citizens, because the modern expectation of responsible government carries within it the belief that representative, democratic governance depends upon the free exercise of responsibility by its populace. The liberation inherent in this modern notion of reciprocal responsibility is, in turn, contingent upon

the free pursuit of values and truth, rather than the imposition or prescription of it, following from the free exploration of ideas.<sup>62</sup>

The modern notion of a self-governing nation-state must therefore recognize that it is simultaneously responsible to its constituents, the cultural communities that they form outside of political organizations, and other nations. This cultural responsibility is a result of the social expectation that communities will negotiate and discuss issues of accountability, thus standing imputable for actions, and will fulfill the engagements which they have agreed to undertake and make amends for grievances, thus recognizing their accountability. The fulfillment of this kind of responsibility transcends the necessity of praise or blame, and instead depends upon and reflects sensitivity to the universal values and rationality revealed in free discussions of particular interests and committed action toward the common good. McKeon refers to this sensitivity as understanding, and explains,

Understanding in this sense may operate to transform the civil and criminal laws which determine accountability and to shift the emphasis in conventions and agreements from the calculation of interests to mutual understanding of values, including those which also have artistic, cultural, religious, and philosophical expressions. The understanding of social pressures and preferences, finally, may be transformed into an understanding which undercuts what is at the time preferred and what is thought to endanger one's interests by examining arguments, data, assumptions, and conclusions. Understanding in this sense is the comprehension of beliefs and of the reasons for holding them. The external operations of coming to an understanding and of understanding each other find internally acceptable criteria in the operations of understanding common values and of understanding common problems.<sup>63</sup>

Moral responsibility evolved within the context of political and cultural responsibilities, reaching systematic statement concurrent with the articulation of divine and civil law, and the subsequent development of representative governments, wherein mankind was held accountable for its actions and particular acts were imputed to individuals. As a consequence, the concept of responsibility could be utilized to develop criteria for value judgments, justified moral characters

---

<sup>62</sup> McKeon, "The Development and the Significance of the Concept of Responsibility", 21-23.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

of sensitivity, and means of testing ideas in open dialogue for the advancement of knowledge. Therefore, an examination of the modern problem of responsibility indicates the means by which the exploration of common perspectives, the interrelation of the assumptions of distinct philosophies, and the community of cultural traditions can diversify and strengthen our shared values. Moreover, the study of the concept of responsibility reveals how the notion of accountability may be employed to extend and adapt the indemnities of local institutions to the level of international relations, and how the notion of imputation can secure the modern adumbration of values for the enrichment of the life of mankind.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

## Chapter 5

### On a New Mode of Communication

*Only the dead are safe; only the dead have seen the end of war.*

-- George Santayana, "Tipperary",  
*Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*, 1922.

At the conclusion of his essay, “Love and Philosophical Analysis”, which deciphers the distinct conceptions of the nature of love which have been articulated and juxtaposed throughout the evolving history of the symposium, such as the communal bond of *philia*, the erotic attraction of *eros*, and the divine transcendence of *agape*, McKeon shifts from a consideration of the content of the notion of love to the form of the discussion from which such analysis results.<sup>65</sup> With the modern advance of science, the opposition between the varying notions of love, and the struggle between love and death, has taken on a new potential for either realization or destruction. While the common definition of love, the desire for a gratifying external cause, is still pertinent, with the advent of technology mankind is more capable than ever of fulfilling its own desires, whether satiating its fundamental needs or annihilating itself; so the conflict between the ends to be pursued and the programs proposed to achieve those ends has reached a fever pitch in the contemporary, international world that must find some sort of resolution. However, McKeon contends, the answer will not come from an examination of the differences of the conceptions of love, such as he has provided, or an attempt to reconcile those fundamentally distinct notions. Instead, he proposes a treatment of the circumstances and modes of discourse that reveal differing notions of ends and means.

In the history of philosophy, the dialectic and scholastic methods of inquiry and argumentation have been utilized to garner consensus because both methodologies are precisely suited to the reconciliation of opposed doctrines to a common position which the philosophies implicitly or explicitly approximated. These methods were also appropriate for synthesizing agreement because they were both characterized by a simultaneous orientation toward the nature

---

<sup>65</sup> McKeon’s “Love and Philosophical Analysis” in *Thought, Action, and Passion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954) is an expanded version of McKeon’s presidential address to the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association, entitled “Symposia”, published in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association for 1951-1952*, pages 18-41.

of things and the exigencies of the problem of conflict resolution. For the last three hundred years or so, philosophers have adapted their inquiries to the scientific method, which is also oriented toward accurately stating and practically linking what is the case and what ought to be the case, because it utilizes a logical technique to interpret facts while stressing concurrence between scientists in the resolution of inevitable differences of interpretation. The scientific method therefore allows for a more practical, precise form of interpersonal dialogue in the attainment of knowledge, the statement of common courses of action, and the development of community.<sup>66</sup>

McKeon then assembles a progression in the varieties of scientific dialogue and debate oriented toward the resolution of a problem, with intervals distinguished by the variations in group cohesiveness as well as the quantity and quality of information shared, before sketching out the nature of the ideal scientific symposium and solution. On the lowest level, group thinking occurs whenever the ideas articulated or produced by another are utilized for one's purposes, and since this conveyance of information can occur through any media, such as a text or conversation, the assemblage of persons into a group is not necessitated. In its second manifestation, group think is changed because of the complexity of the problem at hand. When a given situation requires a variety of information provided by a plurality of competencies for its resolution, then each group member contributes data from his respective field and the solution produced has a composite characteristic. In the third form, a group consisting of individuals of various backgrounds, disciplines, and perspectives discusses a common problem also produces a composite solution, but the defining feature of this organization is the peculiar interplay between experts. In this group, the statement of a supposition or unresolved issue by one expert in one

---

<sup>66</sup> McKeon's notion of the procedural dialogue between scientists for coming to consensus reads as a philosophical overview of the processes detailed by Thomas Samuel Kuhn in the development of scientific paradigms as articulated in the latter's work, specifically, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

field, who cannot develop the point further with the techniques of his discipline, plants in the mind of an expert in another field a nascent yet germane idea that may not have otherwise struck him. The fourth and highest form of group thought, for McKeon the only proper use of the term,<sup>67</sup> is distinguished by the quality of the solution arrived at. The result of this endeavor exceeds both the thought of any particular member as well as the sum of all of their individual contributions insofar as the truth is articulated through the development of the discussion, taken *in toto*. Clear examples of such group thinking are few and far between, but McKeon elucidates the point by contrasting it with “philosophical dialogues in which one of the interlocutors is called ‘Master,’ or ‘Wisdom,’ or ‘Intelligence.’”<sup>68</sup>

McKeon’s insight into the nature of this ideal form of committee communication is admittedly vague or opaque, but it is also promising, not only for the theoretical and practical results that could be attained by such an association, but also for the possibilities inherent in that ambiguity for a more precise articulation of the best line of organization to foster group thought, and a qualification of the nature of the thinkers needed for such an endeavor.

Close scrutiny of this fourth mode of scientific group thought reveals that the process is a collaborative effort, wherein each member must speak his mind constructively and freely, contribute to the ideas of other individuals with the skills and methods of his particular field, and thus assist in the refinement and extension in scope of the propositions initially in contention. Given the egalitarian contribution from and exchange between these diverse individuals, to the point where the individuals can truly be said to be functioning as a unified entity, the nature of the group itself and the solution it produces is, by inference, a democratic one. A democratic, scientific association of individuals utilizing their distinct interpretations of objective reality for

---

<sup>67</sup> “Strictly speaking, none of these processes is *group* thinking, since in each an individual thinks in the varying contexts and influences of the group.” McKeon, “Love and Philosophical Analysis”, 51.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

the resolution of a common problem in a single course of action must simultaneously respect the principles of self-determination and universal suffrage, so that each and every member may dissent from, propose, or consent to any of the various facts, means, and ends to be considered, without coercive external influence.

The use of political principles for a symposium of this variety is both justified and beneficial, given that any relation between individuals constitutes a political endeavor and that the elaboration of the structure of McKeon's ideal committee in terms of established political forms would provide a concrete vocabulary with which to discuss the interrelation of group members and their ideas in all of the stages of micro-group thought. To borrow the distinctions from the Adler-McKeon report in the Committee to Frame a World Constitution,<sup>69</sup> there is a direct correspondence between the alliances of nations and the loose associations of thinkers on the base level of group collaboration; the sovereignty of a universal league of nations in relation to its constituent states and the pertinence of the composite solution produced by a class-two group to the complex problem it was created to address; a restricted federal government and the collaboration of individuals in the context of varying tier-three group contexts and influences; and an unrestricted federal union and the derivation of authority for a stage-four unified group and its transcendent composite action from various co-autonomous sources. The unitary state has little relation to the ideal form of group thought insofar as its manner of derivation of sovereignty would tend to invest final say in a particular individual, working counter to the egalitarian group dynamic pre-requisite to the synthesis of a transcendent outcome insofar as such a scheme would revert back to the imposition of varying influences upon constituent members.

Therefore, McKeon's ideal form of group thought may be likened to the unrestricted federal union he advocated, publically and privately, in the mid-1940s. Such a group structure

---

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter 3, Page 2.

would account for the differences of methodologies and principles in the varying disciplines and backgrounds of the committee members, while organizing the disparate individuals into a cohesive group with rules of procedure fashioned from of their mutual assent. It would respect the plurality of philosophies embodied by the various group members, permitting the free discussion of particular ideas and aims, while creating the voluntary association necessary to develop a community committed to a common end.

Yet the question must be asked, since the unrestricted federal union structure does call for the creation of a central government, what equivalent could that have in an egalitarian, democratic group endeavor? To resolve this dilemma, it would be fruitful to reassert the distinction between the collaborative guidance of a central federal government and the prescriptive direction of a central unitary government toward their respective constituents. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to reassert the simultaneous responsibilities of a democratic government to represent the will of its constituents while achieving, through mutually accepted legal codes, its formative purposes. In the case of an ideal association, the individual selected by the members to preside over their committee would not have absolute control over the final decision of the entire group, he would not embody truth itself, but would draw the group members toward thorough collaboration so that they may collectively reach a greater level of mutual understanding, and the group can obtain its objective of a reciprocally satisfying resolution to a common problem.

For such a complex and difficult endeavor, the final consideration of importance is the nature or character of the members to be involved in such a group, especially that of the specific member to be selected to lead them. The most concise statement of the ideal kind of thinkers to be recruited for the development of common understanding is to be found in Immanuel Kant's

third major work, the *Critique of Judgment*. Although the third *Critique* is primarily a treatise on aesthetics, in Part One, Section One, Book Two, Paragraph Forty, entitled “Taste as a Kind of *Sensus Communis*,” Kant discloses the three habits of thought necessary for an individual to engage in active reasoning and thus qualify to pass judgments appropriate to serve as universal imperatives. The first requirement is to think independently, the second is to think from the perspectives of all others, and the third is to always think. To utilize Kant’s terms, these dictums are, respectively, the maxim of unprejudiced understanding, enlarged judgment, and consistent reason. If an individual were to pay diligent attention to exercising these faculties of thought, the result would be a man of an enlarged mind, possessed of the mental habit of detaching himself from the subjective personal conditions of his judgment and reflecting upon his own judgment from a universal standpoint, determined by shifting his ground to the perspective of others, capable of formulating rational, coherent conclusions.

Kant himself acknowledged the great effort and time required for an individual to attain such freedom from prejudice and enlightenment, yet did not believe it to be an impossible feat; likewise, the new forms of international communication, cooperation, and legislation that McKeon envisioned can be achieved, but only through dedicated effort and perseverance in the service of rational understanding. Pluralistic philosophers and comprehensive thinkers, such as McKeon, who could decipher the divergences and similarities between philosophies and thereby recognize points of convergence of sufficient import to utilize in instituting a common course of action while still respecting their points of distinction, are instrumental to the resolution of heated controversy and the dissolution of the prejudices that incite wars.

## Appendix I: Initial Correspondence

*September 16, 1945.* Morgenthau and McKeon write to Hutchins, proposing the foundation of an Institute for World Government to produce a Preliminary Project of a World Constitution, at the University of Chicago:

Dear Mr. Chancellor:

The names and dates of Alamogordo and Hiroshima, July 16 and August 6, 1945, lost almost immediately whatever lyrical or controversial overemphasis they may have carried at first. The statement that there and then started a new era, was accepted almost unanimously as an obvious truth. This in itself was epoch-making. There have been other ends and beginnings in the past; but men did not know. This time they knew.

Some may have doubted the apocalyptic visions summoning this generation to a choice between peace on earth and cosmic annihilation of the species and the earth. But few if any have questioned the validity of a dilemma whose alternatives are world rule—with supreme authority vested in a global organism—or world ruin. In this sense, involving the destiny of immeasurably more than what we call civilization, the tenet, One World or None, has become imperative to the overwhelming majority.

Yet, while there is consensus on the responsibilities and perils, no promise is visible so far of ways and means apt to reach a saving goal. Neither is the record of the methods and powers of official statesmanship, here or anywhere else, such as to encourage the surmise that a staff of governmental experts, as competent in their field as were in theirs the scientists of the “Manhattan Project”, are elaborating in equal secrecy a Universal Law whose revelation should be as dazzling and unheralded as the explosions of last summer.

All indications available point in three directions.

The first is of self-confidence, illimited. Since the skill and resources of this country are beyond comparison and nothing short of their cumulative potential could have captured the atom, we may be sure that the captive is firmly in our hands. Nobody will repeat the feat. “It is doubtful”, said President Truman, “that such another combination could be got together in the world.” If these words, pronounced in the early exultation of triumph, bore the permanent meaning that a part of the audience read into them, the inference would be that the United States has achieved by monopoly of force the unification of the human race. The proud have inherited the earth. Actually or virtually, the planet is our empire.

The second direction is inspired by fear of God—not without fear of Russia, leaving aside other eventual antagonists less clearly identifiable now. If we cannot, as we cannot, count on the perpetuity of the secret, we had better share it at once. Our generosity will appease the world. This view—hardly less naïve than the pious wish of scrapping the discovery altogether and turning the clock back to a pre-atomic age—is as commended by sentiment as it is condemned by imagination and reason. None of its advocates, were he for twenty-four hours the chief executive of the U.S., would consider for one minute lending—or, more bluntly, betraying—to any outsider the mightiest weapon of his country, no matter how short the expectancy of the monopoly, without full security about the use that the recipient would make of the gift. The Security Council, usually envisioned as the agency for technological pooling, was a gravely unreliable contrivance even at the time of San Francisco and Dumbarton Oaks, long before Oak Ridge.

The third direction is apparently a compromise between the two. It has been proposed in several variants. One is Senator Connally’s. The U.S. should retain the secret while making “a special bombing squadron available to the Security Council as a means of enforcing peace.” Since the U.S., like all other Big Four, has veto power in the Council while the U.S. alone would carry the big stick—judge and sheriff alike—the Connally proposal amounts to American world domination in gossamery international disguise. Another variant, promoted by a number of political writers and speakers, insists on atomic trusteeship confided to the Security Council under the proviso that each and all countries—with Russia frankly paramount in the proponents’ minds—should lie open to unhampered investigation and military supervision by “international” inspectors. Since the gist of the proposal is the wish to prevent Russia from building her own Oak Ridges in some remote Eurasian Tennessee, while our own Oak Ridges would of necessity stand, the “right of search” would be spelled out by Russia as her duty to be policed—tantamount to subjugation—by foreign force. She might challenge the demand—and perhaps succumb. Or, if confronted with irresistible force, she might submit—and go underground. In any case the third direction, after a brief or briefer detour, merges visibly into the first: global imperialism.

It seems to us that the situation at the present moment should be summarized as follows.

- 1) There is no disagreement between the judgment of our scientists, as borne out by evident implication also in the Smyth report, and the statement of the Russian New Times that since the fundamental

principles are known “it is simply a question of time before any country will be able to produce atomic bombs.”

- 2) There is disagreement, ultimately not very relevant, in the estimate of the time. Some experts reckon with a mere matter of months. Others forecast an interval of 3 to 5 years. None exceed that limit.
- 3) The counsel, transparent also through Churchill’s speech of August 16, to use the interval for “remolding” under atomic pressure the international relationships in the shape best suiting our will, is fraught with abominable dangers. Since the concept of a super-Nazi aggression aimed at the total occupation of Russia (even assuming we own the means required by an end so enormous) would be abhorrent to the English and American mind, any atomic pressure we may bring to bear on particular areas and issues would reach but fragmentary and ephemeral results. That pressure should be expected to rebound on ourselves with multiplied impace as soon as Russia grasps a weapon as terrifying as ours.
- 4) Should the two surviving rivals of the race for world supremacy, Russia and America, come to final grips, there are some factors that militate in favor of America. They are well known.
- 5) There are other factors, almost equally known, that militate against America. The most notable are: a) the conglomeration, much denser than in the opposite territory, or industries and populations in compact targets; b) the much greater aversion or a prosperous and mellowed civilization to remorseless expenditures in human lives; c) concomitantly with the latter, the contrast between the nearly frantic tempo at which the American state has risen to a military and political summit, and the mental instability of the American people, not much interested in growing or swelling to conquering passions and self-assigned missions of more than Persian or Roman magnitude, whose price should be the holocaust of generations while the prize is unappealing to the common man.
- 6) The outcome of the battle would not be foreseeable.
- 7) Whichever, the victor, world freedom—which is the essence of the American dream—would be a casualty, with countless others. America, degraded to serfdom or catapulted to autocratic power over all men, even if she won the world with all its ruins would lose herself.

Mr. Chancellor, we were strongly impressed, as many were, by the warning you broadcast on August 12. We think we understand you correctly if we assume that the sternness of your word was intended as a call to action. We are in agreement with the general principles you have stated through the years on the meaning and purpose of a university in our time. You have never forgotten, as we do not, that university is universality.

The world state which in your and our thought is the only alternative to world destruction, cannot be the inert addition of the states of the world in alphabetical order. Neither can it be a cartel or trust—disingenuously dubbed trusteeship—of a few big ones, oligarchs with dubious tenure, in whose midst the real Big Two, candidates to voluntary or necessitated tyranny, while talking and wanting peace gird themselves almost openly for a duel whose probability grows at the same rate as the worry.

The interests and doctrines that the two major rivals represent are too sharply polarized, their sizes and armors too towering for a mediation of synthesis to be found at the present level of international association. Coalitions, destined to break-up and clash or in the best of cases paralyzed by permanent suspicion, must give way to coalescence. America and Russia, individualism and collectivism, might and right, as well as all other antagonisms, will not be teamed for creative progress except in the frame of an authority and liberty—which jointly make the substance of order—excelling and comprising both terms of the contradictions.

A world constitution is needed. This is a staggering, yet inescapable assignment—and a most pressing one, the deadline, no mere metaphor in this context, being the day, unpredicted but not remote, when the atomic secret will be in other hands. We do not think that a world constitution or a preliminary project will be drafted by bureaucratic or diplomatic bodies. Their motions are inhibited by statutory routines; their initiatives, even in this most open-minded of nations, must stop at the dogmatic wall of national sovereignty. On the other hand, the Sinais of our time are too steep for any single legislator to scale them and take a torah to the crowd below.

Madison, in a famed passage summarized the conflict of his American and his age as an apparently irreconcilable antithesis between the individual sovereignty of States and aggregate sovereignty, while the “consolidation of the whole into one simple republic” seemed as inexpedient as unattainable. Yet the Virginia plan contrived a way out of the impasse. The United States was not born as an empire, say, of Pennsylvania nor as a secret council of the Bigger Colonies. Unity and viability were sought and attained at an upper level. Many an observer has pointed out already that the problem of the United Nations in 1945 or 1946, however spectacularly magnified in width and depth, is intrinsically the same as that of the United States in 1787.

There is indeed a primacy of America—which implies for her the duty to fill the first place in the ranks of service. This primacy does not reside in her wealth and strength as it does in the uniqueness of her experience. Her birth and early rise of this nation were not, as practically with all others, the result of a slow natural process wrapped in darkness. America is a child of the mind. Its constitution and way of life were an evolutionary emergence controlled by the conscious intellect, in broad daylight. The extent to which each and all the founders were professional politicians and soldiers, is more or less incidental. Essential is it that a number of them, and the most significant of them, were men of high learning and profound meditation who harbored within themselves an idea of the perfect republic that claimed embodiment in the world of the real. Through them the half-fact, half-myth of ancient lawgivers, from Moses to the Decemvirs, building or trying to build the model state on cornerstones of faith and reason, came largely and documentarily true in a modern country that shaped itself, as it were, in a scientific laboratory. Hence, also in subsequent ages and all defaults and failures notwithstanding, a greater receptivity in this country to the concept that interprets history as the gradual shrinking of the gulf that separates the ideal for the real. To strive that they may finally meet is an intellectual and practical duty stressed here, perhaps, more insistently than anywhere else. When their divergence seems to widen, as it seems today, the risks that the regression entails are apprehended here not with anxiety alone but with remorse.

Certainly not to compare our schemes to those fulfillments but to justify our daring in the light of its inspiration, we wish to recall those admirable seasons when the blueprint of the American constitution was readied and almost in the same breath the few of the Federalist provided the “know how.” The Federalist was a university in nuce. We think it appropriate to suppose that a full-grown institution of high learning, in the unparalleled opportunity and liberty of this country, should take the lead in constructive thought at a moment when the promises are vaster while the alternatives are indescribably more tragic than such as loomed in the days of Hamilton and Madison, of Jefferson and Paine.

The University of Chicago played a decisive role in ushering in the atomic age, whose birth-place and date might well be put in Stagg Field, December 2, 1942, rather than in New Mexico or Honshu two and a half years later. There is no manifest destiny, but there is more than a symbolic value in the suggestion that the intellectual courage that split the atom should be called, on this very campus, to unite the world. An Institute of Nuclear Physics has been founded. We propose an Institute for World Government.

We heard you, Mr. Hutchins, saying more earnestly than humorously to the third partner of the August 12 Round Table: “You are suggesting that Gustavson and I should get out and raise two billion dollars for the support of social science research. We will be glad to do that.” No such mountain of gold is needed. One hundredth, or perhaps even one half of one hundredth of one per cent—a sum in no case exceeding \$200,000—would be adequate endowment. For the task of the Institute we have in mind is not analytical and exploratory, but synthetic and structural. The data are at hand.

We think that the research should be centered around the Humanities, for it was the Humanities, since the time of their earliest universal exponent, Plato, that took upon themselves the task of building “Utopias” - whose core is and must needs be systematic philosophy, not fragmentary empiricism. The particular character of the Utopia that is needed today, at the wind-up of a twenty-five century speculation, is its aptness to find a “topos”, or locus – which can be none other than the unified world of man. Its features shall not be designed against the incorporeal background of abstract – and timeless as well as spaceless – perfection. They must be carved into the interests and the resistances, into the passions and forces that are at work in this hour. The passageway between the ideal and the real shall be a bridge, not a rainbow.

Members, self-evidently, from section of the University other than the Humanities, might or should be asked to join – especially from such disciplines as were more or less arbitrarily detached from the Humanities or have been anyhow traditionally held to be closely related to them. Representatives from other institutions or cities – or countries, or continents - might or should be desirable. The central staff, however, to be directed by a President, a Chairman, and a Secretary General, should not be so numerous as to impede the intensity and speed of the work. Ten, or at most fifteen, some of them working full time, would make the proper size. Coordinated groups, some of them specializing in particular fields, could or should be built here and elsewhere. Plenary meetings, relatively numerous, might be called at certain intervals to discuss the previous phase of the study and to influence its subsequent course. Contacts, for purposes of information and mutual enlightenment, could be kept with official agencies in this country, and if feasible in others. Essays and shorter papers, outlining succinctly particular or tentative results whether collectively or individually reached, should be printed promptly and circulated widely.

It is our conviction that the time assigned to the Institute should be rigorously limited: a twelvemonth, from January to December, 1946. In an investigation of this kind, whose premises and hoped-for conclusion are crystal clear, results that cannot be achieved in one year are hardly likely to mature in three or ten. Moreover, should they come late, they might be too late.

The final result of the whole endeavor should be a Preliminary Project of a World Constitution, to be submitted immediately to government and public opinion.

The victorious general who landed in Japan, as it were, in the wake of the atomic bomb, did not say that the problem of our future is basically technological. He said that it is "theological." "It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh." Reuben Gustavson, a physicist who is a moralist, reported the words of another physicist, like-minded—the director of the University laboratory which helped to breed the invention—on the day that the first atomic bomb fell on the target. They were not words of triumph. He said: "This is a very sad day for us."

That sadness might be retrieved. If our intention finds support, if it grows in a consociate effort to be a fact, the atomic discovery, Janus-faced, having shown its countenance of Death, might begin to lift the veil from its other visage, that is Life.

We hope our proposal meets with your general approval. If further details on purpose and technical planning are desired, we will heed to the best of our ability your call.

Sincerely,  
Richard P. McKeon  
G. A. Borgese

Chicago, September 16, 1945.

## Appendix II: CFWC Conferences

1945

1. Location Unknown – November\*
2. New York City – 17 and 18 December

1946

3. Chicago – 4 and 5 February
4. New York City – 29 and 30 March
5. Chicago – 15 and 16 April
6. New York City – 17 and 18 May
7. Chicago – 18 and 19 June
8. New York City – 19 and 20 July
9. New York City – 16 and 17 August
10. Chicago – 24 and 25 October

1947

11. Chicago – 6, 7, and 8\*\* February
12. Chicago – 31 March, 1 and 2 April
13. Chicago – 14 and 15 July

---

\* “Stenotyped reports totaling well over 2,000 pages recorded the tense, occasionally even heated deliberations of the Committee through nine of its ten meetings, the first alone, November, 1945, having remained entrusted to undocumented memory.” Document #127: Brief History, page 14, 24 March 1947.

\*\* No stenotyped record was found from this date’s session, although the meeting was “dedicated to matters of organization and to tentative schedules.” Document #127: Brief History, page 16, 24 March 1947.

### Appendix III: Final Correspondence

*August 18, 1947.* Borgese sends the first letter requesting McKeon's approval, and signature, on Document #144 which was the most recent complete draft of a constitution the Committee had produced:

August 18, 1947

Dear Dick:

You should have received Document #144 early last week. I suppose that the pleasant breezes of Lake Superior have not prevented you from going through those few pages.

The document now has the signatures of Adler, Barr, myself, Hutchins, Innis, Kahler, Redfield, Tugwell. The wandering members we are trying our best to locate in a vast summer realm that stretches from Mexico to Maine.

We feel that we might expect you to sign too. This expectation is founded on two considerations.

One is that the situation in the United Nations and in the disunited world has so developed during the second year of the Atomic Age as to make any world constitution of the "compromise" type—leaning on extant structures—much less realistic than it could seem a year ago. Conversely a radical or pioneering proposition seems today, were it only as a challenge to despair, much less utopian than it could have seemed a year ago.

The other consideration is that, while a signature to Constitution 144 means approval of the principles and purposes as well as of the organs and functions stated and described in it, that signature does not imply a blanket endorsement of each and all procedures, of each and all phrases and words. Opportunities for clarifications and corrections of details we, and others, shall have in plenty, in further stages of expanding discussions, until the World State is born (and afterwards).

Looking forward to hearing from you, I am renewing meanwhile our wishes for a good time to you and family,

[Antonio]  
G. A. Borgese

*August 26, 1947.* Borgese sends McKeon a second signatory request:

August 26, 1947

Dear Dick:

I trust you received Constitution 144 which we mailed on August 8, and subsequently my letter of August 18.

We have now also the signatures of Katz and McIlwain. We should like to have yours.

Please let me know.

Cordially yours,  
[Antonio]  
G.A. Borgese

*August 26, 1947.* McKeon replies to Borgese, refusing to sign on account of fundamental philosophical disagreements with the instrument:

August 26, 1947

Dear Antonio,

I had been through Documents 141 and 144 several times before the arrival of your letter asking for my signature. Your letter raises a difficult problem. I had assumed that signature would mean only that the signer, as member of the Committee, recognized the final result as a compromise document, the best that the Committee was likely to agree on; I should have been willing to sign in this sense. If, on the other hand, signature means, to quote your words, "approval of the principles and purpose as well as of the organs and functions stated and described in it," with room only for differences which can be removed by clarification of procedures, words, and phrases, the stenotyped records of our meetings are full of reasons why I should find it impossible to sign.

I am not in agreement with the principles. So far as theoretic principles are concerned, I find the constitution oriented too closely to a single ideology to elicit the sympathy and support of all the philosophies of the world. To cite only a single example (you will find others in the stenotyped report), I find the reference to the Law of Nature, in section B of the Declaration of Rights and Duties, out of place in a World Constitution. You have doubtless followed the discussion of Natural Law in the US Supreme Court this June. Mr. Justice Black writing the dissenting opinion in *Adamson v. California* on June 25, 1947 presents his objection to natural law in these terms: "And I further contend that the 'natural law' formula be abandoned as an incongruous excrescence on our Constitution." It is my opinion that Constitutions should be so written as to permit differences of interpretation concerning their philosophic bases. Furthermore, if I were seeking a language in which to express confidence in human rights in the twentieth century, I should not choose the language of Natural Law. So far as practical principles are concerned, there is even less reason to enumerate the details of my differences. The Constitution stated in Document 144 seems to me to err in inclining toward a unitary state more than to a federation, in attempting to enumerate the nine regions into which the world should be divided, etc. Stating these two examples in terms of practical principles, I should favor the limitation of national sovereignties by the institution of a Federal World government -- I don't understand what it means for the governments of the world "to order their separate sovereignties in one government of justice," but I am suspicious of all the meanings that I can assign to it. I should favor a functional statement of the way in which nations may federalize into regional units but any attempt to determine a priori and without the use of the principle of self determination, and to set down in a document, the canonical list of regions, seems to me contrary to the principle of justice; so many nations or areas are given a power of limited choice that the exclusions from such choice seem to depend entirely on geographic considerations.

I am not in agreement with the organs and functions. I shall not repeat the details, but only indicate examples. The institution of a strong executive seems to me a monument to FDR, but to be otherwise contrary to our experiences and reason. More important, however, is the weakness indicated by the fact that the constitution is framed in terms of three powers conceived largely in political and civil terms. The problems of constitution making in the twentieth century turn rather more on economic and ideological questions, yet provisions for those functions are all permissive rather than mandatory. Perhaps they should be permissive, but I see no reason for thinking that the provision of a strong executive will provide promising circumstances for their development.

On the other hand, notwithstanding my disagreements with the present constitution, I think that it is no little achievement for the Committee to have eliminated so many of the infinite possibilities and to come out with a constitution that may serve as a future basis of discussion. This is a considerable achievement even if the constitution submitted for discussion has very grave defects -- such as I think the constitution in Document 144 possesses. We have said from the first that we did not expect the document with which the Committee completed its work to be the final constitution approved by the Founding Convention. It was our purpose to provide a starting point or several starting points. I had hoped that the starting point would be nearer to my conception of the end -- ideal, practicable or both -- than now seems likely to be the case. It still seems to me possible that a constitution, submitted by the Committee with the understanding that its members did not agree with all points of principle or details of organization, might serve to focus discussion of world government and make it more concrete. I should be glad to sign such a statement.

The family sends its warm regards: we hope the heat wave was not too uncomfortable in Chicago.

Yours,  
[Richard P. McKeon]

*September 4, 1947.* Borgese replies to McKeon, refusing the qualified endorsement offered, and informing McKeon that the Committee will continue its work without him:

September 4, 1947

Dear Dick:

There cannot be any doubt in your mind, if you think it over, that a signature like the one you offer as a friendly gesture, which we appreciate, while manifesting with frankness equally appreciated how deep and all-comprehensive remains your dissent, would defeat the whole purpose. It would vitiate the value of all the other signatures, none of which was given in a spirit even remotely comparable to yours. It would take us back, from a hard-won harmony supported by the overwhelming majority, nay, unanimity minus one, of the Committee, to preliminary stages of debate which the Committee has outgrown. It would authorize the notion that all we can "show," after a two-year's labor, is the accomplishment of having eliminated "so many of the infinite possibilities," picking one as a basis, obviously interchangeable with a number of others, for further discussion. This, indeed, to have provided a useable basis for further discussion, is, almost in our own words, the Committee's accomplishment. We do not think, however, that the basis we chose would be all too easily interchangeable with others, for we feel entitled to believe that the choice of our text was made not so much in spite of its "grave defects" as on account of its merits. Far from dogmatic though we are about Constitution 144, we are not inclined to be so uncompromisingly skeptical as you would like us to be.

In this situation you certainly realize that, much to our regret, we must go ahead without your company. It should be needless to add that, as soon as the text is published in Common Cause, the pages of the magazine will be gladly open to the expression of your dissent, the only thing to be avoided being, we think, the expression of dissent in a confusing form of consent.

Warm regards to your family. We have survived the heat waves all right, and ou sont les chaleurs d'antan?

Yours, cordially,  
[Antonio]  
G.A. Borgese