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Fides et Ratio: Rhetoric of Communal Perfection. John Paul II, Thomas Aquinas, Fulton Sheen & John Wesley

Abstract

I have approached the study of the Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* by John Paul II as an Organizational Rhetorical Psychologist. More specifically, I define myself as a Neo Aristotelian Organizational Rhetorical Psychologist. I am not responding to this Encyclical as a theologian or philosopher. Aristotle identifies the means of persuasions as appeals to personal character (Ethos), appeals to emotion (Pathos), the use of reasoning (Logos) and sensing the right practice and right time (Kairos).

In this paper, I examine four styles of rhetor exemplars at critical times in the history of Western Christianity. We are examining John Paul, and the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Thomas Aquinas, Bishop Fulton Sheen, and John Wesley as rhetorical organizational social interventionists. These Rhetorical interventionists employ particular patterns, such as the rhetorical tactics, devices and strategies that constitute the ultimate framework of the organizational rhetorical frame work¹.

We will analyze the rhetorical maneuvers of the four exemplar rhetors ranging from using ethos, pathos, logos, metaphor and arguing by example in discourse, to creating events, writing, reading, preaching, meetings, literacy, worship, philosophy, theology, public speech, and social intervention and Kairos.

We suggest that perhaps the four interveners greatest rhetorical strength is Kairos. The organizational pragmatic Sophists “recognized that Kairos provides the time frame for strategic action, for knowing the moment is ripe to

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¹ S.K. Opt, M.A. Gring, *The Rhetoric of Social Intervention. An Introduction* (Sage, Publications, Inc., 2009), p. 86-87.

make an argument and when it best to be silent. In addition to the strategic opportunity, the radical occasionality of a kairotic moment proves an opening to invent a fresh argument, something not in the tradition yet response to it”².

What is Aristotelian Rhetorical Organizational Psychology

Gerard A. Hauser, who is a Neo Aristotelian contemporary scholar describes rhetoric as a social practice in his work *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory*:

Aristotle also taught that rhetoric was a productive art: it was a mode of thinking that produced something concrete of speech in Aristotle’s day, although today we would include any mode of discourse that might influence the judgment of its audience. Rhetoric’s modes of analyzing a topic and of constructing actual discourse formed a *techne* (art) that could be described and taught. Rhetorical thinking involves both aspects... the concept of a social practice is not easily defined, since different traditions involve meaning suited to particular ends. For our purposes, social practice will refer to modes of conduct that are constitutive of an act... These may be everyday micro practices, such as the daily words of encouragement parents offer their children as a way of building self-confidence, or the more macro practices of public speakers who commonly use the pronoun *we* to develop a shared sense of identity with their audiences. Or they may be more momentous practices, such as the Declaration of Independence, through which a group of British colonials established a new political identity independent of the crown and define the core of their new identity by guaranteeing in writing certain inalienable rights: life liberty and the pursuit of happiness... A social practice also assumes a relationship between those who engage in the practice and the rest of society. In this respect, social practices are cultural specific³.

From the perspective of rhetorical psychology, an Encyclical letter is a social device of persuasion and identification. John Paul’s Encyclical is a rhetorical social device to an audience. In the social science of organizational rhetorical psychology, John Paul is defined as the exemplar leader engaged in the rhetorical art of organizational identification and persuasion with Catholic bishops:

My Venerable Bother Bishops,
Health and Apostolic Blessings!

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. Ex 33:18; Ps 27:8-9; 63:2-3; Jn 14:8; 1 Jn 3:2).

² G.A. Hauser, *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory* (Waveland Press, Inc., Prospect Illinois, 2002).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

In the opening of this Encyclical, John Paul asks his bishops to rise to the contemplation of truth. This practice of contemplation is fundamentally a “desire of the heart” to know the truth. Consequently, by knowing and loving God a person comes to know oneself. He is not asking the bishops to study truth and get advanced degrees in philosophy. John Paul is asking the bishops to desire truth from their mind and heart. From the perspective of a Neo Aristotelian rhetoric, John Paul presents 1) a logos of persuasive practical wisdom (heart and mind), 2) pathos (spiritual conscious and unconscious mastery of the emotions), and 3) ethos (in the 21st century rhetorical exemplars worthy of trust and emulation). We sense this is the rhetoric that John Paul is pursuing for his bishops when he writes in chapter IV “The enduring originality of the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas”:

In Chapter IV – The Relationship Between Faith and Reason

The enduring originality of the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas

This rapid survey of the history of philosophy, then, reveals a growing separation between faith and philosophical reason. Yet closer scrutiny shows that even in the philosophical thinking of those who helped drive faith and reason further apart, there are found at times precious and seminal insights which, if pursued and developed with mind and heart rightly tuned, can lead to the discovery of truth's way. Such insights are found, for instance, in penetrating analyses of perception and experience, of the imaginary and the unconscious, of personhood and intersubjectivity, of freedom and values, of time and history (no. 48).

In the conclusion of *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul, as the Rhetor, comes to his dominating claim for the contemporary cultural situation:

Philosophical thought is often the only ground for understanding and dialogue with those who do not share our faith. The current ferment in philosophy demands of believing philosophers an attentive and competent commitment, able to discern the expectations, the points of openness and the key issues of this historical moment. Reflecting in the light of reason and in keeping with its rules, and guided always by the deeper understanding given them by the word of God, Christian philosophers can develop a reflection which will be both comprehensible and appealing to those who do not yet grasp the full truth which divine Revelation declares. Such a ground for understanding and dialogue is all the more vital nowadays, since the most pressing issues facing humanity—ecology, peace and the co-existence of different races and cultures, for instance—may possibly find a solution if there is a clear and honest collaboration between Christians and the followers of other religions and all those who, while not sharing a religious belief, have at heart the renewal of humanity. The Second Vatican Council said as much: “For our part, the desire for such dialogue, undertaken solely out of love for the truth and with all due prudence, excludes no one, neither those who cultivate the values of the human spirit while not yet acknowledging their Source, nor those who are hostile to the Church and persecute her in various ways”. A philosophy in which there shines even a glimmer of the

truth of Christ, the one definitive answer to humanity's problems, will provide a potent underpinning for the true and planetary ethics which the world now needs.

In the following rhetorical analysis, we examine a similar rhetorical appeal in John Wesley, a pivotal figure in the first Great Awakening. He played a significant role in sparking a rhetorical spiritual revival during the mid-18th century in England.

Introduction of the Rhetoric Evangelical Renewal

The art and practice of the rhetoric of perfection had influenced the spiritual life of John Wesley, the organizational foundation, and the extraordinary growth of the Methodist church in the early days of 18th century Great Awakening revival. In many ways, it was Wesley's commitment to rhetoric that explained the growth of Methodism in Britain and the America colonies. He initially became familiar with Aristotelian rhetoric at Oxford. It was a formal academic logic style of argumentation that he changed to a rhetoric of desire, grounded on divine mystical grace and spiritual perfection as experienced in the love of God and others in one's daily affairs of the earthly and afterlife. It was furthermore a rhetorical communitarianism that emphasized the connection between the individual and the community. It was based on the belief that both individual and social identity is molded by community relationships. Communitarian rhetoric refers to a spiritual discourse that emphasizes the importance of community and the spiritual growth of individuals. It is a rhetoric of communal perfection that promotes social cohesion and civic engagement⁴. It is a journey of a rhetorical communal perfection that is apparent in the theology of John Wesley, Thomas Aquinas, and *Fides et Ratio*.

Everyday Rhetoric of Women and the Poor

Wesley's method of preaching associated with the promotion of journal writing that led to the establishment of the spiritual journal as an instrument of spiritual growth available to all persons who could read or write, women as well as men, the poor as well as the wealthy. Concurrently, Wesley's attention to his own inner life attuned him to the inner experience of ordinary people. Wesley and his followers developed a discourse community that disturbed class expectations by empowering marginalized people, such as the working class and women who were influenced by literacy and public speech. In a sense, we could say that John Wesley was somewhat similar to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* of the liberation theologian Paulo Freire of modern times.

⁴ H. Abelow, *The Evangelist of Desire. John Wesley and The Methodists* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1990), Chapter: The Problem Stated.

Methodist spiritual journals functioned as a rhetoric of spiritual experience not replacing scripture but participating in everyday dialogue about scripture. In a large sense, John Wesley's writing was a daily effort over a long lifetime to order his life and others on the teachings of scripture. Wesley became a maker of narrative texts seeking respect through public display and negotiating systems of organizational and domestic power. Keeping a diary or journal was a way of ordering the hours and minutes of the day by means of a reflective spiritual narrative⁵.

Journals Tell Your Story

The following passage is taken from Vinita Hampton Wright who is a well-known contemporary writer in rhetorical Ignatian spirituality. In her work *The Soul Tells A Story. Engaging Creativity with Spirituality in the Writing Life*, she uses rhetorical-narrative spirituality similar to the rhetorical spirituality of John Wesley:

The universe waits for us to follow desires that are too tall an order. When we desire big things, God is ready to step in with the grace and the growth. It is better that I long for peace in my marriage rather than cover that desire with the "need" to suddenly look twenty-five again. I'll go further in my soul development if I desire the best use of my creative gifts rather than concoct a desire to climb some social or financial ladder. My life will be healthier overall if I desire that novel that needs to be written rather than chase after the blockbuster that is sure to get picked up for movie rights.

My deepest, truest desires are actually the Creators desires for me. As a Christian, I have been walking with Jesus for nearly 30 years now, and if the right desires haven't formed in me by now. I'll just not worry about it anymore. Unless you are actually motivated by hateful goals, your true desires are taking you along a continuum that leads to a wiser, truer you. Your deeper desires are located in that well that is your very soul, and God created our souls to constantly move us toward health, wisdom, and peace. Within your souls mysteries is hidden the vision of what you are becoming. Trust your soul to help you get there. As a creative person, you will burst into bloom when you create out of your desires. When you create from your passion, your words and images and sounds will become more than what they are. Your desires are buzzing with energy, with a vivid detail, with visions that are beyond you. Give those desires their heads⁶.

Develop New Rhetorical Habits

Vicki Tolar Burton claims that Wesley's rhetoric had extended well beyond the Methodism of the 18th century. She explains that Wesley drastically

⁵ V.T. Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism. Reading, Writing & Speaking to Believe* (Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas, 2008), p. 10-22.

⁶ V.H. Wright, *The Soul Tells A Story. Engaging Creativity with Spirituality in the Writing Life* (Inter Varsity Press, Downer Gove, Illinois, 2005), p. 102.

broke away from the Aristotelian rhetorical logic of his days in the Oxford club. He spent the greater part of his ministry developing a new rhetoric that would appeal to women and empower the working class. He taught rhetorical leadership skills and encouraged participation in emerging reform movements.

Wesley had a profound understanding of the nature of Aristotelian character psychology and the nature of virtue, habit, and spiritual transformation. Wesley called for followers to develop virtuous habits of rhetoric. Many ordinary people of 18th century Britain were opened to these habits in order to find new ways of affirming the value of an individual's life and personal experiences. The new habits and value of an individual's life experience invited people to tell and write their own spiritual experiences, periodic appearances by speakers from other places connected with people in small groups designed for sharing between souls.

Wesley adapted the five Aristotelian basic canons of rhetoric to Methodism:

1. *Invention* is producing the right spiritual inspiring idea because communication starts primarily with a good idea. His system called for preaching from one of the scripture passages listed for that day. Whenever appropriate for preachers invention included being prepared with small notes on selected passages. If the occasion arose, speakers were also advised to draw from their own spiritual experience and tell their own stories.

2. *Arrangement* is all about the rhetorical organization of the speech. Once you have a good idea you must determine what order it needs to go into to be most effective. Prayer was part of the deliberation, as the speaker or writer invited God to assist in the discernment.

3. *Style/Elocution* refers to choices you make to impact the reader or listener. Consider word choice, tone, visualization, and other emotional-evoking style options. Wesley was very strongly against what was called the enthusiasts. He believed in playing down enthusiasm and to speak from the heart sincerely and with calm conviction. He wanted the preaching of a real person to another person of character. He was really teaching the rhetorical style of today's new rhetoric of identification and persuasion, i.e. knowing, and identifying with the psychology of the audience.

4. *Memory* The English century style of preaching was formal and read. Wesley wanted a rhetoric of the heart in clear accessible language that was not read. It was more of a conversation.

5. Wesley radically changed rhetorical delivery from being more than just a matter of pronunciation. He modeled preaching for his itinerants both in his face-to-face sermons and in his published sermon collections. He delivered sermons and published sermons that often were not alike. In fact, he saw them as having different purposes. The oral sermons aim was proclamation and invitation. The written sermons aim was mainly nurture and reflection⁷.

⁷ V.T. Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism*, p. 134.

Rhetorical Social Interventionism

The public version of Wesley's written sermons constituted formal representations of Methodist theology, and he intended them to be a primary source of theological instruction for lay preachers. Wesley's ability to reach the poor and laboring classes was his preaching main emphasis. More than anything else, it was Wesley's message that struck home. People were not excited by his elegance. Instead his followers were moved by his vision of the Christian life of love of self and others, and a gospel of universal redemption. He found his new underclass and gathered them into new social groups in which each person found acceptance and a new sense of dignity.

Although Wesley developed a unique form of Methodist rhetoric, he remained indebted to his Oxford education in Aristotelian psychology of habit and character development. Vicki Burton writes that John Wesley understood the relationship between habits and change. By sponsoring reading, writing, and speaking of daily habits of the Christian life, Wesley instructed people called Methodists to live differently. Throughout his teachings we hear Wesley's call for his followers to develop various habits of literacy and speech.

Many ordinary people of 18th century Britain were open to these habits because the new ways affirmed the value of an individual's life and experience and invited people to tell and write their own spiritual experiences. He connected with people in small groups designed for sharing between souls, i.e. values, voice, variety, and connection with salvation as a promised gift.

Wesley developed a rhetoric that speaks to the person. He stood before an assembled audience "preaching in fields, streets, and village greens freed from familiar spaces of church buildings and formal pulpits"⁸. He called his converts to a new type of rhetorical spiritual awareness, a pursuit of human perfection by means of mystical grace.

Wesleyan Rhetorical Identification and Consubstantiality

Kenneth Burke was an American literary theorist and philosopher who developed a rhetorical theory of identification and consubstantiality. Identification is a key term for the discussion of rhetoric in Burke's work *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Burke suggests that whenever someone attempts to persuade, identification occurs: one party must "identify" with another⁹. That is, the one who becomes persuaded sees that one party is like another in some way. His concept of identification works not only in relation to the self but also refers to exterior identification. Consustantiality, on the other hand, is the sharing of substance between two or more entities. Burke frequently referred to the philosophical meaning of "substance" when explaining identification and identifying acts.

⁸ Ibid., p. 208.

⁹ K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1950), p. 20-27.

When you're trying to persuade someone, you must try to identify with them. This means that you try to find common ground with the person you're trying to persuade. For example, if you're trying to convince your friend to go to a concert with you, you might say something like, "I know you love live music, and this band is one of your favorites. We'll have a great time together!" By identifying with your friend's love of live music, you're more likely to persuade them to go to the concert with you.

Wesleyan Spiritual Topoi¹⁰

In order to understand the brilliance of Wesley's rhetoric, as mentioned above, it is important to appreciate the influence of Aristotle and his rhetorical methodology. One of the necessary components in Aristotelian rhetoric is his teaching of topoi [topics]. They were more than just topics. Topoi were tools or strategies of invention that a speaker or writer may use to "locate" arguments that are appropriate to a given subject. Here are some examples of the general topoi:

- More and less likely: If the more likely thing does not happen, the less likely thing will also not happen.
- Consistency of motives: If a person has a reason to do something, he or she probably will do it.

There are many more topoi that Aristotle listed, described, and illustrated in his work. The study of topics is the study of the commonplaces that bind together a practice of reasoned argument. It is the study of a shared social practice of argumentation and thus the study of a shared form of social life.

Wesley's Rhetoric Topoi [Topics]

John Wesley's topoi were the topics of conversation and experience. What was your experience of religion as a child? Were there special experiences that

¹⁰ The Aristotelian rhetorical concept of Topoi is extremely important in organizational social psychology. In Contemporary psychology we could call it topic, but it is much deeper than just selecting a topic for examination. It is Nola J. Heidlebaugh who gave the most suitable interpretive and application of Topoi to contemporary organizational psychology. For example, "the wise rhetor recognizes that there is not a truth when novel and contingent moments are being decided, but a variety of truths some hidden and some already disclosed. While many truths may be disclosed the true significance of some elements in the situation remains hidden until deliberation is completed. True in the case of a specific decision-making incident is highly pragmatic; it is what is recognizable to the group as significant to solving their problem. How might the topics have worked? The rhetor might have begun by asking himself what is it that is not clear in the discussion or that is causing conflict and continued deliberation he could have done this by learning the point at which deliberation becomes unnecessary, because as Aristotle says we turn a thing over in our mind until we have reached the point of seeing whether we can do it or not". N.J. Heidlebaugh, *Judgement, Rhetoric, and The Problem of Incommensurability: Recalling Practical Wisdom* (University South Carolina Press, 2001), p. 88-89.

made a strong impression? When did you hear God's call to conversion? How did you respond? When did you hear God's call to speak? How did you respond? What is your experience with backsliding? These questions elicit a story, a line of narrative that might shape the rhetors discourse. Wesleyan rhetors sometimes spoke or preached several times in one day, and the itinerant pattern of their speaking events made it possible for one sermon to be preached many times to different audiences. Multiple genres shaped the arrangement or organization of Wesleyan discourse. Wesley's usual pattern for a sermon was to choose one short Bible verse, take it apart, and then put it back together by defining terms, contextualizing, saying what it does not mean and then applying it to the present situation of the audience. The genre of personal testimony or witnessing depends on a narrative structure and tends to have a chronological line of development often following the "once was lost but now, I'm found" plot line. Methodist women correspondence employed and epistolary [spiritual letter writing style] model of arrangements that included a salutation establishing emotional connection, an affirmation of faith, questions and answers, scripture and experience as evidence, and spiritual encouragement at the close. Wesley and rhetoric tended to follow a conversational model, with many genres exchange between the speaker and the audience. It is this conversational model that makes the audience an active part of the rhetorical situation¹¹.

John Wesley's Spiritual Leadership of Communal Perfection

Michael Billig is a leading scholar in defining a change in thinking in the definition of rhetorical psychology with a growing number of fellow scholars. This shift has been constructed on fundamental principles of argumentation and identification.

Recently, rhetorical conversation analysis has been turning towards argumentative discourse. The stress upon argumentation in the rhetorical approach cuts deeper than merely selecting particular sorts of discourse for examination. The emphasis is a matter of theory. Rhetoric prefers the practice of argumentation and persuasion. It is an assumption of rhetorical theorists that argumentation is not limited to those dramatic situations when tempers are lost and doors are slammed. Instead, rhetoric and argumentation are spread throughout social life. And it is these rhetorical dimensions which are frequently overlooked by social scientists. Human thinking is not merely a matter of processing information or following cognitive rules. Thinking is to be observed in action and discussions, in the rhetorical cut and thrust of argumentation. To deliberate upon an issue is to argue with oneself, even to persuade oneself. It is no linguistic accident that to propose a reason justification rightly calls for argumentation. To say that there is a linguistic complexity in the business of giving opinions is not sufficient. It is also necessary to recognize the theoretical and

¹¹ Ibid., p. 301.

argumentative dimensions. The context of opinion giving is the context of argumentation. Opinions are offered where there are counter opinions. The argument for a position is always also an argument against a counter position; the meaning of an opinion is dependent upon opinions which is countering it¹².

It is the historian Henry Abelove in *The Evangelist John Wesley and The Methodists* who describes Wesley in terms of his organizational leadership persona. As with any great visionary leaders, Abelove portrays him as continuously engaged in rhetorical, continuous, argumentative situations to maintain organizational purpose on theological arguments pertaining to essential issues of the nature of spiritual perfection, the necessity of divine grace and the conversion experience.

A rhetorical community is an organization of people who share purposes, goals, principles, and methods of communication. Members of a discourse community share a unique style of writing, jargon or professional terms of art, media/channels communication, citation styles, genres and community activities. Basically, the success of a spiritual organization is dependent on the diffusion of a rhetorical paradigm.

The following is Aristotle's basic definition of rhetoric:

Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. This is not a function of any other art. Every other art can instruct or persuade about its own particular subject matter; for instance, medicine about what is healthy and unhealthy, geometry about the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic about numbers, and the same is true of the other arts and sciences. But rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us; and that is why we say that and its technical character, it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects¹³.

We mention this passage from Aristotle's rhetoric because it describes Wesley's rhetorical skills as a spiritual teacher, theologian, preacher, healer, organizational visionary, teambuilder, community outreach, social activist, journalist par excellence. Yet, he was not adverse to argumentation and as a recognized public debate, e.g., women's proper dignity, anti-slavery policy, outreach to the working class, etc. He was a leader who would strongly debate, especially against trends in the growing antinominalism and apocalypticism Moravian rhetorical evangelism. One of his most controversial moral issues was the debatable view on celibacy which never was followed by the members of the community to any extent:

Wesley also warned that nobody should forbid marriage, despise it, or foster divorce. Still, he made clear that marriage was second best. Celibacy was what Je-

¹² M. Billig, *Ideology and Opinions. Studies in Rhetorical Psychology*, (Sage Publications Ltd, London, UK, 1991), p. 20.

¹³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. by W. Rhys Roberts, Bk 1, 6-7.

sus wanted, and he wanted it of all those who were born again, so long as they stayed faithful and did not happen to be married already.

Wesleyan Spirituality, The Rhetorical Wayfarers of Perfection

Henry Abelove, as he concludes his sociological historical study of the Wesleyan movement describes their communal rhetoric:

The Methodists could talk about themselves anytime. They could share with one another the developing record of their hopes and fears, faults and successions, doubts and certainties, anxieties and loves. This was what they liked to do; this was what they found comfortable. In Wesley teachings, the Methodists found an opportunity to reappropriate their Puritan heritage, and they reappropriated it in a form pleasing to themselves. Of the old Puritan ideals of the learned clergy, of the commitment to the cleansing of church and nation, they took only what they needed which was very¹⁴.

The Evangelical Revival was a series of Christian revivals that swept Britain and its thirteen North American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. The movement was also known as the first Great Awakening. The revival movement permanently affected Protestantism as adherents strove to renew individual piety and religious devotion. The movement was characterized by a strong emphasis on personal faith, individual piety, and religious devotion. The revival cut across denominational lines and touched every class of society. The movement was led by prominent figures such as George Whitefield and John Wesley. The revival movement also led to the establishment of new religious denominations such as Methodism. The movement had a profound impact on British society and transformed the outlook and character of the English nation.

Wesley, Aquinas, and the Rhetoric of Perfection

Finally, if we could select one major doctrinal teaching of Wesley that became the foundation of the Wesleyan movement, it would be John Wesley's teaching on Divine Grace and personal transformation in perfection. Edgardo A. Colon-Emeric is an exceptional Methodist theologian who has a masterful comprehension of an ecumenical, dialogical synthesis of Wesley and Thomas Aquinas theology of Christian Perfection. He avers that the rhetoric of Christian perfection constitutes a common ground spirituality uniting Methodists and Catholics. It is the core Wesleyan evangelical teaching of a personal and communal faith. It is the breadth and depth of the Christian earthly journey and heavenly destiny¹⁵.

¹⁴ H. Abelove, *The Evangelist of Desire*, p. 94.

¹⁵ E.A. Colon-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas & Christian Perfection: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (Baylor University Press Waco, Texas, 2009), p. 52.

As we learn from Aristotle's definition of rhetoric, it is art not a science. It is an art of persuasion that is applied to a science. Wesley was an expert at the art of persuasion. For example, Edgardo A. Colon-Emeric focuses on this issue when Wesley teaches his doctrine of perfection:

Throughout his many writings and works, Wesley's passion does not consist of offering the people called Methodists a coherent account of Christian perfection, though his account is, I think, quite successful in this regard. Instead, his real passion consists in leading his people to go on to perfection. Indeed, Wesley understands such a commitment to be integral to the divine commission of Methodism. As the large minutes record,

Q. What may we reasonably believe to be God's design in raising up the preachers called Methodist?

A. Not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the church and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.

Edgardo A. Colon-Emeric does an exceptional ecumenical dialogue between Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley on the topic of the doctrine of perfection. He concludes that:

So far, our assessment of Wesley and Aquinas understanding of perfection has considered those structural elements are common to both doctrines; the universal call to second perfection, the centrality of love and freedom from sin, the significance of infused virtues. Throughout the examination I have tried to show how these elements are used in analogous ways in their respective teachings on perfection. I use the term analogous, because as in any analogy there are differences and proportions, but I would argue that these differences and proportions are commensurate with those that distinguish a house from a cathedral¹⁶.

Colon-Emeric uses the rhetorical visual metaphor of Wesley's Methodist house. The porch of this house is repentance, the door to this house is faith, and the interior of the house is Holiness itself. The metaphor expresses both the sense of movement and of discreet status in salvation. The House of holiness itself stands on two pillars: freedom from sin and perfect love. The journey into this house is mediated through means of grace. Entering into the house of holiness is the goal of all Christians. However, the attainment of this goal cannot simply be advanced by teaching and preaching.

It was necessary therefore that Wesley instituted a complex, rhetorical, organizational system of select societies. He organized rhetorical training in the practice of preaching and group meetings of Scriptural experiential sharing.

- 1) The rhetorical preaching of rational passionate methods to awaken the unbeliever from the slumber of sin who was charged to follow the plow by gathering people in small groups known as travel bands.

¹⁶ Ibid.

- 2) Those recommended for the highest level of perfection would enter the house and form select bands or select societies. He also organized memberships that were more soteriological diverse.
- 3) Rhetorical field preaching occurred in the yard; trial bands and the penitent bands (back-sliders) gathered on the porch; the bands met on the threshold and the select bands inside the house itself. The class meetings and united societies gathered people from all over the house.

From the perspective of an Aristotelian Rhetorical Psychology I argue, from the research of Vicki Tolar Burton, his most critical contribution is “(...) his belief in the rhetoric of biblical experience”. Wesley “(...) sees the inner sense as the way humans read not only about God but also the impact of God in their own lives”¹⁷. It is here again that Wesley in his foundational doctrine is similar to Aquinas:

St. Thomas teaches it is the person, not the intellect that knows; and neither the senses nor intellect grasp the existence or essence of anything without the assistance of another faculty. Or, as Gilson contends, that for St. Thomas the existing man, the individual person, not the intellect or senses, grasps the existence (esse) of anything; and we sense with our intellects and intellectualize with our sense¹⁸.

The Media Catholic Rhetor

Fulton John Sheen was an American bishop of the Catholic Church known for his preaching and especially his work on television and radio. He was born on May 8, 1895, in El Paso, Illinois, and died on December 9, 1979, in New York City. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, in 1919. Sheen quickly became a renowned theologian, earning the Cardinal Mercier Prize for International Philosophy in 1923. He went on to teach theology and philosophy at the Catholic University of America and served as a parish priest before he was appointed auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York in 1951.

He resigned in 1969 as his 75th birthday approached and was made Archbishop of the titular see of Newport, Wales. For 20 years as “Father Sheen”, later monsignor, he hosted the night-time radio program *The Catholic Hour* on NBC (1930-1950) before he moved to television and presented *Life Is Worth Living* (1952-1957). Sheen’s final presenting role was on the syndicated *The Fulton Sheen Program* (1961-1968) with a format that was very similar to that of the earlier *Life Is Worth Living* show.

During Sheen’s rhetorical career he authored sixty-two books, published over sixty Catholic pamphlets and booklets, authored countless syndicated articles and columns, edited two magazines, instructed thousands of converts to

¹⁷ V.T. Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley’s Methodism*, p. 24-25.

¹⁸ A.W. McVey, *Soulful Organizational Leadership* (En Route Books and Media, LLC, St. Louis, MO, 2020), p. 106.

the Catholic faith, raised \$100 million dollars for the society of the propagation of the faith while serving as its director from the 1950 to 1966 and participated in every session of Vatican 2. His influence on the 20th century American church can hardly be overstated.

Sheen's rise to fame in American culture accelerated in 1930 when he agreed to deliver weekly addresses for the newly minted radio broadcast the Catholic hour. Sheen's popularity reached its peak in the 1950s when he was offered his own television show, *Life is Worth Living* which ran for five seasons from 1952-1957 during prime-time 8:00 PM evenings, Bishop Sheen, dressed in full Episcopal regalia and his trademark purple Episcopal cape, appeared before the cameras and his TV audience to deliver an uninterrupted lecture that was exactly 27 minutes 26 seconds length, the full duration of his scheduled slot. Over the course of the show's five seasons, Sheen lectured on a wide array of topics including philosophy, science, politics, communism, psychology, religion, the meaning of life, and topics, as she described, more ecumenical in nature network intended to appeal to Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and all men of goodwill. During the time of the show's popularity Sheen was reaching an estimated 30 million viewers. So beloved was Sheen in the culture during this time that in 1952 he received the Emmy Award for most outstanding television personality.

In many ways, Fulton Sheen, like John Wesley, was an exemplar-evangelical-rhetor. Most important, Sheen was a dedicated and accomplished student of Aquinas who, like Wesley, had the remarkable gift of being a brilliant academic philophical and theological scholar who also was able to preach and teach in a pastoral rhetoric of spiritual experience of earthly and heavenly perfection. It is this message that Sheen, as Exemplar Rhetor, proclaims in his final manuscript *Footprints in a Darkened Forest*:

Eternity is without succession, a simultaneous possession of all joys. To those who live toward eternity, it really is not something at the end; it is that which influences every moment of the now. Reason for the Sabbath or the rest on the Seventh day was to make man stand off from the flux of a work a day world to contemplate his origin and destiny. Nor is the end of the series the point where God is found. He is not outside the world; he is within it. In him, where you live and move and have our being. The Immanentism is a kind of temporalization of Eternity; God became flesh and dwelt in our temporal order. Actually, the biblical view does not stress the "morrow", but rather leaves it in God's care. We live in the interim between two comings, the last of which will be the complete dominion of him who already reigns in some hearts¹⁹.

Footprints in a Darkened Forest was Sheen's last work, and as the title suggest, it is about the modern existential sense of the absence of God. He ex-

¹⁹ F.J. Sheen, *Footprints in a Darkened Forest* (Meredith Press, New York, 1967), p. 19.

amines that modern man is not going to God through the order of the universe; he is going to God though the disorder inside himself. He is less impressed by the necessity of a watchmaker for the watch of the Universe. Sheen in his modern, apologetical rhetoric preaches, "God to the modern soul is not way out there in infinite space; rather He is moving within the human soul (...) as St. Augustine teaches, Behold, Thou wert within, and I without, and there I did seek thee (...). Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee"²⁰.

Sheen Footprints on the Rhetoric of the Subconscious

On the topic of the subconscious Sheen focuses his attention on Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. *Footprints* was published in the 1960s; however, there has been a vast expansion in theory and clinical practice into the present. Most notable change in the psychoanalytical tradition has been the introduction of psychoanalytical theory into psychology and sociology. As a result, we are able to develop disciplines that focus on studies of the social unconscious and rhetorical social unconscious. We suggest that Sheen in "The Treasures of the Subconscious" sensed such a need.

Freud's two great insights from his clinical studies were repression and sublimation. Repression are feelings that are pushed into the unconscious. Sublimation relates to human urges and desires and behaviors. At some time in their lives, virtually everyone has urges and desires that are socially unacceptable or problematic in other ways. Sublimation is a defense mechanism that an individual may use to channel those unacceptable feelings and urges into something harmless and possibly even productive and beneficial. Sheen, in his spiritual rhetoric of the treasures of the subconscious, is really describing the dynamics of the social unconscious as opposed to the psychoanalytical unconscious of Freud.

The social unconscious is a concept introduced by Michael Billig. It describes a real force that holds everything together from individual internal coherence to the largest social phenomena. Research suggests that social behavior is largely influenced by unconscious associations and judgments. For example, unconscious attitudes or stereotypes can affect our understanding, social actions, and decisions. Conscious beliefs and attitudes about a person or group that influence decisions and behavior subconsciously.

The social unconscious can affect our behavior through social-rhetorical, unconscious associations and judgments that influence the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us, as well as our everyday actions. Rhetorical unconscious attitudes or stereotypes can also affect our understanding, actions, and decisions. Consequently, with the definition of social unconscious there is difficulty separating the concepts of conscious and subconscious mind. The

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 222-223.

main difference is that the subconscious mind basically performs the function of repression.

In rhetorical social psychology the unconscious only exists to the extent to which people repress. To understand what people do when they repress, we have to understand what they do when they talk. Grand statements about structures are of less use than close observation of details. A speaker's utterances are not merely the mediated expressions of an inner thought. This recent approach to the rhetorical subconscious is similar to Sheen's methodology in *Treasures of the Subconscious*²¹. Fulton Sheen states that we must not "(...) think of our subconscious always as a garbage pail instead of a dinner table"²². He then divides the subconscious into an argument between the id and the pneuma which is Spirit [breath]. It is similar to the concept of Alcoholic Anonymous and other support groups.

We describe the dynamics of dialectical subconscious; we take this position as we draw attention to the struggle against egotism, lust, greed, anger, laziness, intemperance, and jealousy. Pneuma is concerned with peace, harmony, integration, and happiness which are acts as repressed or expressed internal-external behavior in particular human situations. Therefore, they are fundamentally an issue of the rhetorical social journey to perfection.

The Dynamics of a Rhetorical Spiritual Subconscious

Both the id and the pneuma are in the subconscious levels of our mind; through them pass suggestions, desires, urges, drives, and impulses which seek entrance into the conscious level of life and conduct. They are also the same in that there is a little sensor at the top of the stairs who can keep down the dynamism, drives and thrust of the pneuma if it does not like them. In fact, there are seven sensors battling against the pneuma: egotism, lust, greed, anger, laziness, Intemperance, and Jealousy. But there is one big difference; the id is principally concerned with the drive to pleasure. The pneuma is concerned with the drive toward peace, harmony, integration, and happiness. There is in us a double drive: one toward giving release to our carnal nature, the other giving freedom to our deeper spiritual nature. The second is an urge to flaunt conscience and our deeper spiritual nature. One is an urge to flaunt conscience and the moral law and to be bad; the other is to grow in goodness and love of neighbor. One is to exalt our own ego; the other is to serve our neighbor and to crush our selfishness.

We are, therefore, solicited in two ways: One toward release of what is egotistic, the other toward a harmony and perfection of our nature. In other words, we are tempted also to be good.

²¹ M. Billig, *Freudian Repression. Conversation Creating the Unconscious* (Cambridge University Press, UK, 1999), p. 82.

²² F.J. Sheen, *Footprints in a Darkened Forest*, p. 38.

Once again, we must draw attention to Sheen's release of what is egotistic and toward a harmony and perfection of our nature. We claim that Sheen's spiritual rhetorical social unconscious is compatible with John Wesley's teaching on grace and perfection.

Sheen's "Treasures of the Subconscious" provides the foundation for a Christian Rhetorical Social Unconscious, as we learn in the above passage: Both the id and the pneuma are in the subconscious levels of our mind; through them pass suggestions, desires, urges, drives, and impulses which seek entrance into the conscious level of life and implosions which seek entrance into the conscious level of life and conduct.

Treasures of the Subconscious Rhetoric a Social Subconscious and Movement to Divine Perfection

- 1) Sheen describes what we have defined as the dynamic rhetorical social subconscious, Service of others is one of the cures for loneliness, but there is another within man himself—his subconscious mind. Here Sheen is referring to the rhetorical subconscious dialogical imagination of persons, places, and situations²³.
- 2) The mind, from one point of view, is made up of what is called the conscious and subconscious. The conscious mind is like the first floor of a home where visitors are entertained, where we wear our best face and make ourselves presentable. This is similar to Freud's concept of the ego. Of course, Sheen is extremely schooled in Thomistic psychology; thus he is describing a healthy ego capable of intellectual and moral social deliberation [the virtuous habit of prudence].
- 3) The subconscious, on the other hand, may be likened to a cellar into which we throw a number of our unpleasant experiences, failures, embarrassments, and rubbish we do not like to think about, such as a relative who was hanged for sheep stealing. We keep all these out of decent company whom we hope to win as friends or to influence them. Not only do we throw junk and rubbish into the cellar, but it has its own measure of noisome, vexing, and the uncongenial, such as environmental rats which come up from the outside, water which seems to seep up through the floor or termites and mold. Besides the unsavory thought experiences we hurl down into the cellar, there are also certain basic instinctive drives, the deepest one of which according to Freud is the urge to pleasure, others say it is the urge to superiority. Were we born with them, or did they come from the outside? They came from outside us in the sense that all our experiences, unpleasant or pleasant, have resulted from

²³ Ibid., p. 36-39. Sheen questioned traditional Freudian theories and introduced alternative perspectives. Unlike Freud emphasizes the unconscious id as driven by pleasure and Thanatos biological drives innate id factors, Sheen argues that subconscious sociocultural environment, and spiritual pneuma upbringing play a crucial role in shaping personality.

our contact with the environment. Other psychologists list and say that these drives come from the outside also, because they are a part of our evolutionary hangover with the scent from the animal; because we inherit from humanity myths and symbols which often appear in dreams²⁴.

- 4) The foundational principle to understanding rhetorical social psychology is the concept of repression, more precisely a Neo-Freudian concept of repression. The evolving discipline of discourse psychology argues that standard psychology looks in the wrong place for an understanding of human conduct. Instead of hypothesizing what goes on in the mind, Billig suggests we should be analyzing the social details of conversation, paying careful attention to micro features of talk and social contacts. Although discursive psychology has little if any interest in the analytical tradition of cognitive internal structuring of the mind, we approach the subconscious issue of repression from the perspective of a rhetorical social psychology. Within that context, we will add that there is a strong relationship between the study of language and the subconscious mind.
- 5) Given Sheen's depth of spiritual psychology, we suggest that is why methods of pastoral narration and dialogue of individual and group dynamics are necessary. In retrospect, subconscious id repression and pneuma dynamics by means of narration and internal-external, dialogical rhetorical spaces and devices takes us to the early days of the Wesley movement.
- 6) Narrative therapy is a form of counseling that aims to help individuals adjust and tell alternative stories about their lives so they better match who and what they want to be, leading to positive change. The therapy is non-pathologizing, non-blaming and sees persons as experts on their own lives. Narrative therapists view people as separate from their problems and strive to have them view their problems that way as well. The therapy challenges dominant problematic stories that prevent people from living their best lives and helps people identify alternative stories, widen their views of self, challenge old and unhealthy beliefs, and open their minds to new ways of living that reflect a more accurate and healthy story.
- 7) Wesley's took pains to stipulate that when one even strives for moral perfection that individual pursuit of Divine perfection also involves the struggle of mental defects of character. It is the issue of the Sheen's id and pneuma. Wesley's notion of perfection had been preached in Christendom before by Kempis, Francis de Sales, and the Syrian monks of the fifth century all believed in a gradual life of sanctification culminating in glorification. However, Wesley taught Methodist that they were already perfected by living in a community of charity and Divine grace, but full perfection would be attained after death²⁵.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

²⁵ H. Abelove, *The Evangelist of Desire*, p. 80.

The Rhetorical Mystic

Vicki Burton in *Spiritual Literacy* writes about Hester Rogers who was a well-known mystic in the early days of the Wesleyan movement. She corresponded with Wesley frequently, and he published her mystical experiences in journals. Rogers reports:

She was the daughter of an Anglican minister who died when Hester was nine years old. Her spiritual journey followed a mystical path unusual for a Protestant woman in those days, rather than experiencing salvation in a single transforming moment as is described in many Puritan and evangelical conversion narratives. Hester took excessive pride in her accomplishments and embraced dancing, fashionable dress, and parties of pleasure with passion. She also became a reader of novels even romantic stories and began to attend places that might seem as attempting to flee God's hand preceding her spiritual awakening. When at age 13, Hester chose to be confirmed; she determined that she would lead a new life. Her repentance, however, was selective: she gave up anger and neglect of prayer but decided not to forgo dancing, fashion, novels or plays, for her adolescent spirituality oscillated between intense closeness to God for her equally intense separation and darkness. She wrote that during a fever-induced dream, she experienced her own damnation, followed by the vision of a cloud of uncommon brightness and then an angel in white confronted her, saying the Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven all your sins and washed you in His own blood and come to bid you enter into the joy of your Lord. We could call this the mystic consciousness of divine reality²⁶.

Sheen and the Subconscious Transcendent Soul

We will conclude by explaining the pneuma as the "spiritual core" of a Rhetoric-Wesleyan-Thomistic Spiritual Journey of Perfection:

Thus there passes through the subconscious mind aspirations, insights, new values, and motivations which never before were entertained. They did not come from ourselves, and if we correspond with them, they completely remake us. They change fear into love, indifference into enthusiasm, hate into service. This Pneuma does not belong to our nature as such, though the id does. But it is so constantly introduced into our impoverished nature that it seems to be part of our life. When it touches us, it seems to affect principally our intellect and our will: the intellect, by enlightening us to see a truth we never saw before, and our will by giving us a power to do something we never had the strength to do before. But the healing and elevating power of the Pneuma all was set up a counter resistance on the part of our disordered human condition. We are not easily persuaded to give up our sinking ship. The end revolts against the Pneuma and the Pneuma against the id, making our heart the battle ground. The egotistic self is threatened with its conceits, lust, intemperance, anger, and the like. To die for them is not easy, even though the prospect of peace is so appealing and desira-

²⁶ V.T. Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism*, p. 205.

ble. But once the Pnuma is at the helm of the ship, the psychic regions are filled with an indescribable joy and delight.

Concluding Remarks

We conclude this paper with a few personal reflections. When I meet Christian friends, clergy, and academics, and they ask, “What are you working on these days?” I respond, “I am spending a lot of time on the nature and methods of rhetoric. They usually answer, “Well, that is a hot topic these days.” I am not sure what they mean by that if I look at the political rhetoric of the US Congress.

Sheen teaches us in the above lesson about the *Treasures of Subconscious* desires engaging our intellect and will. He says our will is motivated and given a power to do something we never had the strength to do before. When my friends said, “Yeah, rhetoric is a hot topic today, I should answer, “No, I am interested in the Rhetorical Social Subconscious and spiritual healing because I wish to open our souls to the pneuma”.

Aristotle states that rhetoric is the art of persuasion of an audience by means of three principles of public speech. They are 1) *logos* (the use of reason), 2) *pathos* (the use of emotions) and 3) *ethos* (the ethic of the rhetor is trustworthy). John Wesley begins his Methodist movement at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. It is a time of extreme social upheaval in British culture. Large populations of the British family farm life were uprooted into city dwellings as the result of farmland consolidation. Working men sought employment in factories, learning new skills that allowed them to earn a survival living wage from arduous long hours of labor. These families lived in poorly constructed housing that was overcrowded by the new poor working class families. The public health resources of the city were far from adequate to provide for the medical care of the uprooted arrivals. Furthermore, the public sewage systems were appalling and served only in the spreading of community disease. Most important, the government and the general public were in a state of panic about the shocking increase in the birth rate; as a result, there was great concern about the capability of the rate of food supply to keep up with the birth rate.

Wesley came to this culture of collective anxiety and preached a biblical message of personal holiness, and a state of perfection in this life. He rejected Calvinistic predestination, preached free will, went to the emerging working poor families, promoted social justice and literacy, meeting bands, provided health care, instructed women in literacy and rhetorical devices, offered the porches of the Methodist house community for Biblical learning and spiritual dialogue.

What was it at the heart of Wesleyan rhetoric that appealed to the uprooted masses and spoke to social justice? It was Wesley’s call to personal holiness. It is not dedication to an institution. This call to personal holiness became the heft of Methodist rhetoric. He listened to the spiritual voice of the new believers, especially the deep souls of the women and poor who set upon a journey of heavenly perfection, and it is a rhetoric of experiencing heavenly joy by means of grace in

the everyday life in their crowded city dwellings and harsh factory employment, and so I suggest from the perspective of a rhetorical theology of perfection of Wesley and Aquinas that there is “(...) no holiness but social holiness”²⁷.

***Fides et Ratio* and the Rhetorical Desire of Human Perfection**

The pivotal rhetorical teaching to stress is a comparison with *Fides et Ratio*'s about the nature of human perfection and Wesley's communal rhetoric of human perfection. It is about the Christian communal journey of sharing in spiritual perfection. It is absolutely at the core of John Wesley's evangelical message. Christians are called to enter into a community and experience mystical grace in sacrament and word and to share their intimate experiences of the Divine. It is because they participate in a believing, loving, and serving community. They are focused on a journey of experiencing heavenly joy in their earthly Biblical study, sharing of word, caring for the poor and sharing their spiritual experiences in everyday language. As John Paul writes:

In believing, we entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by other people. This suggests an important tension. On the one hand, the knowledge acquired through belief can seem an imperfect form of knowledge, to be perfected gradually through personal accumulation of evidence; on the other hand, belief is often humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person's capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring.

It should be stressed that the truths sought in this interpersonal relationship are not primarily empirical or philosophical. Rather, what is sought is the truth of the person—what the person is and what the person reveals from deep within. Human perfection, then, consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge of the truth, but in a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving with others. It is in this faithful self-giving that a person finds a fullness of certainty and security. At the same time, however, knowledge through belief, grounded as it is on trust between persons, is linked to truth: in the act of believing, men and women entrust themselves to the truth which the other declares to them²⁸.

* * *

Summary

The article analyzes four styles of rhetoricians appearing at breakthrough moments in the history of Western Christianity. This is about the rhetoric of John Paul II (*Fides et Ratio*), Thomas Aquinas, Fulton Sheen and John Wesley. They all employ specific patterns such as rhetorical tactics, devices, and strate-

²⁷ E.A. Colon-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas & Christian Perfection*, p. 201.

²⁸ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 32.

gies that constitute the ultimate framework of organizational rhetorical frameworks. In addition, the article analyzed rhetorical maneuvers: ethos, pathos, logos and metaphors and arguments with examples, as well as creating events, writing, reading, preaching, meetings, literacy, worship, philosophy, theology, public speaking and social intervention and Kairos. Perhaps the greatest rhetorical force of the four interveners is Kairos.

Keywords: *Fides et Ratio*, Rhetoric, Communal Perfection, John Paul II, Thomas Aquinas, Fulton J. Sheen, John Wesley.

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