PART I: SACRED RHETORIC

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SACRED REHTORIC IN THE RENAISSANCE

Debora Shuger

Since the Greeks, most thinkers and scholars have viewed rhetoric primarily in relation to philosophy--i.e., as competitive epistemologies, one offering probable and popular arguments, the other certain and scientific ones. This contrast has generally operated to the benefit of philosophy, except during the epistemic crises of the sophistic period and post-scholasticism. To view rhetoric as simplified and pragmatic reasoning, however, overlooks its distinctive characteristic. Like all forms of argument, rhetoric attempts to teach and persuade. But only rhetoric (and poetry) also attempt to move. Rhetoric therefore is not only grounded in epistemology but also in psychology. From Plato's attack on rhetoric as psychagogia--the enchantment of the soul by subrational, affective language--the history of rhetoric has been bound up with the psychology of the emotions. Attitudes towards rhetoric, whether positive or negative, largely reflect a prior assessment of the nature and value of affective experience, its relation to truth and virtue, its connection to animal appetite and spirituality.

As Book II of Aristotle's Rhetoric makes evident, the connection between affective psychology and rhetoric has always been very close. This is especially true in the Renaissance. From the sixteenth century on, rhetoric was defined as passionate discourse and most of the major rhetorics, particularly those concerned with sacred discourse, contain

detailed analyses of the emotions, while psychology texts during the same period discuss rhetoric.[1] This connection has never been adequately explored. What I therefore want to do is briefly review shifting views of the emotions from antiquity to the Renaissance and look at their influence on rhetorical theory.

The view of emotion in Plato and Aristotle is significantly ambiguous. Plato's treatment of emotional experience is largely negative. In the tripartite psychology of the *Phaedrus*, emotion is confined to the lower, spirited and appetitive parts of the soul, primarily to the latter, the dark and disobedient horse (253-54; see also Gardiner 21-22). Plato associates emotion with physiological appetite, the desires for food, drink, and sex. The *Republic* condemns poetry not only because it is an imitation of an imitation (the epistemic criticism) but also because it arouses subrational and dangerous passions, obscuring knowledge and disturbing the settled virtues of the soul (10.605-606). Yet, for Plato, love, which begins in the sensual desire for physical contact, is the daimon that can draw man to the intelligible realm of ideas (*Phaedrus* 246-56; see also *Symposium* 202-203). Plato never calls such intellectual love an emotion (he does not have the concept of emotion), but its close relation to sensual love suggests that appetite and desire are not only the black horse of the soul but also the power that guides the charioteer from within; that appetite is not opposed to reason but potentially its dynamic and motive force. Thus Plato presents in inchoate form two radically different views of the emotions. The first leads naturally to Stoicism, the second to Saint Augustine.

Aristotle's view of the emotions is more favorable than his predecessor's.[2] Emotion is clearly differentiated from bodily appetite and

placed in the lower part of the soul, which, though itself alogical, is capable of reason. That is, emotion is not oblivious to reasoning, the way thirst and hunger are, but arises from belief and is therefore capable of being altered by rational argument: if you can prove to me that someone is planning to poison my dinner, I will probably hate and fear him. For this reason, Aristotle can raise *pathos* to one of the three types of rhetorical proof and treat the emotions as the material of moral virtue. The good man is the one whose emotions accord with right reason, who feels the way he should, when and where he should. Yet Aristotle shares with Plato a strong intellectualist bent. Throughout the *Rhetoric* the emotions are regarded with distrust as deceptive and unreliable. He thus insists that "we ought in fairness to fight our case with no help beyond the bare facts . . . ." (1404a) and that "the arousing of prejudice, pity, anger, and similar emotions has nothing to do with essential facts . . . . If the rules for trials which are now laid down in some states--especially in well-governed states--were applied everywhere, such people would have nothing to say" (1354a). Aristotle thus prefers a rhetoric based exclusively on rational argument, although he recognizes the effectiveness of emotional appeal.

Aristotle's relatively balanced position on the emotions collapses in the Hellenistic period. Stoicism, Scepticism, and Epicureanism all set up some form of passionlessness (*apatheia*, *ataraxia*) as a psychological ideal; all are openly hostile to the emotions as perturbations and diseases of the soul, infecting its tranquillity with turbulent desires, pains, and fears. The absence of any positive analysis of the emotions led to the failure in the post-Aristotelian rhetorics to find an adequate theoretical ground for the grand style and the greatest rhetoric. Treatment of emotion drops out of Hellenistic rhetoric and leads to some surprising discontinuities in

Latin. Thus in his rhetorics Cicero defends the pragmatic, social utility of movere; but when he turns to philosophical psychology in the Tusculan Disputations his position is Stoic: the emotions are diseases. Similarly, in Quintilian, moving is discussed in the context of how to deceive the judges. Emotional appeals are useful when all the hard evidence is against you. In the sixth book of the Institutes, he writes,

> But the peculiar task of the orator arises when the minds of the judges require force to move them, and their thoughts have actually to be led away from the contemplation of the truth . . . The judge, when overcome by his emotions, abandons all attempt to enquire into the truth of the arguments, is swept along by the tide of passion, and yields himself unquestioning to the torrent. (6.2.5-6)

Except in the work of Longinus, ancient rhetoric never divested itself of the intellectualist assumptions of Classical philosophy and as a result had a difficult time legitimating its functions on anything other than pragmatic grounds--i.e., logical argument simply cannot persuade a popular, mixed audience.

The real break with Classical intellectualism comes in the last centuries of the ancient world.[3] In his City of God St. Augustine offers a radically new evaluation of emotional experience, which becomes the basis for the revival of rhetoric a millennium later. He jettisons the hierarchical faculty psychology of the Classical tradition in favor of a more unified picture of mental activity, one in which feeling, willing, and loving become tightly interrelated. The emotions, he writes, "are all essentially acts of the will," for as the will is attracted or repelled by different objects, "so it changes and turns into feelings of various kinds"

(14.6). Volition, subjectively experienced, is emotion, and Augustine borrows the Platonic concept of love to denote this affective and volitional orientation of the self towards the desired object (14.7). Affectivity, instead of being an irrational perturbation, thus moves into the center of spiritual experience. The emotions springing from a rightly directed will--love of God and neighbor, the desire for eternal life, penitential sorrow--are inseparable from holiness (9.5, 14.9). Angels and saints, even Christ Himself, feel joy, sorrow, love, and compassion. Affectivity thus suffuses Christian existence. Love and knowledge are also interconnected, since the noetic quest is born out of love for its object; yet we can only love that which, in some sense, we already know. Hence, rather than undermining rational judgement, love wings the mind's search for God and truth. As Augustine writes in the Confessions: "my weight is my love; wherever I am carried, it is my love that carries me there. By your gift we are set on fire and are carried upward; we are red hot and we go" (13.9).

Although Augustine himself never relates this psychology to rhetorical issues, his interpenetration of feeling, willing, and loving strongly influences Renaissance rhetoric. Before jumping ahead more than a thousand years, however, we should look briefly at Saint Thomas, since Renaissance psychology is largely an "Augustinianization" of Thomist concepts and terminology. It will not surprise anyone to discover that Thomas modifies Augustine with a strong Aristotelian bent. What this means in terms of Thomas' psychology is a firm division between emotion and volition, what Thomas calls sensitive and intellective appetite. Emotion properly pertains only to sensitive appetite, the part physiological, part spiritual conation towards particular sensible goods. For Thomas the love of God is

therefore not an emotion, and in fact he discusses the emotions only in context of the moral virtues, never the theological. Aquinas accepts the Aristotelian position that the emotions are not inherently evil but the material of moral virtue, yet he locates them in the lower part of the soul and thus breaks the Augustinian connection between man's highest spiritual and contemplative ends and his emotional experiences, between his appetite and his will (*Summa* 1a. 2ae. 22, 1-3; 26, 1-2; 30, 1-2; see also Gardiner 106-7, 114).

To a large extent the Renaissance returns to Augustine, although modifed by Thomist and neo-Platonic elements. In addition, the Renaissance appropriates this Augustinian psychology for rhetorical theory, restoring the connection between the emotions and rhetoric fundamental to Aristotle but thereafter largely abandoned. This is particularly true for the sacred rhetorics, since Renaissance Augustinianism belongs to the history of the great religious renewal, both Catholic and Protestant, that took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[4]

Following Augustine, Renaissance psychology mitigates the distinction between the will and the sensitive appetite (Gardiner 126-28, 135). In the Thomistic commentators, Medina and Soarez (Levi 23-33, 117-18), and in Melanchthon, emotion is no longer restricted to the particular goods of sense but embraces the love of God, repentance, longing for beatitude—all the acts of what Thomas had called the intellective appetite. Melanchthon, for example, writes, in his *Loci Communes*:

> I shall not listen to the Sophists [i.e., scholastics] if they deny that the human affections—love, hate, joy, sadness, envy, ambition, and the like--pertain to the will (*voluntas*). . . . For what is will (*voluntas*) if it is not the fount of the affections? And why do we

not use the word "heart" instead of "will" (voluntas) . . . . For since God judges hearts, the heart and its affections must be the highest and most powerful part of man. (27-29)

A century later, the English priest and psychologist, William Fenner, writes: "As the affections are motions, so they are the motions of the will. I know Aristotle. . . place[s] the affections in the sensitive part of the Soul, and not in the will . . . But this cannot be so. . . . How could the Apostle command us to set our affections on God. . . if the affections were in the sensitive and unreasonable part?" (4). Another seventeenth-century English psychologist, Edward Reynolds, divides the emotions into three categories: the spiritual, rational, and sensitive. The first includes mystical ecstacy, the second love of God and virtue; only the last overlaps with what Aristotle and Aquinas would have called emotion (36-39). For Melanchthon, Fenner, and Reynolds--and the list could be extended to cover most Renaissance psychologists--the emotions are in or of the will and therefore spiritual conation belongs to the realm of affectivity. Whereas Aquinas had differentiated feeling and willing on the basis of differences in their respective objects (sensory as opposed to spiritual), the Renaissance links them on the basis of the similarity of the subjective experience--a shift from an ontological to a psychological perspective characteristic of the Renaissance.

This psychology pervades Renaissance rhetoric. In the ecclesiastical rhetorics, movere assumes a more prominent role than it possessed in antiquity. It is no longer one of three possible functions of discourse (teach, delight, move) but the primary function of all sacred rhetoric.[5] This, in turn, often led to an emphasis on the grand style (which is not equivalent to Ciceronianism). Thus the great Spanish preacher of the

sixteenth century, Luis de Granada, notes that "because the grand style has the sublimity and power able to move souls (which is indeed the foremost and singular duty of a preacher) it is necessary that in every sermon he choose one or even many subjects that can be treated in this genus" (328). The justification for this emphasis on passionate discourse appears in the lists of emotions found for the first time since Aristotle in most comprehensive rhetorics. Almost always, the list begins with love, and the first subcategory under love is the love of God. Hope, and sometimes even faith, the two remaining theological virtues, are also treated as emotions, along with spiritual joy, contrition, and desire for God, as well as "secular" emotions like desire for fame or shame at disgraces.[6] Preaching can become sublime and passionate because the whole view of the emotions has changed and broadened to include the upper reaches of distinctively human experience.

The distance between Ancient and Renaissance views of emotion can be measured by looking at a revision of the Platonic tripartite soul in Johann-Heinrich Alstead's Orator, an early seventeenth-century general rhetoric (i.e., covering both secular and sacred discourse). Alstead starts out, like Plato, by dividing the soul into intellective, concupiscible, and irascible components--Plato's charioteer, black horse, and white horse. The passage begins normally enough: "In the intellective faculty is the mind itself," to which Alstead attributes wisdom, prudence, and eloquence. But then the analysis takes a surprising turn: in the concupiscible part of the soul one finds the love of God and men, love of virtue, zeal and desire for divine glory and the salvation of men, contempt of this world, and so on. In the irascible part, Alstead continues, are hope and faith (fiducia) in God and Christ, fear of God, fortitude,

constancy, magnanimity, and (curiously) outspokenness (208-9). If we might call Plato's model of the psyche polytheistic, with its internal hierarchical subordinations, then Alstead's is trinitarian--three co-equal faculties subsisting in a single nature.

The evaluation of passionate discourse in Renaissance rhetoric (what is traditionally called the grand style) follows from this assimilation of spiritual and affective experience. _Movere_ is no longer thought of as deceptive and subrational obfuscation or dangerous enchantment. Rather, emotional persuasion aims at the transformation of moral and spiritual life by awakening a rightly-ordered love, by redirecting the self from corporeal objects to spiritual ones. The author of the immensely popular _Clavis Scripturae Sacrae_, a sixteen-hundred page study of biblical philology steadily reprinted from 1562 to 1719, Flacius Illyricus writes: "with the exception of the historical books, Holy Scriptures are primarily composed in the grand, sublime, or lofty genus. . . . They teach and exhort and dissuade and accuse and terrify; and again console their hearers and move, form, and reform their hearts in every way; until finally Christ is formed in them" (2.459-60).

Emotion plays a crucial role in Renaissance rhetoric and psychology not only because inner, spiritual life comes to be perceived in largely affective terms but also because feeling is closely related to cognition. This too goes back to Augustine, who, in the opening chapter of the _Confessions_, affirms the mutual interconnection of love and knowledge. Renaissance psychologies spell out this connection. The noetic quest begins in inchoate knowledge, in a dim and partially realized faith; that faith, in turn, stirs up love and a desire to grasp more fully the faintly glimpsed object. Impelled by desire, the person attempts to see and

understand the beloved object, which achieved, creates the ardent love of full union. In his De anima, Juan Luis Vives thus writes,

> The object must be known so that it may be loved, but the knowledge need only be so much as is sufficient to elicit love. Where we are truly connected to the desired object, we know it better and more intimately; and then we rejoice. Our first knowledge leads us to believe that object is good; in the latter knowledge we feel (experimur) that it is so. . . . Thus love is the middle point between inchoate knowledge and the full knowledge of union, in which desire disappears but not love. This rather burns more fiercely, the more and greater goods are found in that union. (178)

In A Treatise of the Passions, Edward Reynolds likewise writes,

> Love and Knowledge have mutuall sharpening and causalitie each on other: for as Knowledge doth generate Love, so Love doth nourish and exercise Knowledge. The reason whereof is that unseparable union, which is in all things between the Truth and Good of them . . . . the more Appetite enjoyeth of [the Good], the deeper inquiry doth it make, and the more compleat union doth it seek with [the Truth]. (103-4)

In Renaissance rhetorics these arguments belong to the defense of movere. In his last major work, the Ecclesiastes, a study of sacred rhetoric, Erasmus notes,

> What Augustine, following Plato, said is true: nothing is loved unless known at least to some degree, and again nothing is known unless loved in some respect. . . . In the Hortensius, Cicero praised philosophy and aroused love for it, before he taught it.

> And who undertakes to teach a subject, first inflames his students, showing through amplification how noble it is . . . . what great things is promises, and how useful it will be. (925B)

The allusion to the Hortensius is significant, because this was the book that first stirred St. Augustine to embrace philosophy. It was not so much Cicero's philosophic position that mattered, as his evident and eloquent praise which moved Augustine's love for a subject he barely knew. Eloquence is not philosophy, but both are parts of the journey towards truth. This sense of the inseparability of love and knowledge was reinforced by the biblical anthropology of the Renaissance. Both the major studies of scriptural philology of the period, Flacius' Clavis and Salomon Glassius' Philologia sacra, point out that the Bible does not differentiate knowing and feeling, as Classical philosophy did. Glassius comments that in Hebrew "to know or to think does not denote simply gnosis but also emotion and effect . . . or what is the same, it signifies a living and efficacious knowledge. . . . Thus [in Hebrew] to know is the same as to love, to care for" (1053-54). Flacius makes the same point: "the Hebrews attribute the whole psychic life of man to the heart and appear to place the rational soul completely in the heart . . . ascribing to it the power both of thought and choice, of wishing and doing. . . . On the other hand, the philosophers locate the rational soul . . . in the head or brain; leaving only emotion in the heart" (1.178). Both Classical and biblical anthropology coexist throughout the Renaissance, sometimes causing no small inconsistencies.[7] The biblical, however, dominates what Bouwsma has called the Augustinian Renaissance, to which belong most of the period's rhetorical theory and whose ideal was not Swift's stoical horses but a passionate and unitive knowledge. The rhetorics and psychologies written

in this tradition treat emotion as part of man's cognitive as well as appetitive perfection. Rhetoric, in particular, belongs to the noetic quest; its emotional power does not subvert reason but animates it, drawing heart and mind towards union with the desired object. As Adam says in his conversation with Raphael, ". . . Love thou say'st/Leads up to heav'n, is both the way and guide" (Paradise Lost 8.612-3).

Thus, the positive evaluation of emotion provides the theoretical ground for Renaissance rhetoric. In antiquity, the lack of such a ground always proved problematic--as seen in the reservations Plato, and to a lesser extent, Aristotle, share concerning emotional appeals. The problem appears more subtly in the discontinuities and reticences of Cicero and Quintilian. How can the vir bonus deliberately deceive the judges by sending up a smokescreen of pathos? One of the major achievements of Renaissance rhetoric, then, was to provide a credible basis for passionate discourse by drawing on concepts from Saint Augustine and the Bible, whether directly or via contemporary psychology. Renaissance rhetoric is based on a view of human nature in which emotion forms part of man's spiritual and noetic excellence. Rhetoric is not popular philosophy, decorative ornament, or "self-satisfying" commonplaces, but specifically affective discourse. It thus has a unique role in the economy of human existence--to transform the heart, turning it towards moral and spiritual truth. The decline of rhetoric in the late seventeenth century, then, results in part from the collapse of Augustinianism under the weight of empiricism and rationalism, in part from the marginalization of Christianity and the consequent loss of the last significant arena for popular, oral discourse. Many of the issues and concepts, however, developed within the rhetorical tradition, quietly slide over into poetics,

as imaginative literature rather than sermons and speeches becomes the locus of passionate rhetoric.

NOTES

[1] For discussion of rhetoric in psychology texts see Fenner 90-104; Senault 171-172; Reynolds 20-21.

[2] More extended treatment of Aristotle's theory of emotions can be found in Gardiner 31-45; Fortenbaugh 9, 17, 26, 45, 63-83.

[3] See Bouwsma 10-11, 38-41; Gardiner 97-98; Levi 17-18.

[4] The neo-Stoic rhetorical theories of Marc-Antoine Murer and Justus Lipsius which form the basis of Croll's still famous studies of Renaissance rhetoric belong to a different tradition. See Bouwsma for the contrast between Stoicism and Augustinianism in the Renaissance. In general, the Augustinian viewpoint is reflected in rhetorical theory.

[5] Melanchthon, Elementorum 420; Alsted 85; Erasmus 861E; Soarez 1, 87; Hyperius 41; Valades 160; de Estella 8; Carbo 162; Keckermann, Rhetoricae 15; Vossius 117; Fenelon 83.

[6] Caussin 459-512; Keckermann, Systema 2:1615-31; Keckermann, Rhetoricae 43; Carbo 211-27; de Granada 83-87, 161-66; Dietrich 29.

[7] Carbo and Caussin, for example, preserve the Thomist equation of sensitive appetite with emotion, while nevertheless listing love of God as an emotion. The most flagrant instance of such inconsistency appears in Wright, who begins by arguing that emotions unsettle reason and generally lead to sin (5-8), but when he comes to discuss specific emotions gives first place to the love of God (193).

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DEBORA SHUGER is currently an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Michigan. She is working on a book on sacred rhetoric in the Renaissance and has published several articles on this subject in *Rhetoric*, *Viator*, and *Traditio*.