

THE RHETORIC OF AESTHETICS: THE BEAUTY OF THE TRADITIONAL  
ROMAN RITE OF THE MASS

by

ANTHONY M. WACHS

B.A., Black Hills State University, 2001

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech Communication, Theatre and Dance  
College of Arts and Science

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2008

Approved by:

Major Professor  
Dr. Charlie Griffin

# **Copyright**

ANTHONY M. WACHS

2008

## **Abstract**

This thesis is a response to a contemporary debate over the nature of rhetoric. Specifically, it has recently been declared that rhetoric is aesthetic. This move is known as the “aesthetic turn” and it has been both praised and denounced by rhetoric scholars. An aesthetic rhetoric is concerned not with the content of a message, but rather with the presentation of the message. In this thesis, I argue that an aesthetic turn is a good turn to make in theory, but that the actual turn taken by a number of prominent rhetorical scholars has been misguided.

A Catholic theory of beauty is developed within this thesis as an alternative to the postmodern aesthetic. The Catholic theory posits that beauty flows from three forms: the accidental, the substantial, and the transcendental. Accidental beauty is concerned with physical traits and can be judged through integrity, proportion, and splendor. Substantial beauty deals with an object’s telos or end and is judged according to the actualization of telos. Transcendental beauty is a trait of all beings and can be judged hierarchically according to participation in Being. Finally, a methodology for analyzing beauty is developed within the thesis.

In order to reify the Catholic theory of beauty and its methodology the Roman Catholic Mass of 1962, also known as the Tridentine Mass, is analyzed as a case study. This artifact was chosen in particular because it was recently liberated from bureaucratic imprisonment by Pope Benedict XVI. In addition to analyzing the traditional Roman rite,

several changes that were made to the Mass after the Second Vatican Council are examined.

This study is important for several reasons. First, it provides rhetorical scholars with a clear understanding of beauty with which rhetoric can be analyzed. Also, the aesthetic theory offered by this study transcends the differences between rhetoric-as-epistemic and rhetoric-as-aesthetic scholarship. Most importantly though, view of beauty that is advanced implies an ethic from which rhetoric can be evaluated. Finally, the study has important implications for the development of the Roman Catholic liturgy.

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Dedication.....	viii
CHAPTER 1 - Rhetoric and Beauty: A Sordid History .....	1
Background.....	1
Overview of the Thesis .....	6
CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review .....	9
Marvin T. Herrick: A Convenient Starting Point .....	10
Robert L. Scott: The True Defeat of Truth? .....	12
Paul M. Campbell: Man is Language .....	14
Whitson and Poulakos: The Aesthetic Turn Formulated.....	17
James W. Hikins: Aesthetic Rhetoric as Eristic .....	21
Summary.....	28
CHAPTER 3 - Catholic Beauty .....	30
A Definition of Beauty .....	31
The Perception of Beauty .....	35
Methodology.....	40
CHAPTER 4 - Aesthetic Rhetoric of the Mass .....	43
Methodology.....	43
The Substance of the Mass .....	43
Walk Through of the Mass .....	45
Accidental Beauty.....	52

Substantial Beauty .....	54
Transcendental Beauty.....	56
CHAPTER 5 - Summary and Implications.....	59
Summary.....	59
Implications .....	60
For Rhetorical and Communication Studies .....	60
Practical Applications .....	60
Ethical .....	63
For the Holy Roman Catholic Church .....	67
Bibliography .....	72

## **Acknowledgements**

There are several persons that I would like to acknowledge at the outset of this project. Without their aid and support there would be no project. To begin with I must acknowledge God, three persons in one. Without His grace only He knows where I would be at this time. Additionally, my patron Saint Anthony of Padua—orator, Hammer of Heretics and patron of lost things—must be acknowledged. During the times when I thought I had completely lost my mind and touch with reality, he helped me to find them.

There are several people on an academic level that I must thank as well. In particular, I would like to thank Charlie Griffin, my major professor. He has guided me through this study and helped to motivate me in my academic career. I would also like to thank Timothy Steffensmeier for pushing me towards excellence and being quite patient with many of my essays written for him which heavily relied on “Eristic.” Additionally, I would like to thank Bill Schenk-Hamlin for his enthusiasm for and joy in academic life which served to keep me positive throughout this project and my academic career.

On a personal level there are several people who also need to be acknowledged. To begin with my parents, David and Marilyn, need to be thanked for their constant love and encouragement. Father Justin Wachs, whom I am glad to call my brother, needs to be acknowledged for the insight he has consistently given me on this topic among many others. Finally, and most importantly I must thank and acknowledge my wife, Melisa. Not only are you the best editor that I know, but you are also my companion, my source of inspiration, my muse and my love! Thank you for putting up with me during this project and for the effort that you have put into as well.

Thank you all! Pax Domini Sit Semper Vobis Cum

## **Dedication**

To Pope Benedict XVI whose clarity of thought has served to deepen my faith.  
Thank you for liberating the traditional rites of the Roman Catholic Church.

To my family: Melisa, my inspiration for this topic. Michael, meus filius, always  
seek out Goodness, Truth and Beauty.

To my parents, David and Marilyn: Thank you for loving me, for all the prayers  
and the paideia in which you raised me.

To Father Justin Wachs: Thank you for all the Masses said and your example.

To the rest of my family: Thank you for tolerating me.

To the Most Reverend Bishop Robert Carlson: Your friendship is priceless; I do  
not know who I would be without it. Thank you for everything you have done.

To the Latin Mass community of St. John Vianney in Maple Hill, Kansas: Thank  
you for showing my family generosity and true Beauty. You have deepened our faith; our  
hearts will always long to be there.



# CHAPTER 1 - Rhetoric and Beauty: A Sordid History

## Background

A debate concerning how rhetoric and beauty relate has persisted for centuries. The role of beauty in rhetoric has generally led scholars into discussions about the difference between rhetoric and poetics. Aristotle refers to the *Rhetoric* numerous times in the *Poetics*. Horace's *Ars Poetica* is laden with an Aristotelian understanding of rhetoric (Howell). Longinus argues in his treatise, *On the Sublime*, that the greatest poets and writers of prose are those who attain "eminence and excellence in language" i.e., the sublime (Longinus, 2). Moving into the Middle Ages, rhetoric is viewed simply as a tool for making philosophical and theological truths suasive. In essence, rhetoric becomes the servant of dialectic rather than its counterpart. The traditional, "handed down" history of rhetoric developed out of the Medieval epoch. It is generally accepted that the Greeks believed rhetoric was persuasive, practical speech while the poetic was artistic imaginative speech (Baldwin, 1), though much has been written that blurs this distinction. Marvin T. Herrick (1948) argues that no need exists to separate the two subjects; we would be better remembering that rhetoric and poetics are not "oil and water that refuse to mix" (3). Paul M. Campbell (1971) concludes that the discipline of Communication ought to be restructured into Communication Aesthetics. More recently, Jeffery Walker (2000) has argued that the Greek sophists did not make a distinction between rhetoric and poetics and practiced a form of poetic rhetoric, the practice of which would ebb and flow until Augustine's time. Indeed, he argues that rhetoric grew out of the poetic and became the practical persuasive speech we know today.

In this vein, modern rhetorical theory has taken an “aesthetic turn.” Some theorists are attempting to liberate rhetoric from being the counterpart of dialectic; they are trying to separate rhetoric and knowledge of reality (Scott; Whitson and Poulakos, 132). They want to view rhetoric as aesthetic and not epistemic (Whitson and Poulakos, 136). Whitson and Poulakos (1993) argue: “Understood aesthetically, rhetoric allows people to suspend willingly their disbelief and be exposed to a world other or seemingly better than the one with which they are familiar, all too familiar. That is why the rhetorical art asks not for dialectically secured truths but for linguistic images that satisfy the perceptual appetites or aesthetic cravings of audiences” (138). The aesthetic turn is primarily a shift of concentration from what is said to how it is said. Advocates of the aesthetic turn believe that:

Aesthetic rhetoric focuses on the human body as an excitable entity, an entity aroused by language. Inasmuch as the ears can be bribed, the nostrils infiltrated, the skin raised, the tongue stimulated, and the eyes stopped at the surface of things, the task of aesthetic rhetoric is to speak words appealing to the bodily senses. In carrying out this task, it substitutes the sounds, the smells, the textures, the flavors, and the sights of the world with a sensual language surpassing them. By contrast, epistemic rhetoric concentrates on one part of the body, the brain, as an entity capable of thoughts and calculations when prompted by language. Assuming that the brain thinks through certain mechanisms, the task of epistemic rhetoric is to produce a language catering to them. In executing this task, it substitutes the world’s inner logic with a cerebral language said to correspond to it. (Whitson and Poulakos, 141)

On this view, the art of rhetoric is about the rhetor's artistic creation of physically pleasing speech. The content of a speech is not of concern, but only the manner in which it is said. According to Whitson and Poulakos, "an aesthetics of rhetoric treats the projections of an orator as those of an artist, not an epistemologist" (136).

At root, the aesthetic turn is an attempt to revive sophism and to give rhetoric the predominant voice in academia by formulating rhetoric as the foundation of all human activity. The aesthetic turn is a response to several questions asked by rhetorical scholars: "How can we avoid delivering ourselves back into the hands of our adversaries when asserting that rhetoric is epistemic? And how are we to keep the fetid forces of truth-as-a *priori* from occupying the citadel?" (Whitson and Poulakos, 132). Essentially, these scholars are tired of rhetoric being secondary to philosophy. According to Greene (1998):

The aesthetic turn is symptomatic of a thirty year struggle to assemble a constitutive model of rhetorical effectivity. A constitutive model of rhetorical effectivity focuses on the role of public discourse in the process of world disclosure. A constitutive model concerns itself with how, for example, subjects, personas, situations, and problems emerge as the effects of rhetorical practices. A constitutive model is in opposition to a theory of rhetorical effectivity based on a "logic of influence." A logic of influence model prefigures the relation between a speaker and audience as a form of persuasion or goal orientated activity. The influence model reduces the question of rhetorical effectivity to the epistemological-ethical implications of a speaker's success or failure to accomplish his/her persuasive goals. (19)

The thirty year struggle that Greene speaks of began with Robert L. Scott's essay, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," in which he declared that truth is situational; being created through rhetoric instead of being eternal and existing apart from people's knowledge of it. The aesthetic turn is seen by some as reinvigorating Scott's understanding of ethics of rhetoric, which primarily promotes tolerance. The aesthetic turn was made because scholars believed that a constitutive model is more "ethical" than a model of effectivity (Greene; Hariman; Vatz). The aestheticians argue that the epistemological scholarship that developed out of Scott's essay was based on a misreading of Scott (Greene).

As this thesis will show, aesthetics need not be void of knowledge about reality. In fact, according to Hikins (1995), "*reality constrains aestheticism*" because "art is essentially dependent on knowledge" (364). Which—if this is true—means that logically no answer to Whitson and Poulakos' question, "How are we to escape the deleterious implications of the Aristotelian notion of rhetoric as the counterpart of dialectic?" could ever be correct, because any answer given would contradict reality. Whereas the aesthetic turn attempts to separate aesthetics and knowledge, this thesis offers a means to transcend the differences between the aestheticians and the epistemologists within the field of rhetoric. I take the position that an aesthetic turn is good for rhetorical studies, but the turn taken by the advocates of a "constitutive rhetoric" is misguided because it is based on premises that render an aesthetic rhetoric impotent. In contrast, this thesis shows that a Roman Catholic understanding of aesthetics, which is built upon Platonic and Aristotelian foundations, provides rhetoric scholars a clear and useful perspective to envision an aesthetic rhetoric.

This thesis also demonstrates that rooting rhetoric within aesthetic studies need not break the bond between rhetoric and dialectic. Beauty, according to the Catholic perspective, is objectively real and can be known by persons. The questions raised by the objective existence of beauty are numerous and imperative. For instance: What does beauty communicate to the human person? How can the human person communicate beauty beautifully? It will be shown that beauty is not simply a relative idea that is manifest in the emotions of a perceiver. When a person does recognize beauty, the experience ought to be enlightening. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato went so far as to say that, “when a man sees beauty in this world and has a remembrance of true beauty, he begins to grow wings” (249). The soul grows wings and is enlightened because of the nature or essence of beauty. She communicates, and her message is not relative. Beauty speaks to the soul of the human person and she testifies on behalf of truth and goodness.

In order to prove that aesthetics is not antithetical to dialectic, in this thesis I will define beauty and describe its rhetorical nature according to a Catholic perspective. Also, I will discuss the three forms of beauty and why it is that some people are not able to perceive beauty, as well as why others may perceive beauty, but not react to it properly. For the sake of clarity, a case study will be developed in order that the application of the developed theory of beauty may be examined. Specifically, the Roman Catholic Mass will be analyzed as the case study for the application of the developed theory of beauty.

The Catholic aesthetic theory advanced in this paper will be used to critique the aesthetic rhetoric of the 1962 Rite of the Mass, also known as the Tridentine Mass. This examination will be undertaken to provide an example of how the Catholic aesthetic can be utilized for rhetorical purposes. Examining the Tridentine Mass is especially exigent

because on June 7, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued a Motu Proprio liberating the Tridentine Mass from bureaucratically imposed bondage. In *Sacramentum Caritatis*, speaking of the Mass in general, he argues:

The beauty of the liturgy is part of this mystery; it is a sublime expression of God's glory and, in a certain sense, a glimpse of heaven on earth. The memorial of Jesus' redemptive sacrifice contains something of that beauty which Peter, James, and John beheld when the Master, making his way to Jerusalem, was transfigured before their eyes (cf. *Mk* 9:2). Beauty, then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation. These considerations should make us realize the care which is needed if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendor. (45)

This thesis explains how the elements of the liturgy make the liturgy beautiful. It also demonstrates how changing certain elements in the liturgy alters the message which is communicated through those elements. Finally, the thesis evaluates the beauty of the Mass on three different levels.

### **Overview of the Thesis**

The second chapter of this thesis is a literature review of scholarship concerning the relationship of rhetoric to beauty. Since this thesis is a response to the aesthetic turn that was taken in rhetorical studies, the primary focus of the literature review is upon the turn itself. It begins with the scholarship that led to the aesthetic turn. First, Marvin T. Herrick's 1948 essay, "The Place of Rhetoric in Poetry Theory," is examined. He analyzes the renaissance's perspective of classical rhetoric and poetry. Through his discussion he argues that no need exists to separate the two subjects. Next, Robert L.

Scott's 1967 seminal essay, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," is reviewed. Scott's essay has provoked a great deal of debate between the aesthetic rhetoricians and epistemologists.

The literature review continues with the scholarship that makes the turn itself. The primary focus here is on the make-up of the aesthetic turn and the problems therein. Paul M. Campbell's 1971 essay, "Communication Aesthetics," is reviewed. In this essay, Campbell argues that communication and language are both aesthetic and that the communication discipline should be restructured to resemble this. In the end he tries to establish a constitutive model of communication rather than one centered upon effectivity.

Next, I examine "Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric," by Whitson and Poulakos. This essay argues that rhetoric is aesthetic not epistemic. Chapter two also reviews James W. Hikins' (1995) essay, "Nietzsche, Eristic, and the Rhetoric of the Possible: A Commentary on the Whitson and Poulakos 'Aesthetic View' of Rhetoric." Hikins argues that Whitson and Poulakos have valid points, but rhetoric cannot be seen merely as aesthetic; for if it were, rhetoric would not be taken seriously as a study and serious ethical problems would arise from such a view. Though his analysis is quite valid and poignant, his solution to the problems raised by Whitson and Poulakos' approach is less than desirable.

In the third chapter the Catholic doctrine of beauty is described. The chapter begins with an explanation of the Catholic definition of beauty. The Catholic understanding of beauty is tremendously important to rhetorical scholarship for two reasons. First, it provides an alternative to current aesthetic rhetoric scholarship, one that

does not have the burden of separating knowledge and aesthetics. Additionally, it is argued that this alternative is much richer because it can account for more dimensions of beauty than the postmodern perspective that informs current aesthetic rhetoric studies. Second, it explores how beauty ultimately functions rhetorically within the Catholic doctrine of beauty. The perception of beauty in Catholicism entails an experience with the divine that ultimately produces love within the perceiver. After the definition of beauty is explained, the three forms from which beauty flows and the human faculties for perceiving these forms of beauty are discussed. Chapter three concludes with the development of a critical methodology based on the Catholic understanding of beauty.

Chapter four consists of an aesthetic analysis of the Mass using the methodology set forth in chapter three. In addition, the various practices of the Tridentine rite that were lost in the transition to the Novus Ordo rite, which has been the standard liturgical rite since 1970, are examined. Chapter four discusses how these changes enhance and/or obscure the beauty of the Mass.

Chapter five summarizes the argument that is made within this thesis. It reviews the problems with way current rhetorical scholarship views the relationship between rhetoric and aesthetics. Then, the Catholic aesthetic and the critical methodology that flows from it are summarized. Additionally, the implications for rhetoric scholarship are discussed; specifically, the methodology developed in the thesis which provides rhetorical scholars with a means to analyze rhetoric. What rhetorical scholarship would look like using the proposed method is also discussed; especially, the possibility of grounding an ethics of rhetoric on the Catholic aesthetic theory. Finally, implications for the organic development of the Roman Catholic liturgy are discussed.



## CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

This study is a response to the aesthetic turn made in the discipline of rhetoric. As such, the “road” taken that led to the turn must be explored. This chapter explores the aforesaid road. Now, all roads begin somewhere and lead elsewhere. In the case of this study, we do not begin at the start of the road because the complete history of this debate is too large for this thesis. Additionally, the stasis of the debate has essentially remained the same throughout time. Therefore, this literature review begins much closer to the turn so as to situate the immediate circumstances surrounding the turn.

We will begin in 1948 with Marvin T. Herrick’s essay, “The Place of Rhetoric and Poetic Theory,” in which he re-evaluates the relationship of rhetoric and poetics for modern scholarship. Then, we will examine Robert L. Scott’s 1967 seminal article, “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic,” because the aesthetic turn is largely a response to scholarship that builds upon this essay. In his 1971 essay, “Communication Aesthetics,” Paul M. Campbell takes the first steps toward an aesthetic turn when he proclaims that communication scholars need to take aesthetics seriously. Then in 1993, Whitson and Poulakos formally call for an aesthetic turn in rhetorical theory. Finally in 1995, James W. Hixson vies with Whitson in Poulakos and offers a solution to the problems they raised in his essay, "Nietzsche, Eristic, and the Rhetoric of the Possible: A Commentary on the Whitson and Poulakos 'Aesthetic View' of Rhetoric." The goal of the literature review, then, is to clearly describe the scholarship leading up to the aesthetic turn, the turn itself and the exigencies which motivated all these scholars to write their respective works. As is shown, these scholars all believe that important humane characteristics of

rhetoric are being ignored by scholars. The aesthetic turn is elaborated upon so that the problems and limitations associated with the philosophy behind the turn and the turn itself may be brought to light.

### **Marvin T. Herrick: A Convenient Starting Point**

During the Middle Ages rhetoric was part of the trivium—grammar, logic and rhetoric—which was the foundation of education. However, it was merely an epiphenomenon of logic, philosophy and theology used as a means to make known truths suasive. During the Renaissance, rhetoric scholars began to delve deeper into ancient Greek and Roman scholars, in particular Plato and Aristotle. The scholarship that grew out of the Renaissance is the foundation for the traditional, “received” history of rhetoric. It is this perspective that Herrick addresses in his essay, “The Place of Rhetoric in Poetic Theory.” Basically, Herrick (1948) analyzes the Renaissance view of rhetoric and poetics through their understanding of ancient Greek rhetoric and poetics.

When studying a subject it is always important to know the history of what has come before one’s own scholarship. Herrick contrasts an older view of poetics to the way it was being studied during his time. Specifically, his essay is a response to scholarship that built upon Herbert Wichelns’ (1925) article, “The Literary Criticism of Oratory.” In his seminal essay—which for all intents and purposes begot the discipline of Speech—Wichelns declares that literature is primarily aesthetic, whereas oratory is pragmatic. Essentially, Wichelns perpetuates the distinction between rhetoric and poetics. Herrick states: “Today the student of literary criticism generally dismisses the older rhetoric as something that went out of fashion with William Jennings Bryan and Chautauqua declamations and gives his whole attention to poetics, to what he likes to

think is a purely aesthetic approach to literature” (2). He reminds scholars that “modern poetics, including the theory of comedy, was built up largely by schoolmasters and commentators whose own training was rhetorical. . . . Much of our difficulty and misunderstanding today would be removed if we could remember that poetry and rhetoric are not oil and water that refuse to mix” (2-3). He goes on to urge scholars to “combat the depreciation of rhetoric and oratory that romantic critics have foisted upon us” (3). Herrick clearly has problems with separating rhetoric and poetics, as is done during modern times, and believes that the two arts should work together. Herrick writes his essay because he sees the separation rhetoric and poetics as unnatural. Additionally, when the either subject is studied without the other, the study lacks necessary qualities from the outset. In a sense, this desire to amalgamate rhetoric and poetics is the foundation of the aesthetic turn.

It may seem obvious to contemporary scholars that rhetoric and poetics should work together, but during the middle of the twentieth century, they were not perceived as doing so. Herrick argues: "The twentieth-century student of literary criticism has to keep in mind that the medieval trivium of logic, grammar, and rhetoric was still in force during the sixteenth century, though considerably modified. For centuries the study of literature, of poetry, had been by way of grammar and rhetoric, and the sixteenth-century still studied literature by way of grammar and rhetoric" (2). He continues:

The ancients and their Renaissance disciples did not make such a mistake: they rightly regarded oratory and poetry as cognate arts, nourished by the same disciplines of logic, grammar and rhetoric. Plato treated poetry and rhetoric together in the *Phaedrus*. Aristotle repeatedly referred the reader of his *Poetics* to

the *Rhetoric*, and *vice versa*. Cicero time and again drew upon poetry, including the plays of Terence, for illustrations of rhetorical principles. (3)

Herrick uses several examples to demonstrate that the “Renaissance disciples” understood the interplay between rhetoric and poetics as the ancients had and to demonstrate how the two can work together (3-4).

In Herrick’s time, scholars believed that rhetoric and poetics had two separate ends: rhetoric to persuade; poetics to imitate (14). Herrick thinks that this is an artificial separation though. Through an examination of the ancients and their Renaissance disciples, he argues that “both orator and poet aimed to teach, delight, and move. The orator put the main emphasis upon delighting his audience. The poet put the main emphasis upon delighting his” (16). The difference between orator and the poet, then, is only of emphasis. Essentially, they are both practitioners of poetics and rhetoric. Finally, he argues that “with the rediscovery of Aristotle’s *Poetics* in the sixteenth century it was inevitable that sooner or later the traditional rhetorical analysis and Aristotle’s poetic analysis would come together, that the two methods, the rhetorical and the poetic, would either be fused or one be raised in importance over the other” (19). This last quotation seems quite prophetic considering what was to come.

### **Robert L. Scott: The True Defeat of Truth?**

In his 1967 article, “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic,” Robert L. Scott declares that rhetoric is epistemic, that we know through it and situational truths are created by it. His article is important to aesthetic rhetoric scholarship because the aesthetic turn is largely a response to it. He is writing against the tradition in rhetoric which posits rhetoric as a means to “making the truth effective in practical affairs” (10). Scott writes

because he believes that rhetoric has been situated in such a way as to keep it as a secondary subject in academia, and rhetoric's subordination to philosophy perpetuates negative ethical consequences. The first part of his essay is dedicated to arguing against the existence of objective truth and the ability to know truth even if it does exist. He states that, "truth is not prior and immutable but is contingent" (13). In the second half he offers an ethical rationale for viewing rhetoric as epistemic.

Scott's declaration that rhetoric is epistemic would be better stated as rhetoric *should* be epistemic. He states: "This notion [rhetoric as epistemic] is most coherent when it is taken as *normative* rather than *descriptive*" (13). Scott argues this because if he were claiming that rhetoric *is* epistemic then he would be making claims about Truth, which would be inconsistent with his overall theory (i.e., there is no objective truth). He claims that "man must consider truth not as fixed and final but as something to be created moment by moment in the circumstances in which he finds himself and which he must cope" (17). His argument is ultimately derivative of the thinking of sophist Gorgias of Leontini. Scott states: "The argument of the Greek sophist Gorgias for his famous three propositions (nothing is; if anything is, it cannot be known; if anything is and can be known, it cannot be communicated)<sup>17</sup> may be interpreted as an attempt to show that man can be certain of no absolute standard" (15).

Scott declares that rhetoric is (should be) epistemic largely for ethical reasons. He argues that people cannot know the Truth and to function as if we can is harmful. He states that "accepting the notion that truth exists, may be known, and communicated leads logically to the position that there should be only two modes of discourse: a neutral

presenting of data among equals and a persuasive leading of inferiors by the capable” (10).

Scott has taken Gorgias’ argument a step further than Gorgias himself. Scott has argued: there is no Truth; if there is Truth, it is unknowable; if there is Truth and it is knowable, it is not communicable; if there is Truth that is knowable and can be communicated, it is unethical to do so. Thus, he offers the normative claim that rhetoric should be viewed as epistemic and builds an ethic from it. He is certain that “the point of view that holds that man cannot be certain but must act in the face of uncertainty to create situational truth entails three ethical guidelines: toleration, will, and responsibility” (16). In the final analysis, Scott is pushing rhetorical scholarship away from being ethically neutral and concerned only with efficacy.

### **Paul M. Campbell: Man is Language**

Unlike Herrick, who simply advocates that rhetoric and poetics are intimately related, Paul M. Campbell proposes a radical shift in communication studies. He writes his essay at a time when the empirical method dominated the perspective from which communication was being researched. Campbell (1971) in his article, “Communication Aesthetics,” argues that communication scholars should begin to study communication aesthetics, which would help to counteract communication studies that have become too analytical and impersonal. Campbell himself does not critique the logical positivism in communication studies during the mid-twentieth century; he simply offers an alternative to social scientific communication studies.

Campbell begins his article by situating it within the context of the discipline and within a greater scholarly whole. He states:

It seems apparent that “communication” has become the god-term of our field, as witnessed by the retitling and restructuring of courses, departments, and the national organization. And it seems equally clear that one major pull of this new ultimate turn is toward empirical-experimental-behavioral methods of investigation. . . . We **must** begin with such studies, and we must **go beyond** them. The warnings against analytic processes *per se* that began with Kant and Cassier have grown in recent years to a veritable chorus of voices—Langer, Lenneberg, Chomsky, Feigl, Polanyi, Duncan, Godel, Sartre, Burke, Koestler, and many others—all crying that every viable system must make room for the knower in what is known, all protesting that “pure” and “impersonal” approaches are distorting and self-contradictory, all pointing out the severe limitations in the analytical method. [emphasis his] (7)

Campbell bemoans the fact that communication scholarship was becoming too scientific and concomitantly was excluding a humanistic approach to human activity. He argues that communication aesthetics would function as a safeguard “against approaches that are too analytical, too objective, and too impersonal” (7).

Campbell claims that Communication Aesthetics’ foundation is based on four interrelating concepts:

- 1) There is a level at which human communication becomes dramatic, an aesthetic act, for such communication requires the use of language (i.e., verbal, nonverbal, natural, or artificial symbolization), and the language process itself is at bottom an aesthetic one.
- 2) Communication is an entirely active process, and though communicative and language acts are often called “symbolic,” no

distinction can be made between “symbolic” and “real” acts. 3) Language, the medium of communication, is the defining characteristic of man, which is to say that to be human is to possess and be possessed by language. 4) In his language acts man effects a fusion of self-symbol-environment that is appropriately studied dialectically, not analytically. (7)

Campbell argues that the interplay between these four concepts creates the new area of study: language as aesthetic process (8). These four concepts, in varying degrees, are implicit within the aesthetic turn.

The most important aspect of Campbell’s theory for the upcoming aesthetic turn is that language is primarily *constitutive* rather than primarily *communicative*. He claims that, “a constitutive language act is one that constitutes, that **is** a passing or permanent aspect of the language user. . . . Constitutive language acts are most apparent in the vocal and gestural play that seems to have been the origin of language in the race and that many theorists view as the precursor of language in the individual” (8). Campbell maintains that individuals create themselves through this constitutive function of language and that the “human state is one of constant tension between the constitutive and the communicative dimensions of language” (9). On account of this, Campbell concludes that man *is* language (11). Ultimately, he argues that in the act of communicating, which entails using language artistically, the communicator is also a performer (9).

Since the communicator is also a performer, Campbell claims that the barrier between the symbolic and the real should be extinguished. He states: “Thus, the symbolic-real dichotomy must be discarded, and all acts must be seen as completely real **and** symbolic” (10). Not only does communication *constitute* who a person is, but



Campbell believes that it should constitute the environment in which people live.

Campbell argues that communication should be judged on whether or not it opens a space for choice, not on how effectively it obtains a desired result (10). The idea that the communicator should work toward giving people options rather than guiding them to a previously known truth is extremely important for those who make the aesthetic turn.

That language *is* the environment in which we exist is the last aspect of Campbell's theory that functions as a foundation for the aesthetic turn. Campbell asserts:

I have already argued that there is a basic sense in which man **is** language. Now I would add the idea that there is a sense in which language **is** the environment, a sense in which language is constitutive of the outer world as well as the self. A note of caution is at once necessary, for in this direction lurks a pernicious metaphysic. We cannot assume that the world around us does not exist or that it is simply and completely unknowable, for that is to reduce the universe and ourselves to a "world" of words or symbols that floats in a vacuum or in a perfect mystery. (13)

Campbell is suggesting that language forms the world around us, but that the world around is not completely dependent upon human understanding. As will be shown below, Whitson and Poulakos go a step further than Campbell by explicitly declaring that the world around us cannot be known.

### **Whitson and Poulakos: The Aesthetic Turn Formulated**

Whitson and Poulakos (1993) vie against rhetoric-as-epistemic scholarship in their article, "Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric." They reject rhetoric-as-epistemic because it fundamentally essentializes knowledge, the very thing Scott was

trying to counter. In other words, they believe that Scott's attempt to liberate rhetoric from objective knowledge had failed because it was not radical enough. Whitson and Poulakos use Nietzsche as a mouthpiece to deconstruct rhetoric-as-epistemic scholarship. Whitson and Poulakos bring Nietzsche to the table because he fundamentally rejects epistemology in favor of aesthetics. Nietzsche believes that aesthetics is about desire; desire being the motive for all action, including rhetoric. They claim that Nietzsche "was able to show that knowledge is nothing more than a rhetorical fabrication, one of many in which human beings trade" (140). Essentially, they use their knowledge of Nietzsche to argue that discussions of epistemology are flawed from their outset because humans by nature cannot have true knowledge.

Whitson and Poulakos begin by arguing that rhetoric has had a long tumultuous history. Rhetoric's problems have been caused by philosophers and those who make claims to know (131). They believe that there are "deleterious effects" of rhetoric being the counterpart of dialectic—a form discourse used to discover truth (132). According to Whitson and Poulakos, people who use rhetoric to persuade others are ultimately arrogant and intolerant. They state:

In the epistemic tradition, orators must know something to begin with—in fact, it is their knowledge that should authorize them to address an audience. Because they are primarily knower, they approach audiences saying: "I know certain things that you do not. I am here to tell you about them because I think you should know them. If you do, you will be better off." In the event this message is rejected, the explanations run as follows: popular audiences are intellectually

inferior; they think they know but do not realize that they do not; they insist on being ignorant. (142)

The two scholars contrast the audacity of the epistemologist to the humility of the rhetorical aesthetician. They claim:

Because they are mainly artists, they approach audiences saying: “Let me take you with me to a world more enchanting and more sufferable than the one you now inhabit.” In the event this message is rejected, the explanations take the form of doubts about the timeliness of the address, the appeal of the words uttered, or the orator’s ability to create and satisfy appetites. (142)

Whitson and Poulakos go on to describe epistemologists as having an inferiority complex of sorts. They state: “Driven by a sense of academic inferiority and the wish to earn the respect of their other colleagues (i.e., philosophers) in the academy, Scott’s supporters and critics alike accepted unquestionably rhetoric’s link to epistemology and undertook to rearticulate it with renewed zeal” (133). According to Whitson and Poulakos, the rhetoric-as-epistemic scholars fall into two camps: perspectivists (critics of Scott) and inter-subjectivists (followers of Scott) (133). They summarize these two positions, argue that they are really not too different and explain that they are both self-contradictory (132-136).

Whitson and Poulakos describe perspectivism as an attempt to “correct the radical subjectivity of Scott’s position” (133). They summarize the perspectivism as follows: “According to this perspective, rhetoric’s relation to knowledge is informed by the kind of realism that requires a belief in real objects with real properties, properties perceptible by different subjects in an identical way as long as they all occupy the same position”

(133). They contrast intersubjectivism with perspectivism in that “intersubjectivism shifts the standard of epistemic validity from objectivity to social interaction by positing that knowledge emerges from human exchanges, with agreement serving as the ground for truth” (133). They summarize intersubjectivism saying: “Understood in this way, knowledge is a human product produced in the give-and-take of communicative settings, not by means of abstract dialectical operations that transcend our social situation” (133). Whitson and Poulakos then explain several reasons why Nietzsche does not like either of these two epistemologies. They state that to understand Nietzsche’s critique of these epistemologies their commonalities must also be understood. They state:

First, both assert that an object can be known in the first place. . . . Second, both assume an objective reality. . . . Third, both approaches intimate hidden worlds with intelligible structures the totality of which can be known if only one follows proper epistemological procedures. In effect, they both claim to be able to pierce existence, subjugate the phenomenal world, and possess its essence. (135)

After explaining the perceived problems with epistemological scholarship, Whitson and Poulakos elaborate their view of aesthetics. Using Nietzsche, they argue that rhetoric is part of a creative act which produces signs that function not to refer to referents, but to beautifully mask the chaos of life (136). Accordingly, “Signs contain neither perspectival nor intersubjective truths; rather, they reflect human needs and desires [the compulsion to ‘arrange a world for ourselves’], which drive the act of signification” (136).<sup>1</sup> This (mis)understanding of signs is problematic.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is where Whitson and Poulakos most resemble the thought of scholars who advocate a constitutive model of rhetoric, as was seen in Campbell above.

Though Whitson and Poulakos reject rhetoric-as-epistemic, they offer a rhetorical epistemology of their own. They argue: “Because we have nothing to go on except nerve stimuli from our senses, linguistic signs intervene to expand the stimuli and forge them into concepts” (137). On account of their epistemology, they legitimately argue that “aesthetic rhetoric focuses on the human body as an excitable entity aroused by language. Inasmuch as the ears can be bribed, the nose infiltrated, the skin raised, the tongue stimulated, and the eyes stopped at the surface of things, the task of rhetoric is to speak words appealing to the bodily senses” (141). Also, “in this light, what is said to constitute knowledge is the result of sensorial aestheticism, and to say that something is true is to pay a compliment to aesthetically successful, not epistemologically valid, discourse” (138). For this reason they are consistent in arguing that, “in the aesthetic tradition, orators are not expected to have epistemological credentials before addressing an audience; their peculiar view of things and their unique manipulation of words suffice” (142).

### **James W. Hikins: Aesthetic Rhetoric as Eristic**

In his article, “Nietzsche, Eristic, and the Rhetoric of the Possible: A Commentary on the Whitson and Poulakos ‘Aesthetic View’ of Rhetoric,” written two years after Whitson and Poulakos’s aesthetic turn, Hikins attempts to refute their aesthetic view of rhetoric. He argues that Nietzsche and Whitson and Poulakos have taken their critique of Scott too far. Hikins argues that they engage in an aphoristic style of discourse, which Hikins calls “Eristic.”<sup>2</sup> Eristic is characterized as an artistic style that is concerned

---

<sup>2</sup> Hikins’s Eristic should not be mistaken with the ancient Greek eristic. He states, “I capitalize Eristic in order to associate it with the Greek god Eris, the god of strife and discord. However, I *dissociate* the term pointedly from the classical Greek notion of *eristic*, for instance, as portrayed in a number of Plato’s

with the possible. He partially solves the questions Whitson and Poulakos raised by subjugating the aesthetic turn to a specific realm of rhetoric so as to affirm their proclamation that rhetoric is aesthetic but to deny their premise that people cannot have knowledge. He agrees that there are aesthetic dimensions to all discourse, but argues that some are specifically more aesthetic than others. For example, Eristic is far more aesthetic and poetic than philosophical discourse.

Hikins does his best to summarize and refute Whitson and Poulakos, but this is difficult because “it is unclear just what their *argument* is” (354). He summarizes their argument in the following manner: “Whitson and Poulakos see Nietzschean aestheticism as a veritable *tour de force* against the two principal opposing philosophical approaches to knowledge, *objectivism* (which the authors see represented in Cherwitz’s and Hikins’s theory of ‘rhetorical perspectivism’) and *subjectivism* (in the guise of Scott’s and especially Brummett’s conception of ‘intersubjectivism’)” (354). He argues: “To the extent that there is any *argument* here, it is grounded in Nietzsche’s bald *assumption* that humankind must *necessarily* and *systematically* distort objects of perception objects of perception when “the material of the senses [is] adapted by the understanding’ (134)” (361). This is why, “the ‘burden’ purportedly plaguing rhetoric is the art’s habit of contextualizing itself in questions of epistemology and ontology” (353). Therefore, “they recommend enthusiastically the Nietzschean aphorism: ‘We now oppose knowledge with

---

dialogues, especially *Ion* (Plato, 1983) and *Hippias Major* (Plato, 1983). In particular, I want to distance Eristic from eristic in that, as I conceive it, Eristic may be tendered with complete intellectual sincerity by original, imaginative, careful thinkers. I especially disjoin Eristic from practices Plato describes certain Sophists engaging in, such as Euthydemus or even Protagoras. Unlike Plato’s stalking horse, the eristic sophist, the Eristic is no intellectual buffoon, nor does the Eristic necessarily employ specious arguments out of some defective moral purpose, as Aristotle apparently believed was the case with the Sophists (7)” (357).

art: return to life!’ (141, 143) Replacing epistemic rhetoric with aesthetic rhetoric, it is claimed, will emancipate the art from ‘the burden of its 2,400 years’ (131)” (353).

Hikins vehemently argues against their pronouncements. He argues that one of the greatest problems with Whitson and Poulakos’s theory is that art is dependent on reality and one’s knowledge of it. He claims:

Poetic license and the demands it places on the artist offer clues to support the claim that aestheticism cannot render otiose such concepts as “objectivity,” “truth,” “knowledge,” or “reality.” On the contrary, such aesthetic demands *require* these concepts—any artistic performance *requires a context of reality*.

This is because the quality of artistic works is always measured against items in or aspects of the context of reality in which they are produced. Thus artistic works in the realist genre are judged in part according to their contiguity with dimensions of reality, impressionist works in large measure with respect to their interpretation of reality, and abstract works to significant degree with respect to their departure from reality. . . . In other words, *reality constrains aestheticism*.

(364)

Art, then, is intimately related to reality and knowledge of it. It follows that, any attempt to divorce art from knowledge of reality would be wholly incongruous with the natural and would be an artificial and harmful separation.

On these grounds, Hikins argues that Whitson and Poulakos used poetic license in their critique of perspectivism and intersubjectivism:

Consider their first complaint: The two theories proffer a correspondence theory of truth, wherein are posited ‘objects,’ a ‘knower’ and a ‘known.’ . . . Nowhere in

this keynote essay [Scott's rhetoric as epistemic essay], nor in Scott's subsequent writings, nor in Brummett's, is there anything other than express antipathy to truth-existing-prior-to-discourse, without which correspondence theories cannot germinate. . . . As far as rhetorical perspectivism is concerned... Cherwitz and Hikins. . . insist that there *is* no correspondence between isolated knowing subject and isolated known object because *subject and object are never isolated, ontologically or epistemically.* (365-366)

According to Hikins, Whitson and Poulakos' critique is unfounded because it does not actually address perspectivism or intersubjectivism. Essentially, they are setting up a "straw man" argument that can easily be dismantled. Hikins continues:

Yes, admittedly both theories discuss the "objectivity" of reality (Objection Two) but not in anything like the traditional sense of the term, a sense reworked substantially within the philosophical frameworks of the two positions. Yes, both "intimate hidden worlds with intelligible structures" (Objection 3) but not "hidden in the sense suggested by Whitson and Poulakos—the sense in which a subject/object scheme locates "ultimate reality" behind and/or beyond "appearance." Absent from intersubjectivism and rhetorical perspectivism is the requirement to *transcend* human experience, as is any suggestion that such transcendence is achieved by the two methods. Both theories dispense with the subject/object dichotomy and transcendence as *ontological* concepts. (367)

Hikins is once again asserting that Whitson and Poulakos exaggerate the claims of intersubjectivist and rhetorical perspectivists.



In addition to refuting Whitson and Poulakos's attacks on perspectivism and intersubjectivism, Hikins counters that their aesthetic view of rhetoric itself is flawed for several reasons. He also believes that the "gravest" of negative consequences would develop if rhetoric is seen fundamentally as aesthetic (354).

His first objection is that "*the aesthetic view of rhetoric offers absolutely no recommendations regarding solutions to the serious problems that confront us*" (370). In other words, deliberation about courses of action is useless because their aesthetic turn separates rhetoric from knowledge of reality. He argues:

Since classical times, critics have been taught to distinguish between truth and falsity. Aesthetic rhetoric of the variety proffered by Whitson and Poulakos abrogates the requirement to make this distinction on the part of speaker, audience, and critic. Aestheticism provides no rationale for adopting one course of action over another, concentrating instead on employing the cleverest way to make us feel better. (372)

Hikins is arguing that this type of aesthetic rhetoric renders people incapable of making wise decisions when faced with a problem.

Hikins second objection to Whitson and Poulakos's aesthetic turn is that it has ethical limitations and that it actually "*invites unethical rhetorical practices*" (372). He states, "Following Nietzsche, Whitson and Poulakos state that '*the only criterion which counts for us is the aesthetic criterion*'" (372). These two scholars themselves admit that the ethical is not a criterion by which rhetoric should be judged. Additionally, Hikins believes that:

Ensnared in the recognition that “aesthetic rhetoric draws its strength from seeing an audience affected by its message” is the realization that aesthetic rhetoric is *exclusively effects orientated*. “In the aesthetic tradition, moving an audience by means of a particular message is precisely the point” (Whitson and Poulakos, 141). Not only must a rhetoric based on the Whitson and Poulakos vision of aestheticism necessarily invite ethical abuse, it offers us no remedy for either identifying or ameliorating such abuse, given its adamant refusal to see *truth* as anything other than “aesthetically successful, not epistemologically valid, discourse” (Whitson and Poulakos, 138). (373)

Hikins is stating that rhetoricians would become ethically impotent if they embrace the aesthetic turn advocated by Whitson and Poulakos.

Hikins perceives there to be one last detrimental consequence of Whitson and Poulakos’s aesthetic rhetoric. He states: “A third indictment of aestheticism involves the consequences such an approach portends for the discipline of rhetoric. *Baldly put, to ground our discipline on aestheticism will relegate the art to a position of inferiority at best, and oblivion at worst*” (373). So, even though Whitson and Poulakos believe that their aesthetic turn would have the effect of placing rhetoric at the pinnacle of academia, Hikins argues that it would have the opposite effect. He states: “In the ‘age of information,’ their aestheticism reduces rhetoric to stylistic adornment. Shorn of any possibility of knowledge-based action in an age of multiple challenges to human existence, aestheticism, as Cherwitz and Darwin (1995) observe, reduces the art to *mere performance*” (374). On account of this, Hikins argues that “in an environment of declining resources for higher education, the suggestion that we repudiate any epistemic

role for rhetoric and rely exclusively on aestheticism renders our discipline anachronistic, vulnerable to extinction by forces within the academy and without” (374).

Though Hikins refutes the arguments of Whitson and Poulakos, he claims to have a solution that transcends the problems with their aesthetic turn. He states: “The argument developed in these pages should not be taken as a denouncement of aestheticism or the aesthetic dimensions of rhetoric, properly conceived” (374). Hikins admits that there is an aesthetic dimension to all rhetoric, but the aesthetic rhetoric of Whitson and Poulakos should be considered as a subcategory of rhetoric. Hikins calls this subsection Eristic rhetoric. He argues:

I define Eristic rhetoric (hereafter generally referred to as simply “Eristic”) as an *imaginative* art, driven by *strife and discord* and characterized by *play* (as in playing a game), whose object or *telos* is the *momentary* securing of a *perspective*, that is, a transient realization of a *point of view or attitude*, typically expressed via *the modality of the sublime*. . . . Moreover, the Eristic’s practice of disassembling an interlocutor’s position does not proceed, as does classical dialectic, by opposing thesis with antithesis (fundamentally a *destructive* practice). On the contrary, the principal goal of Eristic is *constructive* in its efforts to explore facets of imaginable, alternative worlds, fictive domains erected *by means of* Eristic. Eristic seeks to capture, if even momentarily, the sense of a world other than that described by a given culture at any point in history (357).

Eristic, according to Hikins then, is a specialized form of rhetoric with a definite end and specific means to that end. Essentially, Hikins has given aesthetic rhetoric a secondary

place in academic studies. This solution is ultimately incompatible with the view of those who have chosen to take the aesthetic turn

## **Summary**

Rhetorical scholars have followed a road that has led to an aesthetic turn. It is truly ironic that most of this scholarship, which is searching for the true nature or rhetoric, has tended to be founded upon a skepticism that denies objective truth. Robert L. Scott argued that there is no objective truth and that truth is situational construed by rhetoric. Paul M. Campbell claimed that man is language because in him exists a constant tension between constitutive and communicative language use and because man defines his self through this tension. Eventually Whitson and Poulakos made the aesthetic turn because they believed that it is impossible to have knowledge of anything, let alone to communicate it. Finally, James W. Hikins argued that the aesthetic turn can be good if it is viewed as a specific type of rhetoric, and he warns scholars of the consequences of viewing rhetoric solely as aesthetic.

Thus, contemporary aesthetic rhetoric scholarship appears to leave rhetoricians with two competing and irreconcilable positions: either rhetoric is “aesthetics” or it is “epistemic.” My thesis is situated within, and offers one resolution to, this scholarly controversy. In the next chapter I offer an alternative aesthetic theory from which to view rhetoric: a Catholic aesthetic theory. The Catholic aesthetic theory that is presented posits two more dimensions of beauty than contemporary aesthetic rhetoric scholarship. Additionally, the Catholic aesthetic developed has the benefit of transcending the debate between the rhetorical epistemologists and aestheticians. Rhetoric ultimately suffers because of the irreconcilable differences between these two camps. It is also impaired

when viewed solely from either one of these perspectives. The Catholic aesthetic described in the next chapter allows rhetoricians to “have their cake and eat it too.”

## CHAPTER 3 - Catholic Beauty

The Roman Catholic perspective on aesthetics, which is built upon the Platonic and Aristotelian perspectives, provides rhetoric scholars with a clear and useful perspective on which to build an aesthetic rhetoric. Though the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) does not explicitly lay out a doctrine of beauty, the Church does have a doctrine of beauty. Not only is beauty referred to throughout the Catechism and writings of Catholic saints and thinkers, but it is also a key element of the metaphysics which the Church espouses. The Church's doctrine on beauty can be extracted from both official Church documents and Church scholars. Etienne Gilson, founder of the Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, argues:

There is no art without the artist; it was therefore natural that artists should be neglected by philosophers. At the time Nietzsche wrote in *The Will to Power*, 'up to this day the artist has no place in philosophy,' it was literally true. Not so today, and this change explains the renewed attempts of so many historians to find in the past philosophies of art that never existed. Even Saint Thomas has been credited with a philosophy of art and yet, if we are not mistaken, one cannot find in all his works one single passage devoted to the arts of the beautiful or to the artists that make it. If he ever wrote about sculpture, painting or any one of the plastic arts, it must be deeply hidden in his works, since one can read them for years without finding anything. (Gilson, 112-113)

The Catholic worldview has an understanding of beauty that ultimately leads to an experience with God Himself. The Catechism states:

Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos—which both child and scientist discover—“from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator,” “for the author of beauty created them.” (2500)

To understand how it is that God reveals Himself through beauty, we need to understand what beauty is in the Catholic worldview. According to the Catholic worldview, there are three forms from which beauty flows and these three forms are essential to understanding how a person comes to experience the divine. Each form is perceived by a different faculty of the human person. This chapter begins with a formal definition of beauty and an explanation of the definition. Next, it discusses the three forms from which beauty flows and how the human person comes to perceive, or not perceive, beauty. Finally, the chapter ends with a methodology with which beauty may be analyzed.

### **A Definition of Beauty**

The Catholic worldview attributes far greater meaning to beauty than the modern secular worldview. Beauty is important to the Catholic worldview because of what it is and does. According to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (2005), “Beauty wounds, but that is precisely how it awakens man to his ultimate destiny. . . . Beauty is knowledge, indeed, a higher form of knowing, because it strikes man with the truth in all its greatness” (35). According to Catholic thought, beauty is a metaphysical, transcendental property of being

which reflects the truth and goodness of the Creator and should give delight to as well as produce love in the perceiver.<sup>3</sup>

The above definition needs to be elaborated because it is fairly dense in meaning and unfamiliar to the modern mindset. To begin with, Catholic doctrine holds that the beauty of creation reflects the existence of a Creator (CCC, 341). This is because nature is ordered and proportioned and order and proportion are properties that reflect, and appeal to intelligence. The intellect can know that a Creator exists because it sees itself in the order and proportion of the beautiful (Maritain, 28-29). As Dietrich von Hildebrand explains, “Nature praises God in its beauty not only by speaking of God to man and inspiring him to praise God, but also by the silent praise rising from its own beauty” (1960, 9).

Not only does beauty reflect the truth that a Creator exists, but it also reflects the truth or reality of the Creator. He reveals himself through the created because his thoughts are made incarnate in the created (Sayers, 87). Thus, the created being presents the reality or truth of the Creator. The human person cannot have perfect knowledge of that truth or reality, but he or she can have knowledge nonetheless. Thus, the perceiver can know the mind of the Creator through the incarnated idea. Therefore, communication can take place between Creator and perceiver through the created (Sayers, 49). For example, I once viewed a sculpture that combined the forms of a human baby and a dog. The artist, whether consciously or unconsciously, felt either that

---

<sup>3</sup> It can be argued that a man-made piece of art shows the truth and goodness of the creator of the art work and not the Creator. In part this is true; the creation does tell us of the human creator, but since the person is created—the metaphysical situation of the human person being a creature—the beauty that he or she creates in the end reveals the truth and goodness of the Creator. The Creator’s truth and goodness is shown through creating a creature that can make beauty. Additionally, the human person can relate to the Creator through participating in the act of creation. Therefore, any discussion of beauty reflecting the Creator also applies to seeing the human creator within their creation and vice versa.



owning a pet (in this case the dog) is analogous to raising a child, or that a child is the equivalent to a pet. This “reality,” which existed in the artist’s mind, is manifest in the sculpture and communicated through the sculpture. Likewise, the truth of the Creator can be known through His creation.

In addition to reflecting the truth of the Creator, the beautiful reflects the goodness of the Creator.<sup>4</sup> Skillfulness provides insight into the values of the Creator. The act of creating reifies that which the Creator values or considers to be good. Essentially, that which makes a good can likewise be considered to be good; that which creates evil can be considered evil. The goodness of the Creator is shown through the act of creating a beautiful reality in which His creatures exist and are able to delight in. “God is not the great unknown, whom we can but dimly conceive. We need not fear, as heathen do, that he might be capricious and bloodthirsty or too far away and too great to hear men” (Ratzinger 2003, 102-103).

Another aspect of the Catholic understanding of beauty is that beauty is a transcendental property, meaning that beauty is contained in all beings (Maritain, 27-40; Vaske, 178-208). In essence, a transcendental property is a characteristic of Being itself, which means that God is Beauty and everything that exists has the property of beauty simply because creation exists through the Creator (Maritain, 34; Vaske, 201-202). In other words, everything as a whole—and all things as individuals—are beautiful because they participate in be-ing with Being.

Additionally, beauty ought to delight and produce love in the perceiver because beauty is a value (Hildebrand 1960, 46). Value should give pleasure to the person

---

<sup>4</sup> Goodness being the quality of desirability, lovability, or enjoyability in an object (Vaske, 191).

because it is good, without which it would cease to be valuable. This is not to say that beauty is valuable because of the pleasure that it gives; rather, a person becomes aware of the presence of beauty through the pleasure that comes from its perception (Gilson, 23). Beauty ought to delight the perceiver because when a person comes into contact with a transcendental, he or she comes into contact with a likeness of God (Maritain, 35). It follows that the perceiver of the beautiful who does not experience delight has something distorted within him or herself.

Also, the perception of the beautiful ought to produce love in the perceiver (Maritain, 30-31). God's love pours forth creation and through the delight we ought to feel in perceiving creation's beauty, love is born within us. Beauty, thus, teaches us to love because the beautiful is created through love. When one can finally perceive the beauty in being, he or she can appreciate the value of being as an end in itself. When a person truly perceives the beauty within being, he or she can know the love of the Creator.

Beauty, then, is not simply in the eye of the beholder because it is an element of the nature of the Creator. Beauty is rhetorical. She speaks to the soul of the human person of the magnificent truth and goodness of the Creator. She tells us of the love the Creator has for His creation, and inspires us to reciprocate His love to the creation, to one another and to Himself. The human person ought to receive delight from the perception of the beautiful. Through the delight that the beautiful creates within a person, the Creator communicates the truth of His love as well as His goodness to the soul of the person. Beauty, as such, is rhetorical in that it urges the perceiver toward love of God on account of His goodness.

## The Perception of Beauty

The common conception that beauty is relative to the beholder is due to the fact that two people can look at an object and disagree as to whether it is beautiful or not. But, simply because people may disagree as to whether an object is beautiful or not, does not negate the objective existence of beauty. The point is that a person could be wrong about his or her perception. For example, a person who falls into a hole more than likely did not perceive the hole to be there. If they had, it would be unlikely that they would have fallen. Not only may the perceiver be wrong about their perception, but the perceived may have characteristics which conceal its beauty. This section will first discuss the three forms from which beauty flows and the characteristics that make a being more or less beautiful according to each form. Then, the characteristics of the perceiver that allow him or her to perceive beauty and to make the proper value response toward beauty will be extrapolated upon.

The three levels of beauty that can be attributed to all beings are: accidental, substantial and transcendental (Vaske, 200-202). The three levels of beauty are each perceived by different faculties of the human person. The difficulty of perceiving beauty increases in a manner corresponding to the order of the above list. The accidental is the lowest form from which beauty flows because the traits that constitute a being's accidental beauty are peculiar to the individual itself, whereas substantial beauty relates the being to others of its type and transcendental beauty relates the being to all being.

“Accidental beauty” is concerned with the “accidental” physical traits of a being. For instance, it is a mere accident of nature that I am balding and stand five feet, ten inches tall. The qualities that make an object “accidentally” beautiful are integrity (wholeness or completeness), proportion (order), and splendor (clarity) (Gilson, 28-32;

Maritain, 28-29; Vaske, 199-200). A few examples should suffice to explain each of these qualities. An object that has integrity is complete and whole. For example, a painting that is finished is more beautiful than one that is not. Also, Michelangelo's statue of David can be said to be more beautiful than the Venus de Milo because the statue of David is whole. A proportioned object has its parts well ordered according to the whole. A portrait of a person is more beautiful than a caricature of a person, not only because the portrait attempts to objectively represent a being, but also because the caricatures are, by their nature, not proportionate. Atonal music is less beautiful than tonal music because atonal music is less proportionate and less ordered. Finally, and most importantly, the more splendid an object is the more beautiful it will be. Splendor is the most important of these three qualities because it allows integrity and proportion to be perceived (Vaske, 200). For example, organum chant is far less splendid than is Gregorio Allegri's motet, "Adoremus in Aeternum." Not only is the tonality much more clear, but the lyrics are more easily discernable.

The two reasons a person may not perceive accidental beauty in an object are fairly simple. First, accidental beauty is perceived by the senses—the word aesthetic is derived from the Greek word *aesthesis* meaning sense perception (Williams, 31). Due to this, a person with faulty senses would be less able to perceive beauty than a person whose senses work well. For example, a blind person is less able to perceive the beauty of Michelangelo's Pieta than a person whose eyes function properly. Secondly, a person may have a faulty faculty of appetite. In other words, the person has a distorted sense of taste. Essentially, all persons have the ability to appreciate beauty in the world; it is just that some people are not as apt at doing so either because their senses are faulty or they

do not know what to look for (Blair, 16-17). To appreciate a good scotch or wine a person must not only have a fine ability to smell and taste but also the knowledge of what makes a scotch or wine good.

Having knowledge about the nature of a being brings us to the second form from which beauty flows: substantial form. The being which fulfills the telos of its kind is more beautiful than the same type of being that fails to fulfill its telos. In other words, beauty flows more freely from a being that is true to the essence and function of its type than from one that does not. For example, the telos of an oak tree is to be tall, thick, and copious. The oak tree that exists in this manner is substantially more beautiful than a short, thin, dried up, barren oak tree.

The substantial form from which beauty flows is known through the intellect. The substantial form of a being can partially be known through *a posteriori* experience, that is, it can be known through experience with a being. When a person comes into contact with certain types of being, he or she will generalize those beings into a concept in his or her mind. This concept begins to tap into the reality of the type's substantial form, but the concept may or may not be truly representative of the form. According to Catholicism, substance can be known through reason. Specifically, the dialectic is one method of discovering truth through the use of reason. Through the dialectic, the Socratic method of "abstract reasoning upon the basis of propositions" (Weaver, 162), the person can come to know and understand the substantial form of a being. When a person truly understands the substantial form of a being, through the faculty of his or her intellect, he or she may rightly ascertain whether beauty flows from the substance of a being or not. If a perceiver does not have the correct understanding of the telos of the

perceived, he or she will not recognize its substantial beauty. Likewise, if a person has a misunderstanding about a being's telos, he or she may perceive substantial beauty where it does not exist.

The final form from which beauty flows is transcendental form. This form is the most difficult to perceive because it is perceived by the heart,<sup>5</sup> through the harmonious interplay of will, intellect and the affective dimension of the soul (Benedict XVI 2007, 92-93) It is also difficult to perceive because this beauty is common to all beings.

Transcendental beauty is the most fundamental form because without it there could be no substantial or accidental beauty (Vaske, 201). Simply because a being *is* be-ing, it is beautiful. After all, a being must *be* in order for it to have accidental and substantial form. Transcendentally, the more a being participates in be-ing the more beautiful the being is. For example, a cow is more beautiful than a plant because it experiences reality to higher degree than a plant. Likewise a person can act whereas cow can only behave, so the person is transcendently more beautiful than the cow and plant (Burke, 504; Vaske, 202). Since God is the "unparticipated act of be-ing," He is Beauty itself (Vaske, 202).

When a person can perceive the transcendental beauty in a being, he or she comes into contact with a likeness of the Creator. Because of transcendental beauty's relationship with the Creator, the faculty of perceiving and responding to transcendental

---

<sup>5</sup>This terminology is used for lack of better words. The metaphor provides insight into a faculty of perception that has never been able to be accounted for. Generally, it is a faculty only usable by mystics and the most reflective of human persons. It refers not to affect, reason or intuition alone, but it can work through these. The closest I can come describing the eyes of the heart, and this doesn't quite seem close at all, is that it is a faculty of perception that is *generally* limited to those who have fulfilled Maslow's hierarchy of needs and has self-actualized.

beauty, and in turn the Creator himself, is ultimately found in the heart of the person. As Pope Benedict XVI explains:

The organ for seeing God is the heart. The intellect alone is not enough. In order for man to become capable of perceiving God, the energies of his existence have to work in harmony. His will must be pure and so too must the underlying affective dimension of his soul, which gives intelligence and will their direction. Speaking of the *heart* in this way means precisely that man's perceptive powers play in concert, which also requires the proper interplay of body and soul, since this is essential for the totality of the creature we call 'man.' Man's fundamental affective disposition actually depends on just this unity of body and soul and on man's acceptance of being both body and spirit. This means he places his body under the discipline of the spirit, yet does not isolate intellect or will. Rather, he accepts himself as coming from God, and thereby also acknowledges and lives out the bodiliness of his existence as an enrichment for the spirit. The heart—the wholeness of man—must be pure, interiorly open and free, in order for man to be able to see God. [emphasis his] (2007, 92-93)

The perception of God and transcendental beauty is thus dependent upon the harmony of the whole person. The perception of beauty depends on the quality of the substance of the person and, most importantly, the openness and purity of heart. A person whose heart is not pure, free or open will be unable to perceive the transcendental beauty contained in all beings, and, in turn, will be unable to see the Creator.

With this understanding of beauty, a seemingly paradoxical question can be given a clear and non-paradoxical answer. How is it that a person could appear to be beautiful,

but in reality be ugly? To begin with, the person appears to be beautiful because he or she has beauty flowing from his or her accidental form. The person's features are proportioned and whole. Additionally, the person has the quality of splendor through good muscle and skin tone. The physical form is attractive and pleasing to the eye. Now, it was stated in the question that this person is in reality ugly. This would be because the person's physical form is not representative of substantial form of the person.<sup>6</sup> The telos of persons is eudemonia, true happiness,<sup>7</sup> (CCC, 1723; Compendium, 358-362) which can only be accomplished through true freedom.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the person in our example is not *truly* happy because he or she is not free; she is not choosing what is good. This person is a slave to his or her own concupiscence, and is blinded by lust for the pleasures of the world. However, the person, no matter how vile, vicious and malicious he or she may be, must be treated with respect and love because they are transcendently beautiful and a reflection of the Creator.

## Methodology

The Catholic worldview perceives beauty as flowing from three forms: the accidental, substantial and transcendental (Vaske, 200-202). Accidental beauty is

---

<sup>6</sup> Accidental form does not affect substantial form, but substantial form could have effects on accidental form. For example, the moral choices a person makes can affect the physical appearance of the person. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* wonderfully portrays this reality.

<sup>7</sup> True happiness is not an emotion or state of being attained through wealth or material comfort. "In Luke's Gospel, the four Beatitudes that he presents are followed by four proclamations of woe: 'Woe to you who are rich. . . . Woe to you who are full now. . . . Woe to you who laugh now. . . . Woe to you when all men praise you'" (Benedict XVI, 96).

<sup>8</sup> Freedom, as used here, is radically different than the contemporary meaning which is often used synonymously with liberty. Pope Benedict XVI (2007) argues: "Those who understand freedom as the radically arbitrary license to do just as they want and to have their own way are living a lie, for by his very nature man is part of a shared existence and his freedom is shared freedom. His very nature contains direction and norm, and becoming inwardly one with this direction and norm is what freedom is all about" (204). The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "there is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just" (1733).



concerned with physical appearance. Essentially, accidentals are the physical properties of a being. When accidental or physical properties are unified into a whole, the accidental beauty of the object can be judged according to its integrity, proportion and splendor. Splendor is the most important of these three standards because it ultimately reveals the other two. Proportion is an important aspect of the beautiful because proportion “speaks of” an intelligence behind the created object. Integrity is significant because a completed or whole object is better proportioned than if the same object were incomplete. Substantial beauty is based upon the fulfillment of a person or object’s telos. So, to judge the substantial beauty of an object, a person must first know what its telos is. Finally, transcendental beauty is founded upon degrees of be-ing. Transcendental beauty is partly based in comparison to other beings and, more importantly, its truth and goodness, which are transcendental properties which relate to beauty.

Chapter four will present an aesthetic critique of the rhetoric of the Mass based upon the threefold doctrine of Catholic beauty described above. The first step of the critique is to describe the telos of the Mass so the substantial beauty of the Mass can be analyzed further on in the critique. Essentially, a person must have a measuring stick (a standard) before they can go about the act of measuring. I will do this by reviewing both a brief history of the Mass and the names given to the Mass because its names provide insight into its nature (CCC, 275). The second step of the critique is to conduct a “walk-through” of the Mass. During this process, aspects of accidental and substantial beauty will be highlighted.

The next step in the critique is to analyze the accidental, substantial and transcendental beauty of the Mass. The accidentals will be analyzed by looking at the

integrity, proportion and splendor of the Mass. Integrity in this context is synonymous with wholeness or completeness. So, the accidentals are judged on their integrity with respect to the Catholic worldview. The proportionality of the major parts of the Mass will be studied on their own accord and then as a whole. Splendor will be analyzed according to the clarity of the Catholic worldview within the Mass. This step will be closely related to the prior three steps because splendor is the factor that sheds light onto proportion, integrity and in the case of the Mass, its nature.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the Mass is more or less splendid depending upon the Catholic worldview within the Mass. The substantial beauty of the Mass will be judged by examining its practice in light of its telos. Finally, the transcendental beauty of the Mass will be assessed on the basis of how effectively it embodies truth and goodness.

---

<sup>9</sup> According to Catholic theology symbols and referents are intimately united in the Mass. For a more in depth analysis of this relationship see Father Paul A. Soukup's (1988) article, "Ritual and Movement As a Communication Media."

## **CHAPTER 4 - Aesthetic Rhetoric of the Mass**

### **Methodology**

This critique begins with the examination of the telos of the Mass. A brief history of the Mass is given and then various names of the Mass will be listed. The names for the Mass provide insight into the Church's teaching on the substance or telos of the Mass (Compendium, 275). Knowing the telos from the beginning is important because it functions as an orientating principle for critique. Substantial beauty can only be critiqued if the substantial form or telos of the artifact is known.

The bulk of this chapter consists of a step-by-step "walk through" of the Mass. During this walk through, key qualities of the Mass' beauty are pointed out. After the walk through, each of the three forms of beauty is examined. First, the parts of the Mass are analyzed individually using splendor, proportion and integrity as standards to judge the accidental beauty of the Mass. Next, the Mass is looked at as a whole. In part, this is a summary of the accidental beauty of the Mass. The Mass is also examined for substantial beauty. So, the Mass as it is practiced is compared with the telos of the Mass, which is laid below. Finally, the transcendental beauty of the Mass is discussed.

### **The Substance of the Mass**

The Mass, though it has not always gone by this name, has a long history; a history as old as the Church. The Mass developed out of several Jewish ritual ceremonies: the *chaburah*, *berakoth*, *todah*, and *seder* (Aquilina, 28-30; Hahn 1999, 32-33). Throughout its history the Mass has developed organically, in that the rite has grown in small increments. Since the time of St. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century,

the basic elements of the Eucharistic celebration have remained the same in all liturgical traditions (CCC, 1345). There are many rites, or ways that the Mass is celebrated. The two most prevalent rites are the Byzantine and Roman. Until after the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Mass had remained relatively the same since the reign of St. Gregory I (590-604) (Amiot, 20-26). In 1970, after the Second Vatican Council, the Church approved a new rite of the Mass, the *Novus Ordo Missae*. The accidentals, or physical properties, of the Mass underwent tremendous change after the Second Vatican Council. It is worth noting that some accidentals were not supposed to be changed. For example, the *Novus Ordo Missae* assumes that the priest is not facing the people. During several parts of the Mass, as in the old rite, it tells the priest to turn *towards* the people to address them.

Though the Mass itself looks different accidentally, in its physicality, its substance is still relatively the same.<sup>10</sup> The substance of the Mass is manifest in the names that are attributed to the sacrament. The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “The unfathomable richness of this sacrament is expressed in different names which evoke its various aspects. The most common names are: the Eucharist, Holy Mass, the Lord’s Supper, the Breaking of the Bread, the Eucharistic Celebration, the Memorial of the passion, death and Resurrection of the Lord, the Holy Sacrifice, the Holy and Divine Liturgy, the Sacred Mysteries, the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and Holy Communion” (275). The Mass is a sacrifice; it is the re-presentation of the sacrifice of the cross (Catechism of the Council of Trent, 258; CCC, 1330). It is also a banquet, in the Mass the Last Supper of Christ is re-presented (CCC, 1329). It is considered to be Holy Communion because believers are united in perfect communion through the Paschal

---

<sup>10</sup> The Mass is now practiced more as a meal than a sacrifice. Both are parts of its nature of the Mass, but emphasized differently.

mystery—the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ—with Christ, the communion of saints and other believers (CCC, 1331). The Mass is Heaven on Earth presented through the veil of the sacrament; it is essentially the paschal banquet where Christ’s Passover Sacrifice is re-presented. Because of the Mass’s sacramental nature, i.e., it is a sign that affects what it signifies, the accidental symbols of the Mass are not arbitrary. The manner in which the Mass is celebrated affects its substance.

### **Walk Through of the Mass**

The Mass as a whole is made up of two parts. The Mass of the Catechumens, now called the Liturgy of the Word, and the Mass of the Faithful, now called the Liturgy of the Eucharist. (Compendium, 277). The Mass of the Catechumens consists of preparatory prayers and readings from the New Testament, and is orientated to the Mass of the Faithful. In the Mass of the Faithful the Word becomes Flesh, which is the actual sacrifice. Before the Mass officially begins, the altar servers and the priest, who acts *in persona Christe*, process into the church. At the foot of the altar, the priest begins the Mass by making the sign of the cross, the sign of redemption (Roman Catholic Daily Missal [R.C.D.M], 839). Before the priest ascends to the altar of God, he humbles himself and proceeds with the preparatory rite, which consists of penitential prayers.

The preparatory prayers, which are penitential in nature, begin with the *Judica Me*, Psalm 42. “The celebrant longs to ascend to the altar of God, there to perform his holy office and to draw near to the Lord God, even to union with him in the Eucharist. He confides himself to the mercy of God, source of light salvation, and peace, Who imparts to us unalterable youth of soul and blissful immortality” (R.C.D.M., 839). This prayer is well proportioned with the rest of the Mass because it is oriented to the Word becoming

flesh, the high point of the Mass. The penitential rite continues with the public confession, the recitation of the *Confiteor*. The prayer itself is splendid for it lucidly calls to mind the communion of saints with whom the faithful worship, and like the *Judica Me* it is also oriented toward the consecration. “The *Confiteor* creates an interior silence from the beginning of the Mass, as Priest and faithful turn away from their temporal concerns to confront the reality of Calvary, for which their sins are responsible” (R.C.D.M., 843).<sup>11</sup> After the priest makes his public confession the altar servers recite the *Confiteor*. This act is redundant because the priest has already made the public confession for all; the redundancy here makes this section slightly un-proportionate.

“Confident in the mercy of God, the Priest immediately advances toward the altar” (R.C.D.M., 845). After incensing the altar the priest recites the introit, which is a psalm that changes according to the lectionary. The introit makes preparation for the sacrifice by praising God. This is the consistent theme of the Mass because the Mass is a sacrifice offered to God. The sacrifice is offered in praise of God for his goodness and in thanksgiving for the forgiveness of sins. Immediately following the introit, the *Kyrie Eleison* (Greek for “Lord have mercy”) is sung.

After Praising God, we recall our own misery; each of the three invocations is repeated thrice, in honor of the Holy Trinity. The *Kyrie* is the long cry of our wounded nature, like the cry of the sick and the crippled along the path of Jesus, trying to draw His attention to their misery and obtain his Pity. We throw

---

<sup>11</sup> “The *Confiteor* is not meant to paralyze us with sadness or even shame; we do not confess our sins to remain guilty. It is a plea for reconciliation and forgiveness; it is as a child who goes to embrace his Father. ‘I confess to God, for whom I was made, and to Whom I desire to return’” (R.C.D.M., 845).

ourselves on the mercy of God, full of love and free of fear now that we have acknowledged our sins and our desire to be healed. (R.C.D.M., 847)

This prayer is proportionate in that each response is given equal time and stress. Three times, splendidly, representative of the Trinity, the faithful plead, “Lord, have mercy.” Then they plead, “Christ, have mercy” three times and again “Lord, have mercy” three times. The *Kyrie* is, in a sense, cathartic because it shows trust in God’s mercy; the preparatory, penitentiary prayers are thus concluded.

With hearts filled with love of God, in remembrance of his great mercy, the *Gloria* is sung. The *Gloria* is a splendid prayer, which praises God for his greatness and clearly enumerates the teachings of the Church. Specifically, “the four ends of the Sacrifice of the Mass are to be found in the *Gloria: Adoration* (‘Glory to God in the highest’), *Thanksgiving* (‘we give Thee thanks’), *Atonement* (‘Son of the Father, have mercy on us’), *Impetration* (‘receive our prayer’)” (R.C.D.M., 849). On account of the *Gloria* containing the four ends of the Mass, the *Gloria* provides the first instance of integrity of the Mass. Additionally, the *Gloria*, in all of its glory and splendor, provides a proportionate response to the prior drama of the penitentiary rites.

Now that the preparations are complete, the Epistle (readings from the New Testament) and the Gospel are read. Before the Gospel is read it is incensed, an action that is richly symbolic. “Incense represents grace and the effects of grace. Christ was filled with grace as with a sweet fragrance, and ‘of His fullness we have all received.’ From Christ it spreads to the faithful by the work of his ministers” (R.C.D.M., 847). The Gospel is incensed, as are the Priest and tabernacle, because the Gospel represents Christ Himself, the priest functions *in persona Christe*, and Christ is in the tabernacle (R.C.D.M.,

855). In this rite of the Mass, the readings are read in Latin and then before the homily they are re-read in the vernacular. This is an example, as was the dual recitation of the *Confiteor*, of the needless repetition that was removed during the reforms after the Second Vatican Council. These readings are meant for the people so they should be read in their language. To read these in Latin and then in the vernacular creates mis-proportion and does not splendidly present the meaning of the action. The word is to be consumed by the people just as they will consume Christ during the Liturgy of the Eucharist (R.C.D.M., 853).

After the Gospel is read, the priest gives a homily, which is meant to instruct the people about the day's readings, Church teaching, and the relation of these to their lives. When the homily is done, the Mass of the Catechumens is completed by reciting the *Credo*, the Nicene Creed. The *Credo* is the summary of the core Catholic dogmas. By reciting the *Credo*, "the people show that they assent by faith to Christ's doctrine." The *Credo* functions as a response to the voice of God (R.C.D.M., 857). Additionally, the *Credo* adds to the beauty of the Mass because it provides a link between the two Masses. "It [the *Credo*] forms a link between the Mass of the Catechumens and the Mass of the Faithful: it is at once the blossom and fruit of the preceding Scriptural readings, and the foundation stone and basis for the sacrifice which is about to begin, the 'mystery of faith'" (R.C.D.M., 857).

After the *Credo* is recited the Mass of the Faithful begins. The priest begins his preparations for the sacrifice. Immediately after the *Credo* the Offertory prayer is said. The bread and wine that will be made into the Body and Blood of Christ are offered to God. The gifts, the crucifix, the altar, the priest, the ministers and then finally the lay



people are incensed after the Offertory prayer. “The rite and the prayer symbolize the Offertory itself, as the gifts enveloped in a holy atmosphere of blessed incense, and so separated from the rest of creation and dedicated to God. The clouds of incense rise to heaven, descend on the faithful, and spread through the Church, as we pray that the Eucharistic Sacrifice be accepted for the salvation of the faithful and for the whole world” (R.C.D.M., 863). Next, the priest washes his hands to purify not only himself symbolically, but also literally the hands that will be handling the consecrated Host. The act of washing his hands has splendor and integrity because it shows the respect the Church has for the consecrated Host. The Mass continues with more minor preparatory prayers.

The Preface to the Eucharistic prayer is now recited. It offers praise and thanksgiving to God the Father to Whom the sacrifice is offered. “The Preface begins the preparation for the Consecration, which is the second principal part of the Mass after the Offertory. At the Last Supper, Christ began his Passion by giving thanks” (R.C.D.M., 869). The Preface also describes the transcendental congregation that the faithful are unable to see with their fleshly eyes. It is again an example of the integrity of the Mass. The Preface varies according to the lectionary, but each prayer ends with something akin to the following prayer: “And therefore with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominations, and with all the hosts of the heavenly army, we sing a hymn to Thy glory, evermore saying:” (R.C.D.M., 883).

Immediately after saying these words, bells begin to ring. The choir and all gathered sing the *Sanctus*. “The Preface called us to lift up our hearts, and the people now praise the Divinity of Christ alongside the angels: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’; they praise His

Humanity alongside the Hebrew children of Palm Sunday, singing as Christ entered Jerusalem to suffer for our salvation: ‘Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord’” (R.C.D.M., 883). By singing the *Sanctus*, the faithful unite their voices with the heavenly choir. The splendor of this prayer is in the clarity in which the goodness of He who is to be sacrificed is proclaimed. This is another example of the Mass’s integrity in relation to Church teaching.

Now that everything has been prepared, the Canon of the Mass begins. Before the Consecration, several prayers are said; a prayer for the Church and ecclesiastical authorities, a prayer for the living faithful who are present, and a prayer invoking the saints who celebrate eternally in heaven. Then the prayers of Consecration are said. First is the Oblation of the Victim to God. “The priest extends his hands over the offering, symbolizing that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, for Christ takes our sins upon Himself in our place and for our sake. This recalls the Old Testament practice of sprinkling a goat with blood (symbolizing wrongdoing) and letting it escape into the wilderness (symbolizing vicarious satisfaction). The animal was called the ‘scape-goat’” (R.C.D.M., 891).

Keeping this in mind, the Consecration and elevation happen. “The Priest narrates the first offering and institution of the unbloody sacrifice by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper and at the same time he imitates as far as possible the actions of Christ. He pronounces the effective words of Consecration in the person of Christ” (R.C.D.M., 893). After the prayer, the consecrated Host is elevated, as Christ was raised up on the cross, so that the faithful may adore Him. Bells are rung at this point to praise Him Who is sacrificed and to call everyone’s attention to Christ’s sacrifice. In addition to the ringing of bells the elevated Host is incensed by another altar boy. Next, the wine in the chalice is

consecrated, becoming the blood of Christ, and likewise elevated for the people. The bells are rung and the chalice is incensed.

The action of reciting the Consecratory prayer is symbolically multifaceted. Not only is the Last Supper re-presented at this moment, but so is the crucifixion, the sacrifice, of Christ. The Eucharist calls to mind both realities. The Mass at this point is both sacrifice and banquet. The substance of sacrifice and supper are fulfilled because these two elements are made present. For this reason, the Consecration is the high point in the Mass. The people have done nothing; their salvation rests on the merits of Christ. It is in the re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice that God the Father is praised, worshiped and glorified. The whole of the Mass is orientated to and culminated in this moment.

Now that the sacrifice has taken place, the Mass continues. The Canon of the Mass ends with a commemoration of the dead, another invocation of the saints, and the Final Doxology. The Final Doxology is an eloquent summation of the Mass. It states that through, with, and in Christ is all honor and glory that is due to God the Father.

Afterward, the Our Father is recited. "St. Gregory the Great placed this prayer after the Canon as its completion. In the ancient Church it was considered the only preparation worthy of Holy Communion" (R.C.D.M., 903). Then, the *Agnus Dei* is said; Jesus, who takes away the sins of the world, is pleaded for mercy and peace. Afterward, several more prayers are recited: a prayer for peace, a prayer for sanctification and a prayer for grace.

Finally, the priest receives Communion and then administers Communion to those gathered. The faithful approach and kneel *together* at the altar rail and receive Communion *together*. By consuming Christ, body, soul and divinity, the faithful take part in the Last Supper, but also unite themselves to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. After the

faithful have received, the Communion and Postcommunion verses are prayed. Then the Priest concludes the Mass with the dismissal. This may seem unproportionate because it happens so quickly after the people receive Holy Communion, but in reality it is not. The high point of the Mass happened long ago. Now that the people have partaken in Christ's sacrifice, there is nothing more for them to do except to go and spread the good news. Before everyone leaves, John 1:1-14 is read. This verse is read to orientate the faithful back to the mystery of the Sacrifice that has just occurred. The verse reminds them that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God... AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH" (R.C.D.M., 921). In the Mass, the Word became flesh, as the faithful just witnessed. The whole of the Mass, even the final Gospel reading, is oriented toward Christ's sacrifice re-presented at the Consecration.

### **Accidental Beauty**

The Mass is accidentally beautiful. It is a splendorous expression of the worldview from which it comes forth. Once again, accidental beauty is related to physical traits, which makes it literally the most aesthetic (perceived through the senses) of the three forms of beauty. Accidental beauty is analyzed through the qualities of integrity, proportion and splendor. The Mass truly is an aesthetic experience. From the outset of the liturgy to its completion, the senses are bombarded by an array of stimuli. The faithful are sprinkled with holy water; they hear the Gregorian chant throughout the Mass; they can smell the incense as it disperses through the church; they see: the incense rise, the altar cloths that are the same liturgical color as the elaborate vestments the priest wears, the six candles that are placed on the high altar (an artifact worthy of its own case study), pictures and statues of saints and angels that aid the imagination for times when intellect fails, the

proportion of four altar boys kneeling equidistant from one another before the altar, holding candles while the priest elevates the consecrated Host with two more altar boys holding up his chasuble all eight forming a triangle and during this most sacred moment silence is broken by the sound of bells ringing.

The Mass of the Catechumens, in itself, is well proportioned between its penitentiary nature and message of hope and mercy. There are parts of needless repetition that create a minor mis-proportion of form. A good example of this repetition is the double recitation of the *Coniteor* and the readings. It is specifically beautiful in that it is oriented toward the upcoming sacrifice in the Mass of the Faithful.

The Mass of the Faithful is also beautiful. In comparison to the Mass of the Catechumens, the Mass of the Faithful has less needless repetition and therefore is better proportioned. Additionally, the prayers all splendidly proclaim basic doctrines of the Catholic Church. Additionally, this proclamation of doctrine has a high degree of integrity. There is nothing within that can be said to contradict the teachings of the Church.

The Mass, on a whole, is well proportioned because Mass of the Catechumens is oriented toward the more important Mass of the Faithful. Additionally, the Mass of Catechumens, excluding the homily, takes about twenty minutes to complete. The Mass of the Faithful takes about thirty minutes to complete. The Mass of the Faithful should be the larger of the two because the Mass of the Catechumens is void of meaning without the Mass of the Faithful. Additionally, if it were not oriented toward the greater mystery, it would not be congruous with the Catholic doctrine of the Mass and would, therefore, be less splendid. The Mass also has a high degree of integrity. The message contained in

the Mass is a complete summary of the Catholic faith. Additionally, there is not anything in the Mass that contradicts the worldview from which it originates. Finally, the clarity of the symbolism in the Mass wonderfully allows the integrity of the Mass to be seen. For instance, because the gospel represents Christ, it, as well as the other symbols of Christ, is incensed. To not do so, does not negate the symbol, but to do so, is symbolic of the recognition of the symbol.

### **Substantial Beauty**

The Mass is substantially beautiful. The Church teaches that the Mass's telos is a meal or a banquet, as well as a sacrifice. The symbolism within the Mass is clearly that of a shared meal with one another and a sacrifice. Not only do the faithful consume the word through the listening to the Gospel during the Mass of the Catechumens, but they also consume the Word during the Mass of the Faithful. More importantly, the Mass is offered as a sacrifice to God the Father. The solemn performance of the Mass shows that it is taken seriously as a sacrifice.

The recitation of the Mass in Latin has a large effect on the substantial beauty of the Mass. The official language of the Catholic Church is Latin. To recite the *standard prayers* in Latin substantially unites all the faithful, in all times and places, in communion because they are speaking the same language. This can easily be demonstrated by using a contrasting example. It is not uncommon in America—Seven Dolores Catholic Church here in Manhattan for instance—for bi-lingual Masses to be said in attempt to unify Mexican and American parishioners who attend the same Mass. In actuality though, the bi-lingual Mass functions to keep the people separate. Transcendence into Communion with one another, and the universal church for that matter, would more easily be

accomplished if Mass were simply said in the Catholic Church's native tongue: Latin. Though, the recitation of the weekly readings during the Mass of the Catechumens is not as substantially beautiful. These words are meant to be read to and consumed by the people. So, to read the readings that change on a daily basis in the vernacular would make the Mass of the Catechumens more substantially beautiful because the act of reading to the people in their native tongue would act to fulfill the telos of the Mass of the Catechumens.

The celebration of the Mass *ad orientem* (with the priest facing the liturgical east or in other words with his "back facing the people") tremendously adds to the substantial beauty of the Mass. To begin with, in Roman times, during a feast everyone would have sat on the same side of the table, which would have also been true of the Last Supper (Ratzinger, 2000, 78). This unites the people with Christ during the Last Supper. This one accidental trait has a tremendous effect on the substantial form of the Mass. Cardinal Ratzinger's explanation of the effect of changing the orientation of the Priest from *ad orientem* to *versus populum* (facing the people) is worth quoting in whole.

In reality what happened was that an unprecedented clericalization came on the scene. Now the priest—the "presider", as they now prefer to call him—becomes the real point of reference for the whole liturgy. Everything depends on him. We have to see him, to respond to him, to be involved in what he is doing. His creativity sustains the whole thing. Not surprisingly, people try to reduce this newly created role by assigning all kinds of liturgical functions to different individuals and entrusting the "creative" planning of the liturgy to groups of people who like to, and are supposed to, "make their own contribution". Less and less is God in the picture. More important is what is done by human beings who

meet here and do not like to subject themselves to “pre-determined pattern”. The turning of the priest toward the people has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle. In its outward form, it no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above, but is closed in on itself. The common turning toward the east was not a “celebration toward the wall”; it did not mean that the priest “had his back toward the people”: the priest himself was not regarded as so important. For just as the congregation looked together toward Jerusalem, so in the Christian liturgy the congregation looked together “toward the Lord”. (2000, 79-80)

Essentially, celebrating the Mass of the Faithful *ad orientem* adds to the sacred and sacrificial character of the Mass. To celebrate it otherwise would take away from the sacred and sacrificial because the people, in a sense, begin to worship themselves and the community rather than God.

According to the above analysis, the Mass of the Catechumens would be substantially more beautiful if it were celebrated *versus populum*. As was stated above, the readings are meant to be for the people. The Mass of the Catechumens is “about speaking and responding, and so a face-to-face exchange between proclaimer and hearer does make sense” (Ratzinger 2000, 81). In sum, the Mass of the Catechumens would be much more beautifully celebrated if the readings were spoken toward the people and in the vernacular.

### **Transcendental Beauty**

Finally, if Catholic dogma is both true and good, then the Mass the most transcendently “beautiful thing this side of heaven.” According to the Church, God once



again becomes incarnate under guise of bread and wine in the Mass. Reverend Michael F. Hull argues:

The Incarnation is one of the most profound and mysterious truths of the faith. With the Incarnation, “The Word becomes flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14). Therewith, St. John testifies to the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah that God himself would come to save his people (Isa. 35:4). The coming of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity in flesh not only signifies God’s love for man, but also inaugurates the events that lead to the Paschal mystery, wherein man is saved from death by one who, though God, is like man in all things save sin (Heb, 4:14-15; cf. 2:17-18). Concomitant with the profundity and mystery of the Incarnation is the Mass, wherein the Word becomes flesh again and again under the appearance of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist, aptly described by the Second Vatican Council as “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen gentium*, no. 11; cf. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 10). (6)

What could be more beautiful than the love that motivates God to become the food for His people to feed, nourish and strengthen their souls?

On the other hand, if it is not true and good, the Mass is an abomination. A couple examples should suffice to explain this judgment. For the Marxist, the Mass keeps the proletariat subjugated and disillusioned about the reality of the world in which they live in. For some non-Catholic deists and theists, the Mass is an abomination because the Consecrated Host would be seen as a false-god or an idol that Catholics worship. One needs only to do a brief internet search of the Mass to see how negatively many non-

Catholics view the Mass. The goodness and truth of the Mass cannot be ascertained simply by use of reason; it also requires faith. The transcendental beauty of the Mass can only be seen by the eyes of the heart. This is because the heart is the organ with which the person perceives God (Benedict XVI 2007, 92-93).

## **CHAPTER 5 - Summary and Implications**

### **Summary**

Beauty has an important role in rhetoric. Just what that role is has been debated for centuries though. An aesthetic turn in rhetorical studies, then, is desirable. It has been shown that the aesthetic turn that was taken rhetorical studies has many undesirable consequences. Specifically, the aesthetic turn holds a far too narrow view of beauty. Additionally, since the ethic that it promotes excludes discussion of the good and the true, evil rhetoric promoted by people akin to Hitler cannot be critiqued but must be praised.

The Catholic aesthetic theory that has been developed in this thesis is much richer than contemporary rhetoric-as-aesthetic scholarship because it has two more dimensions; dimensions that are far more complex than mere accidental traits. In addition to the aesthetic accidental beauty, the Catholic perspective posits that beauty is also substantial and transcendental. Accidental or physical beauty can be analyzed using the measures of integrity, proportion and splendor. Substantial beauty is analyzed according to the actualization of a being's telos or end. Transcendental beauty, however, is a trait that belongs to all beings and can be measured hierarchically according to participation in Being. The Catholic understanding of beauty can be used as a critical tool to assess speech ritual in a way that honors its objective existence in reality.

The traditional Roman Catholic Mass was rhetorically analyzed using the Catholic aesthetic theory as a methodological case study for future rhetorical analysis. Using the threefold critical framework, the Mass was shown to be beautiful. The Mass is an aesthetic experience like none other. The faithful are immersed into an environment

that is overflowing with sensory stimuli. But, there is room for improvement. Specifically, the Mass could be more accidentally beautiful if some of the unneeded repetition were eliminated. More importantly, the Mass would be substantially more beautiful if the reading of the epistle and Gospel were read in the vernacular and toward the people. That being said, some of the changes that were made to the Mass after the Second Vatican Council were improvements (the vernacular is used during the readings), while others obstruct the beauty of the Mass (the Mass being celebrated *versus populum*, or toward the people). This case study on the beauty of the Mass has several implications for rhetorical studies and for the Catholic Church.

## **Implications**

### ***For Rhetorical and Communication Studies***

#### ***Practical Applications***

A basic premise of this thesis is that beauty is rhetorical. Just as important though, beauty is part of a standard to which rhetoric should be held. This is because in rhetoric, beauty is an element of eloquence and ultimately, persuasion is the end of eloquence (Augustine, 161). In order to persuade, the goal of a rhetor is to be eloquent because beauty is the primary element of eloquence. So, the task of the rhetor is to be eloquent; eloquence being “the combination of truth, beauty and power in human speech” (Condit, 290). The rhetor has the power to move others to the degree that he or she speaks eloquently. As I have argued, this is because beauty has the power to move the person. Beauty sparks desire, and ultimately love, within the human person.

Additionally, from this essay’s understanding of beauty, a methodology for understanding pieces of rhetoric from an aesthetic perspective has been developed. A

speech may be accidentally, substantially and transcendently beautiful. A speech is accidentally beautiful through its style, or the manner in which it is delivered. Therefore, style should have integrity, proportion and splendor because these are the qualities through which a person perceives accidental beauty. Through a style which has integrity, proportion, and splendor the speaker can ingratiate himself with his or her audience. The substantial beauty of a speech comes from its telos or substantial form. For example, Aristotle argues that the three forms of rhetorical discourse are: deliberative, forensic, and epideictic (*Rhetoric*, I 3 1358b). A speech is more or less substantially beautiful according to how well it represents its proper form. So, a deliberative speech that ineptly urges people to do or not to do something is less beautiful than a deliberative speech that forcefully urges people.

Truth and goodness are the foundations of the transcendental beauty of a rhetorical act. This is because beauty relates to truth and goodness. If the message is not true it cannot be beautiful or good. Truth may not always be beautiful or good, but the beautiful and good are always true. For example, there is nothing beautiful or good about a mirage because by its very nature it is false. That which the rhetor advocates must also be good in order to be beautiful. For instance, it may be true that the most cost efficient way to deal with the AIDS epidemic would be to shoot every person with the disease, but the solution is in no way good because it treats the human person as having no value. Therefore, no matter how eloquently (accidentally and substantially beautiful) this solution is advocated it is not a transcendently beautiful message. The audience may perceive a speech to be accidentally and substantially beautiful, and yet find that it is not transcendently beautiful because the message is not true and good. An audience may

be moved, for better or worse, by an eloquent speaker, but the critic must always judge the eloquence of a speaker according to the truth and goodness of the message he or she espouses. The rhetor, in order to be eloquent, must always speak on behalf of truth and goodness.

One implication of this thesis is that it provides rhetorical critics with a means of distinguishing among the different forms of beauty found in public discourse. It also illuminates the paradoxical nature of beauty in discourse. A speech may be “beautiful” in one respect and hideous in another. For example, consider the aesthetics of a speech offered by Adolf Hitler. Accidentally, the style of delivery and word choices could be critiqued. Then, the substantial beauty of the speech could be critiqued by examining the speech’s telos. Finally, the message’s truth and goodness could be critiqued. In the final analysis, his message was neither true nor good, so it would not be beautiful despite its accidental and substantial beauty.

This case study has another implication for the study of rhetoric. Specifically, it provides an alternative perspective that transcends rhetoric as epistemic and rhetoric as aesthetic debate. Current aesthetic rhetoric scholarship assumes that by viewing rhetoric aesthetically the Aristotelian relationship between rhetoric and dialectic is dissolved. This thesis acts as a rebuttal to that assumption. The problem with the aesthetic turn, as advanced by Whitson and Poulakos and others, is that aesthetics need not be void of knowledge about reality. Beauty is intimately related with truth and goodness. Also, these scholars limit their aesthetic perspective to the analysis of accidental form. The “aesthetic” that has been proposed in this thesis is much richer and can account for more aspects of beauty because it perceives beauty as having two additional forms.

Furthermore, substantial and, more specifically, transcendental beauty provide a rationale for reconciling aesthetics and reality. So, instead of subjugating aesthetic rhetoric to the Epicurean—*as* Hikins does—all rhetoric can be judged on an aesthetic level without disregarding knowledge.

### *Ethical*

The third implication for rhetorical study raised by this thesis is related to ethics. According to the Catholic aesthetic tradition, art is not concerned only with the product of work; it is also concerned with the artist, the craftsman behind the craftsmanship (Gilson, 9-34). A work of art not only reflects the artist's technical skill, it reflects his or her motives. The theory articulated here thus offers a rationale that allows the critic to make ethical judgments about the artist. If the person creates evil works, he can justly be viewed as a vicious person.

The ethic that is implicit in the aesthetic turn promoted by Whitson and Poulakos is extremely disconcerting. Aesthetic rhetoric is judged, according to them, not on what is said but by how it is said and if it constitutes an alternative reality for the audience. Upon this reasoning, rhetorical scholars—humanity in general for that matter—have no means to critique orators akin to Hitler. According to their argument, the epistemological validity of anything Hitler said does not matter (i.e., that the Jews were not actually the cause of Germany's problems). Not only should Hitler not be condemned, according to their argument, he should be praised because of his use of the aesthetic. He offered the German people "a world more enchanting and more sufferable" (Whitson and Poulakos, 142) than the one in which they lived. It is truly ironic that Whitson and Poulakos are

trying “to keep the fetid forces of truth-as-*a priori* from occupying the citadel” of academia (132).

Ultimately, the deleterious consequences of Whitson and Poulakos’ aesthetic turn stem from their attempt of trying to separate content from form. They argue: “But things can be done in the name of reason only for so long; eventually, it becomes apparent that reason is in the *name*” (131). They reject the universal faculty of reason and assert that “reason is in the *name*.” Translated, this means is that reality is merely a matter of tropes (137). Quoting Nietzsche, they argue that what a thing is called is more important than what it is (138). Hence, communism is just fine as long as we name it democracy; fascism is tolerable if referred to as republicanism; totalitarianism is not problematic if we call it order; slavery is just if named freedom; and, the mass extermination of one type of people is moral if labeled progress. It *appears* that Whitson and Poulakos have not thought through the consequences of their ideas. And, quoting Nietzsche they maintain, “[*a*]pppearance. . . is the true and unique reality of things. . . . [T]his word plainly signifies a reality that is *inaccessible*. . . I am not claiming that appearance is opposed to ‘reality’; on the contrary, I maintain that appearance is reality’ (*Werke* XIII, # 121, emphasis added)” (137). That being said, I end my critique of Whitson and Poulakos’ aesthetic turn with the reminder that this thesis rejects their form of aesthetic turn and offers an alternative aesthetic turn for the discipline of rhetoric.

An important aspect of aesthetic rhetoric is that it was a response to the proposed ethic of Robert L. Scott. He proposed an ethics of rhetoric that was based on tolerance. The problems with his view of rhetorical ethics are quite similar to those of Whitson and Poulakos. He argues:



If one can be certain, then one needs no commands or urgings (either from oneself or others) to act. Failure to act can only be a sign of a momentary misunderstanding or a flawed intellect. In either case, there is no good reason to tolerate disagreement. As a matter of fact, if one can be certain, tolerating deviations from the demands of certainty may itself be deemed evil. (16)

Though he attempts to argue against those who believe in absolute truth, his ethic cannot escape the condemnation because it poses its own absolutes (tolerance). When tolerance becomes an end, instead of a means to a better society, it becomes corrupted and contradictory. This is easily shown in Scott's own argument. He states, "This demand [to be tolerant], the *sine qua non* of a democratic state, is called by Karl Popper one of 'the most important principles of humanitarian and equalitarian ethics.' His phrasing of the principle is 'tolerance towards all who are not intolerant and who do not propagate intolerance'" (16). Tolerance as a principle is intolerant; during the revolution of the tolerant, a few eggs will need to be broken. From the outset, the ethic that is offered through Scott's article is fundamentally flawed.

The Catholic aesthetic that has been proposed in this thesis implies an ethic that is much different than most rhetorical scholarship assumes. According to the Catholic perspective, beauty speaks to the soul of the human person and she testifies on behalf of Truth, Goodness and ultimately Love. The objective existence of beauty implies that persons have an ethical responsibility to respect and love *all creation* because beauty is made manifest in all creation. The higher the degree of be-ing, the greater the ethical responsibility to respect the being. The response that should be accorded to each being, simply because it is beautiful, is love. Love, then, is a motive for action. Specifically,

the action love demands toward other persons is to function rhetorically with the “other.” Therefore, the most important rhetorical implication of the objective existence of beauty is that rhetoricians should condemn the use of coercion.

Rhetoric is just because it involves the respect of personhood. Rhetoricians ought to condemn the use of coercion because it does not respect personhood. Coercion does not treat the person with the love and respect that is due to the person. As Hildebrand argues:

Man’s dignity consists in his being endowed with the power of self-determination. This freedom of will is the very opposite of anarchic arbitrariness. It means that man has the power of overcoming the great enemy of his freedom: his own self-centeredness, his own pride and concupiscence. Any coercion implicitly ignores this. Coercion jeopardizes man’s transcendence in that it prevents his exercising his ability freely to conform to what he clearly recognizes as good, to what he is called upon to accept and do. (1967, 128-129)

Every person ought to be treated with love and respect because they are transcendently beautiful. In their be-ing, they reflect the truth and goodness of the Creator. The use of rhetoric shows love for the person because it does not force the person to believe the Truth; it allows the person to choose the Truth. The moral use of good rhetoric shows respect and love for the person because it appeals to the whole person. To use rhetoric with persons implies that the rhetor has faith in his or her audiences’ ability to choose correctly. Those who illegitimately use coercion and force, on the other hand, do not place value on the human person. Therefore, rhetoricians

should esteem the use of rhetoric and not debase the study of rhetoric by de facto discussing coercion in morally neutral terms.

Therefore, in making ethical judgments, the rhetorician needs to be aware of the transcendental beauty of that which he or she critiques. Though Hitler was a vicious person—his actions and rhetoric tells us that—he must still be treated with the dignity that is due to a creature made in the image and likeness of God. No matter how vile and vicious a being is, he or she is still transcendently beautiful. Specifically, I believe that through the study of rhetoric, we can discover that which is beautiful about other persons and begin to not merely tolerate the other, but love the other.

### ***For the Holy Roman Catholic Church***

The argument put forth in this thesis is built upon the Catholic principle *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which loosely means the way in which we pray influences our beliefs. It also assumes that the apex of liturgical history was not 1962.<sup>12</sup> Many of the changes made in 1970 actually helped to make the Mass more beautiful. This thesis has shown that some of the changes were appropriate, but also that several aspects of the Mass were, regrettably, lost. Interestingly, much of what was lost was not intended to be lost. Through a better understanding the rhetoric of beauty, the impact of these losses can be clarified and assessed. For the purpose of providing Catholics the greatest potential to transcend their religion into the Catholic faith, the magisterium should reform the Mass once again to make it more beautiful.

Though it is substantially the same, the substance of the faith is less clear to the common Catholic person because of the manner in which the liturgy is celebrated.

---

<sup>12</sup> This is the year that the last set of minor changes was made to the Mass before the Novus Ordo Missae was adopted.

Concomitant with the changes made to the Mass there has been a marked deterioration in the Catholic faith. Indicators of the strength of the faith such as the number of seminarians, priests ordained, women entering convents, children being baptized, people attending Mass and belief in the true Presence have all plummeted since the reforms (Dolan, 196; Jones). This is not to say that fewer people practice the Catholic religion;<sup>13</sup> in fact, there has actually been a large increase in the number of Catholics around the world. What this means is that fewer Catholics embrace the faith of the Church. Since the aim of the Church is to guide the religious to the faith, lack of faith in the Catholic Church is the most significant crisis facing the magisterium, members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, of the Church.

The crisis in the Church cannot be blamed on the lack of information put forth by the Church. The vast amount of resources that Holy Mother Church issues is qualitatively a treasure, yet the common Catholic fails to search it out. Since the common people are not actively seeking out the teachings of the Church, the magisterium must look toward an alternative medium to teach and persuade the people. The alternative medium is the Mass. In fact, *the Mass itself is the message; the medium actually becomes the message.*<sup>14</sup> Essentially, the best manner to develop *religious* Catholics into *faithful* Catholics is to reaffirm the Second Vatican Council's renewal of the liturgy. True renewal of the liturgy would consist of re-sacralizing the Mass by asserting its traditional aesthetic form and purpose. Restoring the beauty of the Mass should persuade the people toward faith

---

<sup>13</sup> There is a definite distinction between faith and religion. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, (1987), argues that, "Gnosticism allows of retaining the time-honored terminology and ceremonial of religion, the aura of religion, without retaining faith" (43).

<sup>14</sup> This is not a novel idea. The Mass has always had a rhetorical function. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) refers to the Mass as the "sum and summary of the faith" (1327).

because, according to the Catholic worldview, the perception of beauty entails an experience with God.

The potential for Catholics to experience Christ has decreased in recent years primarily because liturgical reforms have made the Mass less aesthetically compelling. The Mass should be as beautiful as possible because it is the means by which God is worshipped. Indeed, the Church teaches that the Mass is heaven on earth. Yet another reason for celebrating the Mass as beautifully as possible is because, according to the Catholic worldview, beauty has a rhetorical function. Beauty functions as a means to faith; it kindles the love of God in the person. The relationship between rhetoric, the Mass and beauty is lucidly described by Pope Benedict XVI (2007). The passage is worth quoting in full:

This relationship between creed and worship is evidenced in a particular way by the rich theological and liturgical category of beauty. Like the rest of Christian Revelation, the liturgy is inherently linked to beauty: it is *veritatis splendor* [the splendor of truth]. The liturgy is a radiant expression of the paschal mystery, in which Christ draws us to himself and calls us to communion. As Saint Bonaventure would say, in Jesus we contemplate beauty and splendor at their source. This is no mere aestheticism, but the concrete way in which the truth of God's love in Christ encounters us, attracts us, and delights us, enabling us to emerge from ourselves and drawing us toward our true vocation, which is love. . . . Christ is the full manifestation of the glory of God. In the glorification of the Son, the Father's glory shines forth and is communicated (cf. *Jn* 1:14,

8:54, 12:28, 17:1). Yet this beauty is not simply harmony and proportion and form; ‘the fairest of the sons of men’ (*Ps* 45[44]:3) is also, mysteriously, the one ‘who had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him’ (*Is* 53:2). Jesus Christ shows us how the truth of love can transform even the dark mystery of death into the radiant light of the resurrection. Here the splendor of God’s glory surpasses all worldly beauty. The truest beauty is the love of God, who definitively revealed himself to us in the paschal mystery. (44-45)

This passage clearly and potently states that beauty and the Mass are intimately related. By communicating the beauty of holiness, the Mass becomes the greatest rhetorical means to bring Catholics to faith. This thesis has explored the relationship between these three entities.

For there to be true organic development, which promotes faith through beauty, in the Mass there must be a type of synthesis between the Tridentine Mass and the Novus Ordo Missae. The best example I have seen of synthesis was at St. John Cantius parish in Chicago, Illinois. There they celebrate the Novus Ordo Missae in Latin, *ad orientum*. During the Mass of the Catechumens (called the Liturgy of the Word in the new rite), the readings are only read once, in the vernacular and facing the people. As discussed in chapter 4, this increases the integrity of the Mass because this section is meant to be for the people. The Mass of the Faithful (the Liturgy of the Eucharist), is celebrated, as stated, *ad orientum* in Latin. This increases the integrity of the Mass as well because it is a sacrifice directed toward God and spoken in the universal language of the Church, whereas the celebration of the Mass *versus populum* turns the community inward and

toward worship of itself. Ratzinger (1996) states, “For if the Church herself seems to be saying that assembly is more important than Eucharist, then the Eucharist is also just ‘assembly’—otherwise it would not be possible to treat them as equivalents. . . .

Whoever elevates the community to the level of end in itself is precisely the one who dissolves its foundations” (75). This part of the Mass never changes and all Catholics of all nationality and times are in communion through its catholic nature. Making just these two changes would tremendously increase the beauty within both rites and organically synthesize them into one beautiful rite.

The postmodern “aesthetic turn” was made as an attempt to make rhetoric the predominant voice in academia and to create an ethics of rhetoric from which to build a better society. Rather than increasing the fecundity of rhetoric, though, it renders itself impotent. In this thesis, I have developed a Catholic aesthetic perspective that functions as an alternative aesthetic from which to study rhetoric. The Catholic aesthetic perspective perceives beauty as having two dimensions for which the postmodern perspective cannot account. These two dimensions greatly add to the quality of rhetorical analysis that can be performed through an aesthetic lens. The Catholic theory also yields a strong ethic from which rhetoric can be used, performed, and analyzed. The ethics promoted through the theory requires that people do not merely tolerate one another;<sup>15</sup> it demands that people love one another, treat each other with dignity and always have the good of the other in mind. Every “other” we encounter, by their very nature, is beautiful.

---

<sup>15</sup> One can only imagine how horrible and cold a society would be, if its people openly told one another, “I tolerate you.”

## Bibliography

- Amiot, Francois. History of the Mass. Trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1958.
- Aquilina, Mike. The Mass of the Early Christians. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2001.
- Aristotle. Selected Works. Trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle and Lloyd P. Gerson. 3rd. Grinnell: The Peripatetic Press, 1991.
- Augustine, Saint. On Christian Doctrine. Trans. D.W. Robertson Jr. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merril Company, Inc., 1958.
- Baldwin, Charles Sears. Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic: Interpreted From Representative Works. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924.
- Benedict XVI, Pope. Jesus of Nazareth. Trans. Adrian J. Walker. New York: Doubleday, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Sacramentum Caritatis: Sacrament of Charity. Trans. Vatican. Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2007.
- Blair, Hugh. Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1993.
- Burke, Kenneth. Grammar of Motives. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Campbell, Paul M. "Communication Aesthetics." Today's Speech (Summer, 1971): 7-18.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church: With Modifications From the Editio Typica. New York: Doubleday Press, 1997.
- Catechism of the Council of Trent. Trans. J.A. McHugh, & C.J. Callan. Rockford, IL.: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1982.



- Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church. Washington D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 2006.
- Condit, Celeste Michelle. "The Functions of Epideictic: The Boston Massacre Orations as Exemplar." Communication Quarterly 33 (Fall, 1985): 284-299.
- Dolan, Jay P. In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Gilson, Etienne. The Arts of the Beautiful. Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 2000.
- Greene, Ronald Walter. "The Aesthetic Turn and the Rhetorical Perspective on Argumentation." Argumentation and Advocacy 35 (Summer, 1998): 19-29.
- Hahn, Scott. The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth. New York: Doubleday Press, 1999.
- Hariman, Robert. "Terrible Beauty and Mundane Detail: Aesthetic Knowledge in the Practice of Everyday Life." Argumentation and Advocacy 35 (Summer, 1998): 10-18.
- Herrick, Marvin T. "The Place of Rhetoric in Poetic Theory" Quarterly Journal of Speech 34 (February, 1948): 1-22.
- Hikins, James W. "Nietzsche, Eristic, and the Rhetoric of the Possible: A Commentary of on the Whitson and Poulakos 'Aesthetic View' of Rhetoric." Quarterly Journal of Speech 81 (August, 1995): 353-377.
- Hildebrand, Dietrich. Liturgy and Personality. Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Trojan Horse in the City of God: The Catholic Crisis Explained. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1967.
- Howell, Wilbur Samuel. "Aristotle and Horace on Rhetoric and Poetics." Quarterly

- Journal of Speech LIV (December, 1968): 325-339.
- Hull, Reverend Michael F. "The Mystery of the Incarnation and the Mass." Homiletic and Pastoral Review. (July, 2006): 6-9.
- Jones, Kenneth C. Index of Leading Catholic Indicators: The Church Since Vatican II. Fort Collins, CO: Roman Catholic Books, 2003.
- Longinus. On the Sublime. Trans. A. O. Prickard. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1906.
- Maritain, Jacques. Art and Scholasticism with Other Essays. U.S.: Filiquarian Publishing, 2007.
- Plato. Phaedrus. Trans. W.C. Helmbold and W.G. Rabinowitz. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1956.
- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today. Trans. Martha M. Matesich. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. God is Near Us. Trans. Henry Taylor. Eds. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Journey to Easter: Spiritual Reflections for the Lenton Season. Trans. Mary Dame Groves. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. On the Way to Jesus Christ. Trans. Michael J. Miller. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Sprit of the Liturgy. Trans. John Saward. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000.
- The Roman Catholic Daily Missal: 1962. Kansas City, MO.: Angelus Press, 2004.
- Sayers, Dorthy. The Mind of the Maker. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1979.

- Scott, Robert L. "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic." Central States Speech Journal (February, 1967): 9-17.
- Soukup, Paul A. "Ritual and Movement as Communication Media." The Journal of Communication and Religion (September, 1988): 9-17.
- Vaske, Martin O., S.J. An Introduction to Metaphysics. U.S.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963.
- Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." Philosophy and Rhetoric 3 (Summer, 1973): 154-161.
- Walker, Jeffrey. Rhetoric and Poetics. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Weaver, Richard M. "The Cultural Role of Rhetoric." Language is Sermonic: Richard Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric. Ed. Richard L. Johannessen, Rennard Strickland and Ralph T. Eubanks. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970.
- Whitson, Steve and John Poulakos. "Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric." Quarterly Journal of Speech 79 (May, 1993): 131-145.
- Wichelns, Herbert A. "The Literary Criticism of Oratory." Ed. Alexander M. Drummond. Studies in Rhetoric and Public Speaking in Honor of James Albert Winans. New York: Century, 1925. 181-216.
- Williams, Raymon. Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. Revised. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.