



The *Ethos* of the Practice of Rhetoric

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"Seven minutes is all you have." Most newly ordained Deacons facing their first homily are familiar with these ominous words. It seems that the only preoccupation of the fresh faced Reverend in the third millennium is not only to find a diagonal stole but also a good stopwatch. However, as the book of Ecclesiastes tells us; "Nothing is new under the sun" (Eccl. 1, 9-10). The challenge of communicating a message, of attracting the attention of an audience, even of seeking to convince or persuade others has existed long before Deacons did.

Five centuries before Christ the Greeks were already wrestling with this problem. Communication strategies, in an art that came to be known as rhetoric, were then adopted and further developed by Latin speakers in the Roman world, giving rise to many techniques of communication that are now in everyday use. Today's speaker begins his talk with a joke to rouse a sleepy after-dinner audience actually fulfills the golden rule of ancient rhetoric, that of *captatio benevolentiae*: in opening a speech capture the goodwill and attention of the audience.

The three most illustrious figures in the world of ancient rhetoric are Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. Each author has something to teach us about rhetoric, the art of speaking well and convincing others. All were interested in the art of persuasion, Aristotle as a philosopher, Cicero as a practicing orator and Quintilian as an educator of orators. Despite differences in culture, language and historical period, all gave a special importance to the speaker's character. What was vital in the art of persuasion was not just the content of the discourse, or the effect it would have on the audience but the moral character of the orator. This essay will examine the role of character in rhetoric. It has been scarcely mentioned in the discussion over the revival of virtue ethics, which considers character mostly in theoretical terms, whereas rhetoric considers the actual practice of character.

Ancient Rhetoric

The study of rhetoric in the western world began in Greece in the fifth century B.C. Three areas in rhetorical discourse that became important for the Greeks were:

(i) *Politics*: At this time, democratic government was emerging in Athens. All of the important decisions about public policy and action, such as whether to go to war or not, were made after a debate among an assembly of the men of the *polis*, all of whom could speak. Public speaking thus gained importance in political life.

(ii) *Social gatherings*: Often a crowd would be addressed at different social functions such as funerals, weddings and symposia.¹

(iii) *Courts*: In the law courts, the system of advocacy did not exist and citizens had to defend themselves although their speeches could be prepared by a speech writer known as a “logographer.” Handbooks of judicial rhetoric were also written, the earliest version of which was written by a Sicilian named Tisias (called Corax, or the “Crow”) sometime around 460 B.C. These handbooks were criticized by Aristotle.

Rhetoric thus developed in these three main contexts. In politics, the type of rhetoric was known as deliberative rhetoric (or later parliamentary oratory); at social gatherings such as funerals or weddings, epideictic (or display) oratory and in law courts judicial (or forensic) rhetoric.

Aristotle and means of persuasion

In his major rhetorical work *Τέχνη ρητορική*, the “Art of Rhetoric” and henceforth referred to as *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines rhetoric as an ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion (*pisteis*).² The term *pisteis*, usually translated as ‘available means of persuasion’ or ‘proofs,’ also encompasses the related qualities of trust, trustworthiness, credence and credibility and includes means used to secure the trust or belief of the audience.³ The important means of persuasion for Aristotle are: the moral character of the speaker (*ethos*), the capacity to arouse emotions in the listeners (*pathos*) and the speech itself (*logos*). Thus, a tri-partite division of oratorical structure corresponding to the constituents of the speech-act: speaker (*ethos*), audience (*pathos*) and speech (*logos*).

¹ The symposium was an important social moment for Greek males, providing an opportunity for debate, as well as for eating, drinking and entertainment.

² ARISTOTLE, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse*, translated with Introduction, Notes, and Appendices by George A. Kennedy, Oxford University Press, New York 2007, 37 (135Sb). Here 37 is the page number and 135Sb the corresponding Bekker number. Henceforth cited in the format, ‘ARISTOTLE, Kennedy, 37 (135Sb)’.

³ Cf. Christopher CAREY, “Rhetorical Means of Persuasion”, in *Essays on Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, University of California Press, California 1980, 399.

The importance of moral character in persuasion

Of these three, *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*, Aristotle considers *ethos*, the moral character of the speaker, to be the most effective means of persuasion in rhetoric.⁴ *Pathos* and *logos* have their role, but the precedence lies with the *ethos* of the speaker. The orator persuades by moral character (*ethos*) when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of confidence.⁵ This confidence must come about in the course of the speech and not from any preconceived idea of the speaker's character.⁶ Trusting in the good character of the speaker, we are more likely to give credence to what he is telling us. The judgments made regarding a person's character often depend on how we feel towards them. As Aristotle comments; "We believe the speaker through his being a certain kind of person."⁷ If the listener finds the orator's character agreeable he is more likely to believe what he is saying; "When a man is favourably disposed towards one on whom he is passing judgement, he either thinks that the accused has committed no wrong at all or that his offence is trifling; but if he hates him, the reverse is the case."⁸

What is Moral Character For Aristotle?

Character was the most important means of proof or persuasion for Aristotle but what exactly does he mean or infer when he refers to 'character?' Kennedy writes:

The predominant meaning of *ethos* in Aristotle is "moral character" as reflected in deliberate choice of actions and as developed into a habit of mind. At times however, the word seems to refer to qualities, such as an innate sense of justice or a quickness of temper, with which individuals may be naturally endowed and which dispose them to certain kinds of action. One of the three modes of persuasion is provided by *ethos*. In that sense, the word refers to the trustworthy character of a speaker as artistically created in a speech.⁹

Aristotle considered three characteristics of an orator that can help persuade an audience:¹⁰

⁴ Cf. ARISTOTLE, *The Art of Rhetoric*, The Loeb Classical Library, with an English translation by John Henry Freese, Harvard University Press, London 2000, 17 (1356a). Henceforth cited in the format, 'ARISTOTLE, Loeb, 17 (1356a)'.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 17 (1356a).

⁶ Cf. ARISTOTLE, Kennedy, 39 (1356a).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 74 (1366a).

⁸ ARISTOTLE, Loeb, 171 (1378a).

⁹ ARISTOTLE, Kennedy's comment on Book 2, Chapters 2-17, 148. *Ibid.*, 112 (1378a).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 112 (1378a).

1. Practical wisdom (*phronēsis*)

Aristotle defines practical wisdom in his *Rhetoric* as that virtue of the intellect by which men are able to deliberate well about what is good and bad, with a view of achieving happiness. Aristotle sees practical wisdom as a virtue of the intellect, which has a role in deliberation, helping the orator to choose what is good. At times, the choice will not simply be between what is good and what is not, but may involve a choice between various goods. Practical wisdom also helps one to choose the greater among different goods.¹¹ In proposing the good or greater good, the orator is also proposing what is beneficial such as suggesting that to go to war will be in the best interests of the *polis*. A victorious campaign will verify that the orator had deliberated well but if the army is defeated it may be difficult for him to claim that he is in fact practically wise. As A. O. Rorty notes; "It is exceedingly difficult to maintain a reputation for *phronēsis* without actually giving a fair amount of sound advice. [...] Since a rhetorician's reputation is, over the course of time, at least in part measured by the consequences of the policies he recommends."¹²

2. Virtue (*aretē*)

Whilst Aristotle presents a detailed analysis of the virtues in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, he also discusses them in his *Rhetoric*. He defines virtue as an ability (*dynamis*) that is productive and preservative of goods and an ability for doing good in many and great ways, actually in all ways in all things.¹³ The various virtues listed by Aristotle include: justice, manly courage, self-control, magnificence, magnanimity, liberality, gentleness, prudence and wisdom. He cites episodes or actions which highlight the presence of virtues in the speaker; having performed military service (revealing manly courage), performance of public duties, enthusiastic payment of taxes (revealing the virtue of justice, with liberality also showing that the speaker does not have the vice of stinginess), loyalty and patriotism, openness, simplicity, examples of piety through prayer and also the quality of 'restraint' (revealing self-control), understood as suing another party only as a last resort.¹⁴

The *Epilogos* or conclusion of a speech was a timely moment to remind the audience of the virtuous life of the speaker. Underlining the presence of virtues in a speaker helps portray his character in a positive light and wins the favour of the audience.¹⁵

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 69 (1364b).

¹² Amélie Oksenberg RORTY, "Structuring Rhetoric", in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, University of California Press, California 1980, 9.

¹³ Cf. ARISTOTLE, Kennedy, 76 (1366a). The term "arête" (virtue) was used to refer to any excellence (not only moral), such as excellence in combat.

¹⁴ Cf. Christopher CAREY, "Rhetorical Means of Persuasion", in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, University of California Press, California 1980, 407-408.

¹⁵ Cf. ARISTOTLE, Kennedy, 249 (1419b).

3. Goodwill (*eunoia*)

Aristotle specifically cites goodwill as a characteristic that gives credibility to a speaker. For this reason, in rhetoric, the opening address had as one of its aims the establishment of a rapport with the audience, making them well disposed towards him and capturing their good will.

Christopher Carey, considering the link between Aristotelian *ethos* and producing a feeling of goodwill, notes that the speaker's character as well as inducing a degree of trust, is also able to produce a feeling of goodwill in the audience toward the speaker. The projection of the appropriate character achieves more subtly the effect sought by explicit appeals for a favorable hearing.¹⁶ For William Fortenbaugh, to win the goodwill of the audience is to win their friendship. The orator speaks to the audience as he would do to a good friend and has their best interests at heart.¹⁷

Aristotle was clear in his conviction that the co-presence of these three attributes would prove to be effective in rhetoric as a person perceived as having all these qualities would be persuasive to the hearers.

In book 2 chapter 4, Aristotle gives a long list of qualities that create a friendly feeling in the audience towards the speaker, and some of these qualities are useful to enumerate.¹⁸ The audience is friendly when the speaker is seen to be morally good and respected, pleasant, good-tempered and not critical of people's faults, not contentious or quarrelsome, ready to make a joke, able to praise the presence of good qualities in others, especially to praise the qualities that these people fear they do not really have, neat in appearance and in dress, not critical of mistakes and not mindful of wrongs done nor inclined to cherish grievances but who are easily appeased; for people think the attitude shown to others will also be used with them. The audience warms towards those who long for the same things, to those whose prestige they would like to attain, those who are good at being friends and those who are not deceitful with them; such are those who even tell them their faults and they like those who do not intimidate them and with whom they feel secure; for no one likes a person he fears.

Thus for Aristotle, what persuades an audience is not merely the words of the discourse, nor the emotional reaction that the speech produces in the listener but rather the moral character of the speaker. A speaker who shows practical wisdom, virtue and goodwill persuades others.

¹⁶ Christopher CAREY, "Rhetorical Means ...", 406.

¹⁷ Cf. William W. FORTENBAUGH, "Aristotle on Persuasion through Character", in *Rhetorica* 10/3, (1992) 220.

¹⁸ Cf. ARISTOTLE, Kennedy, 125-127 (1381a-1381b).

Roman Rhetoric

By the second century B.C., Greek rhetoric had begun to be studied and practiced by the Romans. The three most important settings for Roman rhetoric were the public meeting (the *contio*), the Senate and the law-courts.¹⁹ The Greek courts required that the defendant represent himself but in the Roman courts the litigant could ask a professional orator, known as a “patron,” to plead his cause. In court cases, a good character or at least the presentation of good character came to be accepted as a source of proof in Roman oratory. Details such as previous offices held a degree of nobility counted in favour of the litigant.²⁰ The importance given to character in Roman society was responsible in large part for the unusual emphasis upon character portrayal in Roman oratory. It was into such a world that Cicero was born.²¹

Cicero and Character

Marcus Tullius Cicero was the greatest of the Roman orators and the most important Latin writer on rhetoric. He had a long and distinguished oratorical career. He wrote seven books on rhetoric and more than fifty of his speeches survive until today. His most important rhetorical treatise, *De Oratore* (On the Ideal Orator) was written in 54 B.C. at the height of his career. In sections 2.182 – 2.184 of this work Cicero discusses the role of the character and its role in persuasion. He considers not only the character of the speaker but also that of the client. The character, customs, deeds and life, both of the speaker and his client, make a very important contribution to winning the case.²² The third character to be considered will be that of the opponent whose life and character should be met with disapproval. The speaker needs to win the goodwill of the audience:

The minds of the audience should, as much as possible, be won over to feel goodwill toward the orator as well as toward his client. Now people’s minds are won over by a man’s prestige, his accomplishments and the reputation he has acquired by his way of life. Such things are easier to embellish if present, than to fabricate if totally lacking. At any rate, their effect is enhanced by a gentle tone of voice on the part of the orator, an expression on his face intimating restraint and

¹⁹ Cf. Catherine STEEL, *Greece & Rome: New Surveys in the Classics* No. 36, *Roman Oratory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, 3-24. In addition a military commander may have had to address his troops before a battle, and in Roman oratory, addresses at funerals were also important occasion for an epideictic rhetorical display.

²⁰ James M. MAY, *Trials of Character: The Eloquence of Ciceronian Ethics*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1992, 163.

²¹ Marcus Tullius Cicero was born at Arpinum, a town some seventy-five miles southeast of Rome, in the year 106 B.C.

²² CICERO, *On the Ideal Orator*, translated with introduction, notes, appendixes, glossary, and indexes by James M. May & Jakob Wisse, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, 171 (2.182).

kindliness in the use of his words; and if you press some point rather vigorously, by seeming to act against your inclination, because you are forced to do so.²³

Presenting the character of the orator and client as generous, mild, dutiful, decent and unassuming, not severe, not obstinate, not litigious and not harsh also help win the favour of the listeners. For Cicero, the tone of voice in presenting the character is also vital — the orator must speak in a gentle and quiet way. This mode of speaking is most effective; “In cases where there is not much opportunity to use some form of sharp and violent emotional arousal to set the juror’s heart aflame.”²⁴ A speaker’s gentle style helps mold an image of good character in the minds of the audience and wins their approval. Cicero emphasizes the importance of the presentation of a good character in winning a case:

Portraying their characters in your speech, then, as being just, upright, conscientious toward the gods, subject to fear, and patient of injustice, is enormously influential. And if this is handled agreeably and with taste, it is actually so powerful [...] that it often has more influence than the case itself. [...] Moreover, so much is accomplished by speaking thoughtfully and with a certain taste, that the speech may be said to mold an image of the character of the orator. Employing thoughts of a certain kind and words of a certain kind, and adopting besides a delivery that is gentle and shows signs of flexibility, makes speakers appear as decent, as good in character — yes, as good men.²⁵

Contrasting Moral Character In Cicero and Aristotle

Cicero, in his consideration of the role of character in persuasion, has stressed the need to gain the goodwill of the audience. As a practicing orator, he places much emphasis on the style of delivery. A gentle discourse can help win over the listener but a vigorous or grandiloquent style moves them in such a way that they are ruled by strong emotions rather than by reasoned judgment. Thus *ethos* yields to *pathos* and the courtroom is transformed from a *iudicium* into an *incendium*.²⁶ The souls of the orator’s audience become inflamed and can be moved where the orator wills.

In Cicero’s *Orator* written shortly before his death, he describes the orator who employs a grandiloquent style;

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 171-172 (2.184).

²⁶ J. M. MAY, *Trials of ...*, 167.

Magnificent, opulent, stately and ornate; he undoubtedly has the greatest power. [...] I mean the kind of eloquence which rushes along with the roar of a mighty stream, which all look up to and admire, and which they despair of attaining. This eloquence has power to sway men's minds and move them in every possible way. Now it storms the feelings, now it creeps in; it implants new ideas and uproots the old.²⁷

Using this vigorous style, Cicero often overturned an opponent's case and in arousing the emotions of the jury, even resorted to holding a babe in his arms to sway their emotions in his favour. Aristotle's approach to character is rather more sober. The *ethos* and *pathos* distinctly and in a way suitable for the students of his course on rhetoric. All emotions, whether mild or strong are simply considered under *pathos*, the emotions aroused in the audience. These differences can be summarized as follows:

	Aristotle	Cicero
<i>Ethos</i>	Rational, not strongly connected to emotions, helps portray speaker as reliable and trustworthy	Includes mild emotions used by speaker to evoke goodwill in audience
<i>Pathos</i>	Refers to all emotions evoked in the audience	Strong or violent emotions in the audience evoked by speaker's vigorous oratory

Aristotle's clear separation of *ethos* and *pathos* is understandable in the light of the abuse of *pathos* when it was used to manipulate the jury. The existing rhetorical handbooks of his day helped litigants plan and present their case in court. They stressed the importance of bending the emotions of the jury but gave little reference to the importance of *ethos* or *logos* in persuasion.²⁸ Aristotle was aware of the manipulative power of the emotions and felt that it was wrong to warp the jury by leading them into anger or envy.²⁹ The concept of *ethos* presented by Aristotle is thus more rational whereas Ciceronian *ethos* is broader and wider. James M. May commenting on Ciceronian *ethos* notes that it is an *ethos* that deals with emotions, closely related to *pathos* but involving milder

²⁷ CICERO, *Orator*, The Loeb Classical Library, with an English translation by H. M. Hubbell, Harvard University Press, London 1988, 375-377 (xxviii, 97).

²⁸ Cf. ARISTOTLE, Kennedy, 31 (1354a) & 39 (1356a).

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 31 (1354a). Aristotle indeed considers emotions as a means of persuasion but alongside *logos* and *ethos*. Part of his criticism and motivation for writing his *Rhetoric* is that existing handbooks of rhetoric did not deal with these two latter adequately.

feelings; it is also an *ethos* attentive to and more intricately associated with style.³⁰

In Aristotle's concept of *ethos* the impression the speaker makes during the speech must inspire the audience, not any authority or previous achievements that the speaker may have.³¹ For Cicero, what was important was for the speaker to present himself or his client in such a way as to highlight reputation, authority and achievements, helping win the approval of the audience. In the Roman vision, where so much emphasis was placed on status, authority and reputation, Aristotle's conception of an *ethos* portrayed only through the rational medium of a speech and not on reputation or achievements was neither acceptable nor adequate.³²

Placing emphasis on character and previous reputation does not mean that the *ethos* presented during the actual speech was unimportant for Cicero. In fact, Cicero holds that during the speech itself the orator's character needs to make a good impression on the audience. In this regard, he notes that choosing words carefully and adopting a delivery that is gentle when proclaiming his discourse make the speaker appear as a good man, with a good character.³³ Lucia Calboli Montefusco sees here a parallel with the *ethos* presented by Aristotle; "I am convinced that exactly here in this formal *ethos* one can see the Aristotelian component of Ciceronian *ethos*."³⁴ Montefusco talks of the double function of the *ethos* of the orator as outlined in Cicero's *De Oratore*:

1. To present the life, previous accomplishments and reputation of the orator so as to win the goodwill of the judge.
2. Creating a good impression during the actual speech.

The latter function of the *ethos* of the orator, that of creating a good impression during the actual speech, corresponds to the function of Aristotelian *ethos*. We can conclude that despite differences in the rhetorical vision of Aristotle and Cicero, both recognized the prime importance of character as a means of persuasion. Aristotle clearly states that *ethos* is the most important means. For Cicero, in a Roman society that placed so much weight on character and reputation, we can understand why he too gave it so much prominence in his orations. We now turn our attention to the greatest teacher of rhetoric at Rome, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus. It will be interesting to examine the importance he gave to character in rhetoric as he was a teacher of would-be orators.

³⁰ J. M. MAY, *Trials of ...*, 5.

³¹ Cf. ARISTOTLE, Kennedy, 39 (1356a).

³² J. M. MAY, *Trials of ...*, 9.

³³ CICERO, *On the Ideal Orator*, May & Wisse, 171-172 (2.184).

³⁴ Lucia Calboli MONTEFUSCO, "Cicerone, *De Oratore*: la doppia funzione dell'*ethos* dell'oratore", in *Rhetorica* 10/3, (1992) 256. "Io sono convinta che proprio in questo *ethos* formale si può vedere la componente aristotelica dell'*ethos* ciceroniano." (English translation above is mine)

Quintilian

Quintilian was born in Calagurris, Spain (modern Calahorra) in the late 30s A.D. and is the author of the largest Latin rhetorical treatise which survives from antiquity, *Institutio Oratoria*, or Education of the Orator, in twelve books. His primary interest was the formation of children and adolescents as would-be orators. Quintilian stresses that the orator needs natural ability but also much study and practice; "If nature were sufficient on her own, learning would be altogether unnecessary!"³⁵ He adds that if we have a real orator on our hands then no virtue of speaking should be forgotten.³⁶ On the need to create versatile orators, he gives the example of Nicostratus, a famous boxer who showed great versatility also mastering the art of wrestling. Quintilian comments;

How much more must the teacher of the future orator foster this versatility! It is not enough to speak concisely, elegantly, or vehemently, any more than it would be for a professional singer to excel exclusively in the higher, lower, or middle register, or in some part of one of these. Oratory is like the lyre; unless all its strings, from bottom to top, are in tune, it cannot be perfect.³⁷

Virtues of character

Speaking of the relationship between good character and good oratory, Quintilian boldly asserts that no one can be an orator unless he is a good man; "I am proposing to educate the perfect orator, who cannot exist except in the person of a good man. We therefore demand of him not only exceptional powers of speech, but all the virtues of character as well."³⁸ For Quintilian, a good man is a virtuous one. The concept of a good man for him was unintelligible apart from virtue. Virtue and moral character themselves are perfected by training and study.³⁹ The virtues nominated by Quintilian include honour, justice and bravery. The most attractive qualities in an orator are humanity, approachability, moderation and kindness. A good orator needs necessarily to show hatred of the wicked, emotional involvement in the public interest and readiness to punish crime and injury. Firmness, confidence and courage are also necessary for the orator's progress.

³⁵ QUINTILIAN, *The Orator's Education*, Loeb Classical library, edited and translated by Donald A. Russell, Harvard University Press, London 2001, 321 (2.8.8).

³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 321 (2.8.12).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 323 (2.8.15).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 57 (1. Proemium. 9).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 221 (12.2.1-2).

Vices of character

Vices of character include over-confidence, rashness, rudeness, arrogance and shyness.⁴⁰ Shyness may be damaging to an orator as it can cause gifts of talent and learning never to come to light. The solution is self-confidence but not such that it results in over-confidence.⁴¹

The presence of vices in an orator will make it difficult for him to be a good orator. One reason is that the mind must be free to study the art of rhetoric; to concentrate on such a great subject, it needs to be free from all other distractions. Activity that distracts it is to be avoided. A frugal life is essential for enduring the labours of study. Lust and luxury are not good bedfellows for the would-be orator. The mind needs to focus on the task at hand. Can a person have good thoughts amidst some bad ones? Seemingly not for Quintilian. A single mind can no more harbour the best and worst thoughts than the same man can be both good and bad.⁴² Virtue and vice cannot co-exist in the same breath.

Speech and character

Quintilian frequently reiterates that only a good man can be a good orator, but in books 11 and 12 of his treatise, he begins to explain the actual link between speech and character. He states that speech indeed is very commonly an index of character and reveals the secrets of the heart; “There is good ground for the Greek saying that a man speaks as he lives.”⁴³ He elaborates further this link between the orator’s speech and his character:

Will not the orator have a great deal to say about Justice, Courage, Abstinence, Temperance and Piety? But the good man, who does not merely know these things by word and name, and has not simply heard them with his ears in order to repeat them with his tongue, but has really embraced the virtues themselves in his mind and come to have virtuous sentiments — *he* will not have any problem in ordering his thoughts, and will speak out frankly what he knows.⁴⁴

The orator needs to live a virtuous life in order to speak about it. To support his belief that eloquence flows from a virtuous inner life, Quintilian refers to Cicero who bears witness that the power of speech flows from the innermost fountains of wisdom. In addition, teachers of morals and of eloquence were for a long time the same people.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 247 (12.5.2).

⁴¹ We are reminded of Quintilian’s general advice; “The safest route is down the middle, because both extremes are faults.” 325 (12.10.80).

⁴² QUINTILIAN, Loeb, 199 (12.1.4).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25 (11.1.30).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 229 (12.2.17).

⁴⁵ *Cf. ibid.*, 223 (12.2.6).

Perhaps, one could imagine that a bad man might convince others by cunning or deceit? Quintilian points out that the bad man will have difficulty to convince others as insincere protestations always betray themselves however carefully they are kept up. He states; "There has probably never been a tongue so fluent as not to stumble or hesitate whenever the words are at odds with the speaker's real feelings."⁴⁶ It often happens that even when bad men tell the truth, they are not believed. Quintilian concludes his discourse by asking all to banish from their minds the idea that eloquence can be combined with vicious attitudes of mind. He insists that the orator be a good man. If he is not a good man, we are indeed giving the arms of oratory not to a soldier but to a brigand.⁴⁷ Quintilian desires to form orators with that greatness of personality which fear cannot break, disapproval cannot dismay and the authority of the audience has no power to inhibit more than proper respect for them requires.⁴⁸ Being a teacher he would have seen the importance of always motivating the students under his guidance with good moral values. He has these encouraging words for the would-be orator:

The man who has reached the top no longer has an uphill struggle. The hard work is at the bottom; the further you go, the easier the gradient and the richer the soil. And if, by perseverance, you rise above even these gentler slopes, the fruits offer themselves without effort, and all things come forth unbidden- though unless they are harvested daily- they wither away.⁴⁹

He strongly emphasizes the importance of good character in oratory and announces the intention of his treatise; "What I have undertaken is to fashion the perfect orator and my first requirement is that he should be a good man."⁵⁰ Speaking of the relationship between good character and good oratory he states; "In my view, however, the two are inseparably connected. I hold that no one can be an orator unless he is a good man and even if it is possible, I do not want it to happen."⁵¹

Conclusion

In the world of ancient rhetoric, it was firmly established that the speaker's good moral character was vital in persuading an audience. From Aristotle's emphasis on the moral character (*ethos*) of the speaker as the most significant means of persuasion, through Cicero's stress on presenting a good account of both the speaker and client's character, to Quintilian's insistence that only a good man can be a good orator — all

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 211-213 (12.1.29).

⁴⁷ *Cf. ibid.*, 199 (12.1.1).

⁴⁸ *Cf. ibid.*, 247 (12.5.1).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 323 (12.10.78-79).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 367 (2.15.33).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 85 (1.2.3).

these authors were certain that what convinces is not only the words of the speaker but also his life.

Aristotle and Quintilian both warn against the misuse of rhetoric whereas Cicero, seeking to win the case, may not always have been so scrupulous in moments of impassioned oral delivery. Many Fathers of the Church such as Augustine and John Chrysostom had training in rhetoric, recognizing its usefulness but wary about its potential misuse. In book 4 of his *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine points out that a speaker's way of life can be more eloquent than any amount of grandeur of style.⁵²

For Cicero, the orator represented his client but the preacher of the Gospel, in the words of St Paul, is an "Ambassador for Christ" (Cf. 2 Cor. 5,20). The preacher is God's advocate, pleading on his behalf. It is God's case that is being presented. The preacher seeks not his own glory but the glory of God. The wisdom and eloquence that he preaches is that of Christ crucified. The Christian message announced is "alive and effective" (Cf. Heb. 4,12) capable to change lives; it is not merely 'informative' but 'performative'.⁵³ The first *ethos* to be changed by the Gospel needs to be that of the preacher.

Our Deacon may still only have seven minutes for the homily but will be more aware that what is transmitted in preaching is not only what is said or counseled but what is profoundly prayed and lived.⁵⁴ Good communication is thus not merely technical but also ethical. It is a theme of obvious relevance to preaching, moral education and human communication. □

⁵² Cf. Saint AUGUSTINE, *On Christian Teaching*, Translated with introduction and notes by R.P.H. Green, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999, Book IV, 151.

⁵³ The difference between 'informative' and 'performative' is discussed three times by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* on Christian hope (in numbers 2, 4 & 10).

⁵⁴ This tenet is from Rev. Fr. Jaime BONET, the founder of the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity. See *Constitutions-Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity*, Madrid 2000, 36. "*Contagiamos no lo que decimos y aconsejamos sino lo que profundamente oramos y vivimos.*" (Paraphrased english translation in text above is my own.)