David #2
"paradigms

2. The Greek and Roman rhetorical tradition(s) tended to stress "probability" in matters epistemological and ontological. The early Christian tradition tended to stress "certainty" in matters epistemological and ontological. As a rhetorical scholar, how do you think this paradigm clash should be treated?

The origins of the clash between the "probability" paradigm and the "certainty" paradigm can be traced to the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter one, verses eighteen through twenty-five. Paul writes,

> 18.For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."
> 20. Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21. For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23. but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24. but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25. For the foolishness of God is wiser that man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength (I Corinthians 1:18-25, New International Version, 1978).

Paul wrote these words to a church in a Greek city called Corinth. With the words of this letter he directly inverts the accepted premises of the Greek rhetorical philosophers' approach to establishing wisdom. The rhetoricians of Greece postulated the following formula: the rhetor forms a message to produce a desired response from an audience. Paul, in this passage, converts this formula to the following: the rhetor is given the message (verse 18); the audience is given as well (verse 18b), and the response is God's responsibility (verse 21). Paul's words led to

diametrically opposed approaches to rhetoric: one built on the "wisdom of man" and one on the "wisdom of God" (Barclay, 1975, p. 17-20).

Paul's bold declarations have demarcated a battle line regarding methods of rhetorical strategy for centuries. The most poignant and concrete historical example of the "certainty" paradigm, defended and maintained by declaring the "wisdom of God," is the Middle Ages. The modern dawning of the "probability" paradigm coincides with the advent, in the seventeenth century, of the "new science." (IJsseling, 1976 p. 60). The "new science" advocated an inductive approach to knowledge and truth (IJsseling, 1976, p. 61) in contrast to knowledge to truth as a given deductive premise from God. Through these historical developments the "certainty" paradigm surrendered some of its soverign grip on western civilization.

The clash between these two approaches continues as religious rhetors declare "God's" truth throughout the world. Is this clash inevitable? Did Paul intend for the wisdom of God, as he describes it, to produce antithetical paradigms of knowledge? Are they indeed antithetical? As a rhetorical scholar and a Christian minister, I shall argue that a clash between these two paradigms is not inevitable. I shall argue that the two perspectives share similarities that warrant careful consideration. The suggestions and observations I shall present may provide a means toward a cooperative paradigm, or at least reveal an overlap in approach. Steven Toulmin's notion of a "field of argument" may suggest that

such a merger is not possible, yet he also maintains that some elements remain relatively constant from one field to the next, which he calls "field invariant" (Toulmin, 1964, p. 14). In addition, H. W. Johnston, Jr. asserts that valid argument must be addressed argument ad hominem. By this Johnston means that argument should be directed to the person who advocates the belief (Johnston, 1959, pp. 1-20). Building on the notions these men provide, I might ask, "What are those elements that are "field invariant" and what ad hominem notions can be gleaned from each paradigm, perhaps demonstrating unity despite a long history of diversity? I shall unfold the possibilities in three parts: (1) Paul as a rhetorician, (2) social science and rhetoric, and (3) a portrait of a connecting "rhetorical" paradigm. First I shall address issues pertaining to the "certainty" paradigm and those who would identify with it.

Paul as a Rhetorician

Within the certainty paradigm there is a saying that goes something like this, "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." The question that naturally follow is, what did God say exactly? In Paul's declaration in I Corinthians, he appears certain that things are the way he declares them to be. Yet in other places he expresses less certainty. In Romans, Paul says that the human conscience will, at times, accuse or excuse, without mentioning the means to determine when it will be one way, or the other (Romans 2:15). In Acts, Luke quotes Paul speaking in front of

King Agrippa, a Roman official. On this occasion, Paul says that he is merely giving his opinion regarding a situation (Acts 2:27). These are only two examples of how Paul changes his rhetorical strategies, shifting from strategies that communicate absolute "certainty" to strategies that communicate a sense of openness and interaction.

Reading how he changes his "declarations" suggests that Paul, himself has made some rhetorical choices. For example, in the I Corinthians passage, Paul may have chosen the words he did in order to produce the greatest effect. In a Greek city, where ears had long heard conflicting claims and arguments from probability, a sure, confident voice with no endless speculation may have sounded like a loud, clear bell in a noisy market place. Thus Paul, with God, chose the most probable premise from which to begin. Those that responded are credited as having been moved by God. Paul (Paul and God) used a prudent, "unexpected" rhetorical strategy.

Furthermore, Paul's familiarity with rhetorical influence is clearly revealed in his numerous biblical references to persuasion (Englishman's, 1903, pp. 609-10). Paul uses an alternate spelling, though it is the same word Aristotle uses for persuasion in his Rhetoric (Bauer, 1952, p. 663). Paul's educational background and familiarity with the Greek world provided him numerous opportunities to learn Greek rhetorical strategies (Barclay, 1975, p. 5). His knowledge of the Greek systems, along with his foreign status afforded him the additional advantage of

an objective perspective on Greek rhetorical practices. For example, he may have witnessed the audience's boredom with endless declamations (Barclay, 1975, p. 19-20), and siezed the opportunity to invert their standard paradigm of perception. My observations move beyond mere conjecture, for in one situation in Athens he clearly utilized an "inductive" approach, capturing from the surroundings, the initial elements of his argument (Acts 17:22-23).

While tracing the notion of Paul as a rhetorician, I have emphasized two central notions: (1) Paul was well aware of Greek rhetorical methods and used them, and (2) he expresses uncertainty regarding several issues. I suggest the mask of "certainty" is not Paul's, but that of those who borrowed from Paul's flamboyant style to fulfill their own needs for certainty. The origins of the "certainty" paradigm reveal a confident style coupled with carefully considered rhetorical strategies.

Subsequent Christian tradition reveals an unwarranted extension of some of the biblical elements, while ignoring other elements. Errors of this type were characteristic of another class of scholars called Pharisees who worshiped the letter of the law, while neglecting its spirit. Against the Pharisees, Jesus directed some of his harshest criticism. In conclusion, Paul inverted a communication formula, giving weary ears a clear, unwavering note and a sense of certainty for which they may have longed. The Middle Ages witnessed the abuses of this inversion, leading to a counter inversion called the "inductive" approach.

The Social Sciences and Rhetoric

As I reflect on my experience with the social sciences, three prevalent postures surface regarding the relationship between the social sciences and rhetoric: disdain, misuse, and hesitancy. The first posture is disdain for rhetoric. This disdain may be traced to several sources, though in a modern sense, Francis Bacon may represent the clearest symbol of a break with the "certainty" paradigm (IJsseling, 1976, p. 61). The scientific approach gravitates toward the observable, repeatable, and predictable. Theories are built by piecing together facts from research. Facts are recognizable and constitute the place knowing can begin. Science creates methods for measuring and organizing facts, but all too often the raw data or facts slip through the scientific net. When this happens, scientists must create a vehicle for carrying a confusing array of facts--theories are that vehicle.

Years of data and fact collecting, sorting, arranging and theory building, have produced a labyrinth of conflicting theoretical claims. The "probability" paradigm has produced clashing voices not unlike those in the streets of Corinth. Indeed, the facts have proved illusive. Scientists who wish to defend their particular theory can turn to rhetoric, however to do so is to admit the role of rhetoric in knowledge building. This admission is often avoided for continued disdain and further collecting of the "facts."

A second posture characteristic of rhetoric and the social

sciences is misuse. Utilizing the inductive process, evidence is accumulated which is generalized into premises or enthymenes from which conclusions are drawn in the form of rhetorical appeals. Often this process gives the scientist the role the witch doctor had in primitive cultures. In the realm of social sciences, immeasurable harm can be caused by hasty generalizations drawn from research measuring only particular populations. For example, I.Q. tests are often culturally biased, though their application and the results are used across populations. The scientist produces the measure, substantiates some results and then overgeneralizes. Overgeneralizations are the misuse of rhetorical applications. By neglecting the study of rhetorical processes in society and the dissemination of inforamtion, social scientists have supported the misuse of rhetoric.

A third posture of the "probability" paradigm regarding rhetoric is hesitancy, or the endless collection of data without warranted generalized extension. This posture is the antithesis of the misuse tendency and is perhaps as prevalent. The social scientist often appears trapped in "analysis for analysis' sake" (Weaver, 1985, p. 193). Too often research studies reveal a timidity to risk or hazard any generalizations. Such timidity contradicts the spirit of inquiry, for risking and hazarding alternative explanations captures the spirit of inquiry.

Sometimes the conclusions to be drawn require very little conjecture, yet they are avoided. For example, I recall attending a seminar in which a paper on "Probabilistic Phase Transitions and

the Anthropic Principle" was presented. The lecture shared startling statistics that the probability of the universe humans experience, developing by chance alone, is $10^{10^{123}}$ (Leslie, 1986, p. 1). Yet, no generalizable notions about design or designer were postulated. Speculation continued throughout the seminar despite a "probability" that appears more certain than certainty itself. This is an extreme example though similar hesitancy is repeated countless times on admittedly less intriguing and philosophically oriented questions.

The tendency to withhold generalization is understandable, for the reactions of fellow scholars can be vicious. Walter Fisher, with the support of considerable evidence, recently posited the narrative paradigm of human communication (Fisher, 1987, p. 58). Reaction to his postulate has been at times severe and off target. One critique of Fisher by Barbara Warnick flirted with numerous details rather than seriously critiquing Fisher's major premise that humans do primarily story (Warnick, 1987, p. 172). Though Fisher's notions require continued debate, his courage and rhetorical extensions are to be admired.

Alasdair MacIntyre's work, <u>After Virtue</u>, exemplifies an additional example of an effort to unite and gather numerous observations in order to generalize notions regarding virtue. Such continued effort to unite fragmented research reflects the spirit of reasoned rhetorical extensions suggested by Aristotle when he said, "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic . . . both have to do with such things as fall, in a way, within the

realm of common knowledge, things that do not belong to any one science (Aristotle, 1:1:1354a). Here he claims for a natural connection between dialectical inquiry coupled with rhetorical expression. To exclude one or the other or one from the other is to discredit insights regarding inquiry and practicality observed from antiquity.

Divorcing rhetoric from dialectic, a posture misused, abused, and postponed is equally as harmful as divorcing dialectic from rhetoric--the latter being the chief error of the certainty paradigm. The hesitancy posture is the lack of warranted extensions while substituting endless declamations. This posture produces a state of chaos that favors anarchy in its least attractive clothing (Feyerabend, 1975, p. 21). In such a state of chaos, Paul, the apostle siezed an opportunity and declared a new approach (Barclay, 1975, p. 19). Both of these paradigmatic approaches have seen extended use with much misuse. However, they contain common characteristics that constitute a mutually shared perspective that I shall call the rhetorical paradigm. I shall discuss the characteristics of such a paradigm in the following section.

A Connecting Rhetorical Paradigm

The clash of these paradigms is like the clash of the property claims in Sicily, only this time the clash involves differences in reference to what constitutes reality. The origin of the nature of each perspective, and the difficulties inherent in each have

been reviewed. Despite the clash, both paradigms have one thing in common--rhetoric. How can the shared role of rhetoric operate as a unifying force? The answer to this question clusters around characteristics common to rhetoric itself. What follows is an exploration of these characteristics.

First, the rhetorical paradigm is pervasive. The "certainty" paradigm involves some, the "probability" paradigm, others, but the rhetorical experience unites all. Everyone, whether scientist or religionist lives in a world of rhetoric. This observation itself, is not unique, though coupled with Aristotle's notion that the art of rhetoric may be the only neutral discipline necessary to all others (Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1:1:1354a), provides an arena of unusual commonality in a world of diversity.

Herbert Muller suggests three periods of the history of thought: "A Greek period, metaphysical and idealistic in which emphasis was primarily upon the observer; the scientific period, semi-empirical and materialistic, in which emphasis was primarily on the thing observed; and the period now dawning, in which knowledge is a transition between the observer and the observed" (Muller, 1964, p. 78). Such an observation gives credibility to a rhetorical paradigm and the unifying art of influencing each other, whether leaning toward certainty or probability.

Secondly, a rhetorical paradigm assumes truth clashes are inevitable and provides a vehicle for cooperation. The "certainty" paradigm tries to blot out differences, evidenced in

the history of crusades. The "probability" paradigm assumes the truth is discoverable regarding differences. The rhetorical paradigm advocates that all be heard and may the best story rule (Plato, 1985, as quoted, p. 73). The rhetorical paradigm explains why the scientist returns to the experiment--to collect more facts in order to substantiate the theory. The rhetorical paradigm explains why Paul and other Christian preachers continue to preach--perhaps to persuade some (II Corinthians 5:11).

My first year in seminary, in a course on Christian apologetics, I raised my hand after hearing a lecture on various approaches to defending the Christian faith, and seriously asked this embarrassing question, "How do we know they're not lying?" The professor and the students roared in laughter, but I was serious. I claimed to be a Christian--this was a Christian seminary--why were there so many conflicting truth claims about how to defend the truth? As I look back, I see I confused the truth with ways of talking about the truth, though now I wonder if such a distinction is possible. How <u>do</u> we know they are not lying? What will join the differences? The rhetorical paradigm suggests hearing out the rhetoric with the spirit typified in this explanation by Herbert Simon, who writes,

> If the "characters" seem unreal, or if the "plot" seems strained, or if the anecdote is encumbered by too many extraneous details or asides . . . or if the explanation seems contrived, we become suspicious or turned off. If, on the other hand, the story appears to connect in some way with what we have already experienced or have come to believe; if the "melody" without is harmonious with a "melody" within; then we are likely to achieve a kind of phenomenological understanding--what in German is called <u>Verstehende</u>. (Simon, 1978, p. 28).

A third characteristic of the rhetorical paradigm that operates as a unifying force involves the common human situation. Kenneth Burke describes the human situation when he says,

> "In the face of anguish, injustice, disease, and death one adopts policies. One constructs his notion of the universe of history, and shapes attitudes in keeping. Be he poet or scientist, one defines the "human situation" as amply as his imagination permits; then, with this ample definition in mind, he singles out certain functions or relationships as either friendly or unfriendly. If they are deemed friendly, he prepares himself to welcome them; if they are deemed unfriendly, he weighs objective resistances against his own resources, to decide how far he can effectively go in combating them (Burke, 1984, pp. 3-4).

Whether scientist, poet, or preacher, the struggle to answer common questions is the same. For example: why AIDS? Why injustice? Why hunger? The explanations are built with rhetoric.

Even if God, from the perspective of the "certainty" paradigm does produce the response, why don't all respond to a gospel of love? Does God, only cause some to respond? Such a God sounds like a devil. The rhetorical paradigm suggests reasons for responses regarding message strategies even if one of these strategies is the denial that strategies are effective. The rhetorical paradigm suggests that rhetoric links paradigmatic ways of knowing and reveals that in all ways of knowing, faith is operative. Rhetoric appeals to heart and mind merging both and inviting both to rest (trust) in the sufficiency of the evidence whether historical, phenomenonological, empirical, or spiritual. What is the truth in such a scheme as a rhetorical paradigm? Truth and wisdom become the best answer with the fewest difficulties that people find after extensive searching and

considered reflection--or a justified true belief (Cherwitz & Hirkins, 1986, pp. 31-35).

Finally, the rhetorical paradigm recommends harnessing rhetoric as exemplified and described in Plato's final work on rhetoric (Plato, Phaedrus, 1.279). In the Phaedrus, Plato says that true rhetoric requires extensive knowledge of the topic, of nature, of the soul, and continual practice of the art of rhetoric itself (Murphy, 1983, p. 18). Plato exemplifies the struggle with the rhetorical paradigm, but a struggle that produced beneficial results. Plato harnessed the skills, and in his later years, the spirit of the art of rhetoric. He demonstrates in the Phaedrus how rhetoric can provide a point of harmony amidst diversity. Rhetoric, as Plato defines and uses it, can build unity even between clashing paradigms.

The plan of this essay was to explore an essential unity between the "probability" paradigm and the "certainty" paradigm. The basis for unity clustered around notions of rhetoric--the same rhetoric captured in Aristotle's notion of a counterpart (Aristotle, 1.1.1354a)--the same rhetoric captured in John's notion of the "Logos in the beginning" (I John 1:1). In the discussion of this clash, I endeavored to search out the origins of each perspective. Though the clash can be traced to ancient Greece and events surrounding the time of Jesus in Palestine, the rhetorical unity presented in this essay has contemporary value.

The contemporary value is the purpose of this concluding example. I recently returned to vocational ministry. Preaching

each Sunday to numerous individuals is both enjoyable and exhausting. The enjoyment is especially rewarding when audience members express their appreciation regarding a morning talk. On one occasion a man who had not attended church for years, expressed his appreciation by saying, "I stopped coming because the former minister tried to tell me what to believe. I don't sense that with you. Thanks. I'll keep coming." Incidently, he is a social scientist. His biases lean heavily toward the "probability paradigm. I represent the "certainty" paradigm. Nonetheless, through carefully planned rhetorical choices a mutual meeting of faith perspectives has been possible. The rhetorical paradigm provides an arena where faith and reason can mutually coexist. Rhetoric is the continual invitation to change our lives and move on to new perspectives.

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