

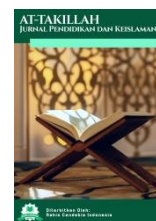


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Rhetorical Practices in Medieval Europe and the Islamic World: Historical Context and Ontological Considerations

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comparative, intellectual, and religious approaches

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A B S T R A C T

This study explores rhetorical practices during the European Medieval period and in the context of the Islamic world, highlighting the historical dynamics and ontological considerations that shaped them. Adopting a comparative approach, this study outlines how rhetoric was not only an art of persuasion but also a medium that reflected the values, thoughts, and ontologies of each civilization. In Medieval Europe, rhetoric was integrated within the Scholastic intellectual tradition, which combined religion with philosophy, emphasizing rhetoric as a tool for the dissemination of Christian teachings and the mediation of knowledge. In contrast, in the context of the Islamic world, rhetoric developed in a wide scope, from its use in religious texts, law, to literature, demonstrating a greater ontological flexibility in Islamic thought. This study reveals that, despite their differences, both traditions demonstrate a deep interconnection between rhetoric, social identity, and the ontological structure of their societies. Thus, this study provides new insights into the role of rhetoric in shaping and expressing social and ontological realities in these two civilizations.

INTRODUCTION

In medieval Europe, rhetoric was used as a tool to strengthen arguments in theology, law, politics, and literature. The Roman Catholic Church greatly influenced the development of rhetoric in Europe during this period, with religious texts being the main

focus. However, the influence of Aristotle and other classical rhetorical works also remained relevant. In the Middle Ages, the discourse on rhetorical science experienced an incubation phase. The cause was the emergence of tyrannical political behavior from emperors who suffered from oratoria phobia syndrome. In addition, it was also influenced by the emergence of a negative image from church theologians who viewed Greek and Roman rhetoric as out-of-date peripheral art and was reinforced by the emergence of a large-scale sale of justifications for 'heresy dhalalah' to anyone interested in rhetoric. This stigmatic image was actually strongly influenced by the fear of evangelical preachers who were afraid of being outshone by the expertise of the rhetors. Meanwhile, in the Islamic world, the practice of rhetoric also developed rapidly, especially among scholars and clerics. Here, rhetoric is used to strengthen arguments in the fields of theology, Islamic law, and literature. Works such as Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani's "Al-Balaghah al-Wadihah" are one of the important works in the development of rhetoric in the Islamic tradition.

Ontologically, the two traditions have different understandings of the source of truth and authority. In medieval Europe, the highest authority often lies in religious teachings, especially the Roman Catholic Church. Meanwhile, in the Islamic world, the source of truth and authority lies in the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as in the broad Islamic scientific tradition

The Middle Ages lasted for 1000 years (400-1400), after which rhetoric entered the modern period. In this period, three important schools of rhetoric were born, namely; the epistemological school, the belles lettres school, and the elocutionist school. Although there is actually a fourth school, namely the school of the faculty of taste. The development of education from the Greek and Roman eras to the Middle Ages in Europe has become an important foundation in the history of world education (Purdaryanto, 2021). Education during this period had a significant influence on the development of culture, thought, and the education system used today. In this article, we will explore how education during that period played an important role in shaping society and providing a valuable legacy for the next generation.

Nevertheless, both in Europe and the Islamic world, rhetoric played an important role in strengthening arguments, influencing public opinion, and shaping people's views on various issues.

METHOD

The research taken for this study is library research, where the data from this study is taken from journals, websites and also books that can be references for this study. Library research is research whose objects are searched for with various library information such as books, scientific journals, magazines, newspapers, and documents (Kusumawati, 2022). This research is different from other studies that require observation or interviews in obtaining data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education becomes a tool to reduce social and economic disparities, open up opportunities for access to better jobs, and encourage social progress and welfare (Lestari, 2022). The development of education from the Greek and Roman eras to the Middle Ages in Europe has become an important foundation in the history of world education (Purdaryanto, 2021). The practice of rhetoric in medieval Europe and the Islamic world was greatly influenced by the historical context and ontological considerations of each region. Here is a brief discussion of the topic:

1. A. Rhetoric in Medieval Europe

In the early Middle Ages, access to education was limited to the nobility and clergy. However, in the 12th century, a system of higher education called universities emerged in Europe, which was established to provide a broader and more comprehensive education. These universities became centers of learning and research, with a focus on the study of law, medicine, theology, and the liberal arts (heny kusmuwati, 2023)

During this period, Latin became the language of education and science in Europe. It is a universal language that allows the spread of knowledge and communication between scientists, scholars, and thinkers from various countries. However, during the Middle Ages there was also a debate about whether vernacular languages (everyday languages used by the community) should be used in education. Education in the Middle Ages reflected the strong influence of religion, especially the Catholic Church, in regulating the education system and shaping the character of citizens. Education was directed at creating citizens who were obedient to religious teachings, obedient to the church, and ready to sacrifice for the church and state. Educational institutions such as monastery schools, cathedrals, and palaces were established to achieve this educational goal. Mechanical learning methods and a focus on memorization reflected a more authoritarian approach and assertiveness in educating students. In addition, the Middle Ages also witnessed the rapid development of Islamic science, where Islamic thinkers contributed to the development of science and philosophy. This shows the intellectual and civilizational development in the Islamic world at that time. Overall, the character of education in the Middle Ages reflected religious values and authority, with a focus on forming the character of citizens who were obedient, disciplined, and adhered to religious values (heny kusmuwati, 2023)

Historical Context

1. **Classical Legacy:** Medieval European rhetorical practices were heavily influenced by the classical Greek and Roman traditions. Writings such as those of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian were widely translated and studied. The classical legacy in rhetoric refers to the legacy of ancient philosophers and orators who defined and developed the art of persuasive speaking and writing. Some of the major figures and important concepts in classical rhetoric are:
 - a. Aristotle: Wrote "Rhetoric", which identified three types of persuasion (ethos, pathos, logos) and analyzed the essential elements of effective speech.
 - b. Cicero: A Roman orator who wrote works such as "De Oratore", which discussed rhetorical techniques and strategies.
 - c. Quintilian: Wrote "Institutio Oratoria", a comprehensive guide to the education of orators and the art of rhetoric.
 - d. Gorgias: A sophist who emphasized the power of language and style in persuasion.
 - e. Isocrates: Viewed rhetoric as a tool for moral and political education, and wrote many speeches and essays on the topic.

2. **Influence of the Church:** Rhetoric during this period was also heavily influenced by the Catholic Church. Formal education was often provided by church institutions, which emphasized the use of rhetoric for theological and homiletic (preaching) purposes. The influence of the church on rhetoric was significant, especially in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The Catholic Church played a major role in spreading and developing the art of rhetoric in several ways:
 - a. Education and Training: The church established cathedral schools and universities where rhetoric was taught as part of the trivium (the three basic liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, and logic). This education often focused on the ability to write and deliver effective sermons.
 - b. Preaching: Preaching was the church's primary form of public communication. Priests and monks were trained in the art of rhetoric to convey religious messages persuasively to their congregations. Saint Augustine, a renowned Christian theologian and philosopher, wrote "De Doctrina Christiana" which discussed the use of rhetoric in Christian preaching.
 - c. Church Literature: Many religious texts were written using rhetorical techniques to convey religious teachings and defend church doctrine. These texts include homilies, pastoral letters, and other church documents.
 - d. Apologetic Rhetoric: Christian apologists used rhetoric to defend the Christian faith against external criticism and attacks. They developed strong arguments to defend and spread their beliefs.
 - e. Rhetoric in Art and Architecture: The influence of rhetoric is also seen in church art and architecture. Cathedrals and churches were often designed to inspire awe and faith, using persuasive visual and symbolic elements.
 - f. Use of Symbolism and Allegory: The Church often used symbolism and allegory in its teachings and writings. These techniques helped convey complex messages in a way that was easier for a wider audience to understand and remember.

2. Development of Universities: The emergence of universities in Europe, such as in Bologna, Paris, and Oxford, played an important role in the development of rhetorical studies as part of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic). In the 13th century, the hope of obtaining higher education was born, called the University (Asy'ari, 2018). Some of the best monastery schools were expanded and the quality of their lessons was improved so that universities were established, including the University of Salerno for medicine, in Bologna for law, and in Paris for divinity. The shortcomings of the Middle Ages were that all schools were based on orders from the church and the clergy; all lessons and education were only for the benefit of the church and the clergy; only organizing previous knowledge, which came from Greek and Roman experts, hampered the progress of science. Universities are a turning point in education to achieve progress. Science is a reality that must be understood and possessed by people who can be said to be professionals in their fields. The mindset in the Middle Ages in Europe had a complex impact on the development of education. On the one hand, the dominance of the church and the limited knowledge taught could hinder the progress of science. However, on the other hand, the emergence of universities opened up new opportunities for the development of science and professionalism. Universities became a place for the development of science and provided access to higher education in various fields. Thus, a more open mindset in universities helped advance education and contributed to the development of science as a whole

a. Ontological Considerations

- Communication Purpose: Rhetoric is often used to convey religious and moral teachings, so that ethics and truth are the main considerations in rhetorical practice.
- Identity Formation: Through rhetoric, individuals and communities try to form and maintain their identities, both religiously and socially.
- Logic and Argument: Rhetoric is not only about persuasion, but also about constructing logical and reasonable arguments, influenced by scholastic philosophy.

b. Rhetoric in the Islamic World

Different from the West, which has an ambivalent attitude, where on the one hand rhetoric is considered heretical in a dholalah manner, then plagiarized to preach. In the Eastern world, rhetoric that has been forbidden by Christianity, through an attitude that is free from prejudice, welcoming new ideas, and a high intellectual spirit, rhetoric is accepted accommodately to later become the forerunner for the growth of the science of balaghah, bayan and ma'ani. In this regard, the collection of speeches of the Prophet Muhammad is called, Madinat al-Balaghah (City of Balaghah). Likewise, Imam Ali, his collection of speeches is called Nahj al-Balaghah (The Way of Balaghah). In further developments, through a high spirit of intellectual exploration, rhetoric was studied by Muslim philosophers who discovered it when they were in dialectic with a number of Hellenistic heritages through the translation movement. The end of the introduction of Islamic society to rhetoric was when they conducted a productive study of Hellenistic philosophy. The figures in the epistemological school of thought include; Peter Ramus, Roger Bacon, George Campbell, and Richard Whately. The focus of the study of the Epistemological school of thought is the emphasis on the importance of rhetoric involving faculty psychology. This stressing finally delivers rhetoric as an art as well as a tool to arouse psychological motivation in the form of the emergence of understanding, memory, imagination, feelings and the will of the audience (Abimanyu, 1996).

c. Historical Context

- Greek Heritage: As in Europe, the Islamic world was also influenced by the Greek classics. Many Greek rhetorical texts were translated into Arabic and became an important part of education.
- Quran and Hadith: The Quran as the primary text of Islam played a major role in the practice of rhetoric. The study of Quranic tafsir (interpretation) and Hadith (sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) greatly enriched the rhetorical tradition.
- Centers of Learning: Cities such as Baghdad, Cordoba, and Cairo became centers of learning in the Islamic world, where various disciplines, including rhetoric, were developed.

d. Ontological Considerations

- Ethics and Religion: In the Islamic tradition, rhetoric was often used for the purpose of da'wah (spreading the teachings of Islam), so honesty, ethics, and justice were important aspects.
- Structure and Style: Arabic rhetoric was heavily influenced by the structure and style of the Quran, which is known for its beauty and refinement.

Social and Political Goals: Rhetoric is also used in social and political contexts, both for government interests and in the context of competition and conflict between groups (Rakhmat, 1999).

CONCLUSION

In the West in the Middle Ages, a number of preachers emerged who used rhetoric that they had once denounced as heretical in preaching Christian teachings, among these preachers were: Tertullian, Lactantius, Victorianus, Aurelius Augustine, Hironimus, Yohanes Chrysostom, Pope Urban 2, and St. Bernandus, as well as a number of other preachers. Rhetoric in its monologic form, in particular, plays a role in overseeing various tablig activities so that they can successfully achieve their goal of changing theoretical faith to practical faith. Theoretical faith is passive in nature, which is dominated by all kinds of illusions. Meanwhile, practical faith is an active faith, because faith is no longer an illusion but has manifested itself in the form of good deeds. However, this practical faith has its levels, namely, Naive, magical faith, and creative faith.

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