

**Announcing the 2019 "Tuesdays With Tallmon" (TwT)
summer seminar in rhetoric:**

**"Vivacity, Perspicuity, and the Movement of the Soul:
George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*."**

The Scottish Enlightenment was a "hotbed of genius" that gave rise to advances in letters, philosophy, and science. As the Scottish Enlightenment worked out the implications of Sir Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, intellectual societies blossomed in every quarter. The Philosophical Society of Aberdeen (The Wise Club,) was one such enclave. George Campbell, along with Thomas Reid, founded the group in (1758). They were keenly interested in responding to the works on skepticism of David Hume. In their view, Hume's position was subversive of faith, and The Wise Club aspired to answer his arguments, in a decorous spirit of intellectual inquiry, but upholding the Christian faith. Beyond answering Hume, The Wise Club's constitution focused the society's efforts on realizing the promise of Baconian Method. "Faculty psychology," in particular, had great currency in their day. Consider, for example, how Bacon's definition of rhetoric: "The application of reason to imagination for the better moving of the will," presupposes those elements that constitute the human soul. This ubiquitous perspective motivated Campbell's project, to elucidate an exhaustive philosophy of rhetoric, based on an up-to-date "scientific examination of the human soul." After having fleshed out his insights, in dialogue with his friends at the bi-weekly meetings of The Wise Club, Campbell was ready, in 1776, to publish his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Incidentally, a good friend of both Reid and Hume's, over in Glasgow, Adam Smith, published two important works in 1759 and 1776 respectively: *A Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *Wealth of Nations*.

Reid was impressed with Smith's acclaimed "Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres," from a decade prior. Now Smith requested that his unpublished works be burned upon his death. However, a set of student notes was discovered a century later,⁺ and these were eventually published and are, still available through Liberty Press. I have attempted to teach those lectures in my rhetoric courses, but, being student notes, they are so spotty and fragmented that, when it came time to choose a text for our summer seminar 2019, I turned rather to Campbell's more complete, elaborate, and eloquent *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Following is a sampling of chapter titles we will discuss from *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, that will launch Tuesday, July 9 and land August 13. (Please note: we will stream our face to face meeting on July 16 from the annual meeting of the Consortium for Classical Lutheran Education on the campus of Concordia University Chicago!)

- Bk I Chap. IV: The Relation Which Eloquence Bears to Logic and to Grammar
- Bk I Chap. VII: Man as endowed with: Understanding, Imagination, Memory, and Passions
- Bk II Chap. VI: Of Perspicuity
- Bk III Chap I: Of Vivacity as depending on the choice of words
 - Sect. I: Proper Terms
 - Sect. II: Rhetorical Tropes
 - Part I: Preliminary Observations Regarding Tropes
 - Part II: Tropes that are conducive to Vivacity
 - Part III: Tropes that are obstructive to Vivacity

We will utilize archive.org's, online version of Campbell's work, so no books need be purchased for our summer session! A series of articles here will preview each week's discussion topic . . .

* H/T U of Glasgow's Craig Smith, https://www.adamsmithworks.org/life_times/introduction-craig-smith-11-1 accessed 4 March 19. Recommended also: Arthur E. Walzer. *George Campbell: Rhetoric in the Age of Enlightenment*. Albany: State University of NY Press, 2003.

+ William Purcell. "A Reassessment of Adam Smith's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres" (Spring 1986) *Central States Speech Journal*, 45-54.

TwT2019 Week Two: Introduction

Our seminar begins with an introduction to the Scottish Enlightenment. We will be introduced to the key players and a brief history of the philosophical and scientific societies that grew in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and especially, "The Wise Club" of Aberdeen. Dr. Tallmon will lecture on influences of and contributions to Western Thought of the Scottish Enlightenment. A number of online resources will be consulted throughout the week and discussed online.

Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* will be positioned the history of these ideas. We will then examine the layout of the work, major themes, and get a feel for Campbell's modus operandi. George Campbell's unique and substantive work is a one of a kind contribution to rhetorical studies.

TwT2019 Week Three: Focus on Perspicuity & Vivacity

Once one understands the significance to Enlightenment rhetorical thought of "Faculty Psychology," the centrality of both perspicuity and vivacity makes sense. In his effort to conduct a "scientific" or methodical examination of how one expresses oneself with clarity, but also with profundity, where complex ideas are at play, it follows for Campbell that the ideas must be both *lively* and also treated with *perspicuity*. Campbell defines them in the following manner: Perspicuity is the opposite of nonsense; vivacity is "the lively idea" (as opposed to the "tired one"). Perspicuity is, therefore, for Campbell, a combination of plausibility, good sense, and verisimilitude, clearly communicated. The ratiocinative faculty requires that, to be grasped intelligibly, ideas have a ring of truth and that they "jibe" with good sense. Reason, in other words, entertains only so long the "counter-intuitive" before it rejects as nonsense whatever silliness is brought before it. When it comes to persuasion, however, appeals to reason are insufficient to move the hearer to action, and the end of persuasion *is* action.

In order to bring the ideas into "real contact" with the mind and emotions of the hearer, the ideas must be made "lively." That is to say, by masterful use of "tropes and metaphor and figures of speech" the orator makes his or her ideas come alive in the mind of the audience. Now, anyone who has studied rhetoric with yours truly will immediately recognize in the above observations a key component of rhetorical studies conceived from a Christian perspective. If rhetoric is speaking the truth to one's neighbor, to move the neighbor toward The Good, for his improvement, the vocational and ethical implications, indeed, the importance in terms of Christian Liberty, are all obvious. Serving the neighbor, expecting nothing in return, is the

essence of Christian living. Serving the neighbor by discussing Truth, perspicaciously and in a lively manner, is key to *moving* the neighbor. Anyone who's studied rhetoric with yours truly also realizes how much stock I put in the thought of Richard M. Weaver! To quote [one of my favorite Weaver essays](#),

Rhetoric moves the soul with a movement which cannot finally be justified logically. It can only be valued analogically with reference to some supreme image. Therefore when the rhetorician encounters some soul "sinking beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice" he seeks to re-animate it by holding up to its sight the order of presumptive goods. This order is necessarily a hierarchy leading up to the ultimate good. All of the terms in a rhetorical vocabulary are like links in a chain stretching up to some master link which transmits its influence down through the linkages ("*The Phaedrus and the Nature of Rhetoric*").

Over the next two weeks we will learn from Campbell some of the "nitty gritty" of how one skillfully, masterfully, intentionally affects this "movement of the soul." Preliminaries have done, we are now "at table." In the next two "courses" we will enjoy "meat and potatoes."

TwT2019 Week Four: *Philosophy of Rhetoric, Indeed!*

Book III is where Campbell makes his most significant contributions to the history of rhetorical thought. As I intimated in our last installment, this is the course in the feast where Campbell presents the entrees! It is a veritable "culinary school" of making one's ideas palatable to both reason and to imagination; to rendering them both true *and* beautiful! As a result, the following two sessions of our summer seminar (weeks 4 and 5) constitute an in-depth study of how, while perspicuity ministers to reason, rhetorical tropes engage the imagination. This is what makes ideas "lively" and, therefore, stimulates one to embrace them!

In Book III Campbell considers how proper terms differ from rhetorical tropes, then how particular tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.) operate upon "fancy" (imagination). Section II is particularly interesting insofar as Campbell teases out the difficulties of translating certain types of comparisons (that are what we call today, "culture-bound,") from one culture to another. A great illustration of Campbell's approach is where he discusses St. Paul's epistle to the *Ephesians*.

'I have coveted,' says Paul to the elders of Ephesus, 'no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.' Had he said 'my hands,' the sentence would have lost nothing, either in meaning or in perspicuity, but very much in vivacity.

Another particularly delightful example is Campbell's allusion to the "vein of satire" one perceives in *Gulliver's Travels*, and how ridiculous sounding would be that observation by simply substituting the single word "artery" for "vein"! With these and myriad other examples, Campbell explores how rhetorical tropes (figures of speech,) captivate the imagination which "moves the soul with a movement which cannot finally be justified logically," to return to the

Weaver quote with which our previous installment concluded. Notwithstanding the difficulty of giving an intelligible account of how language animates the soul, Campbell labors on . . . and so shall we!

Section II concludes with a striking claim, that rhetorical tropes are common to all cultures, "civilized and uncivilized," across the planet. Perhaps Campbell's turn of phrase is more elegant: "Tropes," he observes, far from being mere inventions, "result from the original and essential principles of the human mind." *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, indeed! Please join us for this interesting, insightful, and substantive exploration of the power of language.

TwT2019 Weeks Five & Six: The End Game

This introduction to George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* concludes with an in-depth examination of pages 321-38 of our archived text. (Just a note, for the sake of intellectual community, if I may be permitted: Since we have enjoyed, for several weeks now, the free use of the material archived here, [precluding the need to purchase a book for this course] it seems only proper that a small donation [they suggest \$5] be offered in support of the work of [The Internet Archive](#). Thank you.)

At any rate, the richness of this section of Campbell's great work will be savored this live chat session (August 6) and throughout the week in our discussion forum. There is really nothing to add, in terms of introducing the prospective student to details about those pages. This week's class elaborates on and "teases out" material whose foundations were explored in previous weeks.

The summer seminar concludes (August 13) with a treat: Those students who are so inclined will "take the helm" and lead us on excursions of their choosing, after having consulted with the captain over the past week or two. We will hear reports from those who've found a destination "off the beaten path," that piqued their interest along our weeks' long journey through *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Dr. Tallmon enjoys concluding brief seminars of this nature with a "Students' Choice" session because of the treasures inevitably unearthed by following heretofore unexplored veins! Fresh sets of eyes always glean fresh insights, or at least, insights enlivened by the fact that they are gleaned for the first time, and combined with observations and ideas unique to the