

# **TOWARD AN AFROCENTRIC METHODOLOGY FOR THE CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF RHETORIC**

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**“One who begins with certainties will end with doubts, but if one will be content to begin with doubts, one will always end with certainties.”**

*– Sir Francis Bacon*

The struggle to advance an African-centered paradigm for studying rhetoric is challenging, for it requires a reconceptualization of all previously learned approaches. The rhetorical scholar must be familiar with alternative genres, their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, he or she must adopt the task of engineering a culturally-sensitive approach, unlike any approach already established. Though it is challenging, it is also necessary to elevate such a model to the level of intellectual esteem held by all other critical methods, which often fail in their ability to critically assess discourse by, for, and about African Americans.

To critique rhetorical acts of African Americans, one must know something of their culture and their artifacts. One must know what is and is not appropriate. The western-centered approaches currently applied to all rhetorical acts fail, in that they do not recognize the importance of culture, thus preventing an idiographic analysis. Four eurocentric paradigms widely used for studying rhetoric are: The traditional, dramatistic, fantasy theme and narrative approaches.

### EUROCENTRIC PARADIGMS

The traditional approach is often associated with the works of Aristotle, and is often labeled the neo-Aristotelian paradigm (Campbell, 1982). Rhetoric begins with a thought and progresses toward a classical art form. In classical rhetoric, the five canons are used – invention, arrangement, style, delivery, and memory. Rhetorical activity is said to be an ethical response to an exigence, or socio-cultural need. The five canons are the foundation of rhetorical analysis and practice among traditionalists (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). The underlying assumption of traditional analysis is that rhetoric seeks to influence, manipulate, and/or persuade. In order to do so, it applies a strategic map of reasoned discourse. The inartistic proofs, as developed by Aristotle, are employed as tools of persuasion – ethos, logos, and pathos. Furthermore, Bitzer's (1968) “rhetorical situation” is endorsed as a concept explaining audience involvement. The rhetorical act is said to constrain the message, depending upon the occasion. Rhetorical situation always involves people, objects, and events placed so prominently in one's environment that they impact the message. The entire message is centered around the Aristotelian statement, “rhetoric is using, in every given case, all available means of persuasion.” The argumentative tone of the rhetorical act is the centerpiece of rhetorical analysis for the traditionalist (Black, 1965).

The dramatistic approach conforms to a philosophical and metaphysical view of reality that suggests that life experiences can be understood by using the social drama analog. Rhetoric is seen as symbolic, semiotic, and societally influenced. Symbols organize experience and structure reality (Burke, 1965). The perpetuation and maintenance of these symbols imply “conflict in social order” (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). Five components, known as the pentad, exist in dramatistic analysis: Act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. The act explains what took place. The scene is the background for the act. The agent is the individual performing the act. The agency is how the act was done. Finally, the purpose reflects the reason or motive behind the act being done.

This paradigm has Marxist undertones, in that it recognizes the need to consider social order. It indicates that the foundation of all rhetoric is to achieve unity among the audience, consequently, the rhetor must come to identify with her audience. The Burkeian explanation of “identification” is given credence, since it complies with the notion of ethos (credibility). By identifying with the audience and its several needs, the speaker enhances her own credibility, and the purpose/motive is more likely to be accomplished.

The third critical approach to be considered is Fantasy Theme Analysis. This approach to studying rhetoric is similar to dramatism in that it views life as social drama. The analog is a dream or fantasy. Of course, in such as analog, the component parts must be understood. It includes fantasy, fantasy theme, fantasy type, rhetorical vision, and rhetorical community. The fantasy is the creative interpretation of a situation. Fantasy themes are those which summarize the dramatizing message. The Fantasy type (stock scenario) is the dramatic reenactment of the situation. The rhetorical vision is that shared concern for change within the rhetorical community of self-invested believers (Andrews, 1983).

The unit of analysis is the group, organization, or mass audience. The approach was designed from a small group perspective, and therefore is most appropriate within groups. Yet, Ernest Bormann, the creator of this critique, extrapolated Fantasy Theme Analysis to include large audiences. Rhetoric is viewed as a referent to some internal, psychological locus. This locus is what guides and governs the rhetorical act, and the promotion of some ideal behavior (Campbell, 1972).

The final approach to be considered is the Narrative approach. The analog is a story or narrative, which seeks to reveal questions of fact, relevancy, consequence, consistency, and transcendency. This is done by analyzing the plot, characters, and setting. There is a clear parallel with dramatism and fantasy theme analysis. They all provide an analog for studying the nature of discourse. The audience, rhetor, rhetorical act, and situation are always considered.

In the narrative analysis, heroes and villains are important figures. Every story has a plot with characters who promote good and oppose evil. The moral of the story uncovers real values. The values should correspond with the message, which is the rhetor's attempt to coopt the audience to change. The narrative approach also asks whether the values reflected transcend beyond the situation to suggest some "ideal human behavior" (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991).

This approach is traditional in that it promotes an aesthetic and ethical standard. It relies upon the works of Plato, Aristotle, and other early Greek agents of change.

The traditional, dramatism, fantasy theme, and narrative analyses view reality from the same vista, a western-centered ideology. The issue of culture appears to have been avoided or overlooked, thus a new paradigm must emerge to address this most pertinent concern. Afrocentricity is that approach. Yet, it must be understood that an afrocentric analysis cannot speak for all cultures. It is culture-specific, and does not seek to be applied across all types of rhetoric.

## THE CONCEPT OF AFROCENTRICITY

Afrocentricity combines "elements of philosophy, science, history, and mythology" to explain the human condition (Asante, 1988). This combination is founded upon principles of afrology, a genuine acceptance of the African past, and the endorsement of a contextual analysis. Afrology is the African-centered study of concepts, issues, and behaviors. As a method, it is the "crystallization of the notions and methods of black oriented social scientists and humanists." Molefi Asante (1988) posits in *Afrocentricity* that an afrologist has three qualities: (1) competence, (2) clarity of perspective, and (3) understanding of the object.

Competence is comprised of relevant skills and abilities utilized to critically assess a given subject matter. Clarity of perspective is the focused engagement in afrocentric analysis. It is maintaining an analytic interpretation, while considering all contingent factors and political ramifications of behaviors and actions. Understanding the African perspective lends itself to a contextual analysis. The subject and its environmental influences are important, since they implicitly indicate phenomena occurring in and around the subject (Asante, 1988).

The European tradition is meant to create, celebrate, sustain, develop, and introduce the totality of the European's existence to the world. The Afrocentric tradition is meant to do the same thing for African descendants. Clarity of perspective requires an understanding of the rhetor's tradition. Afrocentricity intends to expand the repertoire of human perspectives on knowledge (Asante, 1990). A scientific procedure for deciphering rhetoric and its familial parts will follow. This analysis is grounded in a philosophy of struggle and resistance, the condition that undergirds the African throughout the Diaspora. It seeks to reveal the dialectic present in every political instance and endorses the idea that everything is political. Furthermore, it is the contention of this paper that all afrocentric discourse implicitly and/or explicitly addresses the issue of liberation.

Understanding of the object refers to the ability of the rhetor to communicate with the audience. The object or purpose of the discourse is not simply to persuade. This diverges from (popular) notions of audience analysis and identification. Audience Analysis is often comprised of recognizing factors such as age, gender, occupation, religious orientation, etc., which assist the speaker in tailoring the message. Identification, Burke (1969) posits, is when: "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image,

attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his." In this case, rhetoric is seen as a persuasive tool used to adapt discourse in order to accomplish the rhetor's desired ends. This is known as *logos*.

Communing with the audience involves an extension of *logos*. When a rhetor says, "Let's eliminate one more environmental problem and recycle," the word (*logos*) has been spoken. However, this has not been transformed into meaning for the individual until the message is received and processed within his/her system of meanings. This is the point of communion. According to African philosophy, the spiritual, intellectual, and physical embodiment of one's worldview is only captured via *nommo* (*nommo* is described in depth, below). To have communed with the audience means that the rhetor has fundamentally achieved harmony with the spiritual, intellectual, and physical essence of the audience.

It is precisely this interconnectedness, this observance of circularity, harmony, and dialectic that was taught to Plato by Africans such as Socrates (Khamit-Kush, 1983). It is characteristic of the afrocentric epistemology to explore, uncover, and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data (Asante, 1990). No afrocentric methodology can afford to ignore this function of afrocentric discourse.

### CONSIDERATIONS OF AN AFROCENTRIC METHODOLOGY

Rhetorical condition, Rhetorical structure, Rhetorical function, and Ethical standard are the four major aspects of an afrocentric method.

Any speech or speech act can be analyzed by critically assessing whether the rhetor has taken into account the aforementioned consideration. Furthermore, the message and the audience can be critiqued in order to gather evidence for an afrocentric presence. The four major considerations – rhetorical condition, rhetorical structure, rhetorical function, and ethical standard should be the centerpiece when using an afrocentric method.

Rhetorical condition relates to the political constraints placed on a certain situation. It is the regard for a hierarchal or structural power source which impacts a rhetorical situation. To study rhetorical condition is to analyze the subtle "machinations" of power as they lie latent in situational constraints. It is not the study of discourse as discourse, but rather a meta-structural item. Asante explains that the traditional ideas of arrangement and style come naturally, but rhetorical condition takes into account the inherent power relationships. The choosing of a form, such as deliberative, forensic, or epideictic always precipitates a commitment to a certain outcome, because the rhetorical condition is taken into account at the same time the form is (Asante, 1988).

The rhetorical structure is a little different. It attempts to decipher the underlying meanings in words. Structure intimately ties in with the internal structure of discourse. This point is made in Asante's *Afrocentricity* when he asks who takes possession of the word and what use is made of this discourse. A rhetoric of structure accomplishes its end regardless of altering stylistic elements. This is why Malcolm X was able to give two speeches on the same subject to two separate audiences, and maintain the same position. This transferability is present in all effective discourse. It then allows for a wider audience acceptance, and promotion of a unidirectional perspective.

Rhetorical function is the third element which poses to the critic the challenge of indicating motive, intention, and generalizability of the message. It asks what the purpose of the discourse is. From an Afrocentric stance, all rhetoric persuades one to act. A change of attitude is not enough. The rhetor is most successful when action is taken to rectify imbalance, conflict, or indecision. Asante suggests that afrocentric theory explains how one can dis-identify from controlling structures.

Ethical standard is the methodological consideration. This is the axiological component of the analysis. Every piece of afrocentric discourse has a vested interest in *ma'at*. An aesthetic and ethical standard is uplifted as the venue for presenting a message. This axiological tenet is at the core of the afrocentric enterprise, since it places emphasis on the political, economic, and social good for a given community. As many African Americans say, "Beauty is as beauty does", therefore she is beautiful for what she does is good, not because her physicality conforms to some agreed upon notion of pulchritude.

Styling, rhythm, lyrical code, *nommo*, improvisation, and coherence are additional components of rhetorical structure.

Styling is the manipulation of language or mannerisms to influence the effect of the message.

Rhythm involves pauses, intonations, pitch, rate, and speed. The African concept of polyrhythms is employed. This is the varied speeds, rates, and pitches, which, when used charismatically, will induce the audience to respond enthusiastically and agreeably.

Lyrical code is the inventiveness and creativity expressed through language. The metaphorical reinterpretation of words and phrases is lyrical code use. The use of epanaphora and climax to create a desired

effect among a church congregation is lyrical code. The call-and-response dialectic is used, and also the poetic and narrative style. Lyrical code, most importantly, is a cultural creation, which craftily engages a selected set of values for the enhancement of discourse.

Nommo is another element under the rubric of structure. This concept is defined as the generative power of the word. It is the idea that a word brings power with it, rather than the rhetor granting it power. This is particularly so with a radical leader, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. He knew that a certain generation and transformation of sounds would elicit certain responses. So he selectively chose a style that would appeal to his audience. It was the word that infused the audience, because of its inherent power. His vibrating "ministerial" voice motivates the audience, as a minister does his/her congregation.

Improvisation is a unique aspect of a culture's speech. African American speakers improvise to make a message more meaningful. Improvisation is the impromptu delivery of a speech. It is highly effective when an audience's rhetorical condition suggests a need for it. It is not meant to be a boastful display of rhetorical prowess, but rather a competent rhetorician's attempt to satiate the needs of a struggling group. Playing the dozens is an excellent example of this.

The final aspect is coherence. This refers to the fluency with which a message is constructed. A coherent message is intended to be one which considers the limitations and capabilities of an audience, and seeks to eliminate indecision. It offers an organized form for understanding a set of phenomena.

These structural aspects are the internal guides of discourse. The speaker employs them to heighten the message, and achieve intended outcomes.

## AFROCENTRIC METHODOLOGY

"I am an invisible man . . . simply because people refuse to see me."

– Ralph Ellison (**Invisible Man**)

" . . . The Black man only has one destiny – whiteness"

– Frantz Fanon (**Black Skin White Masks**)

When considering the issue of an afrocentric critical methodology one cannot overlook the sociocultural and political conditions from which it emanates. According to Molefi Asante (1987), the "father of afrocentricity", the purpose of providing an afrocentric paradigm is "to dis-identify with controlling structures." Frantz Fanon and Ralph Ellison provide profound statements suggesting a need for liberation. However, scholars (Cummings & Daniel, 1992) have noted that African American rhetoric has been reactionary, which limits its possibilities for any organized collective thought (Ani, 1994). Afrocentricity is the crystalizing of African scientific notions, culture, history, and conventions, whose goal is to arrive at a collective community consciousness (Atwater, 1992; Asante, 1987; 1988; 1990; 1994). It does not seek to devalue eurocentricity within its own tradition. One of Asante's major criticisms, as expressed in the **Afrocentric Idea**, is the European hegemonic studies of Africans. He says that European methods and approaches are limited, since they parade as that which is, with little to no consideration of the constraints which determine condition and thought (Asante, 1987).

Asante and other afrocentrists have made a case for providing a critical method for African American rhetoric. In this paper, I provide a synthesis of the concepts initiated by Asante in order to lay a framework for analyzing black rhetoric. The key concepts include the seven senses, oral retentions, an afrocentric communication model, and its application as a critical method for discussing discourse produced by African descendants. Furthermore, I will discuss *magara* and *nommo* as alternatives to consubstantiality (Burke, 1965).

### The Seven Senses

First, it is important to note that I have re-interpreted the discussion of seven senses so that it more directly accents rhetoric as the mode of discourse. Originally, Kariamu Welsh-Asante provided an explanation of these terms in relationship to African art, music, and dance in **African Culture: Rhythms of Unity**. Nevertheless, the senses are the same: polyrhythm, polycentrism, dimensionality, curvilinearity, repetition, epic memory and wholism. Polyrhythm is defined as the syncopated energy that accompanies any presentation. It is the combination of song, dance, and drum. This "sense" indicates that Black rhetoric has percussion, syncopation, and energy as concomitant parts (Asante & Welsh-Asante, 1993). Polycentrism suggests that life is a process of interrelated spirals, and there is a connectedness between person, nature, and environment, as is typical in African communities (Mbiti, 1970). Dimensionality is the multiple realities phenomenon. It is an underlying presumption of African reality that hegemony is inappropriate, and therefore, one must release herself from the

strains of nomothetic necessity. Curvilinearity is the notion that the rhetorical approach of Black rhetors must be vervistic (Nobles, 1986), and his or her rhetoric must be afrocircular, as opposed to eurolinear in its reasoning, style, and delivery. Repetition is synonymous with epanaphora, which is the idea that enthusiastic repetition leads to a climactic response by the audience. Epic memory is the "sense" which relates to "historic memory" (Asante & Welsh-Asante, 1993). It is the idea that the oral tradition must be preserved through oral discourse, whether it is through folklore, poetry, drama, orature, or any other oral/aural modality (Thoms, 1846; Puckett, 1926; Woodson, 1933; Levine, 1977). Wholism is the final sense, which offers a statement regarding connectedness, togetherness, and the fact that there is a collective system with interdependent parts. This idea best rationalizes the separation of rhetorical styles and strategies as evidenced in assimilationist, revolutionary, and separatist rhetorics (Golden & Rieke, 1971, see chapter 1). There are many parts, with the same end, but its equifinal property allows rhetoricians the opportunity to travel different paths to the goal. However, as Asante (1987) would suggest, the collective consciousness is most important. Furthermore, an open system, whose health is sustained through its energy and multilexicality, is teleological (purposeful).

### Oral Retentions (Rhetoric of African Descendants)

African American rhetoric is the manifestation of culture, which seeks to celebrate, sustain, develop, and introduce itself to history and humanity. Generally speaking, rhetoric in the African American community is distinctly African, according to **Africanisms** (ed. by Holloway, 1990). Puckett (1926) was the first person to research carryovers from Africa into the new world (America). Carter G. Woodson (1936), an African American historian, further traced oral discourse to the notions of generosity, lyricality, and song in Africa. Turner (1949) offered his version of the genealogy of Black language being traced from Africa to America, and the thriving use of the Gullah dialect, as an authentic African linguistic code variation. Mintz & Price (1974) further evidenced African American oral discourse being linked to Africa by talking about customs, such as storytelling, proverbs, myths, and verbal interplay. The griot was described as being the community historian, or sage blessed with ancestral memory. Levine (1977) indicated a clear connection between African American conventions and those of the "motherland," by explicating consciousness as it relates to a social construction of reality. Creel (1988) adds additional credence to the authentic linkage by discussing Gullah Dialect present in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, almost identically spoken as it was in the eighteenth century.

One of the major debates regarding distinctiveness of African culture in American Blacks is that of E. Franklin Frazier (1965), who wrote **The Negro in America** and Melville Herskovits (1941), who wrote **The Myth of the Negro Past**. Frazier argued that when slaves were brought to America, the linguistic continuities were limited and other African customs were eliminated as well. Frazier did not totally deny the presence of African conventions, but he suggested that the damage was so great that a reconstructed social reality was necessary, thus came Black English. This was a pidgin, which was creolized only after generations of speaking the pidgin. Amuzie Chimezie (1963), a historian at the University of Cincinnati categorized those theories which suggested a distinct linkage to Africa as "Affirmation theories" and the others are "Negative theories." These individuals believe that from slavery emanated a redeveloped, redesigned culture which exists today through the African American community. Melville Herskovits, on the other hand, was a firm believer in the linkage to Africa. He suggested that there are too many evidences which parallel those of Africa to suggest distinction (Holloway, 1990). Some of these evidences are articulated by Molefi Asante. Africans are religious, spiritually-motivated, communalistic people grounded in oral tradition. They share a highly codified system of communication and understanding, kept sacred, as is suggested by the hieroglyphics, and its intricate meanings (i.e. lyrical code, discussed below).

For example, Molefi Asante (1990) contends that "there are observable relationships in the substantive social fabric of language behaviors – proverbs, riddles, dozens, call-in-response" (p. 21). He further asserts that these structural elements form Black English, which emanated from coastal West African languages or the Niger-Congo language family. One popular linguistic system in this family is Bantu. The zero copula is another example. "He be acting crazy" is a sentence which appears in standard American English to exhibit subject-verb disagreement, or an improper conjugation or the verb "to be." But, in fact, this sentence exemplifies proper usage of the Niger-Congo present tense. These are simply two examples of linguistic continuities observable in African American culture.

## AN AFROCENTRIC MODEL

An afrocentric model of communication must act as the foundation for any critique of African American discourse. It is through these elements that one properly analyzes rhetoric from the perspective of a community of African descendants. It assumes that there is a circularity of experience that is transactional in process. Also, the elements described are focal points of critique, not categorized schemata for studying step-by-step comparisons, such as Burke's cluster or the pentad. However, the similarities are evident. The elements are as follows: rhythm, soundin', stylin', improvisation, storytelling, lyrical code, image making, and call and response.

Imagine these eight elements placed in a circular pinwheel figure, with nommo at the center. That is the Afrocentric model, as initiated by Tyrome Smith (a graduate student at Howard University), which is the operating instrument for the afrocentric rhetorical methodology. Rhythm is similar to polyrhythm in that it suggests that the energy of the rhetor must be one with the energy of the audience. However, the mediating force is nommo, which is the generative, life-sustaining force of the word. This is referred to as Ase' in the Yoruban communities, and Marimba Ani (1994) calls it utamaroho in her book, *Yurugu*. Nommo is like water, it is the fluid that facilitates life, and permeates boundaries. The rhythm must coincide with the mystical and magical power of the word, so that the speaker, the word, and the audience are all on one accord. This is done through the excitement of two forces – nommo and magara. Soundin' is the idea of wolfing or signifying within the African American tradition (Smitherman, 1994; Kochman, 1981). It is the insinuation, sometimes sarcastic, but implied and often explicit expression of ideas. Stylin' is the notion that a speaker has combined rhythm, excitement, and enthusiasm which propel a message and the audience. It is usually accomplished through the vocal variety, resonance, percussion, epanaphora, volume, rate, pitch, and tone. It is the stylized movement and energy of a Black minister that maintains a certain oratorical distinctiveness. Improvisation is a stylistic device which is a verbal interplay, and strategic catharsis often resulting from the hostility and frustration of a white-dominated society. It is spontaneity. One example is playing the dozens, where there is harmony found through conflict. Thurmon Garner (1983) talks about playing the dozens. Thomas Kochman (1981) and Geneva Smitherman (1963) also discuss this concept. Garner basically suggests in Kenneth Burkeian terms, that playing the dozens is "equipment for living" (Burke, 1965). It allows one to transcend hostilities of life and release energy through verbal interplay, strategy, and improvisation. It is this nuance that is present in the African concept of ma'at. By harmonizing the opposites, good and bad, conflict issues with a spirit of rectification and release. Ma'at is the concept of harmony, truth, justice, and equality served through catharsis Asante (1988). Storytelling is experienced through folktales or folklore as Thoms coined it in 1846. It is seen in the African community as a preservation of oral tradition, and is often used by a rhetor to arouse epic memory, and exercise the embodiment of magara. Most importantly though, interaction between speaker and audience is not only permissible, but encouraged.

Any evaluation of African American discourse requires critical consideration of the aforementioned elements. Storytelling, as evidenced by folktales mentioned earlier, also has the responsibility of creating a moral fabric, which will inspire values. The myth of stagolee and the myth of shine are two examples. Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, and other trickster tale characters are evident features of this in early folklore (Cummings & Daniel, 1992). According to Melbourne Cummings and Jack Daniels (1992), oral discourse can be linked to Africa, particularly through the use of nommo, present in poetry, literature and folktales. They suggest that folktales are the tradition of sharing messages with morals and lessons. One area of the literature was that of Brer Rabbit, who appears to be a small, harmless, and easily intimidated animal. However, in the African tradition of "Trickster Tales," Brer Rabbit is a conniving, menacing, and fun-loving animal who is smart enough to outsmart larger animals such as Brer Fox. The terrapin is another example of a small species, who is afforded strength, might, and fortitude. It is this lesson that indicates that it is not how big you are, but how bright you are. These stories set the precedent for recent cartoon characters like Tom and Jerry, Speedy Gonzalez, Peppy Le Pew, and Droopy. These little animals exemplified great courage. It gave an overall message that in the face of adversity, the small can win.

Lyrical Code is the preservation of the word through a highly codified system of lexicality. It is the very dynamic lyrical quality which provides youth to the community usage of standard and Black English. It is often used by speakers to appear communalistic, commonplace, and not so convoluted in diction. Image making is the element which considers legends, myths, and heroes in a given culture. Without these figures, self-worth and self-esteem are effected. Call and response is the final element which offers a culmination of all of these elements into an interactive discourse atypical of European communities. It is the idea that one should affirm by clapping; saying "amen", or responding in some way. If a preacher says, "Y'all don't hear me!", then he or she is letting you know that you should respond to his or her call. Oral tradition in the church is another carryover. The minister's call and response dialogue with the audience enhances enthusiasm and provides nourishment to the soul (See Niles, chapter 8). Nommo is used here to provide the magical, mystical power of the word to an

audience, who through spiritual connectedness (i.e. magara) with ancestors and the supreme being create meaning for sustaining life (Jahn, 1963). The rhythm, rate, tone, glossalalia, epanaphora, and other rhetorical phenomena move the audience or congregation through a syncopated energy of great percussion and resonance. If the audience is caused to emote, then, the message is that much more powerful.

### MAGARA & NOMMO – THE ALTERNATIVE

Magara is described by Kanheinz Jahn in his book *Muntu*, which means humanity. Magara is the spiritual, life-giving force of the word, through ancestral mediation. It is the notion directly related to the idea of "Strengthening or weakening another" (Jahn, 1961). So, there is a circularity that occurs in African American discourse peculiar in its own right. An African by the name of Socrates (Kush, 1983) suggested a rudimentary framework for circuitous thinking. The method hinted at a thesis-synthesis-antithesis circle. This concept says that views, values, beliefs, systems of thought experience paradigm shifts such as those suggested by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Resolution*. I may have an idea today, but that if provided enough convincing evidence I may change my views. My views are my thesis. African American rhetoric competently includes the audience in such a way, that it inspires change. Rather than simply providing the audience with information, the African American rhetor seeks to commune with the audience, as one would when using call and response. While the goal is not to change ideologies, and entire belief systems, the rhetor should offer convincing enough evidence that it seems plausible to reconsider. If my views do not change, I have actually added an additional dimension to strengthen my current condition or life force. It is when my thesis is challenged that I reconsider and synthesize my views with that of another. Then, again my view is challenged due to the existence of multiple realities, and it becomes an anti-thesis or antithesis, which ultimately reestablishes itself in the form of another thesis. Magara is the spiritual force that affords the speaker the energy to move his or her audience from one rooted standpoint to another, without revocation of stance. This requires a reconceptualization of the word. The word, in the eurocentric tradition is often externalized. This is similar to a basic sentence with a subject, verb, and object. In the eurocentric enterprise, the subject is the speaker, the verb is the message, and the object is the audience. The word is held constant, so that it can be controlled. As Richard Wright so cleverly states in an article entitled *Exploration Into the Power of Words* (1994), the rhetor, once the word is held constant, has the power to define, and by defining, grasps, manages, controls, and ultimately is able to predict behavior. The assumption is that language, culture, thought, and behavior are systematically intertwined, so that by holding the word (language) constant, one can deterministically, through nomological-deductive processes, predict. The African rhetorician, in the afrocentric tradition seeks to internalize meaning through the word, which requires meeting the audience on a deeper, more spiritual level. The word becomes subject, the speaker is the verb (or carrier of the message) and the audience is object. It is through this spiritual force, the combination of body and nommo, that the word lives through the people. This causes the audience to emote through glossalalia, call and response, or syncopation of energy with the substance of nommo. The Burkeian concept of consubstantiality is synchronic and therefore is only interested in immediate identification, but not life-sustaining vivacity. It can be said to be ephemeral, but the goal of the rhetor is not to provide a lasting persuasion, but rather one which will alter attitudes. However, the true essence of "substance" in the African tradition is a concentration of the physical (buzima), mental (nommo), and spiritual (magara) forces upon an audience induced by a set of principles set forth by a given speaker (Jahn, 1963).

By analyzing text and context, the critic works back and forth examining the texture of these elements presented. It is limited in its approach in that all Black rhetors do not share the entirety of these qualities; and it could be argued that this is the consequence of assimilationist worldviews. In other words, individuals who value assimilation as a survival technique, may sacrifice a speaking style that is authentically African. Even then, one may assert that many non-white citizens of the United States may not be intrinsically aware of how much socialization into the mainstream may have affected their cognitive and rhetorical styles. Of course, others might argue that this model is of limited use because it appears to only apply to afrocentrists. The position held by the author of this paper rejects these criticisms. I agree with Melville Herskovits (Holloway, 1990) in that African descendants have retained multiple aspects of their africanity, regardless of their physical removal from the continent of Africa, and their socialization into the American mainstream. And one of those aspects is their rhetorical style. Future studies should refine this model in order to apply it more readily to discourse produced by African descendants, and one way that this may be done is by analyzing the use of magara and nommo as rhetorical devices within this discourse.

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