

THE RHETORICAL FUNCTIONING OF ONE'S WORLD PARADIGM

Sherlock Holmes' supreme aim & joy was the struggle toward & arrival at (1.34 of the 2v Bantam "Complete..." I'm now wading through) "a theory which explains all the facts," unites all the fragments, & so binds up the broken skein of life that the law can re-order society by appropriately punishing the criminal(s). One fascination of detective fiction is that, on a ministage, it neatly fulfils the inherent human dream of a world-picture "which explains all the facts" in a self-evidencing, irrefutable manner. In believing the biblical world-paradigm, I am an orthodox Christian: I am modern in denying the very possibility that any worldview could, without logical challenge, present its claims as self-evident and, without remainder, answer all ultimate & prudential questions. My modernity makes me modest: my Christianity makes me joyfully affirmative. And the two together set me against both dogmatic Christians & agnostic-cynical moderns.... This thinksheet is about leaders' un/conscious appeals to ultimacy & prudentiality in staking their claims & rallying their troops & promoting their cause(s).

Yesterday (8June87) in Poland, the Pope seems to have been (I don't have the full texts) kenotic about his own ultimate sanction, God's nature & will. As I mentioned in the case of Mortimer Adler (my #2157.1), he moved onto nontheistic ground in confronting Poland's atheist leader: the rights of man "are inalienable, because they are rooted in the humanity of each person." Potent rhetoric even though (as circular ad hominem) logical nonsense. For him, God is the why behind this why: (1) Why are human rights inalienable? Because they're rooted in human nature. (2) Why are a person's rights to be respected? Because it's the will of God the Creator, whose human creature cannot flourish without these rights. (Again: Not having the full text, I don't know whether the Pope voiced, as is his custom, this second why, which is logically first.)....The Pope, again as is his custom, then rammed home his affirmation with a prudential-consequential sanction: "Every violation (of rights) and each lack of respect of man constitutes a threat to peace." So "in the name of this dignity," humans are "not to be treated as objects" by the state. (Note the convergence of the two modes of sanctioning as he applies his message.)....The communist leader's response to the Pope appealed to the communist ultimate sanction, viz, the historical inevitability of socialism: "The lines of renewal, reform, and agreement are irreversible."....Each of these ultimate sanctions is an irresistible force meeting, in the other, an immovable object. Armchair reconciliations of the two are easy, but it's an ineluctable fact that the politicization of the one leads toward anarchy (the individual's rights claiming ultimacy), possibly stopping short at democracy; & the politicization of the other leads toward tyranny (the socialist state, as bearer of the meaning and energy of "history," being the locus of ultimacy over against the individual). EXAMPLES: The U.S. Constitution & the Bill of Rights are logically synergistic; but the Sandinista Constitution, with its marxian philosophy of history, is uneasy even with those human rights it states. Could a secular state craft a constitution ungrounded in ultimacy yet weighty with profundity & solemnity? Yes. How? By frankly stating the various ultimates distributed among the populace: "Some of us....Others of us....All of us are committed to religious liberty, the freedom to name & live by one's ultimate commitment." As far as I know, no nation has drafted such a constitution, though ours has only one ref. to ultimacy, & that pro forma: "in the Year of our Lord"--but the Declaration of Independence, which is theistic, functioned & continues to function as the preamble, the WHAT of which the Constitution is the WHY.