

“WE GET TO CARRY EACH OTHER:”  
AN ANALYSIS OF AGENCY WITHIN  
THE POLITICAL RHETORIC OF U2’S BONO

by

REBECCA A. KUEHL

(Under the Direction of Vanessa B. Beasley)

ABSTRACT

This project explores the connections between rhetoric, agency, and celebrity politics through analyzing the political rhetoric of U2’s lead singer Bono. Bono’s authority in global politics is a significant reason to analyze his relationship with agency, especially in a world increasingly influenced by a connection between entertainment and politics. Although not a traditional politician, Bono is granted political agency and rhetorical opportunity by world politicians. This thesis examines Bono’s rhetoric to understand how he constructs agency appeals for his audiences of American citizens and policymakers through two case studies: Bono’s 2006 keynote address at the National Prayer Breakfast and U2’s DVD of their Vertigo Tour concerts. The analysis has implications for thinking about rhetoric as a primer for agency. Rhetoric prepares an audience to engage in social change in both intellectual and experiential ways—in considering American activism in light of a global community and through formal expectations of political involvement.

INDEX WORDS: Agency; Form; Celebrity Politics; Bono; National Prayer Breakfast; Vertigo Tour

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## DEDICATION

*For Mom, Dad, Sarah, and Christopher:*

*May each one of you continue to be an inspiration to the world,*

*For in different ways, you have all always been mine.*

*And also to Bono and others like him:*

*Never give up in your quest to make this world a better place.*

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## CHAPTER ONE

“LIKE SMILING, CRYING AND CELEBRITY:”

### AN INTRODUCTION TO BONO’S POLITICAL RHETORIC, CELEBRITY POLITICS AND AGENCY

*The thing about this good citizen of the world is he's used his position to get things done. You're an amazing guy, Bono. God bless you.*

President George W. Bush, 2006 National Prayer Breakfast<sup>1</sup>

*I commend the organizers of this concert [Live 8], the artists who are performing, and the activists who labor every day to advance the cause of the poorest people on the face of the Earth...In particular, Bono and Bob Geldof are leading the way by inspiring our youth and furthering public awareness.*

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, July 1, 2005 press release<sup>2</sup>

Republicans and Democrats certainly do not agree on much in the current U.S. political landscape, but politicians from both parties believe Bono is doing some good, especially with his work on AIDS and global development policy in Africa. Party leaders such as Bush and Pelosi do not give praise to just anyone; Bono’s advocacy has had a major influence in Africa. But what does it mean when a rock star earns praise from major U.S. politicians with opposing ideologies? Some might say Bono’s politics indicate that democracy is disappearing because rock stars are taking over the political realm. Yet others might say that democracy is stronger when citizens—even celebrities such as Bono—participate. How do we make sense of a celebrity such as Bono doing political work in the world? In short, what are we to make of Bono’s agency, and how does he construct appeals to agency for his audiences to take action?

This project examines Bono's political advocacy to understand how agency works within his rhetoric. If rock stars such as Bono function as politicians within the global political realm, what has happened to traditional notions of political agency, in which the entertainment realm seems necessarily separate from the political? When Bono first began his crusade for African debt and poverty relief in the 1980s, he was a singer in an unknown Irish rock band called U2. After advocating this cause for over 20 years, however, Bono is being taken seriously by politicians and world leaders. Is his political power the result of his celebrity status and the agency he derives from it? Bono was named one of *Time* magazine's People of the Year for 2005, made the short list for World Bank President in March 2005, and was also a short list candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 and 2006.<sup>3</sup>

Bono's authority in global politics is a significant reason to analyze his relationship with agency, especially in a world that is increasingly influenced by the connection between entertainment and politics. Bono is not a politician, yet he is granted political agency and rhetorical opportunity by some of the most influential politicians. Bono is not just a celebrity, either; he has become an expert in debt relief and poverty through studying with leading world economists and debt relief experts, including University of Cambridge fellow Noreena Hertz and Columbia economics professor Jeffrey Sachs.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond these accolades, Bono's multi-faceted approach to political change has important implications and significance regarding global politics. Debt relief was not a high priority for G8 world leaders before Bono's 2004 address to the British Labour Party and the Live 8 concerts, which were staged throughout major cities around the world on

the eve of the G8 summit in July 2005.<sup>5</sup> In his 2004 British Labour Party address, Bono urged British Prime Minister Tony Blair to make debt relief and poverty a priority. He specifically called out to world leaders to make poverty an issue and emphasized that 2005 was *the* year to make it happen. As Bono said in *The Scotsman*: “2005 is our chance to go down in history for what we did do, rather than what we didn’t do.”<sup>6</sup> Bono’s celebrity activism, political speeches, and passion for Africa have contributed to material political success, specifically \$40 billion pledged by the G8 for debt relief in Africa. Because of Bono’s efforts in making poverty and debt relief a global campaign, these topics are on the minds of politicians and the public and are represented in the media.<sup>7</sup>

Bono may use his celebrity status to garner attention from media, politicians, and a world audience; however, his thorough knowledge of debt relief and economic affairs shows his dedication and commitment to actually solving these political issues in material ways. Bono recently took another trip to Africa in May 2006, where he saw the anti-retroviral drugs saving the lives of African men, women, and children first-hand.<sup>8</sup> One of the most interesting aspects of Bono’s political advocacy involves his *material* political participation.<sup>9</sup> As *NBC Nightly News* anchor Brian Williams notes: “Bono asks the questions any investor would, and that’s what he’s doing here, he’s checking up on the investment he’s made in time and in the massive amount of money he has raised.”<sup>10</sup> Bono does not simply raise money; he takes trips to Africa to see that this money is going to the right people.

Bono’s continued influence in the realm of global politics warrants a variety of research questions. My central research question is concerned with how Bono constructs

agency appeals for his audience. Do his constructions of agency for his audience emerge from his own agency as a celebrity politician? How does this particular celebrity expert utilize political agency to activate millions of people through one rhetorical voice?

To better understand how Bono constructs agency appeals for his audiences across a range of rhetorical contexts, I focus on one case study that considers agency in a more traditional setting of public address in his 2006 speech at the National Prayer Breakfast, and on a case study that looks at agency in a less conventional setting of a rock concert in U2's *Vertigo 2005* DVD. Through my analysis, I hope to answer my research questions and provide insight into larger issues of agency, political rhetoric, and celebrity politics. In what follows, I first set up the context for Bono's political rhetoric and describe literature that discusses the importance of celebrity politics. I then present my critical perspective of the complex constructions of agency that guides my analysis and explain the texts upon which I will focus. I close my chapter with a preview of the rest of this project.

### **Bono's Politics as a Celebrity Expert**

Bono's status as a celebrity politician informs how Bono constructs agency for his audiences in his political rhetoric. To understand his appeals to agency for his audience then, we must first explore literature about celebrity politics. Before delving into the literature on celebrity politics, however, I first briefly describe the rhetorical situation of Bono's political advocacy, beginning with a short description of the dire situation currently facing Africa. I then explain Bono's rhetorical and political constraints in advocating for Africa, including the problems of global development policy and his celebrity status. Building off this focus on his celebrity status, I bring in research about

celebrity politics. Although some scholars might approach a project about Bono through primarily asking questions about his celebrity status, as a rhetorical critic, I am most interested in questions about Bono's rhetoric and its ability to motivate an audience to engage in social change and political action.

*Africa's Crisis: Debt, AIDS, and Economic Struggle*

Bono's political advocacy—through trips to Africa, speeches to politicians, and creation of non-profit advocacy groups—is a direct response to the continent's horrific poverty. Africa continues to face the bleakest economic and political outlook of any region in the world.<sup>11</sup> Africa faces this dismal situation, however, partly because of the developed world. Due to poor economic management by the World Bank and IMF during the 1980s and 1990s, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, Africa was poorer than in the 1960s, *before* the IMF and World Bank intervened.<sup>12</sup> Plagued by slow economic development, lack of education, corrupt governments, internal wars, the AIDS epidemic and rapid population growth, Africa's problems continue to worsen.

To solve these problems, foreign governments have contributed resources to African nations. Although foreign aid plays a large role in African economics, the results of this aid have been among the most disappointing of any part of the world. Foreign aid is still crucial to Africa, however, because international financial institutions and foreign governments are the governing bodies that continue to urge and finance economic reform programs.<sup>13</sup> In addition to foreign aid, debt relief is crucial to the continent. Debt relief would allow for stronger economic reform in Africa; money currently used to pay back debt could finance national programs such as education or AIDS prevention.<sup>14</sup> Although

eliminating debt is not the sole answer to Africa's problems, many economists believe debt relief is a crucial part of a larger solution.

*A History of Failure in Global Development Policy*

Beyond the abysmal situation of African poverty, another rhetorical constraint for Bono involves the continual failure of global debt relief programs, particularly with G8 leadership. Although the G8 may be focused on distributing the benefits of globalization to the developing world, and particularly to Africa, this becomes a problem when the G8 fails to follow through on such promises.<sup>15</sup> In addition, globalization often does more harm than good.<sup>16</sup> The G8 has failed to follow through on various policies, including the Millennium Development Goals<sup>17</sup> and fully clearing debt for the 42 most heavily indebted African nations.<sup>18</sup> The G8's failure in implementing political promises is an important rhetorical obstacle for Bono.

The G8's policy implementation problems are only a part of the history of failure regarding global development policy. There is a legacy of colonialism between the West and Africa—a legacy of using and abusing the continent of Africa to further Europe and America's interests and economies.<sup>19</sup> Many policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), still exist that continue to support this notion of colonial self-interest.<sup>20</sup> Another aspect of self-interest involves Western governments' caution in becoming more involved in African poverty and debt relief.<sup>21</sup> Instead of taking risks to achieve greater gains, Western nations dismiss global development efforts in favor of their own self-interest. Overcoming this history of failure and self-interest is not an easy rhetorical task, especially for a celebrity such as Bono.



### *Bono's Celebrity Status*

Bono realizes many politicians are skeptical of his ability to instruct them on African poverty and debt relief. He has many critics who believe his efforts have achieved very little.<sup>22</sup> Bono's reputation is also harmed by the G8 and UN's continual inability to realize their promises. Some argue that if Bono's advocacy was truly effective, there would be more material, successful results.<sup>23</sup> These criticisms of Bono's work are certainly a rhetorical constraint in his political advocacy, especially when some of these critics are experts in global development policy.

Whether his celebrity politics are seen as superficial by some or influential by others, Bono's celebrity politics must first be understood within the context of U2's political action. U2 became involved in Live Aid in 1985, and headlined for an Amnesty International tour in 1986.<sup>24</sup> Over the years, U2 has supported the following organizations: Amnesty International, Greenpeace, African Well Fund, DATA, Chernobyl Children's Project, Jubilee Debt Campaign, the ONE campaign, Live 8, and Make Poverty History.<sup>25</sup>

Through his involvement in U2, Bono's celebrity status has given him access to world leaders and politicians. Steve Stockman explains: "Bono's place in the world gave him a big enough foot to be able to stick in some big and few important doors...Bono walked through the doors of the houses of political might and took on the world's finest economists and bank managers."<sup>26</sup> This celebrity access includes meetings with current G8 leaders, past U.S. presidents, the Pope, and various U.S. Senators, Representatives, and White House officials.<sup>27</sup> Bono's position as U2's front man allows him to use U2 tours as another vehicle for political rhetoric. As Dorian Lynskey writes, "Some rock

bands use a world tour itinerary as a chance for some sightseeing; Bono takes the opportunity to bend the ears of world leaders over debt relief.”<sup>28</sup> In the Elevation and Vertigo tours, the band has constructed its set list and visuals to accompany a political message of global activism for African debt relief. As Lynskey notes, “There’s more where [traditional political advocacy] came from: the UN Declaration of Human Rights scrolling down screens during Pride (In the Name of Love); a kaleidoscope of world flags for Where the Streets Have No Name.”<sup>29</sup> U2 continues to use the concerts to encourage fans to mail or email President Bush and other decision-makers, asking them to take more action on debt, poverty, and HIV/AIDS in Africa.<sup>30</sup> Bono has given numerous speeches as a result of his celebrity status; in addition to the 2004 British Labour Party address, Bono spoke at the 2001 Harvard commencement and 2006 National Prayer Breakfast.<sup>31</sup>

Although this access allows for many outlets of advocacy, other aspects of celebrity are harmful to Bono. He admits the absurdity of celebrity activists yet does not evade responsibility:

There are people much better qualified to [advocate for third-world debt relief] than me. But as it happens, we live in this culture where people think pop stars and film stars are more important than nurses and firemen. I’m prepared to work with that. But I’m as skeptical as anyone would be about celebrities and causes...<sup>32</sup>

Importantly, Bono avoids using the term “cause” in his keynote address to the British Labour Party and instead refers to the crisis as an “emergency.”<sup>33</sup> Another way Bono counteracts the negative stereotypes of celebrity is by being well-informed. Susan Dominus reports a statement from Bono: “I’ve a soft spot for the boring minutiae. I read

the Charter of the United Nations before meeting with Kofi Annan. I read the Meltzer report, and then I'll read C. Fred Bergsten's defense of institutions like the World Bank and the IMF."<sup>34</sup> Bono acknowledges his celebrity status yet provides evidence to demonstrate his awareness.

Bono's knowledge, long history of activism and dedication to the issue are often noted when he meets with political dignitaries. As journalist James Traub explains, "Bono laid out his argument. 'He was deeply versed in the substance,' [Sheryl] Sandberg [(who was chief of staff to Lawrence Summers, Secretary of the Treasury under Clinton)] recalls: 'He understood capital markets, debt instruments, who the decision makers were.'"<sup>35</sup> Bono's experience with politicians and economists bolsters his reputation and counteracts negative connotations of his celebrity status.

#### *Literature on Celebrity Politics and the Celebrity Expert*

Celebrity politics relates to questions of agency because celebrity status influences a celebrity politician's access to rhetorical and political opportunities; celebrity experts in particular seem to have more agency than traditional politicians. Without celebrity appeal, fewer individuals—including both politicians and average citizens—would be willing to listen to what a rock star has to say about politics. Bono's status as a celebrity politician is certainly not exclusive; other celebrity politicians do exist, but few are as politically successful in terms of initiating policy changes that have resulted in material effects (such as more AIDS drugs, increased numbers of textbooks and schools in Africa, etc.).

The connection between celebrity and politics has been most clearly articulated by political scholars Darrell M. West and John Orman.<sup>36</sup> Drawing heavily on their

distinctions of celebrity politics, I suggest four areas where the line is blurred between celebrity and politics: 1) where politicians become celebrities, which results in us treating our politicians like tabloid celebrities (e.g. The Kennedys, Bill Clinton); 2) where celebrities are treated as politicians (e.g. Michael Moore); 3) where celebrities endorse candidates, raise money, and try to pass on their luster to the candidate (e.g. Madonna endorsing Wesley Clark); and finally, 4) where the celebrity bypasses the political system and takes on a specific political issue (e.g. Sting and protecting rainforests).

Bono can somewhat be classified into this last area of celebrity politics, but does not quite fit because he works both outside of (through his rhetoric in rock concerts) *and* within existing political structures (through his rhetoric in political public address). Bono is also different than most other celebrities in his expertise on matters such as trade, debt, and poverty. This political knowledge, in conjunction with his celebrity, gives Bono more agency than many national politicians, especially on the issue of global development policy.

Celebrity politics has largely been unaddressed by rhetorical scholars, but some have focused on this notion of celebrities as potential experts. Building off the work of others,<sup>37</sup> I extend the realm of celebrity expert to include celebrities of genres outside of traditional politics, specifically the genre of popular music. Lisa Slawter, Tania Lewis, and David J. Jackson & Thomas I. A. Darrow all acknowledge the overlap between “stardom and intellectualism.” Specifically, Slawter addresses the discursive tensions of the celebrity expert, Lewis focuses on the celebrity intellectual as depicted in the mediatized public sphere, and Jackson & Darrow acknowledge the influence of the celebrity expert on public political opinions.<sup>38</sup> Diana Smolkin reflects on the importance

of the celebrity expert's political media coverage through a case study of Arnold Schwarzenegger.<sup>39</sup> All of these scholars articulate the importance of expertise in the realm of celebrity politics and are less skeptical than most in their assessment of these celebrity experts and such experts' influence on politics.

Bono is not a traditional politician, yet he is granted political recognition and rhetorical opportunity by influential world leaders. Bono is not just a celebrity, either; he has become an expert in debt relief and poverty through studying with leading world economists and debt relief experts.<sup>40</sup> Jack Ewing articulates the negative aspect of celebrity activism, however: "No question that Bono's intentions are good. But celebrity-led relief efforts still make some people uneasy. Star power generates publicity, but it's not so clear what the lasting effect is."<sup>41</sup> As Ewing notes, even though Bono is a celebrity expert, often the status as celebrity overpowers the status as expert.

Bono's status as a celebrity expert is important when considering how he constructs agency for his audience through his political rhetoric. In a vein similar to John Street, I suggest that the connection between celebrity and politics necessitates a rethinking of politics in terms of *performance*,<sup>42</sup> which has direct implications for thinking about agency as a call to action. Street argues that instead of strictly making an analogy between politics and consumption, that political scholars also theorize politics through celebrity and performance. Street explicitly calls for this kind of scholarship within the current political landscape:

In focusing on the style in which politics is represented, we need to go beyond mere description of the gestures and images. We need to assess them, to think about them as *performances* and to apply a critical language

appropriate to this. In what and how successfully do Bono or Blair evoke feelings and passions that are acted upon? These are questions about the politics of popular culture itself.<sup>43</sup>

Like Street, I am interested in agency as action in the political realm. In the following section on agency, I discuss the complex nature of this concept and emphasize action over being. Although philosophers are primarily concerned with questions of subjectivity and being, similar to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, I primarily draw on rhetorical questions of agency as “...the capacity to act, that is, to have the competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one’s community.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Complicated Constructions of Agency**

To analyze Bono’s political rhetoric, I utilize a perspective that focuses on agency as a call to action. Because of the abundance of scholarship on agency across a wide array of fields, I explore how these concepts have been used by scholars in rhetorical studies, political science, and philosophy. Drawing primarily on Campbell’s views of agency, I organize the literature according to her five characteristics of how agency: 1) is communal and participatory; 2) is “invented” by authors who act as points of articulation; 3) emerges in artistry or craft; 4) is effected through form; and 5) is protean, ambiguous, and open to reversal.<sup>45</sup> In reading most of the literature on agency, most authors’ articulations about their theories of agency are less clear. To manage the diversity of definitional perspectives within the literature, I use Campbell’s essay as an organizational guide. Before I approach literature on agency, however, I explain the importance of a global community because Bono’s political rhetoric takes place within—and is important to—this notion of a global community.

### *Agency within Global Community*

A global community is important to agency and politics, especially in the realm of Africa and global development policy, because national leaders have failed to initiate policy change. As a global celebrity expert, Bono gets things done. National leaders—despite their attempt through institutions such as the G8, UN, World Bank and IMF—have not been able to realize political goals nor have many material policy effects in Africa.

The emergence of a global community necessarily changes the nature of agency. Communication researcher D. Robert DeChaine believes that globalization is both a threat and an opportunity for our world to consider the societal forces that shape our notions of community, solidarity, and group identity.<sup>46</sup> Building off this notion of a global community and focusing on its opportunities, this means an extension of agency to those who may not have previously had a voice. Victor Armony, Martha Barriga, and Daniel Schugurensky explain the emergence of a global community within the context of immigrants in Canada: “These overlapping identities are increasing with the expansion of global communication, which potentially allows entire communities to be more connected with their countries of origin than with Canada.”<sup>47</sup> They argue that immigrants become acculturated to Canadian culture yet retain ties to their original countries; in essence, forming a unique global identity that is transnational.

A global community can be seen as positive regarding a potential increase in agency for those formerly marginalized; however, Gideon Baker articulates a potential problem with this type of thinking. He argues that global civil society organizations in particular often position those who they help as objects:

This ought to be of particular concern given that, on the basis of the uneven spread of power and resources, most ‘global’ civil society organizations are actually thoroughly Western (many based in, even resourced by, Western states) and the majority of the world’s ‘citizens’ are more adequately conceptualized as objects rather than subjects of such organizations.<sup>48</sup>

Although a global community and global organizations can be helpful in giving a voice to those who are voiceless, they can also objectify these individuals on the margins. A global community could thus potentially *minimize* rather than *increase* agency, especially within the context of global civil society organizations.

#### *Agency is Communal and Participatory*

A global community does pose unique challenges for agency, and Campbell takes these challenges into account with her first proposition for agency as “...communal, social, cooperative, and participatory and, simultaneously, constituted and constrained by the material and symbolic elements of context and culture.”<sup>49</sup> Material and symbolic aspects of culture certainly restrict agency, even within a global community, and consumption is certainly one such material aspect within most cultures. In the context of Bono’s political rhetoric, it is important to realize that consumption among wealthy, Western nations is attached to their willingness to provide aid to non-wealthy, non-Western countries, such as those in Africa. When analyzing Bono’s rhetoric, one must realize that agency is thus tied to consumption in the context of global development policy.



Regardless of material constraints on agency, most scholars agree that agency is primarily a social endeavor, especially in the political realm. Political agency is often presented as a component to collective action within the public sphere, especially regarding citizenship and democracy.<sup>50</sup> Rhetorical scholar John M. Murphy, for instance, understands agency in a collective sense in his analysis of Bill Clinton's speech to the 2004 Democratic National Convention. He writes of a rhetorical agency of collective action that emerges from the process of judgment and decision making: "As an audience, we chart that story. We choose. That is the sense of rhetorical agency that emerges from a study of judgment. It is also a sense that is too often missing from contemporary politics."<sup>51</sup> Murphy indicates the need for collective agency within contemporary politics and believes that Clinton's speech is one example that asserts the importance of collective action and decision-making.

Citizenship is often upheld in opposition to consumption within this view of agency as social and participatory. Karrin Vasby Anderson & Jessie Stewart argue that a model of politics based on consumption rather than citizenship is problematic. They assert the negative aspect of political agency's association with consumption: "[Political consumption] shifts attention away from the more mundane but necessary acts of citizenship such as voting, volunteerism, social activism, and building the social capital that Robert Putnam has identified as a key component of thriving democracies."<sup>52</sup> They assert that lifestyle choices are potentially political, but are not truly evident of political agency unless some sort of collective action within the public sphere occurs. They explain, "Personal agency replaces social activism, empowerment comes through individual consumption rather than political participation, and each woman is responsible

for the enhancement of her own life... [This model of political agency] undermines responsibility to the community.”<sup>53</sup> Political agency is thus directly related to citizenship and activism within the public sphere and involves a direct relationship to the community.<sup>54</sup> Ellen Riordan agrees with Campbell, Murphy, and Anderson and Stewart in the belief that agency is social and participatory. In a vein similar to Anderson and Stewart, she critiques a model of political consumption and writes instead of the need for “girls to transcend individual consumption to enact collective change in social relations.”<sup>55</sup> Riordan emphasizes that empowerment on an individual level is initially important, but that social practices can only be changed through collective action.

Important for all of these scholars is the notion that agency is constantly constrained by material and symbolic elements; as a material constraint, consumption thus must be taken into account even if heavily critiqued. The conditions for agency and larger questions about access and material conditions are important questions for rhetorical scholars.<sup>56</sup> Although I recognize the problem with political agency’s connection to consumption for some scholars, personal politics do play an important *supplemental* role in the practice of politics for some citizens. Purchasing a particular item of clothing may seem like a minor action for someone to represent his or her politics, but it is still an important method for the public to engage the political in a smaller, every-day kind of practice.

#### *Agency is “Invented” by Authors*

In addition to agency’s communal nature, agency is also “‘invented’ by authors who are points of articulation.”<sup>57</sup> This proposition addresses the complex nature of the “author” within post-structuralism and is relevant to Bono’s political rhetoric, especially

in attempting to understand his often fragmented (and perhaps post-structural) method of politics. Bono uses a variety of advocacy methods, including concerts, speeches, political connections and non-profit organizations; an understanding of the author (in this case, Bono) as a “point of articulation” assists my analysis of Bono’s multi-faceted appeals for his audience to take action.

Many scholars have addressed the difficulty of finding agency within post-structural theory and the post-modern situation.<sup>58</sup> Michelle Ballif argues some of the challenges of this situation: “The postmodern challenges to history, to politics, to communications, to political agency, along with our increasing digital and virtual experiences, have radically altered our conceptions of time, place, and rhetorical purpose, and have led us to question the form of a body politic that rhetoric (a body of discourse) constructs.”<sup>59</sup> Cheryl Geisler is more optimistic with these challenges but believes they must be addressed, especially for teaching purposes. She believes that the post-modern situation does provide challenges to rhetorical agency, but argues that the debate has shifted from a notion of the universal to the specific and local, focusing on consciousness and the material conditions of access.<sup>60</sup>

In dealing with these challenges for agency in claims about the “death of the author,” Campbell asserts that agency should be thought of in terms of invention. She explains, “As I have noted, authors/rhetors are materially limited, linguistically constrained, historically situated subjects; at the same time, they are ‘inventors’ in the rhetorical sense, articulators who link past and present, and find means to express...the forms of feeling that encapsulate moments in time.”<sup>61</sup> Thinking about agency as invention situated in material conditions sheds light on a different way of thinking about

subject-positions. If agency is invention, including the invention of different subject-positions and collectivities, then agency is open-ended and filled with possibility for rethinking social practices.

### *Agency Emerges through Artistry*

Building off this notion that agency is invention, Campbell asserts that “agency is linked to and effected through artistry or artfulness; it is learned.”<sup>62</sup> In her articulation of this proposition, Campbell points to the importance of *techné* (art) as training and more importantly, *practice*. She explains, “Accordingly, when I refer to artistry or craft, I mean all the heuristic skills that respond to contingencies, and for which there are no precise or universal precepts...”<sup>63</sup> Thinking about agency as learned and as a practice that responds to contingencies is important in my analysis of Bono’s rhetoric. Bono’s performance—both literally and figuratively in terms of Campbell’s discussion of *techné*—is important to consider when thinking about how he constructs appeals to agency for his audience.

In offering this proposition, Campbell openly connects her theorizing of agency to performance. She articulates the ironic practices of repetition that open up spaces for resistance: “Agency emerges out of performances or actions that, when repeated, fix meaning through sedimentation. Agency equally emerges in performances that repeat with a difference, altering meaning.”<sup>64</sup> Campbell thus draws on theorists such as Judith Butler in arguing the importance of thinking about agency through performance and ironic practices of repetition. Butler articulates the importance of theorizing about a different kind of subject; one that is not restricted to institutional structures but rather has

freedom in creating alternate productions of subjectivity and agency. She argues that we must *necessarily* deconstruct the subject in this way to theorize the potential of agency:

For the subject to be a pre-given point of departure for politics is to defer the question of the political construction and regulation of the subject itself; for it is important to remember that subjects are constituted through exclusion, that is, through the creation of a domain of deauthorized subjects, presubjects, figures of abjection, populations erased from view.<sup>65</sup>

The only way to equalize material constraints such as limited access, then, is to deconstruct the subject through breaking the iteration of dominant subjectivity. Instead of repeating a performance of stable, dominant, language categories, Butler emphasizes the importance of alternative language productions through resignification, in which new configurations of the category become possible.<sup>66</sup> Michelle Ballif explains what this kind of agency might look like within postmodernism:

Therefore, when I propose a Third Sophistic praxis, I am suggesting that we not reproduce via “conversation” current political relations and ideologies, but rather that we stretch the borders of language, render the code liquid, in order to free us, sophisticatedly, from philosophy's demands for faithful reference and undistorted communication and communities.<sup>67</sup>

Instead of thinking about language as deterministic and constraining, rhetorical scholars should follow the lead of scholars such as Campbell, Butler, and Ballif in theorizing agency as *techné*, filled with possibility for changing a learned practice through repetition that incorporates differences through performance.

### *Agency is Effected through Form*

Artistry produces agency in another way through texts. Campbell articulates how form is important to agency: “Here, I wish to highlight the power of form. Textual agency is linked to audiences and begins with the signals that guide the process of ‘uptake’ for readers or listeners enabling them to categorize, to understand how a symbolic act is to be framed.”<sup>68</sup> Form is crucial in an analysis of Bono’s political rhetoric; the differences in form between public address and concert rhetoric are stark yet insightful in understanding how agency can function in different ways *through* form. Campbell extends this proposition of agency to understanding conventions of genre, allusions, and tropes. She explains, “The idea of form plays a crucial role in recognizing the nature of the kairotic moment at which a particular stratagem, formal, tropic, or argumentative, will have salience.”<sup>69</sup> A talented rhetor will use the right kind of form for her audience at exactly the right moment, and thus creating appeals to agency involves a kind of rhetorical competence.

Agency can be present in a wide variety of texts, with various kinds of forms. Agency can take the form of social movements,<sup>70</sup> cultural traditions,<sup>71</sup> spectacular politics associated with visual and body rhetoric,<sup>72</sup> and through general political volition.<sup>73</sup> Understanding how different forms affect agency is important in my analysis of Bono’s political rhetoric, since he seems to draw on all of these different forms throughout his appeals to his audiences. One form of agency heavily theorized by political scholars is that of political volition and involvement. I describe this form in more detail here because it influences the other forms previously mentioned, such as social movements and cultural traditions.

Diana Coole argues that agency and politics must be voluntary, and should be associated with democracy and the common citizen rather than an elite group of individuals. She writes: “Any regime that aspires to impose a pre-conceived reconstruction on society is dangerously deluded about the nature of the political.”<sup>74</sup> For political agency to truly be agency through free-will rather than coercion, Coole argues that it must be voluntary action on the part of average citizens. She continues: “If the collective noun of ‘the people’ or ‘the multitude’ replaces that of the proletariat, the aim is broadly similar: a politics invented and practiced by a self-critical demos, rather than rule by elites.”<sup>75</sup> Self-critical democracy importantly involves ordinary citizens shaping politics “from below” rather than an elite group of a few individuals constructing politics “from above.”<sup>76</sup> Agency thus involves volition and can be conceived as “the capacity for intentional, self-initiated action” that works toward larger scale political change.<sup>77</sup>

#### *Agency is Perverse and Ambiguous*

Agency may be effected through form, especially through political volition, but it is also open-ended and protean. Building off scholars such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Kenneth Burke, Campbell’s final proposition for agency involves its potential to be perverse, variable, and ambiguous. She writes, “Agency is the power to do evil, to demean and belittle. The fear and disparagement of rhetoric are lodged here because rhetoric has an equal capacity for transcendence, resistance, and destruction.”<sup>78</sup>

Campbell thus articulates the negative side to agency that many rhetorical scholars who theorize about resistance and politics are sometimes unwilling to acknowledge. Nick Turnbull further explains the ambiguous nature of rhetorical agency: “But the agency that is so positive for rhetoric is also that for which rhetoric has been condemned...Rhetorical

agency permits deception...”<sup>79</sup> Agency remains open-ended, but as Campbell and Turnbull demonstrate, because of this openness, agency must also be critiqued for its ability to “other” and deceive human beings.

Ronald Walter Greene offers some examples of how agency can become “malign, divisive, and destructive.”<sup>80</sup> He critiques a political communication model of agency and calls instead for agency to be theorized in terms of capitalism and consumption, so that scholars are aware of the more dubious uses of agency. Greene explains his vision of rhetorical agency: “I will argue that rhetorical agency belongs to the domain of communicative labor, a form of labor increasingly necessary to the workings of contemporary capitalist production.”<sup>81</sup> This perspective of agency as a form of labor sheds light on political aspects of agency as well. Political issues such as campaign finance, expensive media campaigns, and buying domains for campaign web sites make more sense in the context of theorizing agency as communicative labor that can be directed toward capitalist ends.

Greene further explains how some rhetorical scholars make a clear distinction between economics as the site of exploitation and (national) politics as the space for struggle over class interests. He warns about theorizing agency as this mediating force between economics and politics: “This distinction [between economics and politics] suggests that rhetorical agency is a form of mediation between economic and political levels of an integrated capitalist world-system. However, as a mechanism of mediation, rhetorical practice exists to place the United States’ national values as a transcendental moral authority regulating future rhetorical invention.”<sup>82</sup> Greene’s examples thus support Campbell’s proposition that agency does indeed have “an equal capacity for



transcendence, resistance, and destruction.”<sup>83</sup> A transcendent agency is restrictive to invention and artistry; rhetorical scholars must be aware of how this kind of agency can dominate other opportunities for agency and practicing difference.

All of these propositions about agency, taken together, show the breadth of agency and its positive as well as negative implications for social change within a global community. By aligning my perspective of agency with that of Campbell and other rhetorical and political scholars, I am better able to consider whether or not these different propositions about agency are supported in various case studies of Bono’s political rhetoric about Africa. If these propositions are in fact supported, an analysis of Bono’s rhetoric should also shed light on *how* agency functions for a rhetor that has ties to celebrity and politics.

### **Discussion of Texts and Preview of Chapters**

This multi-faceted nature of agency can be seen throughout Bono’s political rhetoric, and many of his methods of political action are less than conventional, crossing the boundary of a celebrity who simply has a “cause.” To understand this complex nature of agency and how Bono constructs appeals to agency for his audience, I focus on two different texts that show the range of Bono’s rhetorical appeals, especially in terms of form. One case study considers agency in a more traditional setting of public address through Bono’s speech at the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast, whereas the other case study explores agency in a less conventional setting of a rock concert, as represented by the *Vertigo 2005: U2 Live from Chicago* DVD.

The first text involves thinking about agency in a more traditionally political method of advocacy through public address. Bono delivered an address—which many

later called a sermon—on February 2, 2006 at the Washington D.C. Hilton, to the 54<sup>th</sup> annual National Prayer Breakfast, attended by President George W. Bush and hundreds of national leaders. Bono's remarks at the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast have been widely acclaimed as a uniquely powerful blend of faith and the mission of governments.<sup>84</sup> The breakfast, with its 3,000 guests from 160 countries, is held each year for politicians and dignitaries to pray about the needs of the nation and the world.<sup>85</sup> The location and venue of the address, especially considering its audience, is interesting to analyze in light of Bono's agency as a celebrity politician. Although Bono has given speeches to political leaders in the past, this address is unique because of its location in America, primarily to an American audience of national leaders. The religiosity of the address is also a key component to Bono's appeals to agency; by drawing on religious unity on poverty, Bono's address carries even more rhetorical force.

The second text considers agency in less traditional ways through performance and audience experiences in U2's Vertigo Tour, which occurred from 2004-2006. I study the *Vertigo 2005: U2 Live from Chicago DVD* as a representation of a U2 concert experience.<sup>86</sup> Agency is important to consider within concert rhetoric; Bono is trying to persuade concert-goers to care about political issues and thus motivate them to activate their own agency as a collective. The experiential intensity of the concert, dynamic performance by U2, and proximity of U2 fans all contribute to forming a powerful crowd dynamic in which a group of people transforms from unified spectators to collective political agents. Bono's status as a global celebrity, U2's popularity, and the band's acceptance of Bono's politics all contribute to the political and rhetorical force behind U2's Vertigo Tour. During their second leg of the tour in America, U2 recorded their

concerts in Chicago (May 9-10, 2005) for a DVD of the tour entitled, *Vertigo 2005: U2 Live from Chicago*, which was released in November 2005.

Celebrity politics has implications for rhetorical analysis, and my project hopes to demonstrate a connection between celebrity politics and how rhetorical scholars theorize agency. The next chapter includes my first case study that examines Bono's address at the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast. Chapter 3 analyzes concert rhetoric within U2's *Vertigo Tour* as represented on the *Vertigo 2005: U2 Live from Chicago* DVD. My final chapter addresses my conclusions and potential implications for political rhetoric, celebrity politics, and agency. A celebrity politician such as Bono constructs agency in a variety of ways. Theorizing agency in terms of rhetorical performance seems important in understanding how celebrity status may influence the rhetorical appeals to agency for an audience.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RHETORIC AS AN INTELLECTUAL PRIMER FOR AGENCY:

#### BONO'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT

#### THE 2006 NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

*American foreign policy is more than a matter of war and diplomacy. Our work in the world is also based on a timeless truth: To whom much is given, much is required. We hear the call to take on the challenges of hunger and poverty and disease—and that is precisely what America is doing. We must continue to fight HIV/AIDS, especially on the continent of Africa.*

President George W. Bush, 2007 State of the Union Address<sup>87</sup>

In the 2007 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush highlighted the U.S. commitment to fighting “hunger and poverty and disease...especially on the continent of Africa.” President Bush’s inclusion of fighting poverty in Africa within the State of the Union address lends importance to this issue, positioning it as a key subject for Americans to support. Before its emphasis within the State of the Union address, however, Africa’s poverty was advocated by U2 front man Bono almost a year earlier, at the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast. An unlikely keynote speaker, Bono certainly faced skepticism in speaking to President Bush, members of Congress, and the American people due to his celebrity status. By making African poverty the center of his political advocacy in this address, however, might Bono have contributed to making this issue more prevalent for all Americans and Westerners? Might Bono’s attention to this issue at the National Prayer Breakfast have influenced President Bush’s decision to emphasize it in his 2007 State of the Union address?

To understand how poverty in Africa became a prevalent issue to be included in the 2007 State of the Union address, we must go back to Bono's keynote address at the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast, to realize the context of Bono's rhetorical situation for that particular address. The 54<sup>th</sup> annual National Prayer Breakfast was held on February 2, 2006, at the Washington D.C. Hilton Hotel. The breakfast was co-led by a Jewish man, U.S. Senator Norm Coleman, and another keynote speaker (at the lunch on February 3) was King Abdullah II from Jordan, a Muslim known for his inter-faith efforts.<sup>88</sup> The breakfast is not funded through government money, but is supported by the Fellowship Foundation, an evangelical Christian group.<sup>89</sup> The 2006 National Prayer Breakfast thus featured a Jewish Congressman, Muslim world leader, and Christian political activist/rock star all contributing through their respective roles.

The unique contextual characteristics surrounding the address shed light on its importance as a public address that sought to unite faiths rather than divide them. This speech is thus an appropriate text to analyze regarding agency; it focuses on a multiplicity of agencies in an attempt to unite people of different faiths on the issue of global poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa. I focus on agency because of its overwhelming presence and compelling nature throughout the address. Although a celebrity such as Bono could have focused on his own status or accomplishments with this political issue, Bono instead emphasized what his audience has done and *can do*. Simply put, Bono highlighted different types of agency in this address and *not* different subject-positions. In this speech, Bono's political requests depend more on agency than subjectivity. This address is not about the interpellation of subjects; rather, the speech concretizes the grounds on which people are called to act. In this way, agency functions as an inventional resource

for Bono. Agency is not simply about fulfilling a purpose in this speech; rather, agency is a unique inventional resource for Bono as a rhetor.

Agency's role as an inventional resource certainly makes this speech significant; this speech is also an important example of political advocacy through lobbying.

Throughout the address, Bono lobbied President Bush, members of Congress, and the American people to support the ONE campaign's policy initiatives through appealing to a variety of types of agency. Bono considered his agency in the address while simultaneously persuading his audience to reflect on their own agency in the policy-making process. Importantly, this speech is not about Bono's celebrity. Although his celebrity status may have opened up some important doors for Bono's political work, his political knowledge and expertise regarding Africa, debt, poverty, and HIV/AIDS are what truly enabled this rhetor, especially in this rhetorical situation. In the introduction of the speech, Bono did appeal to his celebrity, using self-deprecating humor to dismiss his celebrity status and past rock star blunders. Except for the introduction, however, the rest of the speech looks like any other traditional, political advocacy speech. If Bono's name was removed from the first page of the transcript, the average reader would likely never know that this address was given by a rock star.

Agency's position as an inventional resource and this speech's explicit political advocacy make this address a significant text to analyze. Through my analysis, I suggest that Bono's various appeals to agency in this speech position rhetoric as a kind of intellectual primer for taking action because all of these types focus on various reason-based appeals to the audience. Four different depictions of agency formulate Bono's position on politics throughout the address: political agency, transcendental agency,

existential agency, and absent agency. The first type of agency has two aspects: Bono's political agency is understood through his policy proposals as a celebrity politician; and his audiences' political agency is understood through democratic action such as their participation in creating policies. The second depiction of agency is that of transcendental agency, which involves Bono's portrayal of policies as a responsibility because of free will given by God. Transcendental agency comes from a common faith in Abraham's God and is a common feature in the three largest monotheistic religions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. The third aspect of agency is existential agency, which is a more humanistic approach to agency; existential agency is the notion that *all* lives have value and involves the interaction of political and transcendental agencies. The final depiction of agency in this address is absent agency. Curiously, Bono never explicitly spoke of agency on the part of poor African citizens; instead, he talked about how Americans are the *means* for Africans to achieve agency. My analysis thus follows the textual traces of these four aspects of agency, explaining how Bono uses rhetorical appeals to construct these four agencies in multiple, myriad ways.

### **Political, Transcendental, Existential and Absent Agencies**

In this address, different depictions of agency come to the forefront of political action for Bono. More specifically, four different notions of agency formulate Bono's position on politics: a traditional, democratic depiction of political agency, transcendental agency, a portrayal of existential agency that is a unique combination of the interaction between the previous two, and absent agency regarding impoverished Africans.

### *Political Agency*

The first distinctive type of agency apparent in Bono's address to President Bush, U.S. Congress, and the American people involves a more traditional notion of political agency through democratic action. In this traditional notion of political agency, citizens see themselves as political agents of change, through engaging in democratic processes such as participating in government. In addressing his immediate audience of President Bush and U.S. policymakers, a traditional notion of political agency explicitly involves democratic participation in processes such as creating laws and policies through government. Bono's rhetorical appeals that involve this type of agency are similar to those found in any "typical" politician's address to an audience he or she hopes to persuade to take action.

In my analysis of Bono's use of political agency in the address, I posit that he attempts to persuade his audience to change policy through four appeals: material appeals that involve specific facts, clear calls to action that are usually policy-oriented, an emphasis on the people's responsibility to create laws and policies that help those in need, and praise of the concrete work completed by politicians and church members, through both policies and human generosity. This traditional notion of political agency is thus two-fold: Bono enacts political agency by making this request to decision-makers, and these decision-makers have political agency through their electorally-sanctioned responsibility and ability to grant his requests.

One of Bono's appeals to the audience that allows them to realize their democratic, political agency involves his use of material appeals that include specific facts; such appeals often contain information about material, political changes that have



taken place, or *must* take place. For example, Bono used an analogy to the 2004 tsunami in his address: “Well, in Africa, 150,000 lives are lost every month—a tsunami every month. And it’s a completely avoidable catastrophe.”<sup>90</sup> Bono thus emphasizes a staggering statistic to motivate his audience to realize their own democratic, political agency in this matter, especially within his immediate audience of President Bush and members of Congress. As an “avoidable catastrophe,” the situation in Africa compels action on the part of Bono’s audience, and this action is policy-oriented.

Throughout his address, Bono advocates for a specific policy change through the ONE campaign. By asking his audience to support the ONE campaign initiative, Bono is basically asking President Bush, Congress, and the American people for an additional one percent of the U.S. budget to be allocated to eradicating poverty in Africa. To help his audience understand their own political agency, Bono uses material appeals that provide specific instances of what this policy could do for real people in Africa. He said, “One percent [of the U.S. federal budget] is the girl in Africa who gets to go to school, thanks to you. One percent is the AIDS patient who gets her medicine, thanks to you. One percent is the African entrepreneur who can start a small family business, thanks to you. One percent is not redecorating presidential palaces.”<sup>91</sup> By incorporating personalized examples of what additional U.S. funding can provide for Africans, Bono makes an abstract concept—such as one percent of the U.S. federal budget—more concrete through an explanation of the material benefits of such a policy. Through this example, Bono asks Congressional representatives, President Bush, and the American people—the key players in initiating and passing American policies—to use their authority through the

democratic process of law-making to make the proposed policy of the ONE campaign a reality.

To supplement his material appeals that emphasize the audience's political agency, Bono also incorporates a clear call to action throughout the address. This call to action for his audience is mostly policy-oriented, as he focuses explicitly on the ONE campaign throughout this speech. Throughout the last part of the speech, Bono makes his call to action quite clear. He stated, "Mr. President, Congress, people of faith, people of America: I want to suggest to you today that you see the flow of effective foreign assistance as tithing; which, to be truly meaningful, will mean an additional one percent of the federal budget tithed to the poor...Okay, that's what we're after, folks."<sup>92</sup> Bono implements direct calls to action toward the end of his address to emphasize a traditional notion of democratic, political agency, especially given the nature of his immediate audience of the U.S. President and members of Congress. Although Bono may use other types of appeals to a "higher power" throughout the rest of the address (more on that in the transcendental agency section), in the concluding section of his speech he only emphasizes a traditional notion of political agency through the democratic process of creating laws in the United States. Because his immediate audience involves policymakers, Bono must be specific with his request for his audience to support the ONE campaign through a policy that would ensure that the U.S. provided an additional one percent of its federal budget to assistance in Africa.

Bono anticipates cynicism toward giving U.S. money to Africa, however, and explained, "One percent is a new partnership with Africa, not paternalism towards Africa; a new partnership with Africa, where increased assistance flows toward improved

governance and initiatives with proven track records and away from the boondoggles and white elephants that we've seen before."<sup>93</sup> He thus preemptively addresses the credibility issue of African governments, reassuring politicians that U.S. assistance would be well-used. Bono explicitly appeals to the well-known and often-used counterargument against giving U.S. assistance to Africa; this counterargument is one that maintains that African governments are not stable or credible enough to be given large sums of money to be used at their discretion. The last paragraph in his address again incorporates the traditional depiction of democratic, political agency, but also involves Bono "selling" the ONE campaign to Americans by noting how this policy would help the U.S. He said, "One percent is national security. One percent is enlightened economic self-interest, and a better safer world rolled into one. Sounds to me that in this town of deals and compromises, one percent is the best bargain around."<sup>94</sup> This last paragraph is interesting because it initially seems to be an odd conclusion in a speech that is otherwise driven by more of an approach that involves a "higher power." I propose, however, that Bono's celebrity and identity as a rock star make him more receptive to audiences, and thus he ends his speech with "selling" a political initiative.

Although the conclusion of his speech seemed out-of-place during my initial reading of the address, upon closer examination, Bono is incorporating a direct appeal to his audience of policymakers. By bluntly noting Congress' self-interest and power with terminology that refers to Washington, D.C. as a "town of deals and compromises," Bono simply says it like it is, and thus concludes his address with a blunt, direct appeal for Congress and President Bush to support the ONE campaign. In essence, Bono does "sell" the ONE campaign to American policymakers, especially by concluding his

address with the benefits for America, rather than focusing on the transcendental need for Americans to act because of God's will. The ONE campaign is the "best bargain around," and thus policymakers should support it, because the campaign would help America's image in the war on terror. This economic tone in the conclusion of the address is also a part of a traditional model of political agency. Democracy and economics are often closely connected to one another in the U.S., and Bono seemingly understands that self-interest is an important motivating factor in both U.S. economics and democracy. By positioning the ONE campaign as the "best bargain around," Bono employs an economic appeal to motivate policymakers to realize that this policy would not only be a great democratic move by the U.S. (in terms of its relationship with Africa and eradicating poverty), but would also serve the U.S.' self-interest economically, through safeguarding the U.S. from terrorism.

Seemingly contradictory to an appeal to America's self-interest is another appeal Bono uses to imbue his audience with traditional, political agency. Throughout this address, political agency is something Bono wants his audience to realize they *already* have. Once his audience realizes the potential of their own political agency through democratic action, they can use this agency toward meeting Bono's goals to eradicate poverty in Africa. This next appeal involves an emphasis on Americans' responsibility to create laws and policies that help those in need. Although this type of appeal is somewhat connected to transcendental agency, Bono interestingly emphasizes the political agency of his audience through democratic action on the part of the American people. For instance, Bono stated, "I'd like to talk about the laws of man, here in this city, where those laws are written."<sup>95</sup> The laws "in this city" of Washington, D.C., are laws

written by the American people, through their representatives in Congress. Bono thus emphasizes the traditional, democratic, political agency of Americans and of policymakers with this discussion about creating “laws of man.” The American people have the political agency to make responsible policies that assist those in need. Bono again referred to the importance of man-made laws later on in his speech: “And while the law is what we say it is, God is not silent on the subject. That’s why I say there’s [sic] laws of the land, and then there’s a higher standard. And we can hire experts to write them so they benefit us, these laws, so that they say it’s okay to protect our agriculture but it’s not okay for African farmers to protect their agriculture, to earn a living. As the laws of man are written, that’s what they say. But God will not accept that. Mine won’t. I don’t—will yours?”<sup>96</sup> In this section of his speech, Bono mixes the “laws of the land” (political agency) with a “higher standard,” which includes an appeal to transcendental agency. Bono does *not*, however, emphasize the transcendental agency in this discussion of laws; rather, he gives a concrete example of American policy toward African agriculture, highlighting the importance for the American people and their policymakers to *change* this policy, reflecting on Americans’ responsibility (and political agency) to help the poor in Africa. Although this aspect of his address does begin to reflect the third notion of agency to be discussed later in this section, Bono’s talk of the laws of man are important in empowering his audience to realize their power *and* responsibility to others (such as those in Africa) who lack such political agency through democratic action.

Along with emphasizing the responsibility of the American people to help those in need with the “laws of the land,” Bono also praises work already completed by politicians and church members, through their policies and simple generosity. This final

appeal imbues his audience with traditional, political agency because it affirms that Americans have made *some* progress in assisting the poor in Africa. Americans have already utilized their political agency in past work, and thus they should continue their work to meet Bono's goals. For instance, Bono explained, "That same thought, grace, is now incarnate in a movement of all kinds of people. It wasn't a bless-me club. It wasn't a holy huddle. These religious guys were willing to get out in the streets, get their boots dirty, wave the placards, follow their convictions with actions, making it really hard for people like me to keep our distance—ruining my shtick...The Church was slow but the Church got busy on this the leprosy of our age."<sup>97</sup> By praising the work of the Church in this example, and in other instances throughout his address, Bono reaffirms the political agency of these individuals, motivating them to continue their incredible work.

Bono also highlights the importance of church work in policymaking, something that many churchgoers in America may not associate with their faith. Bono said, "When churches start[ed] demonstrating on debt, governments listened—and acted. When churches started organizing, petitioning, and even that most unholy of acts today, God forbid, *lobbying* on AIDS and global health, governments listened—and acted. I'm here today in all humility to say: you changed minds; you changed policy; and you changed the world. So, thank you."<sup>98</sup> Bono thus directly associates the faith and political agency of church-goers with the policies enacted by their governments. For Bono, changing policy means changing the world, which reinforces his broader view of politics as a material, concrete endeavor that involves assisting those in need. Through praising activities such as lobbying and governmental action, Bono tells his audience that these actions are meaningful to him, to Africans, and to those Americans who engage in such

activities. The power and agency to make such changes in the world resides with his audience of President Bush, Congress, and the American people.

Bono emphasizes other material, concrete instances of the results of policy-making through praising a second group of people—his immediate audience of President Bush and Congress. He stated, “In fact, you have doubled aid to Africa. You have tripled funding for the global health—for global health. And Mr. President, your emergency plan for AIDS relief and support of the Global Fund—you and Congress—has put 700,000 people onto life-saving anti-retroviral drugs and provided eight million bed nets to protect children from malaria...But here’s the bad news. There’s so much more to do.”<sup>99</sup> Bono thus praises his immediate audience but also explains that this is but one small response to what he calls an “emergency” in Africa. By incorporating specific, material results from the money given by President Bush and Congress, Bono makes an abstract policy more concrete. In this example from his speech, increasing aid to Africa has resulted in providing life-saving drugs to 700,000 people, and protecting children from malaria, which help policymakers to visualize how this aid is actually being used. Although Africa needs more assistance from the U.S., Bono aptly praises and demonstrates what has already been happening with American monetary assistance. He describes the material effects that result from Americans realizing their political agency through democratic action.

### *Transcendental Agency*

Beyond a traditional, democratic concept of political agency, Bono also uses appeals that support a portrayal of transcendental agency. While political agency involves the realization of a democratic process to create policies, transcendental agency

involves the realization of responsibility because of free will given by God. Bono uses three different rhetorical appeals to demonstrate the importance of transcendental agency to his audience: critiquing institutions, portraying God as having agency over human lives, and locating God with the poor.

To encourage his audience to consider the transcendental agency given to them by God, Bono critiques two institutions when talking about God's work: religion and politics. Bono said, "One of the things I picked up from my father and my mother was the sense that religion often gets in the way of God; for me, at least, it got in the way—seeing what religious people, in the name of God, did to my native land. And even in this country, seeing God's second-hand car salesmen on their TV cable channels offering indulgences for cash."<sup>100</sup> Bono is critiquing the institution of religion by arguing that often, religious people do things that do not represent God's will. In his view, the transcendental agency that God instills in all human beings is one that need not answer to the laws of man, but involves higher laws and higher callings.

Bono's critique ironically extends to the institution of politics as well. Although Bono is trying to persuade his audience of policymakers to change policies toward aid in Africa, he also realizes that often politics gets in the way of God's work. He explained, "So, even though I was a believer, and—perhaps because I was a believer, I was cynical—not about God, but about God's politics."<sup>101</sup> Simply put, Bono realizes that human beings often make mistakes. If his audience realizes its own transcendental agency, however, it will realize that God's work is *always* with the poor, and thus *must* increase U.S. aid to Africa. Even though the institutions of religion and politics are full of problems, they are still important methods for improving the lives of the poor and



vulnerable. Bono reminds his audience, however, that transcendental agency is crucial in making the *right* kinds of choices regarding these institutions and their policies.

Bono importantly critiques *human* institutions of religion and politics. His second rhetorical appeal to convey transcendental agency lies in Bono's ability to portray God's power in directing humans' agency. For Bono, God knows what is best for humanity, and as faithful Americans and policymakers, we must follow God's calling through realizing our own transcendental agency. God has given us free will for a purpose, and we must strive to fulfill God's higher standards. Bono stated, "Love was on the move. Mercy was on the move. God was on the move. Moving people of all kinds to work with others they had never met, never would have cared to meet...This is what happens when God gets on the move: crazy, crazy stuff happens."<sup>102</sup> In his address to President Bush, Congress, and the American people, Bono thus provides an example of God's power in directing humans' agency. With "God on the move," people from a variety of different backgrounds come together to help the poor in Africa. Even though all followers of the monotheistic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) have transcendental agency, to truly realize that agency, we must follow God's calling to assist the world's poor.

In addition to critiquing institutions and articulating God's ability to influence our own transcendental agency, Bono also locates God with the poor throughout his address at the National Prayer Breakfast. A significant portion of Bono's speech focuses on this concept. He said, "But the one thing we can all agree—all faiths, all ideologies—is that God is with the vulnerable and poor. God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a

virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives, and God is with us if we are with them.”<sup>103</sup> In this passage, Bono unites all faiths by locating God with the poor. He then further visualizes this concept for his audience by offering vivid examples of people who suffer from poverty, AIDS, and war in Africa. If Americans truly realize their own transcendental agency and join God by helping the poor, God will protect them.

In this instance, Bono is connecting transcendental agency and “right” action to national security—a hot-button issue for most Americans, even four years after September 11. Simply put, Bono is telling his audience that if Americans help the poor, God will help Americans by protecting them from terrorism. Bono even turns to President Bush in the address, asking Bush if he wants the Lord to watch his back. Bono explained, “It’s a powerful incentive: ‘The Lord will watch your back.’ Sounds like a good deal to me, especially right now. (Right? The Lord will watch your back. [turning to President Bush] You like that. Okay.)”<sup>104</sup> Bono thus presents a God that is with the poor but is also with those who help the poor, and couches this assistance from the Lord within the American framework (and fear) of terrorism.

Further emphasizing the realization that God is with the poor, and thus Americans must assist the poor, Bono continues by quoting scripture from Matthew 25:40, noting, “It’s not a coincidence that in the Scriptures, poverty is mentioned more than 2,100 times. It’s not an accident. That’s a lot of air time.”<sup>105</sup> If Americans realize the transcendental agency given to them by God, they will follow the Scriptures and notice the overwhelming importance of eliminating poverty in the world. Citing the Scriptures on a

variety of occasions, Bono uses these Biblical verses as evidence that God is with the poor and that Americans should follow his call to eradicate global poverty.

Bono also explains God's position with the poor in another part of his address through narrative. In this brief narrative, Bono frankly tells the story of the Jews' quest for equality from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He said, "I mean you think of these Jewish sheep-herders going to meet with the Pharaoh, mud on their shoes, and the Pharaoh goes, 'Equal? Equal?' And they say, 'Yeah, that's what, that's what it says here in the Book, here. We're all made in the image of God, sir.'...So on we go with the journey of equality."<sup>106</sup> By relating the current quest for equality to the Biblical story of the Jews and Pharaoh, Bono yet again portrays God's location with the poor to American policymakers, asserting that his audience has no excuse for inaction. The frankness of the story is compelling. Thousands of years ago, Jews fought for equality among the Egyptians, and today, Africans are still fighting for equality among Westerners. By making Jews analogous to Africans, Bono asserts that *both* of these groups of people are God's people. Just as God was with the Jews in Egypt, God is with Africans as they struggle for equality from Western nations. As part of the oppressor group, Americans thus *must* realize their own transcendental agency and help the poor because God is with the poor.

### *Existential Agency*

The third type of agency prominent in Bono's address at the National Prayer Breakfast is that of existential agency. This depiction could only exist as a function of the interaction of the previous two types of agency. Although existential agency is broader (in that more people are imbued with this agency) than the preceding two, both

political and transcendental agencies are *antecedent* to existential agency. Existential agency is the realization that human beings must not consider policies without considering their own existence and position of privilege in the world. While political agency comes from the enactment of democratic processes, and transcendental agency comes from the monotheistic belief in free will given by God (mainly in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism), existential agency comes from a more general paradigm of humanism. Simply put, existential agency involves the humanistic view that all lives have value. By articulating existential agency in this address, Bono focuses on rhetoric of unity rather than divisiveness. For Bono, articulating the importance of existential agency to his audience happens through three different types of rhetorical appeals: transcendental agency *compels* the realization of political agency, transcendental agency serves as a *rationale* for political agency, and the *privileging* of transcendental agency over political agency.

In the first rhetorical appeal to convey the importance of existential agency for his audience, Bono uses examples of transcendental agency to *compel* his audience to realize their own political agency. In many of the examples used in his address, Bono both figuratively—and sometimes even literally—speaks of the Spirit moving the audience to political action. In one example, Bono said, “Popes were seen wearing sunglasses! Jesse Helms had a ghetto blaster! Evidence of the Spirit moving. It was really—it was breathtaking. It literally stopped the world in its tracks.”<sup>107</sup> The transcendental agency through the movement of the Spirit compelled Christians to take action through political initiatives and connecting with other groups.

Later speaking of Jesus' ministry, Bono proclaims that Jesus initially declared the year of Jubilee, in which Jesus preaches the good news to the poor. He continued, "What [Jesus] was really talking about was an era of grace—and we're still in it. So fast-forward 2,000 years. That same thought, grace, is now incarnate in a movement of all kinds of people...Love was on the move. Mercy was on the move. God was on the move. Moving people of all kinds to work with others..."<sup>108</sup> In this example, grace is literally "incarnate in a movement of all kinds of people." Transcendental agency given from God, in this instance, *literally* compels people to assist the poor through their own political agency through the Jubilee campaign. Still speaking of the success of the Jubilee campaign in 2000, Bono explains the realization of the Lord's call and how it has historically *compelled* Christians to act through politics. He stated, "[Christians] had the audacity to renew the Lord's call and were joined by Pope John Paul II, who, from [a] Irish-half-Catholic's point of view, may have had a little more of a direct line to the Almighty. But they got together to declare the Year of Jubilee."<sup>109</sup> Guided by transcendental agency offered by God, Christians—including the Pope—took action on the political battlefield, bridging their faith with their daily actions to assist the poor in this world.

In addition to the examples from the Jubilee campaign, Bono also uses this rhetorical appeal to show how transcendental agency *compels unity* through political agency. Toward the end of his speech, Bono explains the importance of seeing faiths united through common political action. He cites similar passages from the New Testament (Christianity), the Koran (Islam), and the Torah (Judaism), showing through Scriptures how all of the faiths are united in the belief that God is always with the poor

and vulnerable in this world. Bono previewed the citation of those Scripture passages, however, with the following paragraph:

It's very easy, in these times, to see religion as a force for division rather than unity. And this is a town—Washington—that knows something of division. But the reason I'm here, and the reason I keep coming back to Washington, is because this is a town that is proving it can come together...It's not a Republican idea. It's not a Democratic idea. It's not even, with all due respect, an American idea; nor it is [sic] unique to any one faith.<sup>110</sup>

This appeal to existential agency asks the audience to consider the purpose of their existence in this world. More importantly however, Bono demonstrates the breadth of God's work across two political parties, three religions, and numerous nations around the globe through this appeal to unity. Bono presents this policy issue as one that is realized through one unified voice that rejects poverty in Africa, which is answered with the realization of Americans' political agency through supporting the ONE campaign. As Bono said, "Well, let's get involved in what God is doing. God, as I say, is always with the poor. That's what God is doing. That's what He's calling us to do."<sup>111</sup> In this example, transcendental agency clearly compels unity through political agency. Americans must get involved in God's work with the poor, and through God's call to action, they must take political action. Bono presents the problem of poverty as one that is consistently a priority for God in three different faiths, and thus the political solution is clear—Americans must support the ONE campaign.

Regarding the organizational structure of the address, Bono presents the unified problem of poverty right before he emphasizes the traditional, democratic appeals to political agency with the ONE campaign. Although the conclusion seemed peculiar upon an initial read, the organizational structure now makes sense. Bono sets up the problem of poverty as God's call for unity across two political parties and three different faiths. He then answers this call in the conclusion of this address, by providing a clear call to action to his audience of Americans, asking them to support the ONE campaign.

Beyond a rhetorical appeal that focuses on the compelling aspect of transcendental agency, Bono also uses a rhetorical appeal that explains transcendental agency as a *rationale* for political agency. Simply put, Bono positions transcendental and political agency in such a way that his audience feels that they need the former to understand how to proceed with the latter. In a lengthy discussion about justice and equality in this address, which echoes appeals made to these concepts in other speeches (including the 2004 British Labour Party address), Bono presents transcendental agency as the standard, or as the rationale, for political agency. He explained, "And finally, getting to higher levels, higher callings: This is not about charity in the end, is it? It's about justice."<sup>112</sup> The higher standard presented by God, through transcendental agency, is justice.

Although people may want to dismiss the issue as one of charity, Bono argues that God's higher standard of justice should serve as the rationale for humanity's political work. Bono continued by giving specific examples of how humanity's laws have consistently fallen short: "Six and half thousand Africans are still dying every day of preventable, treatable disease, for lack of drugs we can buy at any drug store. This is not

about charity: This is about Justice and Equality...So on we go with the journey of equality. On we go in the pursuit of justice.”<sup>113</sup> By giving specific examples of how humanity has fallen short of the transcendental standards of justice and equality, Bono demonstrates to his audience the importance of realizing “higher standards” as a rationale for policies and laws created by humans.

In another example, Bono more explicitly shows the audience how transcendental agency serves as a rationale for political agency, again by pointing out how humanity has failed to meet transcendental standards. He said, “Preventing the poorest of the poor from selling their products while we sing the virtues of the free market, that’s not charity: That’s a justice issue. Holding children ransom for the debts of their grandparents, that’s not charity: That’s a justice issue.”<sup>114</sup> These concrete examples show the blatant injustice of Western policies, and how higher standards such as justice and equality *must* serve as the rationale for man-made laws and political initiatives. Bono thus reinforces the importance of transcendental agency serving as the rationale for political agency. Because God is with the poor and has higher standards for human beings, Americans are thus expected to create man-made laws and policies (through political agency) to assist those who are vulnerable and unprivileged in this world (through transcendental agency). American policymakers must realize that their laws and policies should follow from the realization that they are in a unique position of power, and thus have a responsibility to follow higher standards.

Closely related to transcendental agency serving as the rationale for political agency is Bono’s third rhetorical appeal, in which transcendental agency is *privileged* over political agency. This appeal is different from the former appeal, in that the appeal



in which transcendental agency serves as a *rationale* for political agency involves understanding God's will and realizing compassion in the process of creating man-made policies. In this last appeal, in which transcendental agency is *privileged* over political agency, Bono clearly articulates that God's will and higher standards are what matters, and that they must always be privileged over humans' will and standards.

In continuing his discussion about the laws of this world and higher laws, he speaks directly of his audience's and his own inability to maintain a higher standard. He explained, "I'd like to talk about higher laws. It would be great to assume that once there's the other, that the laws of man serve these higher laws, but, of course, they don't always...And some of us are not very good examples [of serving higher standards], despite what [Senator] Norm [Coleman] says."<sup>115</sup> In this example, Bono clearly privileges transcendental agency over political agency, arguing that humans make a lot of mistakes, but that the higher standards *must*, in the end, prevail. In fact, Bono blatantly says that humanity's appeal to be better individuals—to meet those higher standards—is the reason why the National Prayer Breakfast itself exists. He said, "I presume that, in a way, is why you're all here. I presume the reason for this gathering is that all of us are here—Muslims, Jews, Christians—are all searching our souls for how to better serve our family, our community, our nation, our God."<sup>116</sup> Bono thus privileges transcendental agency over political agency. American policymakers are at the breakfast not because of man-made standards that are created through political agency; rather, they are at this gathering because of their transcendental agency. Transcendental agency—that realization that their position and free will in this world has been given to them for a reason—is thus positioned by Bono as more important than political agency, despite the

fact that Bono is attempting to persuade his audience to support a man-made political initiative through the ONE campaign. By positioning the ONE campaign as an initiative that fulfills those higher standards of justice and equality, however, Bono transforms a man-made policy into a campaign that is directed by God's will and support.

### *Absent Agency*

Bono uses the previous three kinds of agency to explain and imbue his audience with a desire for political advocacy; however, the final type is curiously different from the others. Throughout this address, Bono does not give explicit agency to the subjects of the speech: the victims of poverty in Africa. The absent agency of impoverished Africans is noteworthy because they are the purported *subjects* of the speech. How does Bono create a subject, then, that has no agency in this address? Can this group of Africans really take action to improve their situation if they have no agency? Absent agency in this address functions in two ways: to characterize the nature of the African emergency since Africans cannot help themselves, and to constitute God as the subject for the power- and agency-less.

The first function of absent agency involves characterizing the nature of the rhetorical problem as an emergency. The lack of agency on the part of African citizens in this address forces an American audience to realize that Africans cannot help themselves in this matter; Americans must take up this emergency. Perhaps Bono makes his argument to American policymakers more compelling by making this move, through articulating that in fact *no one* is willing to help these people, and that they do not have the agency to even help themselves. While Americans are imbued with all three of the previous agencies within Bono's speech, in contrast, Africans are not given *any* explicit

agency in the address. When Bono does specifically mention African people, they are constructed in the passive voice and are always *acted upon*, usually in a negative manner by Americans. As Bono said, “Preventing the poorest of the poor from selling their products while we sing the virtues of the free market...Holding children to ransom for the debts of their grandparents...Withholding life-saving medicines out of deference to the Office of Patents, well that’s not charity. To me, that’s a justice issue.”<sup>117</sup> Bono thus ties the absence of African agency to justice and equality, arguing that the real problem lies in Americans’ inability to view Africans as equal. Simply put, Americans have prevented Africans from having any agency because of the larger problems of injustice and inequality. In another example, Bono stated, “Six and a half thousand Africans are still dying every day of preventable, treatable disease, for lack of drugs we can buy at any drug store. This is not about charity: This is about Justice and Equality.”<sup>118</sup> Americans have acted upon the African people in negative ways; by preventing African trade in Western markets, failing to incorporate debt relief, and not allowing medicines into Africa because of patent regulations. In all of these instances, Americans are preventing African agency because of Western greed and self-interest. Bono extends these negative actions, however, to greater issues such as justice and equality, which help characterize this rhetorical problem as an emergency.

Towards the end of the speech, Bono does give some agency to Africans, but this agency is only realized through *American* action and involvement in the ONE campaign. Bono explained, “One percent is the girl in Africa who gets to go to school, thanks to you. One percent is the AIDS patient who gets her medicine, thanks to you. One percent is the African entrepreneur who can start a small family business, thanks to you.”<sup>119</sup> If

Americans follow Bono's call to provide an additional one percent of the federal budget toward poverty in Africa, then—and only then—are Africans given the agency to improve their lives. Through articulating the agency of the poor in this manner, Bono reinforces the idea that Americans have a responsibility to assist the poor. Americans are the individuals with agency and must use their agency to help others. In fact, unless Americans join together through the ONE campaign, Africans will likely never be able to get out of poverty or improve their lives. Through an absence of agency on the part of Africans, Bono's call to support the ONE campaign turns into an even more compelling call to action for the American people and policymakers.

In addition to characterizing the rhetorical problem as one of emergency, an absence of agency also functions to constitute God as the subject for the power- and agency-less. By refraining from giving the poor agency in this address, Bono constitutes God as the subject that actually *becomes* these agency-lacking individuals. As Bono explained, "God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives, and God is with us if we are with them."<sup>120</sup> God thus not only represents the poor; God *is* the poor. Although Bono may not give explicit agency to the African poor, by positioning God as the subject, he makes the stakes of poverty much higher for his privileged audience. An American audience is likely unable to visualize or care about poverty unless it is portrayed as directly affecting them in some way. By making God the subject of the poor, Americans are better able to realize that if

they fail to take action, they are not only being unjust toward the poor; they are failing to help *God*, which may have devastating consequences for Americans.

### **Potential Implications for Rhetoric as an Intellectual Primer for Agency**

After understanding the complex constructions of agency used by Bono in his address at the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast, this section posits implications that help further an understanding of the nature of agency in rhetorical scholarship. This case study demonstrates how rhetoric acts as an intellectual primer for agency. After listening to this address, the audience is compelled to take action because at least *one* of the three distinctions of political, transcendental, and existential agency should resonate with them. These various aspects of agency are rational and intellectually-focused for an immediate audience of policymakers; reason-based appeals are a norm in arguments about policymaking. Three important implications arise from my analysis: Bono's unique articulation of his own political agency through rhetorical public address, an interesting construction of multiple agencies for multiple audiences, and the interactive nature of the four different agencies discussed by Bono in the address.

One of the first implications for better understanding agency lies in realizing how Bono uniquely articulates his own political agency in this speech. As the keynote speaker at the breakfast, Bono certainly is given much rhetorical agency; he is the featured speaker who is given the opportunity to address a powerful audience of American policymakers and world leaders. Although Bono's celebrity status certainly assisted him in having the opportunity to speak with numerous politicians over the years, his political expertise regarding this issue is what enables Bono's rhetorical agency in this instance. Bono's rhetorical agency, however, is not the dominating aspect of agency in

an analysis of his address at the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast. Bono's own political agency becomes the dominating feature when looking at Bono's agency in this speech. While Bono does incorporate some humor in the introduction of the address, which might be an indication of attempting to bolster his rhetorical persona (and agency) as a celebrity politician, the bulk of this address focuses on Bono's advocacy through his own political agency. Bono's status as celebrity politician does not seem to be at issue in the address itself; Bono's speech is a fine example of political advocacy through lobbying his audience of global decision-makers. Thus, the fact that Bono is not an American politician does not come up during the address. Bono's political agency is understood as a given through his request for political action from his audience, and an analysis of his address shows that this political agency is seemingly never questioned during the speech.

In addition to Bono's unique articulation of his own political agency, the speech itself shows an interesting construction of multiple agencies for multiple audiences. Although Bono's goal is religious unity on the issues of global poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa, his construction of multiple agencies appeals to a variety of different audiences from different faiths and backgrounds. By utilizing so many different depictions of agency, Bono includes all of the different facets of his various audiences. For example, Bono's use of political agency appeals to his audiences of American policymakers, President Bush, and the American people by affirming and applauding their democratic processes as an indication of their political agency and potential to change the world. Bono's use of transcendental agency appeals to a unifying characteristic found in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—all of these faiths believe in a God who has given individuals free will. The portrayal of existential agency in this speech is an even more general

appeal to humanity; by arguing that all lives have value, Bono includes the rest of his audience who may have felt precluded by political (American) or transcendental (Islam-Judeo-Christian) agency. Interestingly, the one group not given explicit agency in Bono's speech—victims of poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa—are articulated throughout the address as receiving agency *only* when Americans (and other Western nations) realize their own agency and support the ONE campaign.

Beyond utilizing multiple agencies to appeal to multiple audiences, another interesting implication involves the interactive nature of the four different agencies in the address. Not only does Bono use four different depictions of agency, he also demonstrates how the various agencies are interactive, emphasizing the importance of a broader global involvement and interaction regarding this political issue of poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa. For instance, political and transcendental agencies in this address interact within the third depiction of existential agency. The absent agency of Africans is made opaque only through Americans' realization of their own political agency. By depicting the four different agencies as interactive, Bono shows his audiences (and the rest of the world) that this rhetorical problem is one that is shared by *all* of humanity, and thus the political solution must also involve people from all around the world, with different economic backgrounds, races, nations, political affiliations, and faiths. After this speech, audience members should realize that differences are not important; religious and political unity are more important—and are in fact, necessary—when considering political issues such as poverty and disease. Bono seamlessly connects political, religious, and philosophical appeals altogether in one address. By presenting these wide-ranging appeals as rationales for political action, the audience has no excuse for inaction after

hearing this speech; everyone has at least one of these agencies from which to get involved in “God’s politics.”

The 54<sup>th</sup> annual National Prayer Breakfast may have seemed like an ordinary, political event upon first glance. After an in-depth rhetorical analysis of Bono’s keynote address at the breakfast, however, this chapter demonstrates the complex constructions of agency that are present throughout the speech. Despite his celebrity status, Bono focuses on the facts and policy concerns surrounding this issue, demonstrating his knowledge of Africa’s dire situation. Bono’s political agency in this address is antecedent to his requests for political action, and the speech itself is an excellent example of traditional political advocacy through lobbying. This case study thus begins to shed some light on how Bono constructs agency appeals for his audiences. In the following chapter, I attempt to understand Bono’s appeals to agency within a completely different form of a rock concert, through an analysis of U2’s Vertigo Tour as represented on the DVD, *Vertigo 2005: U2 Live from Chicago*.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RHETORIC AS AN EXPERIENTIAL PRIMER FOR AGENCY:

#### POLITICAL REVIVAL AT A ROCK CONCERT

*Sing! For Dr. King, for Dr. King's dream...for a dream big enough to fill the whole world...where everyone is created equal under the eyes of God...EVERYONE!...Not just an American dream, or an Asian dream, or a European dream—but also an African dream.*

Bono, U2's *Vertigo* 2005 DVD<sup>121</sup>

These remarks may seem both too religious and too political for a rock concert, but U2's lead singer Bono speaks the words with passion and political resolve. Combining spoken rhetoric with the sensory experiences of a U2 concert, Bono's message takes a unique shape within the text of U2's DVD of the concert. The form of this concert rhetoric has important implications for collective agency. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell explains, agency "is effected through form,"<sup>122</sup> and the collective agency within a rhetorical community at a rock concert is one example of how agency is protean,<sup>123</sup> quickly changing from the traditional (through Bono's rhetoric before and after songs) to the phenomenological (through sound, lighting, and a sense of collectivity at the concert). While Chapter 2 explained Bono's political savvy through his appeals to multiple forms of agency within a more traditional rhetorical form of public address, this chapter conceptualizes less-traditional appeals to agency to explain how a sense of collective agency might be formed.

Specifically, I propose that these appeals resemble those historically found within religious revivals and political rallies. Looking at the characteristics of these two forms of events is an important place for a critic to begin when looking at the political function of a rock concert today. Not only have both of these cultural archetypes pervaded American culture and public life;<sup>124</sup> the characteristics of such archetypes are apparent when looking at a similar context of a rock concert today, which also involves the importance of pilgrimage, a dynamic crowd, the possibility of transformation, and carefully designed sensory experiences.

To better understand the protean nature of collective agency and its function,<sup>125</sup> this chapter focuses on the representation of U2's popular Vertigo Tour concerts through the *Vertigo 2005: U2 Live from Chicago* DVD. In 2005, Vertigo Tour grossed \$260 million and drew more than three million people for over 90 concerts, all of which were sold-out.<sup>126</sup> During their second leg of the tour, U2 recorded their concerts in Chicago (May 9-10, 2005) for a DVD of the tour entitled, *Vertigo 2005: U2 Live from Chicago*, which was released in November 2005. This DVD serves as a specific textual example that represents one instance of the rhetoric within U2's popular concert tours.<sup>127</sup>

Using the DVD as my text, I suggest that U2's Vertigo Tour draws on the experiential appeals and rituals found in cultural archetypes such as religious revivals and political rallies by functioning as a third form I label "political revival," which may be understood as a hybrid of the two. Some of the experiential appeals used in revivals include their occurrence at night, the importance of the crowd and the music, and the goal of conversion,<sup>128</sup> whereas some of the appeals used in rallies involve the use of large visual props like banners and flags, the energy of the crowd, and the importance of

charismatic political leaders who increase the audience's commitment to the political group.<sup>129</sup> In both revivals and rallies, individuals often make an initial pilgrimage to the event, and after a transformation while attending the event, they are compelled to practice a kind of "evangelism" to convert others to their beliefs or political platform.<sup>130</sup> This aspect of evangelism is important because the goal of a revival or rally involves the participants getting to a higher level of involvement or commitment, which is where agency comes to fruition.

For agency to be realized, however, rhetoric serves as a necessary primer. In the last chapter, I proposed that Bono's rhetoric in his speech at the National Prayer Breakfast functions as an *intellectual* primer for agency. In this chapter, however, I explore how the text of a U2 concert as represented on DVD reveals that Bono's rhetoric may function as an *experiential* primer for agency. Similarly, whereas the last chapter contributed to the importance of traditional reason-giving within rhetoric, this chapter seeks to understand how we experience the feeling of agency in less rational ways, initially through a sense of collective unity.

Unity is an important precursor for agency; unity prepares a crowd for agency in both visual and aural ways through shared experiences. Bono articulates reasons to get involved in African debt and poverty relief via traditional speeches such as the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast,<sup>131</sup> but Bono and U2 use another form via a concert DVD to call for political action in a different manner. How does agency function in this non-political medium of a rock concert, as opposed to the multiple agencies within Bono's keynote address at the National Prayer Breakfast? U2 uses concert events to prime fans' political agency, and my analysis will show how by attending to the *form* of the event

itself as a hybrid of religious revivals and political rallies while also considering the verbal, visual, and experiential content. After my analysis, I present implications for political rhetoric and collective agency, fostering further discussion about how this form of political revival primes the audience for agency to partake in a practice I call “political evangelism.”

### **Analysis of the *Vertigo 2005: U2 Live from Chicago* DVD**

My analysis focuses on how U2’s Vertigo Tour functions as a hybrid of two familiar forms—religious revivals and political rallies—that prepare U2 concert-goers (as DVD viewers) to engage and critique politics through a third form of political revival. Through establishing a rhetorical community for concert-goers similar to the one formed in events such as religious revivals and political rallies, political revival encourages collective unity that prepares the audience for collective agency. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell articulates how agency can be collective: “...[A]gency is communal, social, cooperative, and participatory and, simultaneously, constituted and constrained by the material and symbolic elements of context and culture.”<sup>132</sup> My analysis thus attempts to understand how both the material and symbolic aspects of rhetoric interact within the rhetorical form of a rock concert—to further understand how both the event and the content of the rock concert prime collective agency within the audience.

In the first part of my analysis then, I focus on the rhetorical form of U2’s rock concert as political revival, drawing on the shared appeals and characteristics of transformation within revivals and rallies while demonstrating that these appeals are an expectation for the form of political revival. In the second section of my analysis, I propose that the sensory experiences of the concert build collective unity, in essence

preparing the audience for agency. The third part of my analysis focuses on an invitation for audience participation and establishes that once collective unity occurs, the political revival leader—who in this case is Bono—guides the transformative experience for the audience, which is where unity begins to turn into agency; Bono sends out various calls for participation, and the audience actively responds in a variety of ways. The final section of my analysis builds upon the first three: the expectations for the rhetorical form of a political revival assist the audience in being open to a feeling of collective unity through shared sensory experiences, and the political revival leader guides the transformation of that unity into agency for audience members. After these moments occur, the audience experiences identification with Bono and the rest of U2 (the political revival leaders), completing that transformation and engaging in political evangelism. I describe political evangelism and how the revived and transformed audience is now compelled to take the message “to the streets,” getting involved in politics through interacting with those who have yet to experience this transformation.

#### *The Rhetorical Form of U2’s Rock Concert as Political Revival*

To understand how collective agency functions within U2’s Vertigo Tour, one must first realize how transformation and agency occur within previous events geared toward this same goal, namely religious revivals and political rallies. This section of my analysis describes the overlapping characteristics of both forms, focusing on how both traditions involve an initial pilgrimage to the event (which can take the form of a physical, rhetorical, or vicarious pilgrimage), emphasize the dynamic of the crowd, entail a transformative experience that occurs at the event, and involve an importance of taking “their work” to the next level by spreading the message through a kind of evangelism that

can be political or religious.<sup>133</sup> The form of the event serves both as a set of generic expectations that may be present in audience members or DVD viewers, and as elements that must be understood from the perspective of the critic before they can be applied to this specific case study. The audience has specific expectations for a U2 concert in addition to formal ones, so I briefly revisit U2's history of political involvement as an important audience expectation.

The first shared characteristic of both religious revivals and political rallies involves the initial pilgrimage to the event. Before an individual can experience transformation and thus agency at an event, that individual must first make the journey to the event. Donn James Tilson asserts that "spiritual journeys, or pilgrimages, are one expression of the global faith phenomenon."<sup>134</sup> Although Tilson is referring to a *physical* pilgrimage to a sacred place or political event, an initial pilgrimage need not be physical. Beyond the actual journey to arrive to the concert, for instance, concert-goers take a *rhetorical* pilgrimage through their sensory experiences throughout the concert.

The overtly phenomenological component to the concert enhances the rhetorical pilgrimage, making the concert-goer aware of his/her surroundings and the surreal experience of a spiritually- and politically-inspired concert experience. For example, rhetorical scholar Marouf Hasian Jr. enacts a rhetorical pilgrimage of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) within his essay. He provides the reader with a "...rhetorical pilgrimage of the USHMM that allows critics to view and assess the arguments that are made by the architects, curators, scholars, council members, planners, and other participants who are interested in preserving particularly American remembrances of the Holocaust."<sup>135</sup> In describing his own rhetorical pilgrimage through

the museum, Hasian Jr. argues that the pilgrim's rhetorical journey is important to constructing and altering the pilgrim's present and future identities. Similarly, when U2 concert-goers undergo a rhetorical pilgrimage, those sensory experiences necessarily influence their initial individual conceptions of collectivity and action.

Communication scholar Roger C. Aden articulates pilgrimage in a different manner than Hasian Jr. Through narrative, our investment in stories, and as simply "fans" of cultural phenomena, Aden suggests that we often take symbolic pilgrimages to places he calls "promised lands," to escape the often brutal reality and materiality of day-to-day life. Aden explains the nature of these "promised lands:" "By 'promised lands,' I mean the symbolic visions shared by a culture that provide a destination, unique to the culture, where the members of the culture expect to find ultimate fulfillment."<sup>136</sup>

Whereas Hasian Jr.'s rhetorical pilgrimage through the USHMM actually involves movement and a journey through the museum, Aden argues for a symbolic pilgrimage that takes place within our imaginations. Aden believes a symbolic pilgrimage is the only way for humans to construct sacred places within a fragmented postmodern culture. He explains his notion of symbolic pilgrimage:

...A symbolic pilgrimage is an imaginative, ritual journey to a sacred place that is constructed out of the rhetorical fragments possessed by the fan and the text. This sacred place exists in a liminoid space that is in between the space of the popular story and the material environment of the fan.<sup>137</sup>

Symbolic pilgrimages thus help us to escape from every-day material problems and banality through our imaginary journeys and shared experiences as fans of stories, films, and other cultural phenomena.

Building upon Aden's notion of pilgrimage, I use different terminology to describe the initial pilgrimage of a DVD viewer as *vicarious* rather than symbolic. Although the screen may be perceived as a divide between the DVD viewer and experiencing the sensory experiences of the concert, by showing the viewer the "behind the scenes" technology and design of the tour, the viewer is still a contributor to those shared sensory experiences based on "insider" knowledge of the concert's design. Not only does the viewer see how the audience transforms collectively through shared sensory experiences; that individual is also aware of U2's involvement in fostering that kind of an atmosphere for the audience. The sensory experiences are thus still poignant to the DVD viewer, and in conjunction with the "behind the scenes" display of the tour, the viewer feels empowered and more knowledgeable after the vicarious pilgrimage has taken place. Thus, while rhetorical pilgrimage involves sensory experiences as a participant becomes involved in an event (such as a concert), vicarious pilgrimage is more abstract and takes place within the participant's imagination (such as the mediated experience of watching a DVD). Before a participant can become transformed or partake in evangelism, he or she must first experience physical, rhetorical, or vicarious pilgrimage to be open to the transformation.

After an individual makes the initial pilgrimage to the revival or rally, the dynamic of the crowd becomes especially important in both religious revivals and political rallies.<sup>138</sup> Whereas revivals and rallies have often incorporated media such as



the press to “spread the good news” or the “correct political message,”<sup>139</sup> Bono uses U2 concerts such as Vertigo Tour to distribute his political message primarily through the sensory experiences of a crowd. The dynamic of the crowd is an important part of the tradition of tent revivals and is fundamental in understanding how sensory experiences lead to a sense of collective unity at a U2 concert.<sup>140</sup> As media and religion scholar Bruce J. Evensen writes, “Together [revival leaders] crafted a civic spectacle of unprecedented proportions. There was something in the sight of 10,000 penitents under a single roof that ‘thrilled the soul’ of a believer...”<sup>141</sup> The sheer number of individuals that compose a crowd is often enough to energize an individual within that crowd. The smells, sights, and sounds that people experience while in a crowd are compelling; we all enjoy “people-watching” in a crowd and are aptly aware of our collectivity when in a crowd of thousands. Communication scholars Carolyn Marvin and Peter Simonson describe the crowd dynamic through a term called “congregational communication,” explaining that “...to congregate meant to make oneself a companion and accompany others in mingling, singing, fighting, or worshipping.”<sup>142</sup> This type of embodied participation was also noted by rhetorical scholar Michael William Pfau. In his essay about the history of deliberation at political conventions, he describes the importance of spontaneity and solidarity within crowd participation.<sup>143</sup> Although both Marvin and Simonson and Pfau are mainly talking about the political participation of these crowds in a historical sense, this notion of the dynamic crowd sheds light on the importance of sensory experiences represented on U2’s DVD of Vertigo Tour, and how those shared experiences are important in fostering unity.

In addition to the importance of a crowd dynamic, both religious revivals and political rallies focus on a transformative experience that occurs among individuals within the crowd, often between audience members and the revival or rally leaders. Religious revival, for instance, can be thought of as a surprising work of God combined with human agency, but revival is ultimately grounded in the importance of spiritual experience as a transformation.<sup>144</sup> Revival participants experience a conversion; some participants may even become “filled with the Spirit” and behaviorally transform before the other participants’ eyes. Likewise, in political rallies—and especially political conventions—ritual often plays a key role in guiding this transformation of the audience to a higher level of commitment. Communication scholar Thomas B. Farrell argued decades ago that the 1976 Democratic convention was a “ritual of legitimation” in which a convention theme guides the ritual and culminates in the legitimation of the convention’s nominee, who symbolizes and enacts the theme.<sup>145</sup> The convention leader thus guides the audience’s transformation of increased commitment to the party through ritualistic practices.

One such practice is often through the nomination acceptance address at conventions. As William L. Benoit, Kevin A. Stein and Glenn J. Hansen explain, “[N]omination acceptance addresses are watched by millions. Approximately one-quarter of the electorate decide their presidential vote during the conventions and the candidates’ acceptance addresses are the convention’s climax.”<sup>146</sup> Even if the address is mediated to the public, millions of individuals are still interested in a political nominee’s guiding thoughts for the party; the successful and charismatic nominee will increase the party members’ commitment and involvement. An engaging leader of a political rally or social

movement relies on the characteristics of charisma, prophecy, and pragmatism to guide the transformation of political participants to a higher level of dedication.<sup>147</sup> Not only must a leader be charismatic through giving awe-inspiring speeches; a successful leader derives legitimacy from prophetic sources or simply has a sense of knowing the “truth” for the political group. Such a leader also gains legitimacy from pragmatic matters such as organizational expertise, efficiency, and tact.<sup>148</sup> These characteristics of a revival or rally leader shed light on how the leader guides the transformation of the audience at the event, and are important in understanding *how* Bono is able to guide an audience’s transformation from unity to collective agency.

Beyond the immediate transformation that occurs at religious revivals and political rallies, individuals are also expected to draw on their transformations at the events and extend their reach outward to others in future actions through a kind of evangelism, which can be religious or political. This kind of evangelism is important because the goal of a revival or rally involves getting to a higher level of involvement or commitment in which the individual seeks to change the behaviors and/or attitudes of *others*. Thus evangelism is the most important aspect in understanding how collective action is transformed from unity (through the collective unity in the crowd) to agency (through collective agency in political and/or religious action in the world). Religious revival, for instance, has a strong connection to this type of evangelism:

Most Christian revivals have as their object some sort of conversion or experience of grace in the individual. Very often that experience is instantaneous and datable, after the manner of such spectacular conversions as those of Saints Paul and Augustine. Others are less

spectacular, and some people prefer to see their spiritual lives as pilgrimages. Modern revivalism, particularly owes a great deal to pietism, with its emphasis on personal probity and attention to the disciplines of spirituality.<sup>149</sup>

Religious revivals have an important element of conversion, or transformation that goes beyond the initial revival event. Additionally, if an individual attending a revival believes that his/her entire *life* is a pilgrimage toward such a conversion, the importance of evangelism becomes apparent. If someone believes he/she is undergoing a conversion over a lifetime, that person has a commitment to improving the world and reaching out to others who have yet to hear the “good news.”

This kind of evangelism is also reinforced through religious revival’s focus on living a moral (albeit temporal) life through advocating for political change.<sup>150</sup> As Mary Elaine Hegland writes, “If supporters of the religious resurgence have as a principal aim the improvement of temporal life...they also believe governments to be the appropriate and/or effective agents of bringing about such improvements. The religious revival is highly visible in interaction between proponents of revival and governments.”<sup>151</sup>

Although Hegland is primarily writing about a broader, cultural religious revival, participants in tent-show religious revivals are also invested in politics and engage the traditional system of politics to enact social change. This investment in the political system is characteristic of what is happening in political evangelism. U2’s Vertigo Tour fosters this kind of outward effort to “convert” others to supporting the political issues that are so salient at the initial event of participating in the concert or watching the DVD.

Political evangelism is also a likely expectation for the audience based on the history of U2 and their political involvement.<sup>152</sup> Because of both Bono and U2's political commitments, audience members or DVD viewers may come to the event with an expectation for politics to be featured at the concert. These expectations help describe the form of political revival and show how form itself is about priming the audience for a particular kind of agency that focuses on the experiential. Looking closer at the content within the DVD concert experience, the rest of my analysis shows the different kinds of opportunities for the audience to become involved participants in their transformation toward agency.

#### *Collective Unity through Shared Sensory Experiences*

Once individuals commit to making a pilgrimage—whether physical, rhetorical, or vicarious—they are expecting a certain kind of experience at a political revival. In my analysis of U2's *Vertigo 2005* DVD, the sensory experiences of the concert-goers were crucial in creating a spiritual bond between the audience and the band—and especially between the audience and Bono. For example, Marouf Hasian Jr. describes how the design of the USHMM emphasizes the sensory experiences of the visitor: “Journeys through new museums thus become sensory experiences that involve the co-production of meaning, as both rhetors and their audiences are involved in the process of remembrance.”<sup>153</sup> Similarly, sensory experiences at a U2 concert emphasize the co-production of meaning, but this meaning is inevitably directed by U2 to a goal of political action. The sensory experiences of *Vertigo* Tour are an example of the interaction of the “material, symbolic, and purposeful dimensions of rhetoric.”<sup>154</sup> Three components work together to create sensory experiences that culminate in a sense of unity for the DVD

viewer as concert-goer: lighting, sound, and Bono's use of props. The goal of this section is to establish that the lighting and sound of the DVD foster intense sensory experiences, drawing on the dynamic of the crowd, invoking collective unity which is assisted by the use of props, and thereby preparing the audience for collective political agency after their transformation at the concert or by watching the DVD.

The first component that assists in heightening the audience's sensory experiences of *Vertigo 2005* involves the lighting of the tour. The concert opens with U2 playing the song, "City of Blinding Lights," during which confetti comes down from the ceiling along with bright yellow lighting, creating an intense spectacle. The lights pulse with the beats of the song (which are emphasized with the sound of the bass guitar), accentuating the powerful connection between light and sound, vision and hearing. During the song "Vertigo," lights are again an important aspect of positioning the concert-goer into an actual state of vertigo:<sup>155</sup> the red lighting is vivid, deflecting and reflecting, moving quickly around the auditorium and quickly creating a disorienting spectacle of light. Using disorienting lighting blinds individuals within the audience and highlights the crowd as a whole. Given the expectation of a strong crowd dynamic within the form of political revival, this kind of lighting contributes to a reliance on collectivity because of the intensity of the shared sensory experiences.

The song "Beautiful Day" is also filled with lighting that enhances this sense of spectacle. The ellipse itself (the stage that extends out into the audience) changes colors, exhibiting every color of the rainbow. Sensory experiences are enhanced with this colorful lighting because the concert-goers may feel as though they are right in front of a rainbow; the vivid lighting along with the music creates an intensely spiritual experience.

This experience matches the song's lyrics that reference the Old Testament story of Noah and the flood ("after the flood all the colors came out") and the rainbow that signified God's promise to his chosen people (the sons of Abraham—who are represented by Judaism, Christianity, *and* Islam) to never forsake them. The use of rainbow-colored lighting within Beautiful Day thus reinforces Bono's larger political message of religious and political unity—and hope—on the issue of poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa. These visual experiences surrounding the lighting are important in understanding how unity is created through a rhetorical community. Being in a dark room with thousands of cheering individuals all chanting the lyrics to the same song is a powerful experience of unity, providing the audience with a sense that the individual is part of something greater, and that unity is an important step toward action.

Lighting works with sound throughout the concert in creating sensory experiences for the audience that foster unity. Although all of the songs use sound as a primary mode for the audience's shared sensory experiences, a few of the songs in particular utilize sound to enhance an explicitly *political* kind of experience. During a part of the concert in which the political design seems most apparent (the set list moves from one political song to the next, with Bono speaking in between songs about different political issues), the band utilizes sound to reaffirm the political nature of their message and call for unity. Before the song, "Miracle Drug," which is a song Bono wrote regarding his experiences of talking with people in Africa living with HIV/AIDS, Bono speaks to the audience, preparing them for the political set list to follow. Bono says, "We don't really look back that much in our music; we don't look at the past. The best bits of the past we try to bring with us; they're our songs...they're the best bits of the past and we'll take them

with us. ‘Cause we’re interested, we’re excited, and we have faith in the future—that’s where we’re headed.” He talks about how U2 is headed for the future, but that the band intends to bring the political songs from their past with them, because these songs have informed their future.

Bono explains that U2 is excited for the future, and following the song “Sometimes You Can’t Make it On Your Own” (a song about Bono’s relationship with his father), the band plays the first song in the overtly political set list: “Love and Peace or Else.” In this song, bright red lights (that invoke the war and/or fire in the lyrics of the song) accompany the piercing sound of missiles and other war sounds of planes and flying. During this song, Larry Mullen (the drummer) is positioned at the front of the ellipse, drumming on a separate, large drum that sounds like a call to war. Even by itself, the intense lighting would alter the crowd’s senses and behavior; in concert with sounds of war and planes, the lighting takes on an even higher level of importance in putting audience members in a mood of collectivity. The lighting and sound emphasize the importance of the crowd; the dark arena, with only the lights and sounds of war and fire, is conducive to persuading the crowd to rely on a sense of collective unity to experience the concert. The intense lighting and sound diminish an individual’s senses and thus heighten the shared sensory experiences of the audience as a collective.

The appeal to unity also occurs through Bono’s use of props during part of the concert. During “Love and Peace or Else,” Bono puts on a “coexist” headband, which features the symbols of the Islamic moon to represent the letter “c,” the Jewish star of David to represent the “x,” and the Christian cross to represent the “t.” After putting on the headband during the song, Bono takes over the war drumming from Mullen, who



returns back to his drum set on the main stage. The song ends with loud drumming by Bono, and then the band begins the guitar part from “Sunday Bloody Sunday,” an old U2 song that is very popular and that the audience on the DVD immediately recognizes. Before the song begins, Bono speaks for awhile about the nature of the “coexist” headband. He declares, “Why fight when we all have one God?!” The “coexist” headband is a concrete representation of Bono’s political message of religious unity for his audience. By emphasizing religious unity through wearing the headband, Bono becomes a representation of what that kind of religious unity might look like in a political arena, emphasizing a call to find political common ground amidst religious diversity. For Bono, religious unity means unified political action on the issues of poverty, debt, and HIV/AIDS in Africa. Bono’s wearing the “coexist” headband is an appeal aimed at initiating the type of transformation found in both religious revivals and political rallies. As a charismatic leader, Bono hopes to foster a “conversion” in his audience so that they become politically involved in his political work; establishing collective unity in the audience is an important first step toward achieving that kind of transformation in his audience.

In conjunction with wearing the “coexist” headband, Bono also uses an Irish tri-color flag to appeal to unity. Following “Love and Peace or Else,” the band begins to play “Sunday Bloody Sunday,” a well-known U2 song even for non-fans. During the beginning of the song, an audience member hands Bono the Irish tri-color flag, which is symbolic because the song “Sunday Bloody Sunday” was originally about Ireland’s conflict between Protestants and Catholics, during which many people were killed on a day that came to be known as “Bloody Sunday” in Ireland. The theme of unity is thus

implicit in Bono's use of the Irish tri-color flag; the colors are green, white, and orange, with green representing (Catholic) Ireland, white representing peace between (Catholic) Ireland and (Protestant) Northern Ireland, and orange representing the Unionist (Protestant) faction of Northern Ireland.<sup>156</sup> The symbolic unity present in the Irish flag is another powerful way that Bono emphasizes religious and political unity; the conflict in Ireland is one that could be resolved if religious and political differences were set aside to focus instead on improving the lives of the people living amidst this conflict.

While holding the Irish tri-color flag, Bono continues to talk about the concept of "coexist," chanting: "Jesus, Jew, Muhammed, it's true" and saying that all are sons of Abraham. Focusing on religious unity through the "coexist" headband, Bono thus fosters a sense of collective unity within his audience by highlighting that all are indeed "sons of Abraham," united in one God. Again, the crowd dynamic here is important. Achieving collective unity regarding religion is certainly not an easy feat; however, the energy and anonymity of a crowd fosters that kind of a collective unity. Even if someone in the crowd is Hindu, no one will ever know, and the energy of the crowd can be enough of a catalyst to transform that Hindu into one small part of a *collective*, unified crowd at that moment, despite the disparity of *individuals'* actual religious practices.

After the song "Sunday Bloody Sunday," sounds of war—such as missile strikes and war planes zooming by—are again played in the background, and the band begins the song "Bullet the Blue Sky." This is another political war song about the negative effects of war, especially regarding women and children, and Bono continues to wear the "coexist" headband. After this song, Bono begins to sing "Johnny Comes Marching Home," and visuals and sounds of war planes appear on the four jumbo screens above the

band. This song is an Irish-American folk song that was first sung during the Civil War to indicate the longing that individuals felt for their loved ones to return home from war. Because this aspect of the political set list involves an articulation of the negative effects of war, this song's inclusion at this point in the DVD is not surprising. During this brief song, Bono takes off the "coexist" headband and uses it as a blindfold. He then blindly reaches out to the audience at first—as if in a trance—and then positions his hands up into the air, as though in supplication. This position could also be read as that of a person being handcuffed or otherwise restrained, but the action is regardless a kind of plea to another person or higher power.

Bono's behavior of reaching out while seemingly in a trance hints at the type of behavioral changes that often occur during conversions of individuals at religious revivals. Bono sings the lyrics, "These are the Hands that Built America," which is the refrain from a U2 song about Irish immigrants in the U.S, but then returns to the song "Johnny Comes Marching Home," singing: "Johnny—as long as he comes back to Illinois—comes marching..." Bono mentions Illinois and Chicago throughout the DVD, mainly to appeal to the immediate audience's home state and hometown. Few aspects of a person's identity are more conducive to collectivity and unity than the hometown of an individual, and Bono certainly utilizes this appeal to collective unity throughout the concert. Singing "Johnny Comes Marching Home" is a direct reference to American troops fighting abroad in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Bono explicitly mentions this reference to the troops as the band transitions to the song, "Running to Stand Still." Bono says, "This is for the brave young men and women of the United States," which relates to the American cultural theme of supporting the troops and certainly fosters a sense of

collective unity among the crowd. Toward the end of the song, Bono again emphasizes his (and U2's) support of American troops and says: "This is a prayer for anyone who has a sister or brother overseas, or in danger, or whatever." Bono thus tells the audience—including the DVD viewer—that U2 is all for supporting American troops, even if the band has been explicitly non-supportive of President Bush's terrorism policies. By drawing on the theme of supporting the troops, Bono thus fosters collective unity among audience members in the crowd at the price of talking about dissent regarding the motives of the war. The dismissal of dissent is certainly a concern with this kind of concert rhetoric. Collective agency can only be realized through collective unity, and thus disagreements among different people in the audience are seemingly overlooked to achieve collective unity. The disparagement of individualism within this rhetorical approach is certainly a limitation of Bono's political rhetoric; rhetoric that focuses on building unity simply does not allow for political dissent, which can potentially contribute to political fundamentalism and the oversight of citizens' concerns.

After the dedication of the song as a prayer for American troops and families, Bono sings "Hallelujah," and the four jumbo visual screens display the UN Human Rights declaration, which scrolls down the screen, along with a reading of the declaration by a young woman with what sounds like a Chinese accent. The Human Rights declaration is featured prominently; the stage area darkens, so that the attention of the DVD viewer is directed to the screen and the young woman featured through fog smoke beside the screen, reading the declaration. The display of the Human Rights declaration, after a song that is played "for the brave young men and women of the United States" is

significant; Bono is appealing to the importance of human rights in light of U.S. soldier abuse atrocities.

By designing the concert to feature human rights after an appeal supporting U.S. troops, while emphasizing the declaration on the DVD, U2 is presenting a political message to Americans that demonstrates that the American people can be supportive of their troops while *simultaneously* becoming advocates for human rights worldwide. Collective unity is highlighted through the DVD in this example by focusing on American community through supporting the troops, using lighting to emphasize the declaration itself, and deploying sounds of a young Asian woman reading the rights that presumably have been denied either to her or to her fellow countrywomen and men. The sound and lyrics of U2's music, working concomitantly with lighting, thus reinforce shared sensory experiences, allowing the audience to build a sense of collective unity for political education and action. In this example of the human rights declaration especially, U2 has designed the concert so as to foster a sense of American collectivity and political awareness, priming the audience with the unity to later engage in activism. If this concert was recorded in a different country, the appeals to unity would likely be different (i.e., U2 would likely not dedicate a song to a country's fighting troops, but would focus on other culturally relevant themes according to the location of the event).

Throughout the DVD, lighting, sound, and Bono's use of props heighten concertgoers' sensory experiences, which along with the dynamic of the crowd help establish a collective unity among audience members through both religious and political appeals to unity. In order to transform that unity into agency, however, the audience must develop a relationship with the political revival leader. The transformation must take place through

the political revival leader because of the nature of the leader-crowd dynamic. Although individuals do embark on that initial pilgrimage through their own volition, which does indicate a certain level of agency, the leader's level of agency is much greater than the audience's agency *before* their transformation, and thus the relationship between the leader and the audience is vital in understanding how unity transforms into agency. Bono initiates this transformation through various types of invitations for audience participation in their own conversion.

*Bono as Political Revival Leader: Transformation through Invitation for Participation*

Although various kinds of invitations for audience participation are used by Bono to guide the transformation from unity to agency, call and response is perhaps the most persuasive regarding the form of the event. Call and response is a shared feature of both religious revival and political rallies that focuses on the interactions between the religious or political leader and his/her audience.<sup>157</sup> The goal of this section is to describe how Bono functions as a charismatic political revival leader. In a manner similar to leaders of religious revivals and political rallies, Bono guides and directs his audience through offering various opportunities for audience participation in their transformation, helping the "followers" in the audience to feel renewed and change their lives through conversion and a higher level of involvement in the political group. By taking on this role, Bono facilitates the audience's transformation at the event from a notion of collective unity (established through shared sensory experiences in the previous section) to eventual political action through collective agency. In the *Vertigo 2005* DVD, Bono invites the audience to participate in four different ways: a technological call and response, a verbal

call for political action, a visual call for experiential participation, and a visual call for enthymematic critique.

The first invitation for participation is a technological call and response through the audience texting Bono to join the ONE campaign. Bono asks the audience to bring out their cell phones and talks about how cell phones are “dangerous little devices.” The auditorium turns completely black, positioning the illuminating light of the cell phones as the only light in the arena. The camera shot spans the audience of little cell phone lights, which reminds the viewer of the historical significance of lighters in past rock concerts. Bono says: “We’re not looking for your money—we’re looking for your voice.” He asks the audience to text UNITE to sign up for the ONE campaign, and then the song “One” actually begins (the quiet playing of the bass line and guitar becomes louder, signifying the beginning of the song), with the four jumbo visual screens mostly displaying Bono throughout the song. When Bono talks about the ONE campaign, he says, “We’re going to make poverty history. That’s what we are called to do.” The four jumbo screens above Bono read, “Text UNITE.” At the end of the song, Bono and the Edge sing “Call,” and Bono says, “Call me.” Bono thus calls for his audience to use their cell phones to text and call him, in order to join the ONE campaign and the political effort to eliminate poverty in Africa. Ironically, the response in this instance is literally making a call to Bono.

This use of cell phone technology by Bono is ingenious; through this minor request to his audience, he adds thousands of names to the ONE campaign’s petition to increase the U.S. aid contribution to Africa to one percent of U.S. GDP. As the political revival leader, Bono thus fosters the realization of collective agency within his audience;

he is not asking for their money but rather for their collective *voice*. Asking for the audience's voice is asking the audience of concert-goers to transform to a higher level of commitment to African poverty and debt relief because such a commitment involves more investment from the audience than simply giving money to a cause. This technological call and response thus focuses both on individual and collective agency; individuals are called to text Bono, but the campaign as a whole can only have political force with policymakers through the collectivity of audience members' names. The collective agency thus holds more weight than individual agency in this case, because the campaign can only be materially successful when a significant number of American citizens become committed to the campaign, sending a message to their congressional representatives to support the policy initiative.

Although the technological call and response best follows the "call and response" model that draws from religious revivals and political rallies, the other types of invitations for audience participation are equally important in providing the audience with opportunities to participate in their transformation from unity to agency. The second type of invitation for audience participation involves concert-goers' verbal response to Bono's call for political action at the event. Although at some level this kind of participation appears to be the devotion of the fans, we must take a closer look at *when* and *why* such an invitation for participation occurs. For instance, in songs such as "Elevation," "Pride," "Sunday Bloody Sunday," and "One," Bono prompts the audience to sing the lyrics or a descant that accompanies Bono to the song. Importantly, most of the appeals for verbal participation involve sections of the concert that include highly political songs. Similar to the collective spiritual experience of a congregation of church-



goers, Bono constitutes this audience of concert-goers as a unified body for political action through the overtly political set list.

After the band displays the UN Human Rights declaration, they begin to play “Pride,” a popular political U2 song about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and other heroic people throughout history. Bono provides a verbal call to his audience to work toward equality through political action by saying: “Sing! For Dr. King, for Dr. King’s dream, for a dream big enough to fit the whole world. A dream where everyone is created equal under the eyes of God. EVERYONE! Not just an American dream, or an Asian dream, or a European dream...also an African dream.” The audience responds with vivid applause while the four jumbo visual screens display the continent of Africa, similar to how political rallies usually display political banners and flags. Even if the audience only responds verbally at this point in their transformation, that verbal participation is the first step toward commitment to later political action. Bono’s spoken rhetoric throughout the political set list specifically asks the audience for this kind of commitment. After “Pride,” Bono says: “Africa...the dreams go on...” and then the band begins to play the song, “Where the Streets Have No Name,” another popular U2 song that the audience on the DVD immediately recognizes. As the introduction of the song builds, becoming louder and with more intense lighting, Bono says, “From the bridges of Selma...to the Mississippi...to the peaks of Kilimanjaro...From Martin Luther King’s America to Nelson Mandela’s Africa...A dream of equality goes on, and on, and on!” In this instance in the DVD concert experience, lighting, sound, visuals, and Bono’s explicit verbal call for political action all combine to form a unique experience that emphasizes collective agency and the suggestion that political action is the appropriate response.

These appeals invoke a feeling that one *must* take political action, to fulfill this “dream of equality” that Bono speaks about. This feeling that one *must* take action is the beginning of the transformation from unity to collective action.

To begin “Where the Streets Have No Name,” Bono sings what sounds like an African chant, and goes back into the chant in the middle of the song. During the song, the flags of nations around the world scroll down on the four jumbo visual screens that are positioned above the band on the main stage. The visuals of flags from around the globe continue to highlight the collective unity of the audience; not only is the DVD viewer a part of the concert audience on screen, he or she is also a part of a global community. The flags also fulfill the initial expectation of politics being featured at the concert through the form of political revival. As a member of the unified crowd, the individual becomes overwhelmed with a feeling of responsibility and thus begins to convert that collective unity into agency, striving for equality for all human beings, regardless of race, class, or gender. Bono’s call for audience participation in this instance is one of political action; by participating in this concert experience, the audience participates in a transformation from a unified collectivity into a group that realizes its collective agency through political action.

Beyond this verbal call for Bono’s audience to respond with political action, the DVD often portrays Bono as the political revival leader with more agency than his audience. As a political revival leader, however, Bono must *initially* have a higher level of agency, mainly because he is the one who must guide the audience to transformation and political action. Bono takes on a conductor-like presence during some of the instances of his verbal call to action and exhibits remarkable control over the audience.

One particularly poignant example of Bono's explicit control of the audience occurs during "Elevation." During the beginning of the song, Bono calls out to the audience almost immediately, and the audience responds with their hands outstretched in the air. Bono directs the audience's response of the word "Elevation," controlling the volume and frequency of the response as their revival leader. During this moment in the DVD, literally thousands of people are following Bono's direction to say "Elevation" softer or louder, quickly or slowly. The audience's receptiveness to his directions is further evidence that this audience functions in a way that is similar to a congregation at a revival, or a crowd at a political rally. By sending out a call for political action, the political revival leader initiates the transformation of the collective audience. The audience's enthusiastic and audible response to Bono demonstrates how charismatic and prophetic leadership qualities are important to political revival leaders in guiding a transformation. The audience would not as easily identify with Bono as a guiding force in their transformation without such qualities as charisma and prophetic voice. *With* these qualities, however, Bono is able to guide the transformation from unity to agency; it is this collective agency that compels the audience to go out and contact politicians and friends about political issues in Africa. Through the various opportunities for participation in their own concert experience, the audience directly transforms from simply a unified collectivity to a group that begins to take action, even on the level of participating at the event.

Although Bono functions as the concert-goers' political revival leader, the DVD's selection of audio throughout the concert emphasizes the audience's importance in their own transformation toward collective agency in *Vertigo 2005*. Throughout the DVD, the

audio of the audience singing the lyrics of the U2 song is often louder than Bono's singing of the lyrics. Although sound-editors of the DVD could have edited the audience's sound to focus more on U2's sound, the amplification of the audience's sound is yet another example of Bono and U2's attempt to empower the DVD viewer as a participating audience member. As Bono told his audience during "One," his request is not for the audience's money but rather for their voice. By accentuating the audience's voice—even over U2's voice—throughout many of the songs on the DVD, the DVD is designed to foster this idea of a collective voice and collective agency. The DVD's emphasis on the audience's responses to Bono also reinforces the importance of the interaction between the leader and the audience within this form of political revival.

In addition to technological call and response and a verbal call for political action, an invitation for visual experiential participation also takes place through selected camera shots that are featured in the DVD. Throughout the concert, the audience often has their hands up in the air, which is symbolically similar to a congregation reaching up to God in a traditional religious revival, or to the political body reaching out to the political leader at a rally. Importantly, the DVD focuses in on camera shots of both Bono's and the audience's hands outstretched. Bono's white ONE elastic wristband is worn throughout the show, and is often the focus of various camera shots on the DVD. By visually representing audience participation in this way, a DVD viewer can actually see what participation looks like, making vicarious pilgrimage easier. In one example, during the song "New Year's Day," the camera shot zooms in on Bono's hand, raised high, holding up a single finger as he sings, "We can be one." In another instance in the DVD, the camera shifts from an above-the-audience perspective to U2's perspective from the front

of the stage. In this particular camera shot during “Sunday Bloody Sunday,” the entire audience, from the perspective of the main stage, is featured with their hands extended up in the air, chanting “No More” in response to Bono’s call to eliminate poverty and violence. By showing images of the transformation from unity to agency taking place at the concert among individual audience members, the DVD highlights this kind of “conversion” moment for the viewer, even though that individual is not actually present at a concert.

A final invitation for audience participation occurs through visual enthymematic critique. After the highly political set list that begins with “Love and Peace or Else” and ends with “One,” U2 leaves the stage. The stage darkens, and the jumbo screens light up with icons and voices from the jumbo screens from U2’s popular Zoo TV tour from the 1990s. Also an overtly political tour, Zoo TV focused less on policy initiatives and more on cultural critique. The tour involved the use of spectacle to appeal to self-awareness and critique of the media, government, and politics. Zoo TV criticized mass media, America, and world affairs but did not advocate for a positive policy response in the way that Vertigo Tour does.

The visual call for participation involves this reference on the jumbo screens to Zoo TV. Guided by the rhetorical force of enthymeme, the audience is invited to participate in the concert with cultural critique through irony. For instance, in the *Vertigo 2005* DVD, the jumbo screens that foster recognition of Zoo TV show images of President Bill Clinton, President George W. Bush, Saddam Hussein, Uncle Sam, and the UN, all spinning on the screens as though an unseen actor was playing with these images on a slot machine. In this example, the unseen actor (which could be God, based on the

religiosity of the political revival itself) is literally gambling with political actors such as Clinton, Hussein, and the UN, demonstrating how fickle and chance-oriented politics can really be. By participating in cultural critique through visual enthymeme, the audience understands the importance of collective criticism (through a reference to Zoo TV) as well as positive policy initiatives through U2's call for political action (through Vertigo Tour).

*Collective Agency Realized through Identification and Political Evangelism*

While sensory experiences create collective unity and invitations for audience participation involve an initial transformation of that unity into agency at the event, collective agency is finally realized through identification and propulsion toward political evangelism. The audience's interaction with Bono and the other members of U2 solidifies identification between the band and their audience, which in turn further imbues the audience with collective agency to take political action. Once identification is realized between U2 and the audience, audience members may feel more capable of enacting social change because if Bono can do it, they feel that they can, too. The goal of this section is to establish that once collective unity is achieved through shared sensory experiences and the political revival leader invokes agency through requests for participation in the transformative experience, the interaction between the leader(s) and the audience takes that transformative experience to an even higher level, a level that extends outward to those who have yet to be "transformed." This final section thus posits that identification between U2 and the audience turns collective agency into *political action as a form of evangelism*; the audience is expected to turn their "transformation"

outward to others through the collective agency they just experienced, thereby engaging the rest of the world through political action.

When looking at Bono's agency, an important tension unfolds. Bono is both a charismatic political revival leader *and* an average human being interested in political change. Bono certainly displays celebrity to his audience, but he also humanizes his rock star persona in an attempt to better identify with his audience. Only if Bono is able to connect with his audience are they able to readily transform collective unity into agency. Identification is thus necessary to get to the next level of collective agency; the audience must be imbued with their own sense of agency through identification. If Bono becomes "just another guy," then becoming politically involved seems less difficult for the audience, and this insight becomes a catalyst for the transformation of unity into collective agency and political action.

Various aspects of the concert humanize Bono to assist the process of identification. For example, Bono takes off his sunglasses during key moments in the concert, i.e., when he sings "Sometimes You Can't Make it on Your Own" (a song about his father's death) and "Running to Stand Still," which he dedicated to American troops and their families. By taking off his sunglasses, Bono indicates that the song and political message are personal for him because he rarely takes off his sunglasses in public. The songs during which he takes off his sunglasses are serious in tone and are dedicated to others, indicating a level of earnestness to the act. Bono also attempts to downplay his celebrity persona by interacting with a couple of selected audience members who are brought on-stage as audience representatives. For example, Bono brings a young boy on stage during the song "Into the Heart," asks the boy his name and then tells him, "My

name is Paul but I call myself Bono.” This reference to Bono’s original Irish name, Paul Hewson, also contributes to humanizing the rock star persona of “Bono.” When Bono takes off his sunglasses for “Sometimes You Can’t Make it on Your Own,” he talks about his father, Bob Hewson, with whom he had a difficult and often tumultuous relationship. In this song, Bono publicly shows his pain with his father during life and death through the lyrics of the song. Importantly, the camera work during this song about Bono’s father focuses on close shots of Bono, and the viewer can see his facial features—and his eyes—because his sunglasses are absent. During these moments where Bono becomes Paul Hewson, the DVD viewer is better able to identify with Bono as just another person; Bono becomes a person who has problems with his father, is angry with war, and likes talking to kids. The humanizing of Bono also assists in the realization of collective agency for the audience; it positions Bono as a concerned global citizen trying to make a difference through political action. If Paul Hewson can create change through political action, certainly U2 concert-goers and DVD viewers can.

Beyond identification between Bono and the audience, the other members of the band also connect with the audience through venturing out from the main stage to the ellipse, which positions the band members closer to the audience. Throughout the concert, each band member—even the drummer—comes out onto the ellipse, and Bono consistently performs on the ellipse, as close to the audience as possible. U2 has a history of audience interaction; during Live Aid in 1985, the band became famous for Bono going into the audience and bringing concert-goers onstage.<sup>158</sup> The band continues to bring concert-goers onstage, and during the concert portrayed on the *Vertigo 2005* DVD, two audience members are invited onstage—the young boy during “Into the Heart”



and a woman during “Mysterious Ways.” During “Mysterious Ways,” the woman dances to the song and is wearing a white ONE elastic wristband. After the song ends, Bono hugs and thanks her for her beautiful dancing. This explicit interaction between all of the members of the band—but especially Bono—and representatives from the audience is unique to U2 and contributes to collectivizing agency within the audience. The individuals are brought up on stage at random and could be anyone in the audience; that feeling that the participant on stage could be you is compelling in the process of identification. Although that might not be you on stage per se, it *could have been you*. This close interaction also unites the audience with the band, which increases agency, because the agency of Bono as a political revival leader is so powerful. By identifying with the audience through such interactions, the members of U2 enact rhetorical community by strengthening the collectivity of the concert experience, the band, and the audience within a moment that becomes “moving” in a literal sense; audience members transform from a collectively unified group to a group that feels capable of political action. Strengthened by the performative aspect of agency in this context, concert-goers and DVD viewers alike are transformed into collective agents of change through the practice of political evangelism.

Before the audience is compelled to partake in political evangelism, however, they must first end the initial pilgrimage in such a way that they feel renewed and prepared to go out and “convert” others to political action, just as they might at a religious revival. This initial pilgrimage, as portrayed on the *Vertigo 2005* DVD, closes with two overtly religious songs: “Yahweh” (the Hebrew name for God) and “40” (in reference to the book of Psalms, chapter 40). These religious songs function as a

benediction to the political revival and serve as the primary call for political evangelism. Bono claps for the audience before the band plays “40” and says: “This was a special night for us to put it on film,” referring to the taping of the concert for the DVD. Bono picks up a spotlight from the stage, and shines it on the upper levels of the arena to explicitly include this often forgotten segment of the audience. This action importantly enhances identification for those who may not have been as physically close to the band during the political revival experience. The concert ends with the audience singing a line from “40:” “How long to sing this song” is a lamentation from the Psalms. Bono hangs his Catholic rosary on the microphone and walks offstage with the audience singing the verse from “40,” and is followed by the other members of U2, one by one. The concert as represented by the DVD thus ends with a prayer: the political revival over for the evening, the audience takes the spiritual energy with them as they leave the “sacred” place that was the reason for their physical, rhetorical, or vicarious journey. U2’s hope is that the audience is not only spiritually “revived” after the concert, but is motivated through collective agency to enact such spirituality in the political realm, primarily through political evangelism.

Political evangelism could include any range of acts that increase the participant’s involvement, or aim to persuade others to join the political platform advocated by Bono and the other members of U2 throughout Vertigo Tour. Such acts could include joining the ONE campaign and emailing friends to join, writing a letter to President Bush to keep funding U.S. aid to Africa, or purchasing a variety of items through the Product [RED] campaign, in which certain products donate proceeds to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa. Political activism in this context, then, could be based in social movement activism

(joining the ONE campaign), traditional political action (letter-writing to the President), or individual activism through consumption (buying products that are part of Product [RED]).

Political evangelism can only be realized, however, through the initial pilgrimage that occurs at the event of the concert experience, and thus the entire political revival event comes full circle. When the pilgrim leaves the concert or ejects the DVD, that individual is revived and supported through the collective rhetorical community that was created throughout the concert experience, and this is when political evangelism becomes the next call to action after this transformative experience. In the case of U2's *Vertigo 2005* DVD, collective agency is thus fostered through appeals to community, a common focus on political issues, and release through sensory experiences.

### **Potential Implications for Rhetoric as an Experiential Primer for Agency**

In light of my analysis of U2's *Vertigo 2005* DVD, I propose three important implications for the relationship between political rhetoric and collective agency. My analysis concretizes an experiential form of agency, supports literature that argues that a group dynamic is important in individuals' capacity to take action, and demonstrates that this form of political revival has potential negative implications for political dissent.

In terms of larger theorizing about agency, this chapter contributes to understanding how less rational appeals to agency function. Although thinking about agency through notions of shared experiences and transformation is difficult to theorize through a rational method such as writing, my analysis helps to concretize agency realized through such experiences. A closer look at audience participation in U2's DVD of *Vertigo* Tour shows that an experiential approach to agency may be more compelling

than scholars may have first thought. This case study serves as a beginning for future research that must pay closer attention to the experiential and non-rational dimensions of agency.

This experiential approach to agency also supports research about the importance of a group dynamic in individuals' capacity to engage society. In religious revivals, political rallies, and in this form of political revival, the persuasiveness of the group dynamic must not be overlooked. Without the collectivity and unity fostered by shared sensory experiences, individuals within the audience would not be as likely to engage in action. Because audience members and DVD viewers undergo a transformation together as a group, participating in political evangelism seems easier because they know they are supported by thousands of others who went through the same experiences at the event.

But does this rhetoric foster unity and eventually agency at the cost of political dissent? In this form of concert rhetoric, collective agency can only be realized through collective unity, and thus disagreements among different people in the audience are likely disregarded during the transformative process at the event. Appeals to unity are helpful in the process of transforming a collective group into one compelled to engage in political evangelism, but social movement and rhetorical theorists may want to reconsider the negative implications of such an experiential approach to agency, especially in light of the lack of critique and dissent regarding larger political issues such as the war in Iraq. Although the invitation for visual enthymematic critique at the concert attempts to incorporate some cynicism of politics into the audience's experience, the process of transforming unity into agency is not conducive to critique among the individuals who are a part of the crowd at the event.

After analyzing a less rational approach to collective agency through U2's *Vertigo* 2005 DVD, my final chapter compares and contrasts this approach with Bono's use of multiple agency appeals in his speech at the National Prayer Breakfast. How does an understanding of these different approaches to agency contribute to the larger theoretical discussion about celebrity politics, political rhetoric, and agency? Through exploring Bono's multi-faceted appeals to agency, I hope to answer that question.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “HOW LONG MUST WE SING THIS SONG?:”

#### IMPLICATIONS OF BONO’S POLITICAL RHETORIC

*In attempting to address issues of ‘agency,’ I feel a little like [President Jimmy] Carter’s speech writers as I search for a way to develop a coherent approach to this difficult topic. The term ‘agency’ is polysemic and ambiguous, a term that can refer to invention, strategies, authorship, institutional power, identity, subjectivity, practices, and subject positions, among others...That is agency—promiscuous and protean.*

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean”<sup>159</sup>

As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell has argued, agency is, at the very least, complicated. Bono’s wide range of appeals to agency demonstrates how complex and protean agency can be, even within the political rhetoric of one individual or group. This concluding chapter compares and contrasts Bono’s use of multiple agency appeals in his speech at the National Prayer Breakfast with the collective agency appeal in U2’s concert rhetoric. After an analysis of these two case studies of Bono’s political rhetoric about Africa, I propose that understanding these different approaches to agency contributes to a larger theoretical discussion about rhetoric, celebrity politics, and agency.

Rhetoric, celebrity, agency, and politics all come together and interact within Bono’s rhetoric about Africa. Rhetoric primes agency; in different yet equally important ways, Bono’s multi-faceted rhetorical appeals prepare his audience for political action and involvement. Bono’s celebrity status contributes to his own agency in having rhetorical opportunities to speak to millions of individuals, including influential

American policymakers and world leaders. As a celebrity expert in the area of global development and poverty in Africa, especially in his National Prayer Breakfast address, Bono is granted political agency before he utters a word. Within the National Prayer Breakfast speech, rhetoric functions as an *intellectual* primer for agency; the majority of Bono's rhetorical appeals involve reasons, rationale, and traditional political advocacy. As a global rock star yet celebrity politician, Bono draws on his own agency within his rhetorical and musical performances, primarily through political rhetoric on the stage of U2's Vertigo Tour. Through U2's DVD of Vertigo Tour, Bono's rhetoric acts as an *experiential* primer for agency; in this context, Bono's rhetorical appeals involve audience expectations of form, experiences, and transformation through collective unity.

I thus contribute a sixth proposition in addition to Campbell's five propositions about agency: rhetoric primes an audience for agency. Grounding my conclusions in this proposition, I articulate implications for further theorizing agency, studying political action, and exploring religion's influence within American culture, but also within the broader realm of global politics. Throughout my conclusions, I also expand and provide examples of how my case studies support Campbell's five propositions about agency.

### **Theoretical Implications for Agency**

Agency is more complicated than many rhetorical scholars have acknowledged. Building upon Campbell's work on agency, in this section I further theorize agency's relationship to rhetoric. More specifically, I posit that form is crucial to understanding *how* rhetoric functions as a primer for agency, that rhetorical scholarship needs to consider the connections between celebrity politics and agency, as well as advocating for

the study of agency as *action*, and that these case studies of Bono's rhetoric shed light on global rhetorical appeals for political action within a global community.

*Form's Role in Rhetoric's Ability to Prime an Audience for Agency*

Form is important when considering rhetoric's role in priming an audience for agency. Form's relationship to the audience was initially explored by literary critic Kenneth Burke, who explained the importance of generic and situational expectations for the audience.<sup>160</sup> In contributing to Campbell's proposition that agency is effected through form, my analysis offers an example of how one rhetor can utilize distinctive forms of rhetoric, appealing to audiences in different but equally powerful ways. Agency is protean in that it can work through more traditional, reason-based appeals but also through audience experiences and transformation. On a functional level, agency appeals change *through* form, and an expectation about form influences how an audience receives or participates in a text. An audience's expectations for a political speech and a rock concert may be quite different, but in the examples of Bono's rhetoric, both sets of expectations prepare an audience for an experience that focuses on political involvement. Whether those expectations involve political advocacy or political rally/religious revival experiences, both forms of rhetoric prime the audience in activating their own agency, in part because of a formal expectation of political action and advocacy from Bono and the other members of U2.

Beyond audience expectations about form, the stark differences between intellectual and experiential appeals to agency are quite apparent within Bono's rhetoric. The analysis within my case studies attempts to deconstruct the dichotomy between *logos*- and *pathos*-based appeals. Although a variety of scholars have tended to privilege



reason-giving and *logos* throughout history since the time of Plato,<sup>161</sup> my analysis shows the persuasiveness of experiential appeals through *pathos*. Drawing on the traditions of religious revivals and political rallies, my analysis demonstrates how powerful such experiential appeals to agency can be. Within a situation that emphasizes the crowd, spectacle, transformation, and leader-audience identification, powerful experiences transform an audience from a group of individuals to a group imbued with collective agency. My analysis thus supports scholarship that emphasizes the importance of a crowd dynamic and more general kinds of embodied participation.<sup>162</sup> Importantly, Bono uses both *logos*- and *pathos*-based appeals in persuading his audiences to take action. Although the form of his rhetoric may change, which in turn changes the kinds of appeals to agency, Bono makes smart rhetorical choices by incorporating such a variety of different appeals in his fragmented approach to political rhetoric. With such a vast number of differentiated appeals, Bono increases the number of opportunities for his audience members to connect with him and activate their own agency in political matters.

#### *Rhetoric's Need to Engage Celebrity Politics and Agency*

Form is certainly crucial to understanding *how* rhetoric primes for an audience for agency, but rhetorical scholarship also needs to consider the connections between celebrity politics and agency. Building upon scholars' notion that authors serve as points of articulation within a post-structural framework, I propose that Bono's appeals to agency for his audience are informed through his celebrity expertise.<sup>163</sup> Bono's celebrity functions as one "point of articulation" in his construction of rhetorical appeals.<sup>164</sup> As such, his celebrity status also serves as a rhetorical resource for invention; as a celebrity politician, Bono has different and more numerous rhetorical resources to draw upon as

opposed to more traditional (national) political rhetors. For example, as a *celebrity* politician, Bono can draw upon his rock star persona to impress and connect with average American citizens through the sexiness of celebrity and rock music. Most traditional politicians are not allowed the kind of leniency given to Bono's political efforts, either; even if Bono's work is not as successful as he purports, many Americans seem content with the fact that at least Bono is doing *something* good in the world as a citizen with access and power. When this is contrasted with many national politicians' apparent inability to pass and implement policies that result in material effects (such as antiretroviral drugs to Africa), Bono's success seems even more apparent and impressive.

Although that celebrity can and does limit Bono in some political arenas,<sup>165</sup> in connecting with the average American citizen, that celebrity status may overpower many doubts about Bono's political knowledge, especially within the context of a rock concert. Bono likely draws upon his celebrity status in constructing appeals to agency because of the audience's receptiveness to that celebrity. In an American culture obsessed with celebrity and Hollywood, Bono's status functions as an important rhetorical resource in constructing appeals to persuade his audience to take action. Because of Bono's celebrity status and political knowledge, audience members have a formal expectation for politics, even within rock concert rhetoric.

### *The Importance of Studying Agency as Action*

The connection between celebrity politics and agency seems apparent after my analysis, but more research needs to pay attention to agency as action, especially if the field of rhetoric is concerned with understanding how and why people take *action* rather than focusing on philosophical questions of subjectivity. Although I understand the

importance of asking questions about being, I align myself with Campbell's interest in studying agency as action rather than subjectivity as being.<sup>166</sup> Rhetorical scholars are in the best position to analyze and comment on what motivates individuals to function as a collective group, acting politically to improve their conditions. Because of our knowledge of language and its inventional and motivational capacities, we are best equipped to understand the rhetorical appeals of influential leaders of political movements. By studying action through a rhetorical approach, scholars are better able to articulate potential rhetorical strategies for future political leaders, understand what metaphors and analogies resonate with an audience, and articulate the importance of discourse in the political realm. Rhetorical scholars can thus distinguish themselves from the study of agency in other fields by focusing on how agency involves studying action rather than being.

Concentrating on agency as action does not mean that agency is unrelated to subjectivity; agency certainly has important implications in thinking about subjectivity. For example, Campbell points out the implications for agency in rethinking subject positions,<sup>167</sup> and Judith Butler deconstructs the "political subject" so as to allow for different possibilities for agency.<sup>168</sup> I am not suggesting that rhetorical scholars completely dismiss agency's relationship with subjectivity; rather, I challenge rhetoricians to focus on agency as action because of philosophy's fixation on subjectivity and being. Philosophical questions of subjectivity have been the driving force for much of the research about agency; however, if rhetorical scholars are truly interested in how individuals become motivated to take action in politics, then they must refocus their scholarship on practices of action.

*Global Appeals for Political Action within a Global Community*

Rhetorical scholars must not only focus on agency as action, however; they must also realize how agency has gone global, especially regarding global politics. My case studies shed light on how rhetors construct *global* rhetorical appeals for action, notably when the proposed policies are issues that concern a global focus. Through assembling a multi-faceted repertoire of rhetorical appeals—including many that focus more on the articulation of a global citizen or human being—Bono successfully talks about global political issues that are difficult for Americans, especially, to selflessly consider.

Although Bono does appeal to Americans' self-interest in overt ways (e.g., through “selling” the ONE campaign in the National Prayer Breakfast speech), most of his appeals to agency (especially his appeals to transcendental and existential agency, and his concert rhetoric) concern the individual as a part of something bigger than a national identity. Bono constructs a globally involved citizen within his rhetoric through articulating the importance of unity among three diverse religions, showing his audience that their position of privilege compels a sense of political responsibility for others who are disadvantaged, and by using experiential appeals to agency through his concert rhetoric by drawing on international equality and justice. Global appeals to agency, then, function by demonstrating the compelling nature of human responsibility in a world of divisiveness. Despite religious, national, or ethnic differences, audiences must focus on their collective unity to stimulate their own agency and achieve the political goals of global development and the eradication of poverty in Africa.

Bono's celebrity status only furthers his opportunities for rhetorical invention in constructing a global message for action in Africa. Appeals for global involvement are

certainly more difficult to construct than national appeals. I am not suggesting that nationalism is history and that globalism has taken over; rather, I propose that Bono's global celebrity has given him unique rhetorical opportunities to address global political issues better than many national political leaders.

Bono's global celebrity status is largely in part because of the current climate of the music industry. Because of the global consumption of entertainment, and specifically music, Bono's celebrity has even more force than celebrities such as John Lennon may have had in an earlier age of music. The global access of downloading music online has transformed the music industry; now most of the production, distribution, marketing, and consumption of music happen on a global scale through six major recording companies.<sup>169</sup> Bono's global celebrity, in conjunction with his political knowledge about global development policy, imbues Bono himself with an incredible amount of agency before he opens his mouth to sing or speak. National leaders simply lack such global celebrity status, and in the age of a global community—especially one that consumes entertainment on a global scale—that status matters in terms of reaching and persuading an audience to take action on global political issues.

### **Implications for Politics and Agency**

Because of the presence of a global community, agency has shifted somewhat from a national focus to also include a global focus on politics. Global rhetorical appeals for agency thus take into account national identity but attempt to transform that national identity into an agency that works to change global politics, primarily through focusing on global citizenship and a broader notion of human responsibility. One example of a global rhetorical appeal can be found in Bono's rhetoric at the 2006 National Prayer

Breakfast. In this address, Bono focuses on individual and diverse religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (e.g., he provides examples of God's alliance with those in poverty from the New Testament, the Torah, and the Koran). After describing these diverse religions, however, Bono emphasizes that political unity in helping the poor is more important than religious differences. As human beings (an existential appeal to agency), we are compelled to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Global rhetorical appeals help us to understand how agency and politics go hand-in-hand. In describing my project's implications for thinking about politics and agency, I suggest that Bono's rhetoric demonstrates the ever-increasing importance of thinking about celebrity politics as a distinctive realm in its own right, considering agency's role within social movements, and understanding how political involvement and action have transformed to include less-traditional methods of participation.

#### *Taking Celebrity Politics Seriously*

First and foremost, my case studies demonstrate the importance of understanding and further theorizing the connection between celebrity and politics. I acknowledge that the arena of celebrity politics is a fairly new phenomenon in academic scholarship, but more scholars need to work toward filling the gap of theory about celebrity politics, especially in American culture today. John Street's essay about strengthening the analogy between celebrity and politics, especially in terms of performance, provides an excellent call for this kind of scholarship and demonstrates a beginning toward better understanding how the political realm may have shifted in recent years.<sup>170</sup>

What does a rhetorical performance, in terms of celebrity politics, look like? My case studies about Bono's rhetoric—especially his concert rhetoric—help answer this

question. Bono's rhetorical performance may shift as it changes form, from a political speech to a rock concert, but his performance remains nonetheless, a *performance*. Bono's performance of agency through his musical (concert rhetoric) or rhetorical (political speech) performances demonstrates the *enactment* of agency for every person in the audience. By demonstrating his own agency, Bono shows every person in his audience what taking action looks like and that agency is, as Campbell suggests, a learned practice.<sup>171</sup> In conjunction with his trips to Africa, participation in non-profit organizations to support poverty eradication, and discussions with world leaders, Bono's rhetorical performance is magnified for his audience and helps them to understand why taking action is so important. Celebrity has this way of drawing in an otherwise non-interested audience, especially in American culture; Bono's performance works off of this kind of obsession with celebrity by incorporating intellectual and experiential appeals to agency for his audience.

Celebrity politics thus brings together celebrity appeal, reason-giving, and experiences to persuade an audience to take action on a particular political issue. With Bono as the charismatic leader (celebrity appeal), taking political action seems less difficult given collective unity experienced at a concert (experiences); political action in Africa actually becomes compelling for an American audience, especially given their positions of privilege in the world (reason-giving). With this differentiated approach in appealing to agency, a celebrity politician puts him- or herself in the best position possible to persuade an audience to take political action. My project also demonstrates that celebrity politics is certainly not innovative with this approach; it reinforces the

importance of Aristotle's argument that *ethos*-, *logos*-, and *pathos*-based appeals are *all* equally important for a rhetor to consider in attempting to persuade an audience.

### *Agency's Role within Social Movements*

Taking celebrity politics seriously means that rhetorical scholars need to engage and further theorize case studies of celebrity politics. In addition to engaging celebrity politics literature, rhetorical scholars must also further explore how agency functions within literature on social movements. Although a few scholars have attempted to bridge disciplinary boundaries regarding social movements and political action, scholars have largely failed to work together in theorizing agency within social movements and global political action.<sup>172</sup> How does political action really happen on the ground? What kinds of rhetorical appeals persuade a group of individuals to work collectively toward social and political change? Does it matter if the political action is more global in scope, such as in the case of global development policy?

In answering these questions, understanding the importance of the group dynamic or sense of collectivity regarding a social movement seems crucial; such a perspective also supports Campbell's proposition that agency is participatory and communal.<sup>173</sup> My analysis of Bono's rhetoric supports this claim in different ways through my two case studies. More specifically, individuality and collectivity seem to flow in and out of each other in analyzing Bono's appeals to agency for his audience. In rhetoric's role as an intellectual primer within Bono's address at the 2006 National Prayer Breakfast, agency seems to function on a more individual level of responsibility and citizenship. Although citizenship certainly involves a connection to others (and in the case of global citizenship that Bono calls for, it involves connecting to others around the world), reason-based



appeals to agency within Bono's speech involved more of an individual focus. For example, Bono reminded his audience of their privilege and position in the world as an individual responsibility to care for others who are less fortunate. Even though these reason-based appeals focus on individual responsibility initially, Bono emphasizes *collective* religious unity on taking action to eradicate poverty. In this instance, the appeal is individualistic yet the political action is actually collective.

Individuality and collectivity again work together in my second case study of U2's *Vertigo 2005* DVD. In rhetoric's role as an experiential primer, agency functions on a more collective level of transformation—from unity to agency—through political evangelism. Although collective action does involve each individual becoming committed to the social movement (e.g., asking individuals to text-message Bono to join the ONE campaign), experiential appeals to agency are persuasive because of the group dynamic and transformative experiences at the concert or through viewing the DVD. For instance, Bono appeals to collective unity through using props such as the Irish tri-color flag within the DVD. Unity prepares an audience for agency, beginning with the relationship between the political revival leader and his or her audience. As a leader, Bono invites his audience to participate in their own transformation through text-messaging or visual enthymeme. Although this participation begins on an *individual* level, political and social changes are more likely to happen once these individuals band together as a *collective* group. In this case study, the appeal is both individualistic (calls for individual participation in their transformation at the concert/via viewing the DVD) yet also collective (group dynamic and experiences shared at the concert). Individuality and collectivity thus interact with one another within any kind of social movement

working towards changing a political or social structure. Scholars need to focus on understanding how agency appeals maneuver between the tensions of individualism and collectivism in attempting to persuade people to engage in social change.

*A Transformation of Political Participation*

In conjunction with understanding how agency functions within social movements, scholars must also focus on the apparent transformation of political participation in an age where entertainment and politics have seemingly become intertwined. My analysis of Bono's rhetoric shows how political involvement is still alive and well but has *transformed*; this perspective acts as an important supplement to Robert D. Putnam's well-known thesis of social decline and decrease in political participation.<sup>174</sup> Perhaps political involvement has simply shifted to involve different, additional forms of participation. Whereas once the American population went to political rallies and were involved in bridge clubs, perhaps now citizens show their political involvement through text-messaging, concerts, and email, especially given the prevalence of a global focus on community. I want to be clear in that I am *not* arguing that Putnam et al. are incorrect; rather, these additional forms of participation (especially represented in U2's DVD) *supplement* the more traditional methods of participation used as the standard for Putnam et al. in their study.

Accounting for different forms of participation is important given the transformation of the political world into one that seems to connect politics with entertainment. As noted in the first chapter, although I agree with scholars' critiques of consumption, I believe that participation has changed because of the increasing importance of celebrity politics and entertainment within American culture, and even

more globally. In understanding this societal change of citizens' engagement in politics, a personal politics through consumption must be accounted for, even if such actions are certainly not the apogee of democratic citizenship and political participation. Such personal political actions might include participating in a U2 concert, joining the ONE campaign through a text message, emailing political representatives, creating a YouTube video that critiques European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), or joining a politician's grassroots campaign through his or her website. All of these forms of political participation allow for more of a global focus and must be taken into consideration when researching participation within global political issues such as global development policy.

These political actions supplement traditional forms of political participation such as community involvement and voting. Unlike scholars who see this less-traditional participation as *detracting* from traditional forms such as voting, I consider this less-traditional participation as yet another way to consider political participation within a global community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Scholars need to consider these actions when assessing political participation, especially in researching questions of agency in today's political climate of entertainment, celebrity, and consumption.

### **Implications for Religion and Agency**

The nature of the political climate today, especially within America, means scholars need to think about agency within political rhetoric differently. Scholars should still continue to study more traditional forms of political rhetoric—including public address—but must also branch out to understand how agency functions within this transformed political realm of entertainment and celebrity. In addition to these

implications for thinking about politics' relationship to agency, my project also has important implications for considering the relationship between religion and agency. How has religion found its way into popular political discourse, and what does that mean for agency? In this section, I articulate three implications: appeals to religious unity serve as a pre-requisite for political action, religion's role in popular culture continues to grow, and the dynamic between religion and politics may lend insight into how future rhetors should construct appeals to agency.

### *Religious Unity as a Pre-requisite for Political Action*

Bono's appeals to agency show how religious unity is antecedent to unified political action. In a world filled with diverse religious beliefs, citizens must be unified in their beliefs, at least on the level of realizing unified political action to help those in need. Unlike many religious fundamentalists who focus on religious unity within one ethnic group or religious sect, Bono calls for religious unity across major world religions and ethnic groups. Instead of advocating violence for those against a particular political stance, Bono urges love, peace, and hope through unified political action rather than war.

In both case studies of Bono's rhetoric, religious unity was emphasized as a *necessary* condition for political action. Although many might be skeptical at any attempt to unify faiths that seem so different from one another, Bono successfully demonstrates how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share the common thread of speaking out against poverty. Bono does this through reason-based appeals in his address at the National Prayer Breakfast. In one example of this appeal within the speech, Bono provides verses from the Christian New Testament, Muslim Koran, and Jewish Torah. He explains that all of these major faiths stand united on the issue of poverty and God's

position with the poor. Even though religious differences have a history of violence that often results in political inaction, Bono tells his audience members that they are in a position to change the course of history in uniting together to eliminate global poverty.

Bono also appeals to religious unity through experiential appeals in U2's DVD of Vertigo Tour. The primary example within the DVD involves Bono's use of props such as the "coexist" headband and the Irish tri-color flag. To prevent global violence, citizens need to understand the importance of political unity among different religions. Before citizens can actually engage in global political action and realize their agency, however, they must first realize the common ground they already share with individuals initially perceived as drastically different from them. Bono's rhetoric thus has an important implication in considering the relationship between religion and agency: religious unity, in terms of a commitment to working with others from different faiths, seems necessary for collective political action on poverty.

Simply put, this kind of religious unity—agreeing to work with others across traditions, faiths, and ethnicities—becomes a precursor for political action on a global level. Any rhetor interested in persuading his or her audience to get involved in a global political issue *must* appeal to religious unity because of the importance of religion within a broader global community. The importance of religious unity for political action is not a new idea; one need only look back through a history filled with religious conflict to realize that appeals for political involvement must take religion into account.

### *Religion in Popular Culture*

As religion becomes increasingly important in politics, scholars must realize the wealth of case studies within popular culture that have implications for religion and

questions of agency. My project shows the prevalence of religion in popular culture artifacts such as U2's *Vertigo* Tour. Although U2 certainly has a history of religious connections and lyrics within their music, before analyzing U2's *Vertigo 2005* DVD, I had never realized how crucial religion is to this concert rhetoric.<sup>175</sup> Despite its unlikely place in a rock concert, religion drives forward unity and assists Bono in persuading his audience to get involved in political work regarding Africa.

In analyzing both U2's DVD and Bono's rhetoric at the National Prayer Breakfast, religion functions as one "point of articulation" for both Bono as an author and for the audience in receiving and participating in such texts.<sup>176</sup> As a point of articulation for Bono as the author, religion serves as an inventional resource. By drawing on his own religious experiences (especially his experiences as a son of a Protestant mother and Catholic father in Ireland), Bono explores religion as a jumping-off point for talking about agency. For example, before asking his audience to participate in the ONE campaign at the National Prayer Breakfast, Bono explains his religious background and the need for religious unity before talking about political action in Africa. Although religion's presence at a prayer breakfast is certainly to be expected, its role as an inventional resource for Bono's rhetoric about agency must not be overlooked.

Religion also serves as a point of articulation for Bono's audience. As such, religion happens to be one lens through which an audience accepts and contributes to rhetoric, especially as religion becomes more visible in unexpected places such as rock concerts. In U2's *Vertigo 2005* DVD, the audience experiences Bono's rhetoric at the concert through religion's overwhelming presence throughout the show. In addition to other points of articulation such as personal political involvement or celebrity appeal,

religion guides a particular reception of this text. One such reception might include the audience's consideration of how religion need not be consumed by differences and violence, but could serve as one last realm of hope, especially for those suffering from poverty in Africa. To better understand how religion might interact with agency in such political ways, scholars must look into additional case studies of religion within popular culture. Future research might also focus on other world religions within popular culture that are *not* represented in Bono's political rhetoric, such as Hinduism or Buddhism.

### *The Religion-Politics Dynamic*

In addition to religion's importance within popular culture, another implication for thinking about religion and questions of agency involves the dynamic between religion and politics. A broad area of literature theorizes a global religio-political sphere in which religion informs politics and vice versa,<sup>177</sup> but I believe future research should focus on more concrete practices of how religion and politics work together to compel an audience to participate in movements to achieve social and political change.

One example of this kind of a focus is that of political evangelism in U2's *Vertigo 2005* DVD. By examining the *practices* concerning political evangelism—such as emailing friends to join the ONE campaign, writing a congresswoman to change U.S. farm subsidy policy, or buying items that are a part of Product [RED]—rhetorical scholars are better able to conceptualize *how* agency pans out after the political revival event. Keeping in mind the importance of understanding agency in terms of action, this kind of an approach that focuses on practices, performances, and action within the political realm sheds light on *how* rhetorical agency is realized through political rhetoric in material ways.

Religion and politics certainly work together within Bono's appeals to agency; other political activists should consider connecting these two in their appeals for public involvement and participation. Because of religion's importance in many citizens' lives (especially in America), appealing to individuals' faith is an important move in identifying with an audience. This rhetorical tradition of connecting religion and politics is certainly not new, and recently, politicians such as Barack Obama have considered the importance of religion in constructing rhetorical appeals.<sup>178</sup> This trend will likely continue, especially if the world has truly experienced a shift toward a global religious-political culture in which religion and politics are seemingly interwoven in public participation.

### **Concluding Thoughts on Rhetoric, Celebrity Politics and Agency**

I began this project with questions about the relationship between rhetoric, celebrity politics, and agency. Some of the questions driving this project included: how do we make sense of a celebrity such as Bono doing political work in the world? In short, what are we to make of Bono's agency, and how does he construct appeals to agency for his audiences to take action? Do his constructions of agency for his audience emerge from his own agency as a celebrity politician? Another critical question that guided my research included: How does this particular celebrity expert use political agency to activate millions of people through one rhetorical voice? In this final section of my project, I posit tentative answers to these questions as a result of my analysis of Bono's political rhetoric about African poverty and global development policy. I also point out the possible limitations of Bono's rhetorical approach as well as future directions for this research.



My first set of research questions were concerned with Bono's agency and how he used his own agency to construct agency appeals for his audience. Given the importance of a global community and Bono's celebrity status within such a community, Bono draws on this celebrity status to do the work that national politicians have simply not been able to achieve. Bono uses his celebrity status to appeal to citizens who may not be excited or interested in becoming involved in politics. Thus, Bono's constructions of agency for his audience do in fact emerge from his status as a global celebrity politician, especially given the nature of his political work within development policy.

Bono develops appeals to agency for his audience by drawing on various points of articulation for his audience, including religion, personal participation, and celebrity appeal. Bono is an excellent example of a post-modern rhetor; he uses a multi-faceted approach to agency through multiple agency appeals in the National Prayer Breakfast alongside experiential appeals for collective agency in U2's DVD of Vertigo Tour. With this wide spectrum of rhetorical appeals, every audience member has at least *some* connection with an appeal to agency, whether that appeal involves transcendental agency within an address or collective unity through a concert experience. Bono's use of these multiple appeals demonstrates his rhetorical competence and the persuasive appeal of rhetorical performance in attempting to imbue an audience with agency.

Although these strategies demonstrate Bono's rhetorical competence, there are important limitations of Bono's rhetoric as well. Two of these limitations involve access and discouraging dissent. Although many people are willing to pay exorbitant amounts of money to attend U2 concerts, not everyone can afford to do so. One limitation to Bono's rhetoric thus involves audience access to his rhetoric. Although Bono may reach

millions of people through U2 concerts and political speeches, not everyone has the financial and technological ability to see and hear Bono's political advocacy. To reach more individuals who may lack the means to receive his rhetoric, Bono should consider providing free concerts or lowering ticket prices to U2 shows.

In addition to the limitation of access, Bono's political rhetoric also discourages political and religious dissent. In both of my case studies, Bono focuses heavily on religious and political unity. Although the necessity of unity for political action does make sense, especially concerning the "emergency" of poverty in Africa, such unity is encouraged at the expense of honest and important political and religious dissent. Especially within the context of a U2 concert, audience members who want to retain their individual faith are likely silenced or feel unable to speak out against the crowd. This crowd dynamic is important in an experiential transformation of the crowd but must be considered alongside the loss of dissent and individualism. Appeals to unity are certainly compelling, but citizens must remember to allow and consider dissenting arguments before carrying out any kind of political action.

To better understand these limitations and what they mean for public policy, future research should engage in more general questioning of the connection between entertainment and politics. Rhetorical scholarship needs to take up research that connects the entertainment and political realms, especially because political rhetors increasingly have to incorporate *both* into their rhetorical choices. Future research should focus on how entertainment and politics have the capacity to seamlessly glide from one into the other; the area of celebrity politics is but one area open to rhetorical scholarship. Bono's position as a celebrity expert on global development policy aids his rhetoric in a unique

manner that national politicians simply cannot access. As scholars interested in what motivates individuals to take political action and become involved in social change, rhetorical critics must study other celebrity rhetors that are seemingly able to access millions of citizens, lobby governments, and motivate audiences to get involved in faith-based political action.

As rhetoric, celebrity politics, and questions about agency flow in and out of one another, critics must be aware of rhetoric's role as a primer for agency. As a celebrity expert, Bono uses political rhetoric that demonstrates agency's protean and ambiguous nature through a wide range of appeals to agency for his audience. The form of Bono's rhetoric prepares his audiences to *expect* a discussion about politics and human responsibility, whether within a political speech or a rock concert. In going back to questions about agency and what motivates citizens to act, I realize that the most important aspect of Bono's agency is that he *moves* people. Whether his rhetoric primes citizens in intellectual or experiential ways, Bono's rhetorical performance is *moving*, and his passion for Africa goes without question.

Although Bono may not want to associate himself as a celebrity with a "cause," his rhetoric has had important implications and material results for Africans in need of someone to advocate to the Western world on their behalf. Despite numerous critiques of his political work, at the very least Bono's rhetoric helps Americans to realize that millions of human beings live in dire poverty every single day, on a continent that has largely been forgotten by the rest of the world, and especially the West. If Bono is able to persuade just a few Americans to take action, his rhetoric will have assisted thousands

of people who are struggling every day just to *survive*, and to me, that is the definition of rhetorical success.

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## NOTES

### Chapter One

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## Chapter Two

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### Chapter Three

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<sup>122</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005): 2.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Bruce J. Evensen, "'The Greatest Day That Our City Has Ever Seen:' Moody, Medill, and Chicago's Gilded Age Revival," *Journal of Media & Religion* 1, no. 4 (2002), Carolyn Marvin and Peter Simonson, "Voting Alone: The Decline of Bodily Mass Communication and Public Sensationalism in Presidential Elections," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 1, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>125</sup> Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean."

<sup>126</sup> Ray Waddell, *Stones Take in \$165m with '05 Trek* (January 2, 2006 [cited April 25, 2006]); available from [http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/search/google/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1001772589](http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/search/google/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1001772589).

<sup>127</sup> My analysis conceives of the audience as "DVD-viewers" in addition to actual concert participants. Vicarious pilgrimage thus becomes an important concept within my analysis of the collective agency of concert-goers as represented by the DVD.

<sup>128</sup> Evensen, "'The Greatest Day That Our City Has Ever Seen:' Moody, Medill, and Chicago's Gilded Age Revival," James O. Lehman, *Mennonite Tent Revivals: Howard Hammer and Myron Augsburg, 1952-1962*. (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2002).

<sup>129</sup> Marvin and Simonson, "Voting Alone: The Decline of Bodily Mass Communication and Public Sensationalism in Presidential Elections," Charles J. Stewart, Craig Allen Smith, and Robert E. Denton, Jr. eds., *Persuasion and Social Movements*, 4th ed. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2001).

<sup>130</sup> Marouf Hasian Jr., "Remembering and Forgetting The 'Final Solution:' A Rhetorical Pilgrimage through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21, no. 1 (2004).

<sup>131</sup> DATA, *Speech by Bono to Labour Party Conference* (2004 [cited January 17, 2006]); available from <http://www.data.org/archives/000605.php?printable=1>, Ken Herman, "Bono Urges Aid for World's Poor," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 3, 2006.

- <sup>132</sup> Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," 3.
- <sup>133</sup> Although I use the word "evangelism," I understand the vast connotations associated with this word and thus rely on Merriam-Webster's definitions to help understand both the religious and political connotations to which I refer: 1) the winning or revival of personal commitments to Christ or 2) militant or crusading zeal. See the following webpage: <http://209.161.33.50/dictionary/evangelism>.
- <sup>134</sup> Donn James Tilson, "Religious Tourism, Public Relations and Church-State Partnership," *Public Relations Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2001): 36.
- <sup>135</sup> Hasian Jr., "Remembering and Forgetting The 'Final Solution:' A Rhetorical Pilgrimage through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," 65.
- <sup>136</sup> Roger C. Aden, *Popular Stories and Promised Lands*, ed. E. Culpepper Clark, Raymie E. McKerrow, and David Zarefsky, *Studies in Rhetoric and Communication* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 4.
- <sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.
- <sup>138</sup> Darrel Enck-Wanzer, "Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collective Agency in the Young Lords Organization's Garbage Offensive," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 2 (2006), Evensen, "'The Greatest Day That Our City Has Ever Seen:' Moody, Medill, and Chicago's Gilded Age Revival.," Lehman, *Mennonite Tent Revivals: Howard Hammer and Myron Augsburg, 1952-1962*, Marvin and Simonson, "Voting Alone: The Decline of Bodily Mass Communication and Public Sensationalism in Presidential Elections."
- <sup>139</sup> Evensen, "'The Greatest Day That Our City Has Ever Seen:' Moody, Medill, and Chicago's Gilded Age Revival.," Max Frankel, "15,000 Journalists in Search Of...Parties?," *Columbia Journalism Review* 39, no. 3 (2000).
- <sup>140</sup> Edith L. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer, eds., *Modern Christian Revivals* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), John L. Hammond, *The Politics of Benevolence: Revival Religion and American Voting Behavior* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1979), Mary Elaine Hegland, "Conclusion: Religious Resurgence in Today's World," in *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Richard T. Antoun and Mary Elaine Hegland (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), George M. Thomas, *Revivalism and Cultural Change* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), James Turner, *Language, Religion, Knowledge* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).
- <sup>141</sup> Evensen, "'The Greatest Day That Our City Has Ever Seen:' Moody, Medill, and Chicago's Gilded Age Revival."
- <sup>142</sup> Marvin and Simonson, "Voting Alone: The Decline of Bodily Mass Communication and Public Sensationalism in Presidential Elections," 127.
- <sup>143</sup> Michael William Pfau, "Conventions of Deliberation? Convention Addresses and Deliberative Containment in the Second Party System," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 4 (2006): 638.
- <sup>144</sup> Blumhofer and Balmer, eds., *Modern Christian Revivals*, Hammond, *The Politics of Benevolence: Revival Religion and American Voting Behavior*, Thomas, *Revivalism and Cultural Change*.
- <sup>145</sup> Thomas B. Farrell, "Political Conventions as Legitimation Ritual," *Communication Monographs* 45, no. 4 (1978): 293.
- <sup>146</sup> William L. Benoit, Kevin A. Stein, and Glenn J. Hansen, "How Newspapers Cover Presidential Nomination Acceptance Addresses," *Newspaper Research Journal* 25, no. 3 (2004): 83.
- <sup>147</sup> Stewart, Smith, and Denton, Jr., eds., *Persuasion and Social Movements*, 112.
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-15.
- <sup>149</sup> Blumhofer and Balmer, eds., *Modern Christian Revivals*, xi.
- <sup>150</sup> Hammond, *The Politics of Benevolence: Revival Religion and American Voting Behavior*, Hegland, "Conclusion: Religious Resurgence in Today's World."
- <sup>151</sup> Hegland, "Conclusion: Religious Resurgence in Today's World," 246.
- <sup>152</sup> Refer back to Chapter 1 for a detailed discussion of both Bono and U2's political action over the years.
- <sup>153</sup> Hasian Jr., "Remembering and Forgetting The 'Final Solution:' A Rhetorical Pilgrimage through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," 70.
- <sup>154</sup> Carole Blair, "Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality," in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 50.

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<sup>155</sup> The intensity and spiritual experience are apparent even with the name, “vertigo,” which according to Merriam-Webster means: 1) a disordered state in which the individual or the individual’s surroundings seem to whirl dizzily or 2) a dizzy confused state of mind. See the following webpage: <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/vertigo>.

<sup>156</sup> The color orange draws on Protestant identification with King William III, Prince of Orange, who was a rebel advocate of Protestantism in England.

<sup>157</sup> See especially, Patricia Liggins Hill, ed., *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), Jodi Wilgoren, “In a Long Presidential Race, Dean Sprints,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2003.

<sup>158</sup> Bill Flanagan, *U2 at the End of the World* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1995).

## Chapter Four

<sup>159</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean,” *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005): 1, 14.

<sup>160</sup> Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley and Los Angeles; University of California Press, Ltd., 1973): xviii, 1-3.

<sup>161</sup> Michael C. McGee, “In Search of ‘the People’: A Rhetorical Alternative,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61, no. 3 (1975): 237, Michael Calvin McGee and Martha Anne Martin, “Public Knowledge and Ideological Argumentation,” *Communication Monographs* 50, no. 1 (1983): 48, Michel Meyer, “Toward a Rhetoric of Reason,” *RSQ: Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1989).

<sup>162</sup> Darrel Enck-Wanzer, “Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collective Agency in the Young Lords Organization’s Garbage Offensive,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 2 (2006), Carolyn Marvin and Peter Simonson, “Voting Alone: The Decline of Bodily Mass Communication and Public Sensationalism in Presidential Elections,” *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 1, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>163</sup> Michelle Ballif, “Writing the Third-Sophistic Cyborg: Periphrasis on an [In]Tense Rhetoric,” *RSQ: Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1998), Judith Butler, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question Of ‘Postmodernism,’” in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), Judith Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Seyla Benhabib, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1995), Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean.”

<sup>164</sup> Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean,” 5.

<sup>165</sup> Jack Ewing, “For Bono, Star Power with Purpose,” *Business Week Online* (2006).

<sup>166</sup> Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean,” 3.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*: 4.

<sup>168</sup> Butler, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question Of ‘Postmodernism,’” 13.

<sup>169</sup> Robert Burnett, *The Global Jukebox: The International Music Industry* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), Pekka Gronow, “The Record Industry: The Growth of a Mass Medium,” *Popular Music* 3 (1983), Geoffrey P. Hull, *The Recording Industry* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>170</sup> John Street, “The Celebrity Politician: Political Style and Popular Culture,” in *Media and the Restyling of Politics*, ed. John Corner and Dick Pels (London: SAGE Publications, 2003).

<sup>171</sup> Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean,” 6.

<sup>172</sup> Catherine Eschle and Neil Stammers, “Taking Part: Social Movements, INGOS, and Global Change.,” *Alternatives* 29, no. 3 (2004), Aldon Morris, “Reflections on Social Movement Theory: Criticisms and Proposals.,” *Contemporary Sociology* 29, no. 3 (2000), Kate Nash, “Political Sociology Beyond the Social Democratic Nation-State.,” *Sociology* 36, no. 2 (2002).

<sup>173</sup> Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean,” 2.

<sup>174</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2000).

<sup>175</sup> Steve Stockman, *Walk On: The Spiritual Journey of U2* (Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books, 2003).

<sup>176</sup> Campbell, “Agency: Promiscuous and Protean.”

<sup>177</sup> See especially: Edith L. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer, eds., *Modern Christian Revivals* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), Bruce J. Evensen, “‘The Greatest Day That Our City Has Ever Seen:’ Moody, Medill, and Chicago’s Gilded Age Revival,” *Journal of Media & Religion* 1, no. 4 (2002),



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<sup>178</sup> Barack Obama, *Call to Renewal Keynote* (2006 [cited March 22 2007]); available from [http://obama.senate.gov/podcast/060628-call\\_to\\_renewal\\_keynote/index.html](http://obama.senate.gov/podcast/060628-call_to_renewal_keynote/index.html).