

The Pitfalls of Persuasion Through the Lens of Scientology

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Introduction: What is Scientology?

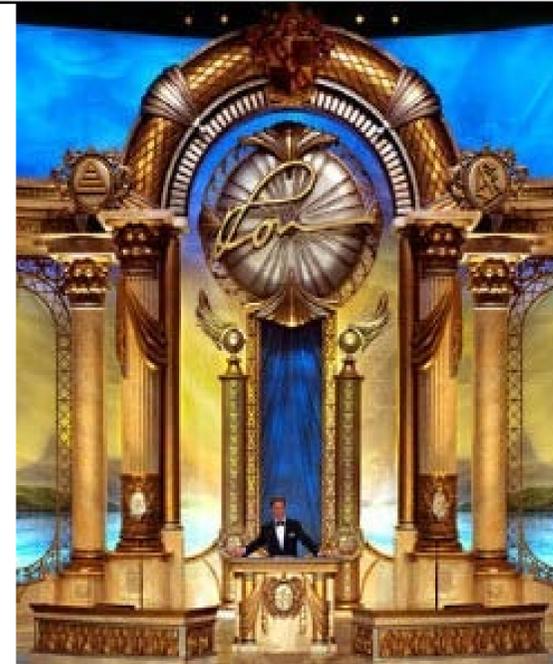
- Scientology is a high-control group founded by L. Ron Hubbard, now led by David Miscavige
- The leadership of this cult have mastered the art of deception, coercion, and exploitation.
- How does Miscavige utilize Aristotle's Artistic Appeals and Cognitive Dissonance Theory to persuade followers to join, maintain commitment, and support the church?

Methodology

- Through rhetorical analysis, I analyzed David Miscavige's persuasive efforts using Aristotle's Artistic Appeals and Cognitive Dissonance Theory.
- Aristotle's Artistic Appeals: Ethos, pathos, and logos are three artistic proofs used by speakers to persuade audiences. Ethos: credibility. Pathos: emotions. Logos: logic
- Cognitive Dissonance Theory: When one experiences mental discomfort from holding two contradictory ideas at one time, they will try to reduce the discomfort.
- I examined two of Miscavige's speeches at Scientology events using these theories.

Conclusions

- The grandeur of the stage – appeal to ethos and logos
- “when you're in scientology, you're in all the way... the bullets aren't particular to who they hit...” appeal to pathos
- Referring to the church's battle with the IRS as 'the war' appeals to all three of the artistic proofs
- “those alleged sciences [psychology and psychiatry] had done nothing to earn their respect” -- appeal to ethos
- “LRH did not offer something to control people” – he claims that government and psychiatric industry work together to control the people – appeal to logos
- He uses harsh language like comparing IRS employees to Nazi soldiers to invoke emotion from the audience
- Award show for high-ranking members – ethos appeal for celebrity members specifically
- Reflection of Christian themes in tactics – logos and ethos



- Members experience cognitive dissonance mainly through celebrity members
- Celebrity members include John Travolta, Dannie and Christopher Masterson, Elizabeth Moss, and of course Tom Cruise
- Tom Cruise has been one of the most highly valued members
- His involvement brought forth a lot of publicity for the church, as well as credibility
- As you can see in the photo, Cruise was awarded the “Scientology Freedom Medal of Valor”
- Cruise's membership elicits cognitive dissonance in both members and outsiders
- I argue that Cruise himself experience cognitive dissonance because his career was threatened by his involvement in Scientology

Literature cited

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