

Dialogue as Rhetoric of Deliberation in the Public Sphere

Petra Aczél

Rhetoric: code, mode, discourse

1 Definitions

Classic rhetoric derives from the ancient Greek and Roman where it served as the universal science of the public sphere in which right acting and right speaking were considered one and there was no distinction drawn between thought and speech (Plato: *Sophist*). Although broadly defined as the art of persuasion it has always tended to outgrow its original concern with persuasive public speaking. Its genuine communicative and strategic characteristics, the philosophical concerns, the pragmatic and semiotic approaches, its references to both the public and the personal have made rhetoric an interdisciplinary field of interpersonal, organizational and public discourse.

Kibédi Varga Áron, the Hungarian scholar emphasizes that rhetoric is the mediator between God and men, a device in man's hand to submit the world into a Godly order and through this to come to know God. This knowledge gives man humanity; his/her organic function in the whole. Rhetoric is a code of cognition and knowledge. (Kibédi Varga 1998. 58). Lloyd Bitzer (1968) defines rhetoric as the mode of altering reality by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action, while Cheney et al (2004) conclude that rhetoric is “concerned about the way discourse is intertwined with human relations.” As a code to render the cognition of the world into an orderly state, a mode of altering reality by discourse and a discourse that is bound with and by human relations rhetoric is a system, a method, and a language that can be applied to situations of human interactions.

2 Rhetoric as consciousness

Philosophically speaking rhetoric is required whenever there is genuine communication. In Johnstone's (2007) view rhetoric is the evocation and maintenance of the consciousness required for communication. Without

remaining conscious communication will become perfect (or absolute) and collapse into non-communication. Non-communication is where there is no intention or opportunity for the refusal of statements, that is it that lacks the space of dialogue. Rhetoric is concerned with the acceptance or refusal to accept statements. To be conscious of something is to always interrupt the unity of the transaction between subject and object. Consciousness confronts the person with something radically other than himself. Consciousness is the relevant distance and distinction between subject and object, between the person and what is communicated. Rhetoric needs to be differentiated from suggestion as suggestion aims at dissolving the interface (the distance) while rhetoric is driving a wedge between a person and data.

Rhetoric, in this philosophical sense is inherently embedded in human existence and interaction. It cannot be considered to be just the art of persuasion but the inevitable technique to obtain the necessary consciousness to relate ourselves to objects (persons, situations or events) and to experience facts and values.

The public sphere is the dimension of the social human activity where this consciousness guarantees the civilised social distance with which people enjoy the company of each other (Sennett), the rational distance from views that enables interactors to argue and the dialogic distance that promotes unity through the individual.

3 Persuasion, rationality and dialogue

Rhetoric is ‘the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion’ as Aristotle (1355b) put it. Since each science was expected to have its own extraverbal subject matter Aristotle did not consider rhetoric a science but an art. Debated as a science it was later defined as to be either a faculty or a virtue. Its verbal persuasive function (*dicere ad persuadendum accommodare*, Cicero) – based on ethos pathos and logos, applying argumentation as a social practice – has widely been accepted and it has long been referred to as agonistic. Persuasion as the symptom of “agon” (the liberation of all strength in world battles, the human condition of public presence and visibility) is most commonly referred to as practice of the coercive and manipulative power. Nevertheless, the rhetoric argumentation providing speech and social act with persuasive strength is based on forms of reasoning and public reasoning exploits logic that has its roots in social cooperation. Thus persuasive rhetoric argumentation in a theoretical sense is of dialogic nature.

3.1 Argumentation and thinking

The same argument which we use in persuading others when we speak in public we also employ when we deliberate in our thoughts (Isocrates: Antidosis). Argumentation addressed to others is the process we employ when mediating in ourselves when mediating about matters. As psychologists explain people asked to think aloud present protocols that are not a sort of monologue, rather in a rhetorical context they attempt to justify and persuade themselves in front of the critical eye

Durkheim (1912/1965) stated ways of individual thinking are formed by the group as the person is constantly dependent upon the knowledge gained formerly by society, he/she obtains it externally through socialization.

Notions categories, abstract rules of thinking are not individual but collective representations, products of the social life.

Durkheim grounded this statement with two arguments:

- Substantial notions of thinking, logical rules and structuration exceed the level of individual activity and assume the cooperation of minds. (the notion of time and space exceed the individual perception and presumes the common context of individual perception. Logical rules provide the inevitable laws of exchanging thoughts, thus become necessary by social demands. They can be opposed to the anarchy of spontaneous representations of the individual.)
- Collective representations are sociomorphic and model the structure and system of the social group.

According to the conclusion of Durkheim's approach thinking is of social origin. When Durkheim rates the universal characteristics of creative thinking into the collective sphere, he implicitly alludes to cooperation, objectivity and mutuality

Thinking is dialogic in terms of reasoning and is sociomorphic in terms of social cooperation and socialization. Dialogue as the immanent feature of thinking explicitly represents the social nature of argumentation.

Thinking and argumentation, reasoning and dialogue are bound in the rhetoric context: the monologue of rhetoric speech possesses the content of a dialogue.

3.2 Consensus and rationality

As Habermas describes the ideal speech situation stipulates that there be a reciprocal relationship between all those participating in discourse. Consensus aimed at by the utmost rational communicative action can be reached only by the intersubjectivity and inclusiveness of the situation, with an orientation toward reaching understanding.

Rationality and logical operations used in rhetoric discourse are dependent upon social cooperation and understanding. As child psychology revealed (Piaget, 1945, Brown and Gribetz, 1995) logic is not an innate character of human beings but it develops as the result of mutual relations.

Thinking, at the beginning (age 2-7) is a kind of mental experiment, the translation of possible activities into symbols or images. This is ideographic thinking, the highest form of which is intuitive thinking and accompanies the activities done in the sensorial motoric field

At the age of 7 and 8 the mental activities of intuitive judgments lead to the stabilized equilibrium characterized by reversibility, it is the starting point of logical operations. These are born not separately but from the reorganization of the whole system.

At the stage of real logical operations (after stages of self centeredness and selfishness, subjective perception based intuitive (monological) thinking, actual activity as central organizing principle) (between 7-11, 12) children are able to cooperate. They are capable of thinking not only from their own point of views but from other aspects as well and thus capable of matching different real or possible points of views. The young person is ready to engage in dialogues, in inner dialogue (minding – thinking) and is able to express thoughts in an structured, ordered way.

There is a strong and substantial connection, bound between the development of logical operations and cooperation. The individual creates his/her own logic through cooperation with others not before it. Free cooperation creates that mutuality between perceptual judgments and representations which are essential for rational, objective operations. Modern sociological approach tends to presume that logic is forced on the individual by social relations. But only when these relations dispose of this logic: coercion does not necessarily have this kind of cooperative logic.

Rhetoric that is generally considered agonistic represents the individual intention to win over the other. Formal agonistic oratory in which there are clear winners and losers aims at the deconstruction of the opponent and the dialogic sphere.

Rhetoric exploiting social logic, the possibility of enthymemes (truncated syllogisms, pragmatic logical implicatures when one premise is missing in order to invite the listener to a common thinking and reasoning), the inner infinity of thinking is dialogic and rational in terms of mutuality and cooperation. It is the discourse of communities, it is the discourse of unity.

In Burke's unique 'dramatism' theory persuasion results from identification. This model holds that humans manage social situations through their use of language, through symbolic acts, because their management is the principal means by which they coordinate their social actions. Language no longer being the means for conveying information is regarded here as modes of

action. Burke emphasized the influence of symbols (rather than arguments) essential to evoke shared meaning and foster identification. Symbols as means of identification invite and implicate others in cooperative enterprises. “You can persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture and tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (Burke, 1969: 55). This language is a “voice within” on which effective persuasion depends. Rhetoric through identification promotes social coherence and as such has a socializing role (Burke, 1969; Livesey, 2002).

4 Dialogic rhetoric

Dialogue involves justification of views and rebuttals (Kuhn, 1991, Tindale, 2004), so it is also dependent upon the consciousness that gives distance to consider interaction and to have the freedom to refuse. Nevertheless, in Bakhtin’s (1981) view dialogue is ruined by agonistic speech and persuasion. Anticipation of the answer and the word’s structuring in accordance with the anticipation of the future answer is what characterizes dialogue, not the fighting views and rebuttals.

As Bakhtin (1981: 280) explains the internal dialogism of the word:

The word in living conversation is directly blatantly oriented toward a future answer-word. It provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answers directions. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word.

Dialogues have the dynamic dialectic structure of not pro-cons but words provoking answers. Aiming at consensus dialogue is a complex form of centripetal (consolidating) and centrifugal (dispersive) meaning functions and interactions.

According to the summary of Gergen et al (2002), referring to recent theoretical approaches dialogue is considered to be the form of communication from which something new emerges, it is concerned with the creation of convergence in views, with conflict reduction, or with a logic of stating and questioning; a form of communication that questions all certainty of knowledge.

Rhetoric is dialogic in terms of persuasion and argumentation. Dialogue is rhetoric because of contrasting different reasons and being of social nature, rooting back to commonly shared knowledge. Dialogue as the process of unconstrained public discourse is inevitable to understand an issue and thus is of political importance.

Dialogic rhetoric as a public practice is exploited in sense-making methodology of public campaigns (Dervin and Frenette, 2001), when campaign audiences are addressed and communicated communicatively. “Being dialogic is not simply a matter of packaging messages to match audience information processing styles or finding ways to transmit messages via trusted, credible or intimate others. It is a matter of acknowledging in the core of the campaign the everyday sense-makings of audiences. All communication is ultimately dialogic.” (Dervin and Frenette 2001: 85) Dialogue can also be utilized in creating commonly shared meanings, a sense of belongingness if corporations are in a stage of change and experience it as uncertainty.

5 Community and deliberation

Béla Hamvas (2006), the Hungarian philosopher when contrasting the mass with the community described the former as heterogeneous, material and united in place by accident that degrades the individual existence and the latter as homogeneous, spiritually united, bound by a supernatural power that exaggerates individual life.

Communities are not cooperative groups of individuals, as human etologists claim Community is a unique level of formation that is the characteristic of humans only. It is of course, based upon mutuality and cooperation but beside these features it is rooted in the sacrifice of the individual dimension (interest, desire, need), with the intent to understand, accept and reflect the other, in the phenomenon of solidarity /solidarity here is not meant as the acceptance of the individualism of the other – egalitarianism – but as an attitude oriented at accepting the unity of autonomous individuals). Therefore communities are not practical but human in a spiritual sense. This sphere of ‘belongingness’ is also the sphere of the dialogic word and the social logic of rhetoric argumentation.

When we deliberate we imagine different futures and contrast different reasons for avoiding and wishing these futures. Deliberation is a strategic communicative action of political nature. The capacity for reasoned speech and the capacity to make arguments gives human beings their political character (Aristotle: Politics 1253a, Yack 2006). The notion of *politicos* refers to the ethos of the public man, it reflects the intention to think, consider and decide together and the capacity to argue, to resist neutrality and indifference.

Deliberation is the practice of the ideal public man, the operation of the *politicos*. It is a social practice in which citizens communicate with each other about how they should direct the life of their communities. Strategically speaking it is a process in which problems and solutions are identified and applied by and within the community: an inherent activity of the non-homogeneous but consciously united community.

(Political) deliberation prepares collective decisions by helping individuals to orient towards a common perspective and determine themselves which collective action to support. Deliberation is not collective decision making (or voting) it is the process of preparing decisions by providing arguments.

Arguments are drawn from the merited opinion, from common knowledge, they are formed with the consciousness that recognizes and bridges the distance between individuals and perceived and considered as operations of communities.

Public arguments are addressed to people in general and belong to the public sphere where citizens participate on equal grounds. Arguments here are to be understood not on the basis of expertise but on the accumulated “social knowledge” of citizens (Goodnight, 1982).

Media based publicity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, has privatized this social knowledge and represented it as the monopoly of experts or as the stock of field specific assumptions.

Interaction is highlighted in new media turns out to be a discursive pattern of multivocality rather than dialogue. Without the social knowledge citizens are deprived of the assertiveness to engage in deliberation. Knowledge that is given and echoed is different from knowledge that is created and debated.

Public communication strategies mostly use the content distribution technique: the readiness of content and the passivity of the receivers characterize the process by which citizens are becoming indifferent and uninterested in matters of their own communities.

Especially in former socialist countries where discourses of memory, the coding of socio-historical events and processes, the narratives of suffering, the motives and notions to define the recent past do not yet exist this common sociocultural knowledge is painfully missing. Public communication and rhetoric is definitely monological and manipulative stimulated by perspectives and intellects of dominant groups.

Without the civil sphere and the endeavor of citizens to gain this common knowledge deliberation can only be referred to as democratic voting.

It is not the audience that initiates rhetoric, it is the rhetoric that initiate audience. Agonistic oratory creates supporters and enemies. Dialogic rhetoric creates communities with recognition of the shared knowledge (narratives, discourses, definitions), the context of creative uncertainty and the possibility of spiritual unity.

6 Brief summary

Rhetoric as public praxis has to be rehabilitated, improved and applied in a dialogic way to situations of deliberation: preparation of common (political) decisions. Rhetoric in its dialogical sense is dependent on a fourth appeal beside ethos, pathos and logos, and that is the spiritual.

Rhetoric offers the consciousness that provides the necessary distance for communication and dialogue. Rhetorical arguments are of a genuinely social nature and are the results of social cooperation.

Dialogue as rhetoric creates a context of solidarity, participation, and responsibility. Rhetoric as dialogue reflects the common knowledge and the sense of togetherness.

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