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## **RHETORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OR ANTHROPOLOGICAL RHETORIC: FOUNDATIONS OF THE “RHETORIC & ANTHROPOLOGY” RESEARCH NET**

**Abstract:** The article is a scientific manifesto by the *Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net*. It discusses the state of the subject, the basic principles of the investigation and an outline of different rhetorical-anthropological fields of work directed by the authors of the article.

The methodological focus is ecological because it is based on responsibility and solidarity specified in a culture of debate worthy of the name, and in the principle of affirmation, that is, in a rhetoric that opens new pathways, provides solutions, and brings people together because it has an eminently positive orientation.

**Key words:** rhetoric, anthropology, persuasion, responsibility, ethics, virtues

### **Introduction**

In the presentation of the web page of *Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net*, coordinated by the chair of rhetoric of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome (Prof. Dr. Rafael Jiménez Cataño), one can read that it must not be forgotten

that rhetoric is a discipline with a strong theoretical basis and of eminently practical use. Rhetoric is an approach to human life that brings together sciences as diverse as logic, psychology, and linguistics. At the centre of this interdisciplinary crossroads, one finds the human person, who communicates with other human beings.<sup>1</sup>

The *Research Net* was created in September 2015 by the authors of this article, who belong to three different universities – Rome (Holy Cross), Padua and Saarbrücken – and who have been working for years on different aspects of *ars rhetorica*, such as argumentation, pragmatics, dialogue, and the relationships between rhetoric and ethics and between rhetoric and culture. The *telos* that has served to unite these researchers belongs to the classical discussion found in Plato’s dialogues about the philosophical and rhetorical *status*, above all the eminently anthropological dimension of communication – from persons, with persons, and toward persons – and whose dignity, to paraphrase one of Hans Georg Gadamer’s ideas (cf. Kemmann 2009: 446), is emphasized when the interlocutors manage to unite themselves with one another to increase their knowledge and reach stable consensuses.

This article is to be considered a scientific manifesto of this research net, which can serve to open the doors to scientific debate and to possible cooperation between persons and institutions interested in a rhetorical investigation with an anthropological focus. This manifesto will be carried out in three phases:

1. Presentation of the status of the issue.
2. Basic principles of the investigation in the *Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net*.

After this exposition of common investigation lines, it will proceed to some brief expositions of each of the contributors of the *Research Net*:

3. An outline of the different rhetorical-anthropological fields.

### **Presentation of the status of the issue**

The inspiration for the title of this article, in which the components of the name of the institution, “rhetoric” and “anthropology” are placed in alternating noun-adjective relation to one another (rhetorical anthropology / anthropological

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<sup>1</sup> “Rhetoric is a multidimensional discipline in which theory, practice, logic, psychology, linguistics, and the behavior and intentions of the speaker and the listener all come together. Thus, in the crossroads of the rhetorical phenomenon, one can find the wholeness of the human person” (<http://www.rhetoricandanthropology.net> – Accessed April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018). “Human person” and “person” mean here most of the same, but we do not consider pleonastic “human person” because we contemplate the idea of divine persons and of angelic persons.



rhetoric), has come from the German language philosophical-rhetorical investigation in recent years. Kopperschmidt (2000) published a volume entitled *Rhetorische Anthropologie* (rhetorical anthropology) and Oesterreich (2008) published a fundamental study in the volume *Rhetorik und Stilistik* from the HSK collection (see bibliography) under the name of *Anthropologische Rhetorik* (anthropological rhetoric). We ask ourselves: are the terms interchangeable, was there a mistake in their use, or is there a specific rhetorical-anthropological concept in each case?

It is well known that the adjective specifies the semantic extension of the noun. In our case, the adjective *rhetorical* in the first case specifies the concept of anthropology, considering man from the perspective of his capacity for communication, and setting aside other dimensions of the person such as liberty, love, culture, work, etc. or, to be more precise, it leads us to contemplate each of these human dimensions from the perspective of the ability to communicate. In the second case, the adjective *anthropological* specifies the study of rhetoric from a human point of view, such as truthfulness in speech, the liberty of the interlocutors, the credibility of the speaker, his rationality in argumentation, etc., without focusing on phenomena that are exclusively pragmatic, stylistic, dialectic, etc. Or, even more, as in the previous case: it puts these phenomena under the particular light emitted by their human character. In the second case, the anthropological perspective tends to study the person not only in his identity but also in his ability to form relationships thus expanding the concept of rhetoric from the narrow margin of persuasion to that of communication between human persons. If the adjective does not, strictly speaking, restrict the semantic extension of the noun but rather casts a particular light upon it, the reason is that the concepts are not univocal but analogous, a phenomenon with which we will not concern ourselves here.<sup>2</sup>

We will not reproduce here all the aspects of the research about this subject, for that we refer to the cited works. However, we do wish to focus on the basic question that drives the idea of the *Research Net*. It is inspired by the most influential philosopher in this field, Hans Blumenberg (2000), whose article we cite is published in Kopperschmidt's book. The underlying question – it could not be any other way in philosophy – is the subject of truth. Blumenberg (2000: 67f) places rhetoric in relation to

- a) the possession of the truth;
- b) the feeling of unease at not being able to attain it.

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<sup>2</sup> About this point, analogical hermeneutics could be of great use, not only because of its analogical perspective but also because of the added hermeneutics, which is as it were the “opposite direction” to the path of rhetoric. All of the rhetorical resources of persuasion of the other have validity in the opposite direction: to understand the other. Cf. Beuchot (1995, 2003).

In the first point – represented by Cicero and the tradition inspired by him – rhetoric has the function of embellishing the transmission of the truth, of presenting it in all its splendour. Its medium is the *ornatus*. The alternative in b) is the sophist option, which bases itself in the impossibility of reaching the truth and therefore appropriates the right of presenting the *persuasibile* as truth. This second case is for Blumenberg the eminently rhetorical, for the truth, according to him, has no need of persuasion. Persuasion becomes necessary on discovering the anthropological failure to find the truth, for which man then makes use of art and appearance as substitutes for being. In fact, to the extent that what has come to be called “real” does not exist, these substitutes become converted in reality.<sup>3</sup>

There is room for another formulation of this essential aporia of the truth (cf. Jiménez Cataño 2012: 9):

- a) it is possible to possess it, without being able to demonstrate it;
- b) one can lie, trick, corrupt, and spoil with the truth.

In this evidence that “truth is not everything”, the anthropological dimension that is necessary for rhetoric becomes evident.

The background of Blumenberg’s theory is the idea of man as a “frail and finite being” (*Mängelwesen*) – a concept introduced by Arnold Gehlen in his work *Man, His Nature and Place in the World*<sup>4</sup> – and the necessity of compensating for these deficiencies, as has already been set forth by Alfred Adler in his individual psychology, particularly in *Study of Organ Inferiority and its psychical Compensation*.<sup>5</sup> This compensation is rhetoric in our case, the only thing that we have when we lose evidence. And this *ars oratoria*, as we are supposed to act in the world, substitutes and systematizes physical action, which constitutes an anthropological radical.<sup>6</sup> A new focus of the frailty of the human condition is expressed in the anthropological reflection of MacIntyre, with the eloquent title of his 1999 work: *Dependent Rational Animals*. The dependence, the vulnerability of man are constituent elements of his condition, they are authentic humanity, not mere “extra-human” contingencies.

In this sense, the rhetorical-anthropological element *par excellence* is the metaphor: the strange or inaccessible is substituted for the familiar and known. It is a metaphorical detour: instead of naming something *as* what it is, it is named *via* something different. In principle a choice of style, it is a cognitive need for the most important realities: instead of knowing something as it is, it is known

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<sup>3</sup> “Sobald es das nicht mehr gibt, was einmal als ‘real’ galt, werden die Substitutionen selbst ‘das Reale’” (2000: 77).

<sup>4</sup> *Der Mensch. Seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt*, 1940.

<sup>5</sup> *Studie über die Minderwertigkeit der Organe*, 1907.

<sup>6</sup> “Physische durch verbale Leistungen zu ersetzen, ist ein anthropologisches Radikal: Rhetorik systematisiert es” (Blumenberg 2000: 73).

through something different. But this knowledge is imperfect – Blumenberg (2000: 80) calls it *principium rationis insufficientis* – and constitutes the correlative of the anthropology of a being that lacks the necessary faculties for its own survival.<sup>7</sup> Bolz (2000: 97), in a commentary to the Blumenberg article in the same volume, compares this concept of rhetoric and metaphor with deconstruction. This is the deconstruction of “is”, the metaphor then corresponds to the instrument for thinking about the inconceivable in concepts.<sup>8</sup> Definitively, what rhetoric offers is protection from the trauma of the real.<sup>9</sup>

In the same volume, Bornscheuer criticizes two fundamental elements of Blumenberg’s rhetoric

- a) metaphor as the most important element of rhetoric
- b) rhetoric as the “poor man’s” compensation

Regarding a), in relation to classical rhetoric Bornscheuer (2000: 103f) reinforces the capacity of man to know something as it is and not simply – metaphorically – through something different. What the individual often finds difficult on his own can be obtained more easily in community. Because of this, Bornscheuer emphasizes: the most significant element of rhetoric, where its function can be most clearly seen and its anthropological dimension is shown, is not metaphor but consensual judgement.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding b), rhetoric is not compensation for man’s weakness, but the ordinary instrument for getting strength out of weakness. In the well-known motto of the eristics of Protagoras of making the weak idea strong an eminently anthropological principle is contained: man is capable of surpassing himself, of finding strength in his weakness, making himself the “apprentice of nature”. Pareyson, as is well known, turned the “weakness” of the word around on recognizing it as being “capable of possessing an infinite” (1971: 115)<sup>11</sup> and, therefore, strength. According to Bornscheuer (2000: 108f) this was the reaction of Herder and of the rhetoric of the eighteenth century. What is the strength that rhetoric provides? It is precisely the category of *evidentia*, which according to Quintilian (VI 2, 32) represents the highest goal of rhetoric. Bornscheuer (2000:

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<sup>7</sup> This insufficiency, accepted as an ordinary human condition, is compensated by the equally human vocation to mutual care, which can be derived from the Philosophy of Care.

<sup>8</sup> “Dekonstruktion ist (!) die Dekonstruktion des ‘ist’. Ganz entsprechend entfaltet die Metaphorologie das Denken des Unbegrifflichen in Begriffen”. Also “trauma”, recognized as belonging to the human condition, finds in the “hermeneutical/rhetorical” center the ordinary relationship between man and reality *semper interpretanda*. This “ordinary relationship” implies that a spontaneous hermeneutics is involved, as well as a spontaneous rhetoric.

<sup>9</sup> “Was Rhetorik vor allen Dingen gewährt, ist Schutz vor dem Trauma des Realen” (Ibid.: 95).

<sup>10</sup> “Nicht die ‘Metapher’, sondern das *konsensuelle Urteil*” (Ibid.: 104).

<sup>11</sup> Gottlob Frege also saw strength in the symbolic faculty of man, which he compared with the invention of the sail, which allowed him to use the wind to sail against the wind (cf. 1998: 107).

106) thus contradicts the basic principle of Blumenberg's theory and of all those who put evidence in opposition to rhetoric: instead of thinking that there is no rhetoric when there is evidence, it is advisable to view rhetoric as the art of putting the truth about things *ante oculos*. This makes the metaphor in its rhetorical conception relevant again, since it is precisely the quality that, according to Aristotle, defines a good metaphor (cf. *Rhetoric*, III, 10, 1411a26)<sup>12</sup>. George Steiner's answer to deconstruction is revealing. Since deconstruction is a denial of the presence of the *logos*, it cannot be refuted through discussion. The best answer is a work of art, for it is a counter-example. In fact, in his book *Real Presences* he attempts to demonstrate the reality of works of art in human history, and its literary merit seeks to make the book a work that demonstrates beauty (cf. 1989: 115ff, 126).

With respect to Oesterreich's position in his concept of anthropological rhetoric (*Anthropologische Rhetorik*), one cannot find a profile as well defined as that which distinguishes the rhetorical anthropology (*Rhetorische Anthropologie*) of Kopperschmidt. Oesterreich also speaks of the anthropology of *homo rhetoricus* as a specifically rhetorical doctrine of man.<sup>13</sup> His contribution is based above all in what he calls "fundamental rhetoric" (*Fundamentalrhetorik*), in which he builds upon the constituent and fundamental communicative properties of man, and goes to the extreme of affirming: speech is the man himself.<sup>14</sup> Over this universal phenomenon *ars rhetorica* has developed over time, and with its services the innate persuasive and communicative qualities have been perfecting themselves. As an illustration of this interrelation between nature and culture Oesterreich (2008: 871) proposes the *quinque partes* (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, actio*) as candidates for invariant anthropological universals. These *partes* would correspond to man's fundamental creative forces to manage his *Lebenswelt*, such as his capacity to discover, organize, shape, remember and dramatize. From our point of view, Oesterreich's position would be convincing if it were turned around: precisely because discovering, organizing, shaping, remembering and dramatizing are constituent qualities of man, he has created the *officia oratoris* in the quality of *inventio, dispositio, elocutio*, etc. Studying these *partes* or *officia* anthropologically will shed more light for understanding the qualities and properties of discourse in greater depth. Oesterreich himself (2008: 871) does so with respect to the means of persuasion *logos, ethos* and *pathos*, placing them in relation to the capacity of man to discover, evaluate and to be moved.

Let us provisionally close the status of the issue with a few specifications about the axis on which the discussion about the relation between rhetoric and

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<sup>12</sup> One must not forget, on the other hand, that classical rhetoric evolved during a period when the possibility of certainties was accepted (besides doubts, paradoxes and obstacles to reach truths), not in the postmodern era.

<sup>13</sup> "Eine spezifisch rhetorische Lehre vom Menschen" (2008: 869).

<sup>14</sup> "Die Rede, das 'ist' der Mensch selbst" (Ibid.: 870).

anthropology turns: the capacity of man to gain access to the truth. Without making any direct reference to Blumenberg, the Spanish philosopher Alejandro Llano (1999) indicates a series of fundamental guidelines to pose a criticism of rhetoric as compensation for knowledge that is inaccessible to man. Llano bases his theory on three points:

1. man does not possess truth, rather truth possesses man;
2. a real relation between truth and freedom exists;<sup>15</sup>
3. truth and virtue mutually complement one another.

Without going into detail here, we will summarize the principal ideas that can serve as a correction to a position that conceives man as incapable of penetrating into the essence of things. True anthropological poverty is precisely that which makes the man fall into metaphysical emptiness. This is truly made manifest if the man says that he possesses the truth. Who can assert this? In such a case it is subjectivism and the schism of society that reign, each person defending *his own* truth. Rhetoric is in this case fundamentally an instrument of persuasion, a weapon, used not only for survival but also to exercise power. Allowing oneself to be possessed by the truth, on the contrary, frees man from subjectivism, from slavery to prevailing opinions and to the pressure of social advantages. Authentic dialogue is possible in this case because it is based on the *logos*, word that transmits knowledge, truth that in the end imposes itself on us, the interlocutors, when we have helped one another by uniting our points of view in order to find it. Fabrice Hadjadj formulates this personal aspect of the truth explaining that

truth is not fulfilled in a stark, cold system but in hearing a voice. It is not about listening only to subject oneself to an order, but listening to the voice itself, as one listens to a singer or, even more, as one listens to a loved one. The voice is the word made flesh and is the expression of a person (2011: 48, own translation).

This position does not make one's life easier.

He who seeks the truth does not pretend to have certainties. On the contrary: he tries to make what is already known vulnerable because he seeks to know more and to know better. And, paradoxically, it is this openness to risk that, in a way, makes a person invulnerable, because his own trivial interests are not at stake, what is at stake is the patency of the truth (Llano 1999: 198, own translation; cf. D'Agostini 2011: 13-14).

Discovering this "patency of reality" involves constant work to overcome subjectivism. Thus, an emphasis is placed on the importance of an ethic of the virtues to facilitate access to the truth. In this sense rediscovering Aristotle's

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<sup>15</sup> The hermeneutics of Pareyson is based on a close interconnection between the person, truth, and freedom (cf. 1971: 84-85).

concept of *practical truth* becomes a task of eminent relevance, the concept of truth that is made, that has been operated freely.

### **Basic principles of the investigation in the Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net**

With respect to the relationship between rhetoric and anthropology, the *Research Net* opts for the research perspective of “anthropological rhetoric”, although differentiating it from Oesterreich’s concept. In effect, *homo rhetoricus*, the man in his exclusive communicative dimension, does not offer the necessary richness of anthropological nuances. Kopperschmidt himself, in his introduction to the volume published by him (2000: 33f), admits that the concept of *homo rhetoricus* serves only as a crutch to bring us closer to man in his entirety, knowing that we are observing his behaviour in very human situations, such as communicative ones. Therefore, their anthropological value is relative. In our net, we seek not so much to reach a better understanding of man through his rhetorical qualities as to better know rhetoric keeping in mind these anthropological dimensions. At the same time, it is inevitable that more will be learned about the man because we see him reflected in his works, especially in these works that exhibit a particular human density. This is why anthropological rhetoric is essentially inseparable from hermeneutics.

In order to do this, we base ourselves in an open, let us say systematic, concept of anthropology, which serves as a counterbalance to the idea of man as a deficient being. As Malo emphasizes quite well (cf. 2013: 23f), the human person is an open system that tends towards its own development, and therefore dimensions (of great rhetorical value) such as integration and rationality play a decisive part in understanding man. In the end, it is not a matter of taking into account in the first place his adaptability and strategies for survival, but of seeking that which can be used for his own improvement.

On this epistemological basis, we can observe with greater detail what supports our optimistic vision that man – more easily in community – can find and communicate the truth (cf. Hurtado 2009) and how this optimism is founded on the realism of the so-called virtues of the orator. In the following lines, we will attempt to show the intertwining of truth and virtue in rhetoric. This optimistic view of man is not original or exclusive to the *Research Net* but is based on the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions of a rhetoric which is always valid, as we will remind shortly.<sup>16</sup>

The discussion between Socrates and the sophists at the beginning of the Greek democracy in the fifth century BCE, which we see summarized in Plato’s *Sophist*, is very well known. Socrates accuses them of being recruiters of the youth of rich and

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<sup>16</sup> For more details, we refer to Gil (2015).

influential families, of being salesmen of products for the soul, artisans of dialectics, quack doctors of the soul... (cf. 221C-226C). But what makes the sophists most dangerous is their imitation of reality, inventing or remaking it, in such a way that they do not offer a faithful image of reality, but an imitation (cf. 233D-236A). If the sophists were masters of simulation in mere speech, what would we say about the artifice that today dominates the media's most refined techniques to *make a reality* that is apparently so real? Being becomes confused with what appears to be. The problem is the sustainability of this game: when the fraud is discovered, confidence is lost, and with it the acceptability of the discourse. It is not, then, very surprising that there is such a distancing of oneself from politics (which is so media-driven that it is sometimes referred to as *politainment*), from journalism and from the same large corporations and institutions in which lies and scandals are discovered. This is also the subjective part of the truth—truthfulness—that causes Socrates to say with an eschatological tone that he leaves honors to the masses: he prefers to keep searching for the truth of things, to live and die, when the time comes, as a virtuous man, inviting all to behave in a like manner.

Precisely in this subjective dimension the importance of rhetoric for a full life in society is highlighted. Expressed ethically, we can speak of the virtuous character of communicative actions, understanding as virtue *areté*, that is to say, the excellence of the person, that brings together the quality of life and happiness. Once again we read in *Gorgias*: the virtuous woman or man is called happy and the unjust and evil unhappy (cf. 470E). We must add that for Plato virtue is not a theoretical monad, rather it has a dimension of social responsibility. As Müller describes (cf. 1994: 60-67), those of the Academy were convinced that the task of the State consisted in teaching the citizens virtue so that they might be responsible and would be able to take the reins of the government of the Polis.

This sociopolitical dimension develops and is perfected with Aristotle and, in Rome, with Cicero. From the first the socio-rhetorical qualities that he sees in man are frequently cited:

- a) man is by his nature a social being (a “political animal”): ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον
- b) man is the only speaking animal (capable of having *logos*): λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζῴων

Both affirmations can be found in the context of his *Politics* (cf. 1, 2, 1253a10) where the human community and the animal are distinguished: the community instinct is truly human when the man is able to recognize and express what is good, bad, just and unjust. The proof is that when men stray from good habits and from the law they become the most perverse of all animals (cf. *Politics*, 1, 2, 1253a31). We can sum up by saying that man's communicational faculties are directed toward the formation and maintenance of a just society. In

other words, rhetoric is not an instrument of power for imposing one's preferences on others, but a means of achieving a more just society.

Cicero, in his third book of *De Oratore*, begins with the conviction that *eloquentia* is one of the greatest virtues (“una quaedam de summis virtutibus”, III 55), for it entails the power to attract one's listeners and to move them. From this great efficacy comes the necessity of uniting *eloquentia* with *probitas* and *prudencia*. Literally: “The greater the power, the more necessary it is that it be completed with integrity and with the greatest prudence.”<sup>17</sup> As can be seen, Cicero has an integral vision of rhetoric, going beyond linguistic-communicational techniques, but not contrasting them with *ars oratoria* as such. This is why he complains that Socrates had contributed to *discidium linguae et cordis*, when in his debates with the sophists he places philosophy in opposition to fine discourse, in fact, he warned of the fragility of a search for truth if it were accompanied by attractive eloquence.<sup>18</sup> Cicero proposes the *vis eloquentiae*, a virtue founded in human nature, that is to say, in its capacity for describing good habits, directing the reins of the State and knowing how to deal with all these public matters effectively and with rhetorical skill.<sup>19</sup>

In short: in classical rhetoric commitment to the truth and civic virtues, two dimensions of great anthropological value, come together.

Continuing along these lines of the Greco-Roman tradition, we also take as a reference point Saint Augustine, a model of rhetoric in late antiquity and for the application of the classical fundamentals of rhetoric to Christian preaching. His method for overcoming the *discidium linguae et cordis* is to seek the harmony between *sapientia* and *eloquentia*, but taking as a given the preeminence of the first, for he knows how much is at stake for those who pass on faith and revelation. His ideas may be found synthesized in *De Doctrina Christiana*, which consists of four books: the first three are of a hermeneutical nature, concerning how to interpret sacred scripture well, and the fourth is dedicated to the proclamation of the Word of God, that is to say, only the fourth is, strictly speaking, about rhetoric. The person of the preacher (in Aristotelian terms we would say the *ethos*) plays a decisive role both in understanding and communicating well. He will be wise – he will act *sapienter* – if he knows the Sacred Scriptures well (IV, IV 7), but not as one who has memorized them and can cite whatever passage may come up, but as one who has reflected deeply over the Word of God observing it patiently with the “eyes of the heart”: “It is

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<sup>17</sup> “quae quo maior est vis, hoc est magis probitate iungenda summaque prudentia” (III 55).

<sup>18</sup> “Hinc discidium illud exstitit quasi linguae atque cordis, absurdum sane et inutile et reprehendendum, ut alii nos sapere, alii dicere docerent” (III 61).

<sup>19</sup> “Illa vis autem eloquentiae tanta est, ut omnium rerum, virtutum, officiorum omnisque naturae, quae mores hominum, quae animos, quae vitam continent, originem, vim mutationesque teneat, eadem mores, leges, iura describat, rem publicam regat, omniaque, ad quamcumque rem pertineant, ornate copioseque dicat” (III 76).



plain we must set far above these the men who are not so retentive of the words, but see with the eyes of the heart into the heart of Scripture.”<sup>20</sup> Of course, this profound knowledge of revelation is only possible when the orator incorporates these teachings into his own life. Thus *eloquentia* can follow *sapientia* effectively and convincingly: “as if wisdom were walking out of its house – that is, the breast of the wise man, and eloquence, like an inseparable attendant, followed it without being called for.”<sup>21</sup>

The type of orator required from Cato to Quintilian, the *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (cf. *De Institutionis Oratoriae* XII 1, 1), is for St. Augustine and in more authentic way than for them (cf. Cattani 2012: 18), the convincing preacher, who doesn’t preach about himself or his great ideas, but proclaims the Word of God and supports with his works what is transmitted by his words. Precisely this unity of life and word is more decisive than stylistic requirements.<sup>22</sup> Preaching is not intended to be used to show one’s personal brilliance, but is a mission that is at the service of the truth (“ut militet veritati”, IV, XI 23). And there clarity and truth unite with one another, when the word is used to help discover the truth (“ut appareat quod latebat”, IV, XI 26). Cognitively it may be said that the creativity of expression is also useful for outlining and deepening one’s understanding of things. Theologically what is demanded of the preacher is a profound piety to comprehend the Word of God and give testimony to it through works. So says St. Augustine, with a play on words using the double meaning of the word *orator*: “and so he ought to pray for himself, and for those he is about to address, before he attempts to speak.”<sup>23</sup> Philosophically he emphasizes the close relationship between truth and virtue, pointing out the enormous importance of the *Ethos* of the orator which makes an effort to know the truth and transmit it in its integrity through means of his words. His ethical quality will lead him not only to be more convincing but also to be more focused on the matter and reach the knowledge of the truth more easily and more surely, freeing himself of any kind of personal demands and social advantages.

## Conclusions

At the *Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net*, there is a convergence of this tradition of harmony between the truth that must be discovered and the capacity to transmit it, as well as to make it acceptable in the ecological approach of rhetorical investigation. In the web page already cited it says:

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<sup>20</sup> “Quibus longe sine dubio praeferendi sunt, qui verba earum (= of Holy Scriptures) minus tenent, et cor earum sui cordis oculis vident” (IV, V 7).

<sup>21</sup> “Quasi sapientiam de domo sua, id est, pectore sapientis procedere intelligas, et tanquam inseparabilem famulam, etiam non vocatam, sequi eloquentiam” (IV, VI 10).

<sup>22</sup> “Granditate dictionis maius pondus vita dicentis” (IV, XXXVII 59).

<sup>23</sup> “ut orando pro se ac pro illis quos est allocuturus, sit orator antequam dictor” (IV, XV 32).

The chosen methodological focus could be called “ecological” because, going beyond references made to the environment and to nature, rhetoric has to do with those goods born from the relationships between human beings and between them and their surroundings, relationships in which not all of what one wants to do and one can do is to find a place necessarily in mankind’s agenda.

This field of investigation, set out schematically in Gil (2014), is expanded in the *Research Net*, opening the doors to new ecological-rhetorical concepts. In the cited work (147ff) an ecological rhetoric is founded on responsibility and solidarity that are manifested in a culture of debate, worthy of the name, and in the principle of affirmation, that is to say, in a rhetoric that paves the way, provides solutions and brings people together, because it is of an eminently positive nature. We would add here only the principle of sustainability: the desirable rhetorical effect is not short-term (to win a vote or sell a product) but rather outlives specific fashions and situations. In order to do this, it should be based on reality, on the truth of the things and on the truthfulness of the speaker.

From all this, it can be deduced that one can corroborate with personal and social experience that one can convince more and better with a convincing personality than with a refined rhetorical skill, which, if it has no values, even works against the speaker by putting the listeners on guard before an “expert”. The convincing person feels open to being, to the truth, and is aware of his capacity for the process of moving toward perfection. This search for the truth and its communicability is enormously facilitated in community, and this is why the civic virtues of the orator are so important.

In conclusion, we want to make clear that an anthropological rhetoric is no substitute for anthropology, and much less for philosophy. They are different disciplines. Just as it would be an error to replace philosophy with rhetoric, it would also not be beneficial to put philosophy in rhetoric’s place. It would be precisely rhetoric that would be lost. Instead, it is a matter of clarifying one’s sight with the help of anthropological criteria to amplify and, above all, deepen our knowledge of rhetoric. In the last section, we will illustrate this scientific focus outlining different fields of investigation where we are working at the *Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net*.

### **Epilogue: outline of different fields of anthropological-rhetorical investigation**

The concepts and principles on which the *Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net* is based are put into practice in different projects and jobs, both individual and collective. In this last section of the paper, we will limit ourselves, because of limited space, to present the outlines of some of the current studies.

Methodologically the subjects are first approached from a rhetorical point of view, later adding the anthropological perspective, in order to, in the end, seek the interrelation between the two disciplines.

**Dialogue between art and rhetoric from an anthropological point of view**  
(Marco Agnetta)

Culture is a combination of guidelines that regulate the behavior of the human being as a member of a particular collective (Hansen [1995] 2011: 29f). Through his behavior, which Morris calls “semiotic behavior” (cf. 1946), the human being constantly corroborates his connection to different collectives, be they a family, a state, a religion, an athletic club, a party, etc. These collectives are characterized by the circulation of certain signs, and their members by the capacity to recognize them, to employ them, and at times – if it becomes necessary – to change them.

According to Cassirer, who defines the human being as “animal symbolicum” ([1944] 1953), all human activities are based on the generation and interpretation of signs. Keeping this definition in mind, one can adopt a semiotic-anthropological view of human behavior.

It is a profoundly human characteristic to constantly reflect upon and question the norms that govern our daily behavior. One of the ways of doing so is through art, which suspends, at least temporarily, the norms and laws to which we are subject (cf. Fricke 1981: 2000) to reconsider them and sometimes even to later free ourselves from them. In this sense, art is capable of offering alternatives (though they may be only fictional) to norms by which individuals have previously allowed themselves to be ruled without thinking about it. Works of art violate norms and laws to force each and every one of those who contemplate the artwork to face such norms and laws, reflect upon them, and accept or reject them.

This didactic role of art, disseminated as an ideal, causes rhetoric to stumble onto skepticism and rejection in some semiotic studies. In these, it is suspected that rhetoric is an instrument, sometimes abusively exploited, used to create (and not describe) collectives, to establish (and not infringe upon) norms and to ideologize (and not sharpen) the minds of the receptors (cf. Eco 1972: 179ff). It is, consequently, another of the objectives of the comparative cultural sciences to study the relationship between art and rhetoric to analyze its repercussions in the behavior of collectives and of free individuals.

## **Toward a culture of argumentation and debate: rhetoric and logic, persuasion and conviction, polemic and dialogue**

(Adelino Cattani)

In an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural world, where different and opposing points of view confront one another, and where we have fortunately acquired the right, besides the duty, to argue, there is no sufficient knowledge of the rules and the manoeuvres of debate, above all concerning their “adjudication”. The shared values that have converted our times into a field of open, free, and democratic discussion, have not made discussions more effective.

Those who work in the field of educational debate know very well that the crucial and most difficult question is *how to evaluate a debate* and *the role of the adjudicator* or judge of the debate.

How does one evaluate the result of a debate and, more concretely, how does one establish who has won and who has lost in a discussion? How is it possible to evaluate the quality of an argumentation? Or better, what makes an argumentation *good* (or bad)?

Adjudication is particularly problematic because the two criteria of evaluation, the one concerning the *content* (which thesis comes out stronger?) and the one concerning the *speakers* (who debated better, with more skill and capacity?) are separable.

The question is even more complicated because, in addition to the fact that a matter is discussed between speakers, this is done in order to *persuade* someone.

Thus, given that in a debate there are three fundamental components (theses, supporters, and addressees), there will be at least three objects and principal criteria of evaluation:

1. the *intrinsic power* of the thesis held, in other words, the integrity of the theoretical position;
2. the *dialectical power*, namely the capacity to confront, offensively or defensively, the other party;
3. the *power of persuasion*, i.e. its effect on the audience.

### Objective

To develop a ballot form for evaluation usable by a new figure: the adjudicator or judge of a regulated and orderly debate.

### Methodology

In order to respond to these demands a research group is proposed to design an empirical survey with the double objective of a) evaluating the effects of

debate training, the “Palestra Botta e Risposta”<sup>24</sup> and b) design a system of evaluation of debate adapted to this project.

The research group will attempt to detect a series of logical-inferential skills (especially the capacity to identify, generically or specifically, flawed reasoning) based on other gifts, personal (such as self-esteem) and social (such as the role one plays in a group) and concerning the way of placing oneself in a situation of interaction and of confrontation with others.

Questionnaires will also be provided, in order to verify the implicit and the official criteria of evaluation and so that the teacher-educators can establish a common denominator useful for:

1. defining the criteria by which we decide who “has come out the winner” in a debate;
2. establishing what we evaluate when we evaluate respectively: a prologue, an argument in favour, a response, a dialectic interchange (Socratic dialogue), a defence, and an epilogue (logical conclusion and rhetorical close);
3. qualifying with three parameters/adjectives the “quality” of a prologue, an argument in favour, a response, a dialectic interchange (Socratic dialogue), a defence, and an epilogue (logical conclusion and rhetorical close).

### **Evidentia as the goal of the elocutio and its anthropological dimension** (Alberto Gil)

Quintilian (VIII 3, 61) considers *evidentia* or *repraesentatio* as an increase in the clarity of expression or *perspicuitas*, primary virtue (“prima virtus”, VIII 2, 22) in discourse, and belonging to the *ornatus* (“inter ornamenta ponamus”, VIII 3, 61). For our objective, it is important to point out first the broad meaning of the concept of *ornatus* (VIII 3, 10-15). Quintilian explains it with the example of a fighter whose beautiful muscles are of no use to him if they don’t make him better able to fight, which is to say: in rhetoric the beautiful and the, let us say, functional come together: “numquam vera species ab utilitate dividitur” (ibid. 11).

In the case of *evidentia*, the goal is to achieve greater representative efficacy, so that one is not content with the fact that one’s message reaches the listener’s ears, rather one takes care that the listener perceives with the eyes of his mind (“oculis mentis”, ibid. 62). In Gil (2011) characteristics and techniques for this visualization can be found just as Quintilian collects them, and, as we have seen, Bornscheuer expounds on them philosophically (2000: 106). In the present outline,

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<sup>24</sup> Or “Tit for Tat”, a project rising from the Theory of Argumentation course at Padua University. See: <http://bottaerisposta.fisspa.uniped.it/> – Accessed April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

we choose the perspective of the cognitive relevance of this representation, asking ourselves about the conceptual value of the linguistic reference and representation. To answer the question, it is very useful to begin with the ideas of those philosophers who believe in the capacity of man to seek and find the truth, but keeping in mind the limitations of the human person. The idea of Rodriguez Valls (2013: 239) is very illustrative in this respect, stating that the tendency to substitute the plausible for the true is definitively based on the erroneous assumption that one can pretend to have access to absolute truth, which is not possible given human limitations. Thence comes skepticism which distances itself from the idea of the truth, as if it were a question of all or nothing:

Not ever being able to be completely in absolute truth has led some to despair absolutely of being partially in it and, consequently, has caused a fall into certain forms of skepticism.

But as Llano, whom we have already cited, points out in another place (2013: 221),

reality itself does not give of itself completely. It is not that in this world we do not know an absolute reality, rather it is that no reality is, in this world, absolute.

Rhetorically, it is important to point out that since reality does not give its whole being, neither is it possible to explain it or express it fully. Linguistic representation and its plasticity are not then a substitute for the concept, but rather a means of transmission, and both the scope and limits of such means should be studied.

In its practical dimension, it is not unusual to find many skeptics who reject action because they know beforehand that unjust systems will not completely change, and they will not settle for the little steps that may be taken in situations that are macroscopically perhaps insignificant, but are (at least relatively) relevant for life in society. Because of this it is of rhetorical importance to look more closely at this relationship between knowing and wanting. Espinosa Rubio (2013), in an intriguing essay – which we cannot go into deeply here, but to which we explicitly refer – shows how, in human knowledge, and with it in rhetoric taken as a technique, there is an intertwining of knowing – influenced by wanting (which often prefers simulation for utilitarian reasons) – and a will of power to gain more social influence. Nonetheless, we believe that it is not necessary to focus on cases of manipulation in any kind of dictatorship (political, social, economic, etc.). *Evidentia* also positively aims at the interplay of knowing with loving. Let us remember Pascal's famous *raisons du coeur* and the well-known constitutive principles of the text (as De Beaugrande and Dressler propose them), among which *acceptability* stands out. Empathy, putting oneself in the listeners' place to build a discourse that is cognitively and emotionally accessible, belongs to a rhetoric that is anthropological and, therefore, ecological.

This requires special virtues of the orator. First of all truthfulness combining not only his thoughts and speech, but also the way he behaves in consequence: a

politician who lives for the people, and not at the expense of them, will speak with more *evidentia* of political problems and solutions and will be more accepted even when he demands sacrifices of the citizens in crisis situations. A preacher who lives ascetically will know better how to explain the value and even the beauty of sacrifice. But there is one virtue even more involved in *evidentia* than appears at first glance: humility. Accepting cognitive limitations when trying to gain access to the truth, and knowing how to control one's own desires for influence and power, will clarify the vision to see and make others see what must be done and that we otherwise neither could see nor wanted to see. Due to lack of space, I refer to *Hermeneutik und Kreativität*<sup>25</sup>, where an attempt to delve into this extremely close relationship between rhetoric and humility may be found in German and Spanish.

We summarize this brief exposition emphasizing that a rhetorical-anthropological vision of *evidentia* seeks motives founded in the person, in his rationality and his ethical base, to get a glimpse of more than the studied techniques for clearly expressing a message, in such a way that the listener vividly imagines it. In our case it has to do with an effort on the part of the speaker to improve his unity of life, combine his knowledge with his desire and grow in the humility necessary for accepting his own limitations, making of them a convincing instrument of cognition and communication.

**Rhetoric and pragmatics: the horizons of a new comprehension in an anthropological key**  
(Rafael Jiménez Cataño)

Since its first formulations, for example in the works of Robin Lakoff (1973) and of Paul Grice (1975), the study of politeness has placed at the centre of its attention the person and relationships between persons. It is obvious – by definition, we could say – since politeness is a chapter of pragmatics, characterized precisely by the study of the users of language. Nevertheless, as linguistics has become highly technical, persons and their relationships frequently appear as merely one more element in the system. It is evident that human relationships are spoken of, and it's not unusual that a debate in a conference takes on a tone characteristic of a conversation about human life, but it soon returns “to the seriousness” and to the demands of the method. I can say from personal experience that introducing a reflection of an anthropological kind, or an inference of a moral character, usually stirs interest, and at the same time, that it becomes classified

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<sup>25</sup> <https://hermeneutik-und-kreativitaet.de/index.php/schwerpunkte/10-h-k/30-rhetorik-und-ethosindex.php/publikationen/artikeln> – Accessed April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

under the liberties that a colleague permits himself, like a glance at the present reality before returning to the analysis of the subjects at hand.

The result is a priceless amount of explored and analysed material, which rhetoricians and philosophers otherwise never would obtain. Nor would linguists have explored and analysed such material if they had sought to elaborate anthropological considerations. It is clear that the person and the interpersonal relationships are the object of pragmatics and, therefore, of politeness. Robin Lakoff, in order to say that the maxim that prescribes clarity (“be clear!”) is unable to completely explain human communication, affirms that

it is considered more important in a conversation to avoid offense than to achieve clarity. This makes sense, since in most informal conversations actual communication of important ideas is secondary to merely reaffirming and strengthening relationships (1973: 297-298).

From this comes the necessity of the second maxim: “be polite!”

The theory of politeness is developed around the notion of face, which in communicative activity is exposed to risks, which we avoid or at least reduce through strategies that vary from culture to culture and from person to person. Brown and Levinson refer explicitly to the expression “saving face” (1987: 61), giving it a deeper meaning. It is a profound anthropological concept that has yet to be explained.

This image that is protected by politeness is not “pure image”, nor is it the *appearance* that sometimes is presented as the opposite of *being*. Paraphrasing Ortega y Gasset, it is valid to say “I am I and my image”, because our image is not something that is really distinct from ourselves. The original words of Ortega are relevant to our subject: “I am I and my circumstance, and if I do not save it I do not save myself” (1987: 322). It may appear pure coincidence, but it is eloquent that he speaks of “saving the circumstance”, just as one saves face, and that this also involves saving the person.

The risks that the image runs are common to all men; they are reciprocal, therefore, in interpersonal communication. “In general, people cooperate (and assume each other’s cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 61). Each expects that the other will be attentive, *heedful*, and this *heedfulness*, this attention, is precisely the central theme of politeness (cf. Jiménez Cataño, 2018).

It is not difficult to relate this sensitivity to save the image – which is saving the person – with the philosophy of care, which in the last few decades has come to place in the centre of its reflections on human vulnerability as something strictly human, that is to say, not as an extreme condition, even pathological (cf. Chirinos 2014: 204-205). The human being is vulnerable, dependent, not only in infancy, old age, sickness, and poverty. His need to eat, to dress, to keep warm, to rest, to move are all dependency (cf. MacIntyre 1999: 127). Melissa



Moschella points out that it is difficult for a liberal mentality to appreciate the value of care, which comes from the difficulty of accepting human vulnerability (cf. 2014: 89), a position associated with modern anthropology, begun with Descartes, which considers as not human anything that is not thought and, therefore, belonging to the animal dimension of man. The philosophy of care is based on the human character of this animal dimension, of the authentic humanity of this dependence and vulnerability.

The person is vulnerable in the vulnerability of his face. It follows that caring for the image is caring for the person. There are many areas of caring that we cannot put into practice with the vast majority of people with whom we come in contact. With them, caring ordinarily means caring for their image: speaking with them in such a way that their presence is the most appropriate one possible, speaking with them in such a way that they find the maximum equilibrium between the correctness of the content and the interpersonal relationship.

This is what could be called the “human vocation to caring” (cf. Jiménez Cataño 2014: 43-44), which can already be found implicitly formulated in the cited passage by Brown and Levinson about the cooperation, on which we usually count, the attention that we expect from others and that each of us tries to offer. And, to the extent that it is not done this way, we speak of impoliteness. Impoliteness that, from this point of view, is much more than an ill-chosen word: it is a deficit of humanity.

### **Rhetoric and dialogue: from the interactive technique to interpersonal encounter** (Sergio Tapia)

Since the publication of the celebrated work *I and Thou* by Martin Buber in 1923, much has been written about the difference between authentic dialogue and merely useful conversation in which the interlocutor is not regarded as a person, but is simply valued as a momentary source of practical information. The rapid development of life in great metropolises and the individualism that many times characterizes it have exacerbated these difficulties. Sometimes one loses sight of the fact that, before obtaining information, our verbal interchanges generate opportunities for interpersonal relationships. Rediscovering those verbal interchanges as a possibility for interpersonal growth is fundamental for entering into an authentically human communication.

Genuine conversation, like any other genuinely complete relationship, implies acceptance of the other. This means that, although one might wish to influence the other and bring him to share in one’s own relationship with the truth, one accepts and confirms the other in his particularity (cf. Tapia Velasco 2014: 128). Because of this, rhetoric cannot be seen as a one-sided activity, but consists of an

interchange of ideas and sympathies, whether in the form of discourse or in the form of interactive dialogue (cf. Schegloff 1999: 408). Persuading, encouraging, informing, and guiding are always activities directed toward persons, who in turn verbally or non-verbally enrich, worry, anger, or cheer the speaker. There are many kinds of conversations. In pragmatics, one often studies those that take place in ordinary life or in talk shows, given that, thanks to filming, they can be studied more easily (cf. Sacks 2007: 33).

While these dialogues between two or more people are pertinent and effective for the study of impersonal rhetorical relationships, there are two types of dialogue that deserve a more profound study from an anthropological point of view: interreligious dialogue and that dialogue that seeks to manage and overcome conflicts in professional and family life (cf. Tapia Velasco 2014: 328-342). In both, emotions play an important role.

At the *Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net* we want to delve into interpersonal conversation, beginning by being conscious of the fact that those who are relating to one another are persons and not merely subjects (or, even worse, objects) (cf. Tapia Velasco 2014: 334-336). This has very specific consequences in a pluralistic society when it comes to appreciating the opinions of others, evaluating them, and finding common ground, before trying to bring the other along the pathways of one's own convictions (cf. Burke 1996: 11). To this is added the search for possibilities not only of understanding but of cooperation. In the sphere of interreligious dialogue, one seeks the rhetorical dimensions of ecumenism and tolerance, showing how in precisely this field the cooperation – for example in charitable action – helps immediately to overcome many theological barriers.

We are interested in showing how the dimension of truthfulness is at the base of all interpersonal relationships: if one were never to tell the truth, any conversation would be fruitless, and, in the long run, confidence being undermined, social coexistence itself would become impossible. There is, therefore, a series of ethical principles that should govern dialogue in a pluralistic society such as ours. If these principles are ordinarily followed, not only does the interchange of information become possible, but one facilitates a transformative experience in interpersonal relationships: one passes from ordinary conversation to a colloquy between friends and in this context conversation acquires greater weight and meaning.

We therefore propose to study as well the possibilities of a pedagogy of conversation (cf. Bollnow 1970: 12-13), oriented in addressing issues of conversational courtesy, showing its limits and possibilities in getting past conflicts and in growing closer to those who have different convictions from our own. The objective is to look deeply into the criterion described by Hans Georg Gadamer in different writings (for example 2006, and 2004: 122) that the dignity of dialogue shows through when the interlocutors come closer together and not

when there are winners and losers. The idea is to demonstrate that rhetoric includes taking the opportunity – the risk – of finding ourselves with others, the challenge of overcoming mistrust and of building a society reclaiming the true meaning of politics. If society is configured as a network of interpersonal relationships, it is because its framework shows a structure of rhetorical relationships (Shotter 1993: 6-18).

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