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## TRADITIONAL AND MODERN CONCEPTS OF RHETORIC: SIX PECULIARITIES

### Abstract

The article explores the common denominators and differences between traditional and modern understandings of rhetoric. It reveals the main tendencies of rhetoric development as a field of theoretical knowledge and transformations of the problematics. The issue of interrelation between logical-content and extra-logical factors in traditional and modern concepts of rhetoric is discussed. The following thesis is substantiated that in modern concepts of rhetoric both the arsenal of tricks used and the area of operation are expanded to include other forms and manifestations of mental communication in line with the individual-to-audience model.

It is argued that, unlike traditional rhetoric, which is largely monologue-based, modern concepts mostly implement rhetoric tricks in negotiation, debate, and competition situations.

The article analyzes the issue of correlation between oral public and direct speech on the one hand, and, on the other, written speech and mediated means of communication in the traditional and modern concepts of rhetoric.

The view is substantiated that in the modern system of rhetoric, much importance is attached to ethical questions, to the issues whether the means used are permissible or inadmissible in terms of effective communication norms.

The relations between the philosophical theory of rhetoric (general rhetoric) and its individual spheres are discussed.

*Keywords:* traditional and modern rhetoric, logical and extra-logical components, area of operation, communication, permissible and inadmissible means, general and particular rhetoric.

### Introduction

Sciences can be likened to stars. In the sky, one can find stars that are always bright; there are stars that fade from time to time and, then, shine again. Constantly bright stars represent natural and exact sciences with their own internal logic of development and dynamics. They don't depend too much on social and political conditions. Fading stars are the humanities and social

sciences, where public demand and, consequently, the pace of development are essentially conditioned by socio-political situation and processes. Among them are logic, political science, sociology, law, social psychology, the theory of argument and debate, and, of course, rhetoric.

Throughout history, skills of effective communication, negotiation, and argumentation, impressive and persuasive speech have regularly been highly appreciated and are even more eval-

uated in the context democratization of the processes of organization of public life and political governance. In this regard, professionals are really interested in the improving arsenal of rhetoric, its various concepts and trends of school development. Formed during the beginning of ancient Greek democracy, rhetoric has undergone certain stages of development, enriched, changed both theoretically and practically. Examining the stages of its development, we can more generally speak about the *traditional* and *modern* understandings of rhetoric and different concepts in that context.

Traditional concepts of rhetoric were formed within the framework of the ancient Greco-Roman culture and philosophical thought. In this sense, works of Aristotle, M. Quintilianus, M. Cicero are of key importance as theoretical sources.

Medieval apologetics and scholasticism, the French school of judicial rhetoric of the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which in its turn had a significant influence on the formation of the Russian school of judicial rhetoric in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, are of essential importance for the development of rhetorical art, particularly argumentation, proof and refutation, substantiation and persuasion techniques.

However, the process of revising traditional rhetoric and developing its modern understanding (neo-rhetoric) is linked to the emergence of postmodernist thinking. A. Schopenhauer's critique of the basic principles of Aristotelian dialectics<sup>1</sup> can be considered a symbolic signal of the revision of the traditional concepts of effective communication rhetoric.

The works of such theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries as D. Carnegie (2010), F. van Eemeren,

R. Grootendorst (1987), J. Hintikka (1989), R. Fischer, W. Uri (1991), Ch. Perelman, L. Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), E. Bettingaus, G. Brutyan (1992), H. Johnston (1966), K. Bredemeier (2005), who studied the problems of argumentation, communication and negotiation technologies, played a significant role in the formation of neo-rhetorical concepts.

The concepts of neo-rhetoric definitely rely heavily on traditional notions and cannot ignore the valuable legacy of the past, even if they are based on the criticism of traditional notions of rhetoric. Despite all the similarities, traditional and contemporary understandings of rhetoric have certain notable differences, some of which will be analyzed below.

#### The Dilemma of Logical and Extra-Logical

Since ancient times, the issue of correlation between *logical-content* factors on the one hand, and *extra-logical* (psychological, ethical, aesthetic, eloquent, linguistic-cultural, protocol, etc.) factors on the other hand in the processes of communication, debate and argumentation has caused controversy among researchers.

The traditions of elaboration and practical application of rhetorical tricks take roots from ancient sophists. But the first complete theoretical study of rhetoric that has come down to us from ancient times is Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Indeed, he is the greatest and most authoritative representative of traditional rhetoric.

Aristotle's greatest contribution to the history of science, perhaps, is the creation of the methodology of scientific knowledge – logic, the discovery and systematization of the rules of regular thought. It is natural that logical norms and principles underlie his aesthetic, political and

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle considers rhetoric to be “an art corresponding to dialectics” (Aristotle, 1929, p. 3).

moral doctrines. Aristotle's rhetoric is no exception.

Arthur Schopenhauer rightly notes that dialectics was the main goal for Aristotle; he proposed logic as the basis for the principles of dialectics and its preparation. "Logic deals only with the form of sentences, while dialectics with their meaning, ...that is, with content, that is why the consideration of the form as a whole should precede the examination of the content in particular" (Schopenhauer, (n.d.), p. 76).

Not denying the importance of extra-logical factors, in the construction of rhetoric Aristotle attributes a key role to evidential and syllogistic thinking. And he considers the enthymeme (a short necessary inference) a rhetorical syllogism (Aristotle, 1929, pp. 5, 9, 19). The use of an enthymeme is expedient because it makes the speech shorter. If a speech is long, as is usually the case with complete syllogisms, it annoys the audience and might not be understood. Meanwhile, if something is popular, there is no need to go into detail, the audience will add up (Aristotle, 1929, pp. 29-33).

If ancient sophists believed that a judicial (public) speech was impressive in case it gave rise to feelings of sympathy, dislike, anger, or excitement among the participants in the proceedings, Aristotle believed that those feelings were more relevant to the judge than to the case being tried. He thought that provoking feelings of anger, compassion, or envy in court was similar to "someone bending the ruler" to be used to take measures. Aristotle considered evidentiality and logical argumentation to be the strong points of a judicial speech (Aristotle, 1929, p. 5).

*With some reservations, it can be stated that traditional rhetoric is based on traditional Aristotelian logic.* The effectiveness of speech, its persuasiveness, impressiveness and other elo-

quent qualities are acquired mainly (but not exclusively) through observing logical norms and principles (requirements for certainty, irrevocability, consistency and rationality and rules stemming from them), or through their deliberate violations, but in such a way that the audience perceives those violations as means that beautify the speech, emphasize the content, increase the impression rather than as logical errors (paralogisms) or as sophisms.

*Example:* Contradictions and inconsistency in a speech will devalue it and will lead to distrust towards its author. However, in some contexts, deliberate violations of the rules of contradiction and excluded third can also emphasize the content of the speech, revealing its rich context. In this case, we are dealing with a contradiction (a contradiction in the sense of a combination of contradictory and opposing phenomena) or an eloquent technique called contrast.

Armenian poet Hovhannes Shiraz uses eloquent tricks of gradation to create one of his wonderful poems dedicated to his mother:

*The fort of our home, my mother,  
My mother is both mother and father,  
She is both slave and master,  
She is homeless of our home,  
She is the nest of eagles, my mother,  
She is the housemaid of our home,  
And the sovereign of our house,  
Although helpless, my mother,  
She is both salve, balm, and healer,  
...  
My mother, our bread is my mother,  
My mother is the God of our house.*

Some theorists of new rhetoric (Chaim Perelman, Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteka, Erwin Bettleheim) and its pragmatic wing (Henry Johnston, Karsten Bredemeier), analyzing the role of communication components, highlight the signifi-

cance of extra-logical factors, particularly accentuating forms of psychological influence (Brutian, 1992, pp. 121-127; Bredemeier, 2005, pp. 20-22) and emphasizing the role of the psychological factor during argumentation, Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) classify the theory of “new rhetoric” as a psychological science, considering it a branch of psychology (p. 10).

American researcher Albert Mehrabian, based on some studies, claims that in communication processes only 7% of information is transmitted through semantic, verbal means, the rest is transmitted through the pitch of the voice, its rhythm, speed, pauses (about 38%) and “body language” – gestures, facial expressions (about 55%) (Mehrabian, 2009, p. 182). Others suggest a 35% by 65% ratio, giving a greater role to the non-verbal forms of communication that express the attitude towards the interlocutor (body position, gestures, glances, facial expression, emotional movements, sighs, laughter, tone of voice, handshakes, etc.) (Petrosyan, 2003, pp. 21-22).

By the way, the tendency to reduce the role of the logical-evidential toolkit is noticeable also in some postmodernist analyses of philosophical argumentation. Friedrich Waismann, for example, notes: “To seek in philosophy, for rigorous proofs for the shadow of one’s voice” (Waismann, 1966, p. 374).

Thus. *If the tricks of traditional rhetoric are mainly based on logical and grammatical rules and modes, in modern concepts the arsenal of rhetorical tricks is considerably expanded, in line with (sometimes even against it) logical means, including extra-logical – psychological, aesthetic, eloquent, ethical, protocol, non-verbal (body language, gestures, facial expressions) and other means, often shifting the centre of gravity to the extra-logical, putting a special emphasis on*

the means of psychological influence.

#### Area of Operation

The rhetoric formed in the context of Greco-Roman culture, first of all, bears the imprint of the practical need to make public speeches at public gatherings (ecclesia, assembly of 500), at courts, before the senate or a large crowd. Even though the rhetoric was viewed as an art close to and adapted to dialectics (Aristotle, 1929, p. 3), or as an integral part of it (Aristotle, 1929, p. 19), the individual-to-auditorium model predominates in the discussion of ancient scholars as an *operational (functional) area* of rhetoric. The level of education, taste, way of thinking and expectations of the listeners are considered most important. The main goal is to find ways to convince the audience (Aristotle, 1929, pp. 13, 15), but an audience is a collective unit, a faceless crowd. When talking about rhetoric and peculiarities of its operational field, Aristotle often refers to the crowd as the addressee of rhetoric: “Here our proofs and arguments must rest on generally accepted principles, as we said in the “*Topics*” when speaking of converse with the multitude” (Aristotle, 1929, p. 11). M. T. Cicero (1967) notes that “But as the orator’s chief stage seems to be the platform at a public meeting” (p. 455).

*The operational field is expanded in modern concepts of rhetoric, also adding different ways and forms of individual-to-individual communication (dialogue, polylog, negotiation, debate, discussion, etc.) to the individual-to-audience model.*

#### Monologue and Dialogue

##### Dimensions

Even though classical rhetoric was linked to

dialectics through “umbilical cord” for quite a long time, it should be noted, however, that the object of research by ancient theorists of rhetoric was mainly the monologue. According to Cicero, a rhetorical speech is a kind of monologue, which is aimed at a large audience to convey something, to form a conviction, and to make fun (Mirzoyan, 2010, p. 45).

Classical rhetoric is mostly a monologue. The episodes of question and answer, dialogue, counter-argument that occur during the discussion of rhetorical issues are more auxiliary and sometimes contextual and sub-textual.

Armenian scientist V. Mirzoyan notes that even in the case of Socrates’ dialogues, the dialogue is only a convenient way to express one’s thoughts, to persuade the interlocutor and those present. Questions mostly serve to expand one’s own thoughts (Mirzoyan, 2010, p. 52).

Modern understanding of rhetoric, while taking into account the monologue format of a speech, give preference to communication, feedback, and interaction, thus more and more often making such tricks of rhetoric as negotiation, debate and competition the subject of research. The ever-expanding list of valuable works on argumentation, debate, negotiation, rhetoric, and general issues comes to prove this (Brutian, 1992; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Kruijer, 1987; Fisher & Uri, 1991; Hovhannisyanyan, 2019).

K. Bredemeier (2005) writes: “...mainly dialectical, that is, dialogue-oriented, debating and argumentative structures come to the fore, while technical means and tricks used for the monologue wear off or run the risk of not being paid proper attention” (p. 22).

### Interrelation Between Oral and Written, Direct and Mediated Versions of Rhetorical Speech

Along with the development of civilization, the role and significance of the exchange of ideas, information and communication processes, in general, has been expanding. Some researchers, while emphasizing the importance of communication skills in public life, explain and interpret different stages of the development of human civilization through the volume of communication typical of that definite historical period, its basic forms and means, through the level of improved methods (McLuhen, 1962; Toffler, 1980).

In the case of ancient Greco-Roman civilization, the cradle of classical rhetoric, the main means of communication was *oral speech* – public speeches and debates. The speeches of ancient orators mainly targeted listeners, not readers. The subject of theorists’ research was live speech and communication.

In terms of communication culture, modern society significantly differs from the Greco-Roman one. The widespread use of printed, written, audio-visual, electronic means of communication has narrowed the realm of live speech. Television appearances, printed and electronic “open letters”, publicly available materials, and live broadcasts on social networks have become commonplace.

Thus, if the main subject of traditional rhetoric and key subject of research was *direct oral speech*, public speaking, then in case of modern concepts of rhetoric *written speech and mediated modes of communication* have taken precedence.

Significance of Ethical Issues. The Issue of  
What is Allowed and What is Not

Still, in the Ancient World, a boundary was drawn between the *dialectical* (the aim is to discover new knowledge, the truth), the *sophistical* (the aim is to make an impression one is wise), the *eristical* (the aim is victory at all costs) forms of communication (Aristotle, 1955, pp. 61-63). In the ancient world, the struggle between the sophistic-eristic and dialectic forms was resolved in favour of the dialectic one largely thanks to the position of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. According to the latter, the practice of persuading the opponent and those present with deceptive, quasi and false arguments, merely via psychological impact is unacceptable and immoral. An only conviction based on knowledge and truth is acceptable. The concept of traditional rhetoric is based on these constructive principles in the case of Aristotle and Quintilian, as well as Cicero.

In recent times, in connection with the spread of mercantile thinking, the unprecedented active forms of political struggle, many scholars have begun to revise the rhetoric based on dialectical principles, paying tribute to the manifestations of sophistic-eristic values. In this respect, A. Schopenhauer's critique of Aristotelian dialectic is rather remarkable.

If Aristotelian dialectics is built on the presumption of the parties' moral completeness (honesty, justice, the pursuit of new knowledge, truth-seeking) (Aristotle, 1960, p. 702), then, according to Schopenhauer, the realistic model of communication must be built on the unfaithfulness of the parties (or one of them) to moral principles. According to the German thinker, if one of the communicating parties is guided by honest motives and pursues to uncover the truth, there can be no guarantee that the opponent will

not act differently (Schopenhauer, (n.d.), p. 75). This is supported by the pessimistic assertion that "the human race is innately corrupt", that one's innate arrogance does not allow them to reconcile their erroneous judgments with the idea that the opponent's statements are true (Schopenhauer, (n.d.), p. 74). Thus, in communication processes, it is most important to make an impression, to win and to impose one's own point of view, while the factors of truth and justice remain in the background (Schopenhauer, (n.d.), pp. 78-79). In the communication process, Schopenhauer (n.d.) preferred Machiavelli's principles of goal and means (p. 75).

K. Bredemeier (2005), an advocate of black rhetoric, expresses a similar position. According to him, "black rhetoric is the ability to use all traditional rhetorical, dialectical, eristical and rabulistical<sup>2</sup> means to lead the conversation in the desired direction, to bring the opponent or public to the desirable for us result" (p. 20). In line with the notion of "black rhetoric", K. Bredemeier (2005) also introduced the term "Interessensrhetorik" (p. 22).

In professional literature, disagreements and debates frequently occur about whether or not a certain trick can be acceptable<sup>3</sup>. This refers to the

<sup>2</sup> The art of ingenious cunning argumentation, which allows the person arguing to introduce the subject matter in a favorable light which is not always true (Bredemeier, 2005, p. 20).

<sup>3</sup> Tricks are considered *permissible* (honest or non-destructive) when, while containing cunning, facilitating communication for its user and making it difficult for the opponent, they do not violate the logical or extra-logical principles that guarantee the effectiveness of communication, do not create delusion, do not violate the legal, moral, ideological equity norms of the parties, and other rules of effective communication. Simply, these tricks build some kind of "positional, tactical" advantage for the authors or help not to lose what they have.

Tricks are *inadmissible* (dishonest) when they are destructive in essence and violate effective communication, the above-mentioned norms. Their main purpose is to suppress the speaker, to impress the au-

use of appeal to the force argument (Brutian, 1992, pp. 44-46; Povarin, 1990, pp. 97-98), to the means of trapping a “stubborn” opponent who shows senseless obstinacy in defending his point of view (Hovhannisyanyan, 2019, pp. 218-220), to the practice of using an impermissible trick in response to an impermissible trick, and so on.

Russian scientist A. V. Steshov, for example, considers it permissible to refuse or avoid answering the opponent’s questions using the “have no right” justification while protecting one’s point of view (Steshov, 1991, p. 135). Meanwhile, S. Povarin considers that means inadmissible, calling it a “slave’s trick” (Povarin, 1990, p. 100).

Sometimes these professional disputes find “hot” manifestations.

A. Schopenhauer (n.d.) justifies the tactics of using the same tricks to neutralize dishonest tricks (p. 93). Analyzing Schopenhauer’s point of view Russian logician S. Povarin (1990) assesses it as an obvious extreme and objects that “one should not crawl in the dirt where one can avoid doing that” (p. 133).

So, in the problematics of modern rhetoric particular importance is attached to *issues of ethics* and *issues of permissibility or inadmissibility* of the means used from the position of logic, psychology, aesthetics, protocol, as well as legal, ideological, worldview norms of the communicating parties.

#### Differentiation of General Rhetoric and Its Specific Manifestations

Fathers of traditional rhetoric, developing general rules of rhetoric and basic principles of

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dience and to win the laurels of the winner (Hovhannisyanyan, 2019, pp. 208-209, 206-262).

eloquence, also referred to certain areas of their application, outlining the directions of further development of that knowledge.

Aristotle distinguished between three types of rhetorical speeches according to the characteristics of their aims and auditorium: consultative, judicial and epideictic.<sup>4</sup> Speeches of the first type occur during public gatherings. Their goal is to make those present understand their own benefit and harm. The purpose of a judicial speech is to clarify the issue of justice and injustice. Moreover, epideictic speech can be praising and reprimanding. Its subject is the beautiful and encouraging or the perishable and embarrassing (Aristotle, 1929, pp. 33-35).

Nevertheless, traditional rhetorical theorists mostly study the general principles of rhetoric and eloquence that apply to different areas of communication. They emphasize the fact that rhetoric is general knowledge while skills comprise a universal system. Aristotle writes: “It is thus evident that Rhetoric does not deal with any one definite class of subjects, but, like Dialectic, is of general application...” (Aristotle, 1929, p. 13). Comparing rhetoric with other sciences, such as medicine, geometry, and arithmetic, the Greek thinker notes that each of them can teach, instruct, and persuade concerning issues in that field. “But Rhetoric, so to say, appears to be able to discover the means of persuasion in reference to any given subject. That is why we say that as art, its rules are not applied to any particular definite class of things” (Aristotle, 1929, p. 15).

The development of public life, the processes of differentiation of relations and spheres of activity could not but leave their mark on the tendencies of development of rhetoric. *Religious rhetoric* (homiletics) developed back in the Mid-

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<sup>4</sup> A similar classification of rhetoric is found in the works of the Stoics and Roman thinkers (Diogenes Laertius, 1925, p. 153; Cicero, 1967, pp. 228-231).

dle Ages. In the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, *judicial rhetoric* underwent a unique renaissance and development. Currently, *political, diplomatic, court, administrative, practical, commercial, pedagogical rhetoric, media rhetoric*, etc. are considered as relatively independent and rapidly developing areas of rhetoric.

Under such circumstances, it is possible to talk about two hypostases of rhetoric: *general and particular rhetoric* (Belokon, 2012).

However, it is inconceivable to imagine the rapid development of individual branches of rhetoric and relevant toolkits without the general meta-theory of rhetoric, the – *philosophy of rhetoric*. In their turn, branches of rhetoric and their developments mutually enrich the fundamental-methodological research on rhetoric, providing a basis for new theoretical and practical philosophical developments.

### Conclusions

The analysis of traditional (based on ancient Greco-Roman culture) and modern concepts of rhetoric allows identifying certain features and trends.

If logical (partly grammatical) rules and modes are of key importance for traditional concepts of rhetoric, then modern rhetoric expands the arsenal of rhetorical tricks, involving extra-logical, psychological, aesthetic, eloquent, ethical, protocol, non-verbal and other means, thus moving the centre of gravity to extra-logical means, in particular, those of psychological influence.

In modern understandings, the operational field of rhetoric expands by adding various methods and forms of individual-to-individual communication (dialogue, polylog, negotiation, debate, discussion, etc.) to the individual-to-audi-

ence model.

While traditional rhetoric, in essence, constituted mainly a monologue, modern concepts mostly signify negotiation, debate and competition situations to implement rhetorical tricks.

In the traditional understanding of rhetoric, the subject of study was public oral speaking and direct communication. In modern concepts, however, written speech and mediated modes of communication come to the fore.

In the problematics of modern rhetoric particular importance is attached to issues of ethics and issues of permissibility or inadmissibility of the means used from the position of logic, psychology, aesthetics, protocol, as well as the norms of legal, ideological, worldview equality the communicating parties.

In traditional understandings, rhetoric appears to be mainly a system that offers universal means for all areas of communication. Given modern processes of public life, the system of rhetoric operates as a multi-layered, multifaceted, divaricating field of knowledge.

Relying on the rich legacy of traditional rhetoric, modern branches mutually enrich the philosophical teaching of rhetoric posing new questions for fundamental-methodological research.

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