

Rhetoric as Knowledge¹

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Resumen: Este artículo trata de la relación entre retórica y conocimiento en el doble espacio de la comunicación y la cultura. El punto de partida para examinar dicha relación es una reflexión sobre la evolución de la retórica desde su condición oral hacia su función en la comunicación global. Se ofrece una visión del papel de la retórica dentro del conocimiento para mostrar la posición de la retórica en cuanto a la cultura y la educación, que están basadas en el conocimiento. Posteriormente se hace un examen del papel del conocimiento dentro de la retórica con el fin de explicar la función de la retórica como instrumento para el conocimiento orientado a la comunicación. A lo largo del artículo se exploran conjuntamente contribuciones históricas de la retórica y nuevas perspectivas sobre la retórica en la comunicación actual.

Palabras Clave: Metodologia da pesquisa; pesquisa em educação.

Abstract: This paper deals with the relation between rhetoric and knowledge in the double space of communication and culture. A reflection about the evolution of rhetoric from its oral condition to its function in global communication is the starting point for examining that relation. A view of the role of rhetoric within knowledge is given to show the position of rhetoric as to culture and education, which are based upon knowledge. Afterwards, an examination of the role of knowledge within rhetoric is done in order to explain the function of rhetoric as an instrument for knowledge oriented to communication. Historical contributions of rhetoric and new perspectives on rhetoric in current communication are jointly explored throughout the paper.

Keywords: Rhetoric. Communication. Discourse. Knowledge. Culture.

Rhetoric from oral communication towards global communication.

Rhetoric is originally a technique for the communication of speeches before an audience with the goal of influencing it as a perlocutionary speech act. However, rhetoric has had a continuous development since its birth up today, in order to take into account the new ways of communication and the needs arisen in changing societies as to communicating. The result of this development is an evolution of rhetoric which maintains the essential lines of its framework and tries to adapt itself to new realities and conditions in communication. This adaptation is connected to the fact that rhetoric has continuously extended its realm in order to be able to study new areas of communication and to serve as a tool for new ways of communication.

Rhetoric has covered a long path from its original space, the space of orality, as far as current spaces of communication like the digital one. This travel of rhetoric has been accomplished with an important characteristic: rhetoric has never given up the spaces where it has been working. Starting from speech as an oral discourse, rhetoric has dealt with literary works, with written discourse, with journalistic communication in its traditional printed form and with the communication of other media like radio, cinema and television, and it currently deals with digital discourse, which is really a multimedial discourse. But during this evolution of many centuries it has also remained in its old spaces despite of reaching new ones. In this sense, the recovery of the historical thought (García Berrio, 1984: 9) is one of the assets of rhetoric.

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Nowadays, rhetoric holds a position within the fields of Human Sciences and Social Sciences, which allows it to contribute to the study of communication in several areas and to accomplish communication itself as a human activity in society. The concept of *rhetoric in society* reveals its role in the relations between human beings. For James J. Murphy, rhetoric is “the systematic analysis of human discourse for the purpose of adducing useful precepts for future discourse” (Murphy, 1983: 3). An inductive strategy is held by rhetoric in analysing the existing speeches (and other kinds of discourses) to know its devices and to systematise them in order to arrange a set of instructions for building and delivering new discourses, which could be based upon the known practice and the identification of problems or difficulties in elaborating or communicating the precedent discourses. Since the study of human discourse, albeit centered on the speech, goes beyond orality and enters other kinds of discourse, it becomes enriched from the analysis of different devices orientated to produce an effect or influence on receivers (mainly hearers of speeches, not being excluded the hearers of epic and afterwards the readers of written literature). The presence of rhetorical figures and tropes both in rhetorical and literary discourses is a proof of the streams linking these kinds of discourses, and it is also one of the ways for rhetoric to deal with other discourses in addition to the oral ones. In the same way, the achievement of an effect or influence on receivers as a goal of discourse is present not only in speeches but also in other kinds of discourses since they have *rhetoricalness* —i. e. the quality of rhetorical that many discourses have and that is inherent to language (López Eire, 2006)— as a discursive constituent feature supported by that goal.

Thence, two dimensions are inside rhetoric: a first dimension concerning its original field of the oratorical discourse, and a second one regarding its extended field as the realm of global communication. Consequently, two main stages can be distinguished in the development of rhetoric:

1) A first stage is constituted by the ancient rhetoric built and consolidated in the Greco-Roman Antiquity and inherited as *Rhetorica recepta* (the received rhetoric) by the successive generations with the function of a technique for communication and a science or tool of study of the complex communicative reality.

2) A second stage is that of the transformation of this inherited rhetoric into a technique and a science for global communication, which includes the foundations and the essential lines, concepts and components that are the bases of the *Rhetorica recepta* as well as a whole or complete rhetoric dealing with all kinds of discourses and communication grounded on those bases.

Rhetoric can be considered to be the systematisation of common sense concerning perlocutionary communication. This is undoubtedly right as to its birth and first stage, but can be asserted for the second stage, too. The communicative experience of the first users of discursive and oral public communication allowed them to build rhetoric by reflecting upon the communication that they had accomplished, by thinking of its results, problems and difficulties. Therefore, the knowledge of communication and its circumstances is a grounding of rhetoric. For Aristotle, “it is clear that matters can be reduced to a system, for it is possible to examine the reason why some attain their end by familiarity and others by chance; and such an examination all would at once admit to be the function of art” (Aristotle, 1982: I, I, 2). The idea that one of the functions of the art or technique is to examine the role of habit or chance in successful rhetorical communication is the basis for the process of constitution of the rhetorical system from the facts of the reality.

The knowledge of rhetoric.

Rhetoric has historically been a part of culture and a component of knowledge in society. Werner Jaeger explains the role of rhetoric within culture and knowledge in ancient Greece and its consequent connection to education (Jaeger, 1978). Quintilian's educational programme contains grammar and rhetoric as two necessary assets for communication. Quintilian writes that grammar is "the study of correct speech" (Quintilian, 2001: I. 4. 2), and he adds as a further step: "rhetoric is the art of speaking well, and the orator knows how to speak well" (Quintilian, 2001: II. 17. 37-38). Thus, Quintilian includes grammar and rhetoric within the dynamic store of the orator's knowledge. Therefore, rhetoric is a component of the professional knowledge of the orator and also a part of the knowledge existing in society because of its presence in the Roman educational programme. The strong relation between rhetoric and education reveals that the knowledge of rhetoric plays an important role in society since it is considered to be a component of culture that must be transmitted to the following generations, and, in addition to it, rhetoric is a powerful tool for education (Hernández Guerrero, García Tejera, 2004; Salvador Liern, 2008). The knowledge of rhetoric as a cultural heritage is one of the roots of cultural rhetoric (Albaladejo, 2013; Chico Rico, 2014).

Rhetoric is an object of knowledge with a projection onto society. The knowledge of rhetoric is a tool for orators (and citizens in general) to communicate and to allow them to know issues and components of society related to communication. Rhetoric has run as this object of knowledge throughout centuries since its birth until current times, with the subsequent transformation of knowledge in accordance with the transformation of rhetoric. This knowledge has its manifestation in the study of rhetoric in the past and nowadays. The treatises of rhetoric have been and are an important part of its knowledge because of their role in the transmission and the improvement of it. Rhetorical practice as a way of knowledge about communication is present in the space of rhetoric since the *exercitationes* to the current clubs of debate and oratorical leagues, without forgetting the use of rhetoric in courts, parliaments, newspapers, radio, television and the digital realm including data bases and the internet.

The rhetoric of knowledge.

Rhetoric is engaged in knowledge since it has a transversal component oriented to know everything concerning communication and, of course, communicators, as well as to get knowledge from reality if useful for its goal of persuading (Cockcroft, Cockcroft, Hamilton, Hidalgo Downing, 2014) and of convincing in some cases, like that of demonstrative or epideictic discourse. It would be possible to consider that there is a *rhetoric of knowledge*, albeit rhetoric is really a lot of issues, knowledge included. If we go back again to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, we will find that his definition of rhetoric is displayed as a strategy of knowledge: "Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever. [...] But rhetoric, so to say, appears to be able to discover the means of persuasion in reference to any given subject." (Aristotle, 1982: I, II, 1). To discover the means of persuasion implies to get a part of the knowledge suitable to concrete communicative situations and goals.

As to its function at the service of the knowledge for communication, rhetoric has a sixth operation called *intellectio* (in addition to the five consolidated *partes artis* or rhetorical operations: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *actio/pronuntiatio*), which consists in the examination by the orator of all elements partaking in

rhetorical communication, which form part of the rhetorical event: the hearer or receiver, the context, the code, the goals, the cause, the speech (or any kind of discourse) to be built and delivered, its referent, as well as the orator itself as producer of the speech (Chico, 1998). The result of the process that constitutes the *intellectio* is mainly the knowledge of the cause that motivates the need for the speech that the orator is going to elaborate and to communicate, the knowledge of the *status*, and the degree of defensibility of the cause as well as its rhetorical genre.

The *aptum* (also called *decorum* or *accommodatum*) is the adequacy between the different elements of the rhetorical event. It allows the orator to elaborate and deliver a suitable speech according to the characteristics of the receiver, the context, the goals, the topic, etc. One of the duties of the orator is to establish a relationship with the other elements of the rhetorical event, which is based upon *aptum*, and he should examine this event taking this task into account. Therefore, the *aptum* is a consequence of the knowledge generated from the orator's study of communicative reality and it is also the practical representation of the possession of this knowledge by the orator, what leads to a communication with a high probability of being successful. The close attention to the audience and its examination by the orator provide him with the knowledge about it and the determination of its polyacroasis (Albaladejo, 1998) as the plural receiving and interpreting of discourses by the receivers.

The knowledge of the cause that orators (and receivers as partaking in the communication) have plays an important role in the right and successful running of *argumentatio* as one of the *partes orationis* or parts of the speech. The technical dimension of rhetorical knowledge includes reasoning as a part of *argumentatio*. The knowledge of enthymemes and epicheiremes, as well as about the general reasoning as a dialectical instrument, is a combination of theory and practice. Nevertheless, the knowledge rhetorically based is not restricted to technical issues. As it is well known, *argumentatio* contains the obtaining and the use of *exempla* (examples) taken from history, literature and real life, this issue being another root of cultural rhetoric (Albaladejo, 2013; Chico Rico, 2014). It implies that the orator looks for examples and he or she exercises his or her search by examining history, literature and reality, in order to obtain the most adequate ones for the speech and the communicative situation. The system constituted by the *loci argumentorum* (and by the *loci communes*, which form part of them) is a framework built by rhetorical knowledge. The *loci* are a store of ideas with such a structure to allow that the orator can get the necessary ideas for the speech; their amount and organisation are the result of the active knowledge of rhetoric as to the world and the discourse. Rhetoric is thus a tool and a way for knowledge and for its arrangement in order to generate necessary constituents of discourse in accordance with the communicative goals of persuading and/or convincing.

The knowledge provided by rhetoric goes beyond speech and discourse. It reaches the space of the receiver and, of course, the space of the own orator. Rhetoric contains a psychological grounding that enables the orator to know the receivers's character and feelings in order to arrange and deliver the speech in the most suitable way in connection with them. In this way, rhetoric is able to work as an instrument for the knowledge of the psychological constitution of receivers and the possibilities of rousing them, as well as their polyacroasis as above mentioned. Additionally, rhetoric also contributes to the orator's self-knowledge, since it makes it possible an examination of himself/herself as to the own psychological constitution. The Aristotelian scheme *êthos* (character) – *lógos* (discourse) – *páthos* (emotion) (Aristotle, 1982: I, II, 3-6) offers a comprehensive view of the components corresponding to the orator's psychological characteristics (*êthos*) and the receiver's ones (*páthos*), which are both connected with the speech (*lógos*) and between

themselves. All three components are object of rhetorical knowledge and work in the communication supported by this knowledge.

By examining, analysing and explaining the reality of communication and the reality outside communication, rhetoric provides the knowledge necessary for communicating. One of the major issues of rhetoric is that of metaphor (Arduini, 2007) as the main trope in *elocutio* (Pujante, 2011). Metaphor requires a semantic analysis of words to be achieved by producers and receivers in order to get the knowledge necessary to connect the manifested sense with the underlying one. If metaphor is conceived as a complex set of dynamic structures that we can call *metaphorical devices*, it is possible to consider that the role of rhetoric in science is parallel to the role of metaphor in connection with analogy. Although the relations between rhetoric and science (Pera, 1991; Ordóñez, 1998; Zamora Bonilla, 2006; Salvador Liern, 2008: 545-546) cover many fields, rhetorical devices and even proper metaphors are used in scientific discourse with the target of persuading and/or convincing. Rhetorical knowledge is thus mapped onto the transmission of scientific knowledge.

Conclusion.

Rhetoric and knowledge are strongly linked with each other. Rhetoric is a technique and also a science, and it cannot be conceived as such if we make abstraction of knowledge, since rhetoric is an object of knowledge and knowledge is an object of rhetoric. Theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge work together in the constitution, development and functioning of rhetoric. The role of rhetoric is consequently that of a system that activates knowledge and at the same time that of the achievement of knowledge in the process of the preparation of discourse and in the process of effective communicating. Rhetoric is a technique, a science, a system, the art of persuasion, etc., but as a transversal issue inside all of them, it is knowledge in communication, knowledge of communication itself and knowledge of the world oriented to communication.

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