

Rhetoric, Social Mind and the Infosphere

Dr. Gergana Pencheva-Apostolova: *A rhetoric of e-kind*

- ♦ **The idea of this panel:**

to find the shortcuts between different structures of today's Web culture where the vehicle of the social mind is rhetoric

- ♦ **Panel Levels of research:**

- ♦ Starting from the **philosophic fundamentals** for the change of the practices and effects of **e-rhetoric**, we shall seek to find **the identity markers of social mind in the political discourse**
- ♦ **Why the Bulgarian case:** Our culture is very sensitive to change and the public dialogues in the Bulgarian political space can be seen as a rich and fruitful field for the study of the rhetorical identity of our cultural social Self.
- ♦ **Cross-cultural estimation of the social Self** where the verbal and non-verbal details of socially significant communication form chronotopes of our identities seen as belonging.

**Thus we have three sub-presentations
of a philosopher, a linguist and a rhetorician.**

A Rhetoric of E-kind

The Worlds of our extended social spaces of the virtual reality are called into being by the mind while talked into being by word of mouth

Rhetoric is an inseparable aspect of the philosophical discourse of the founders of the WWW in that:

- 1) it is the necessary skill for the public debate around the existence, efficiency and effects of the Web upon humanity.
- 2) it turns out a useful methodology for drawing information about our social selves in the Net.
- 3) publicity is the face of today's culture, which is spoken up into being within an environment of e-orality where the form is easy for the machine, yet it is no border to human creativity, and particularly – to the outcome of a talkative social Self.

***The fault... is not in our stars,
But in ourselves that we are underlings.***

Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, Act 1, Scene 2

- **The 4-I have turned into a vast space for social performance of diverse and disputable content.**

The formation of *E-kind* seems to have been dependent on the *interculture* of *informed individuals* on the *internet*.

- **Accepting the tech-platform of the E-agora, we have let its principles of communication become the regulators of our civil minds and challenge our public outcome.**

It is amazing how smooth a **matrix fixes out of Aristotelian Rhetoric**, and how **flexible** it proves **in a series of optimizing procedures** where some of the agents can be situationally dismissed as insignificant.

- The adoption of a holistic approach to intercultural rhetoric requires setting the study of interlingual figures in a system, which can have linguistic, psychological, sociological, political, cultural levels but is functionally bound to the basic rhetoric formula:

Who – is speaking what – to whom – when – where – how and why?

This enables us to build the basic rhetoric matrix for analysis of crosscultural talk where two Cultures are involved, C1 and C2 in a shared situational context SC enriched by both cultures' contexts, CC1 and CC2:

Cultural matrix data character

Intercultural rhetoric incorporates development of cultural rhetoric models, implementing the basic cultural notions of elements or layers (symbols, heroes, rituals and values) and of spheres (religion, philosophy, history, arts, science, education, sports).

A cultural rhetorical model is to be viewed again on two levels: concerning its philosophical grounds and concerning its instrumental aspects.

The philosophical grounds of a complex rhetorical study can be found in the *recovery of practical philosophy*.

We have chosen to classify generally the figures of rhetoric into three groups representing three layers of persuasive expressive instrumentaria.

- The *first* layer includes the figures of language, which are the concern of linguistics and stylistics: syntactic, textual and lexical. Since they are generated within the means of natural languages, they are culturally dependent and bear national or transnational values.

Examples: A Bulgarian bank manager told me in the year 2000 he was extremely amused by the CV of an international employee, where the young man had mentioned his career goals, religion, food preferences, hobbies and interests. Ten years later it does not sound strange even to the last bureaucrat in a Bulgarian office.

The Western Europeans talked about our 'accession' to Europe, while the Eastern Europeans in general were talking about our 'joining' the EU.

The *second* layer of intercultural rhetoric includes the figures of thought which are universal but can be individually encoded. While the validity of an argument is a concern of logic, the *choice* of an argument-type and the choice of verbal forms is of concern to rhetoric. This is the fundamental layer of persuasive discourse, where our matrix as displayed above is to be applied to effect.

The *third* level could be called generic. It is concerned with the processes of encoding and metaphorisation both in diachronic and in synchronic respects. It is a concern of the studies of cultural conscience and touches upon the grounds of rhetoric and linguistics where verbal encoding-decoding, language creativity and situational variation of choice are concerned. This is a problem of further project but our hypothesis is that metaphors are expressive complexes – engine programmes - serving to guard the main stem of the cultural identity of humanity (Apostolova, 2005).

Rhetoric analysis is very close to the Multiple Intelligence Methodology for studying the web culture and the cultural communities transcending into virtual reality from conventional reality. The ethos of e-kind is often traced back to the philosophy of Kant, yet the antinomies of e-kind have thoroughly different meaning from the antinomies of the mind. Again, we find the fundament for their defining in the core matrix of rhetoric and we are still in the procedures of their clarification and proving:

Antinomy of the agents: in the network space there are the two opposite groups of the subjects of cyber communicative situation – *the creators* of programs and *the users* while in between there are those who upgrade or break the programs.

As far as the objects are concerned, unlike other cultural products here each artifact can be immediately shared and multiplied as it is because ‘multiplication’ is bound to the entrances and exits of the display while in its virtual nature the object is one and the same. Thus, through the entrances of the network only one virtual object is the subject of input and the users receive each time the original product at their exits.

Antinomy of the functions: construction and destruction are the two aspects of the existence of the virtual cultural space since the creation of any electronic object demands clearing of some space.

Antinomy of the effect: the existence of the cyber society of the connected individuals effects in individualization and participation in the network, which is either of the two states of being connected or disconnected.

Antinomy of the space: ‘here’ is the relation of the entrances and the exits to the computer space.

Antinomy of the time: ‘now’ is opposed to the virtual time needed for the realization of the program.

The Internet is based on metaphor as the main vehicle of translating our specific practices into generally acceptable activities.

Huge blocks of information are exchanged in messages where

- **clichés,**
- **e-pictograms,**
- **signs of approval or disapproval,**
- **emoticons and**
- **links**

combine to take a couple of lines only, and less than a minute's performance of compressed layers of meanings of intercourse.

The transformation of the form of exchange is a curious procedure since its fundament can be traced back to Empedocles while its fruit is yet to be tried.

Rhetoric has vanished in its traditional guise to reappear in forms that shun the waste of words and elaborate oratory at any chance to use the web recesses as aids for making our existence visible.

***How* this exchange within the web spaces turns into practices at the exits of the net and *why* it is so are the two questions that have tempted me into studying a rhetoric of meanings based on the triadic unity of**

ethos, pathos and logos

as aspects of the performances of social mind in the infosphere.

The Net is not yet advanced enough to catch up with the movement of human sensation, perception, and mindwork. It is generally stated that relies on visual imaging. Yet, audio images play considerable role in communicating in the Net. And there is the language by which we can build any kind of picture in a text from abstract desire to a movie of a dream world. Here comes the need for completing a study of e-rhetoric.

Thus philosophy needs further elaboration in political rhetoric, where we have offered a case study of the talkative political web of Bulgaria, in deeper analysis of linguistic aspects, and diversity of cultural intercourse to form a working platform, and the finalizing touch of a rhetorician as a proponent to the discussion.

The specific effect of the proposed panel discussion is in outlining the efficiency of the rhetoric tools of the internet as an educator of human individuals who are to form the rhetoric society of the E-kind.