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RESIDENCE

SEE: *Kin Groups, Residence and Descent*

RHETORIC

In Greek antiquity, the cognates of the term "rhetoric" (Greek, *rhētōrike* "art of oratory," from *rhētōr* "orator, speaker in the assembly") implied the conscious and artful use of language by one individual to persuade others, especially in the context of law courts or political assemblies. Today, however, the terms "rhetoric" and "rhetorical" are limited in application neither to matters of individual skill, nor to forensic or political speeches. The modern focus has shifted toward a concern with the efficacy of speech itself, toward its inherent capacity to influence the attitudes and opinions of others, and in a variety of possible venues. In this widened purview, one might speak of the "rhetorical" properties of many different types of discourse. The term applies whether a stretch of discourse is naturally occurring or contrived, whether consciously artful or not; and it is used in reference not only to an individual's speech, but also in connection with the habits of discourse associated with corporate, demographic, or ideologically defined groups.

Rhetoric has traditionally been viewed as an "art"—a subject capable of systematic teaching and study. In modern usage, however, this sense of an explicit and systematic canon of rules and principles is by no means the exclusive, or even the central, meaning of the term. A second sense of the term concerns the ordinary, everyday use of persuasive resources in speech. In the latter sense, of course, every culture has rhetorical traditions. But cultures differ enormously with respect to their traditions of rhetoric in the former—explicit—

itly doctrinal—sense. In the Western tradition, the limits and scope of rhetoric in this sense have been shaped profoundly by the relationship of rhetoric to politics and philosophy.

TRADITIONAL RHETORIC

The first systematization of rhetoric as an “art”—usually attributed to Corax of Syracuse (c. 5th century B.C.)—is conventionally linked to the establishment of a democracy in Syracuse in 466 B.C., and to the subsequent need—in the absence of written records—of a method for organizing the large number of verbal claims to property by those dispossessed and exiled in the preceding tyrannies.

This new art was brought to Athens in 427 B.C. by Gorgias of Leontini. Here it found a number of proponents who came to constitute a professional cadre of orators, serving the community as speechwriters and teachers. Of the attic orators, Isocrates (436-338 B.C.) was the most successful in institutionalizing the art. He founded a school of rhetoric where, for over fifty years, some of the leading statesmen and philosophers of the period received their education. From this point onward rhetoric was to assume a central role in the curriculum of the academy.

Given its increasing educational importance, a large number of works on rhetoric were produced during the age of Athens. It was left to Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) to systematize and classify this growing body of knowledge in his famous work on the subject, the *Rhetoric*. Unlike Plato (428-347 B.C.), who viewed the pursuit of rhetoric as being at odds with the pursuit of truth (and who, for the most part, regarded rhetoricians with suspicion), Aristotle gave a systematic account of the varieties of rhetorical forms then extant, and of the proper ends of each, attempting thus to reform the practice of rhetoric in his time. Yet, in so doing, he preserved the Platonic tension between truth and rhetorical effectiveness, seeking rather to bend the power of rhetoric to the service of truth.

The epistemological tradition leading up to Aristotle makes a sharp distinction between knowledge of demonstrable fact and knowledge of what is probable. In Aristotle's thought, this yields a hierarchy of disciplines: philosophy and science are concerned with demonstrable fact, dialectics and rhetoric with the probable; and, whereas dialectics is the pursuit of knowledge through dialogic methods of question and answer by specialists in a field, rhetoric is un-

derstood as the study of methods for persuasively addressing a heterogeneous audience, consisting of both specialists and nonspecialists.

After Aristotle, Cicero (106-43 B.C.) and then Quintilian (c. 35-100 A.D.) came to be regarded as the foremost rhetoricians of the classical period. Cicero, who allied rhetoric to practical concerns such as politics and ethics, is generally regarded as the greatest of the Roman orators. Quintilian attempted to systematize the Ciceronian virtues in his *Institutio Oratoria*, a treatise on education intended for the training of the ideal philosopher-orator-statesman. This book helped shape the curriculum of the European academy for more than a millennium, and is perhaps rightly regarded as one of the most influential works on education ever written.

During the Middle Ages the study of rhetoric became a cornerstone of the academic curriculum; grammar, logic, and rhetoric were the three basic “arts” that constituted the *Trivium*, culminating in the B.A. degree. This course of study was followed by the *Quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) leading to the M.A. Outside the academy, the study of rhetoric was felt to have numerous applications, ranging from the composition of sermons, letters, treatises, and poetry, to the interpretation of law and scripture, and the formalization of methods of scientific inquiry and proof. In this heyday of its first incarnation, rhetoric assumed the status of a universal science.

From the seventeenth century onward, given the widespread dissemination of print technology and the rise of artificial scientific languages—such as the mathematical language of Newtonian mechanics—the study of rhetoric, understood principally as the study of modes of oral persuasion in natural language, understandably suffered a decline. René Descartes (1596-1650 A.D.), one of the most influential figures of the seventeenth century, pursued a sustained and successful series of polemics against the usefulness of the study of rhetoric, in favor of the study of the axiomatic-deductive methods of geometry. For it is a curious aspect of this period that the ideal of the generalizability of mathematical reasoning, more than mathematics itself, came into open conflict with the study of rhetoric, leading to the detriment of the latter. Thus began a gradual decline in the study of rhetoric, its breakdown into a fragmentary enterprise, frozen in time and bereft of any clear place within the fields

of knowledge, continuing well into the beginning of the twentieth century.

RHETORIC IN TRANSITION

A notable exception to this general trend were the writings of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), professor of rhetoric at Naples. In Vico's writings, the relationship between rhetorical studies and the study of societies is first examined in a theoretically explicit fashion. Vico responded to the challenge of Descartes by attempting a new synthesis of the forms of knowledge extant in his time, turning to the study of ancient rhetoric and poetics in order to theorize about the origins of human language and culture. The first systematic advocate of the celebrated distinction between the natural and the human sciences, Vico influenced the revival and reconfiguration of many of the so-called "social" sciences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including anthropology, although the extent of this influence has not widely been appreciated until quite recently. Today, it is Vico who is generally credited with the invention of the modern idea of culture in all of its representative moments: its nonstatic character; its historical and geographic variability; its status as an armature for belief and experience; its rootedness in social institutions and conventions such as language. And it is in Vico's *Scienza Nuova* that the study of rhetoric first becomes a method for the study of culture.

The twentieth century has seen the revival of rhetoric into a form of knowledge sufficiently like traditional rhetoric to deserve the same name (although in some of its incarnations it goes under other names as well), yet profoundly different in some of its goals. Many of these "new rhetorics" share the fundamental concern of traditional rhetoric with the power of speech to affect others. Yet the traditional focus on the speaker has given way to a more varied interest in a number of factors or components of the communicative situation, such as the auditor or addressee, the "code" that is being employed in some particular phase of the communicative act, and the medium or channel in which the communicative act occurs. The practical focus on the composition and preparation of public speeches has given way to a theoretical interest in the effectiveness of speech as a form of social action, in the semiotic and sociocultural bases of its capacity to affect others, and in the power of rhetorical structures in collective habits of

discourse both to guide and to suborn practical morality in everyday life.

Finally, the Aristotelian positioning of rhetoric as a discourse about the realm of the probable, epistemologically inferior to the discourses of the realm of certainty and demonstrable fact, is now generally rejected. This rejection is not so much due to the difficulty of maintaining a principled distinction between the demonstrable and the probable (which difficulty some writers, prone to extremes of skepticism, have embraced), but due to the realization that both types of knowledge claims—claims to certainty and claims about what is probable—depend upon underlying structures of rhetorical form. This realization has led to another departure from the Aristotelian tradition. Rhetorical studies increasingly encroach upon the realm that Aristotle had consigned to dialectics, namely the realm of specialized and expert discourses. Many such "rhetorics of inquiry" attempt to formulate the principles by which specialized forms of knowledge, such as natural science, seek to persuade both specialist and general audiences of the validity of novel views of the world (views that, to the extent that they are based on empirical research, are contingent, contestable, and provisional) through appeals to socially grounded forms of consensus building.

THE NEW RHETORICS

Given the fact that the modern academy is organized in substantially different ways than the academies of Greece and Rome, the renewal and revival of rhetoric in the twentieth century has come from a number of different disciplinary directions, including linguistics, philosophy, logic, literary criticism, and communication theory. Many of these revitalized traditions have, in turn, been assimilated into and shaped by current anthropological research.

One example of this modern trend is the theory of "speech acts," proposed in the 1950s as a critique by the philosopher J. L. Austin of the then commonplace view that the meaning of utterances may be associated exclusively with their descriptive or referential functions. Austin argued that part of what we experience as the "meaning" of words and expressions is their capacity, when uttered, to serve as instruments of social action. Speech acts such as pronouncing two people "man and wife," promising something to someone, and appointing someone to office, create

(rather than describe) aspects of the meaningful social world. "Meaning" is thus, at least in part, identifiable with the dynamic, socially consequential, form-giving power of language. This aspect of meaning is termed "illocutionary force" in this tradition. Although this approach has considerably enriched modern linguistic anthropology (see, for example, Tambiah 1981), it remains committed to certain assumptions underlying the "referentialist" theory of meaning that it sought initially to oppose. This is most evident in the exclusive focus in this tradition on word-and-sentence level properties of language. Speech act theory has little to say about the effectiveness or "force"-fulness of speech at other levels of form and structure—for example, stretches of speech larger than the sentence; prosody and intonation; the "figures" of rhetoric, formed by means of parallelistic and other types of devices in larger scale stretches of connected discourse, and across conversational turns.

I. A. Richards (1936) broadened the purview of rhetoric to include questions of conceptualization and perception, thus locating the question of the efficacy of speech within a broader theory of human cognition. His formulation of the celebrated "context theorem of meaning," the idea that "meaning" is not inherently a property of words, but a result of the occurrence of words and expressions in different experiential contexts, was an attempt to move away from the received view within rhetorical studies that each word has its own proper meaning, a view that Richards parodied as the "proper meaning superstition." The "theorem," in turn, led to the thesis of the "interanimation of words," namely the idea that words constitute a special type of context for other words, what in modern linguistics is termed the "endophoric context." Also highly influential is Richards's theory of metaphor as an entity that is formed, contra Aristotle, not by a single word or expression, but out of the interaction or "interanimation" of two logical constituents, a tenor and a vehicle.

The concern of traditional rhetoric with figures of speech has also reemerged as a central concern in modern times. In some of its manifestations, this resurgence harkens back to the classificatory zeal (even to the ideal of taxonomy as a mode of theory) with which this subject was approached in the middle ages. The structuralist theory of figures and tropes proposed by Group μ (1981), (a group of contemporary European scholars) is an example of this trend. The other extreme, found in certain self-styled, "cognitive" ap-

proaches, entirely eschews all classificatory distinctions in favor of an all-embracing (and hence, as some have argued, seemingly vacuous) notion of "metaphor" (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson 1980). More anthropologically sophisticated approaches (e.g., Fernandez 1991) view the phenomenon of figurative speech in terms of the availability of culture-specific repertoires of interactionally manipulable linguistic tropes, used to effect particular ends in performance.

The writings of Kenneth Burke (b. 1897) have also had a profound influence in refashioning modern methods in the study of rhetoric, and in making such methods accessible—even central—to anthropological research. More than any other thinker since Vico, Burke has expanded the purview of rhetoric through a systematic rethinking of its traditionally understood boundaries, attempting in his work to unite rhetoric and poetics at the level of a theory of literary form. His understanding of "literary form" is broad, and includes any device or form of expression capable of being used in an artful way; this includes not only speech, but also gesture and clothing, as well as anything else that may be used to influence the beliefs and attitudes of others. Although literary form is defined by art, and even by art used instrumentally, the methods of rhetorical analysis that Burke has attempted to develop attend to the *effects* of literary form—both intended and unintended by the speaker/writer—upon the hearer/reader. More than the study of persuasion, rhetoric for Burke is the study of the ways in which the speaker/writer can cause the hearer/reader to achieve a state of "identification" with him or her. In its broadest sense, *identification* is the coming together—or approximation—of aspects of social identity or social being (including the beliefs, the propensities for action, and the understandings of the self) of individuals involved in the rhetorical encounter. On this view, rhetoric as a branch of knowledge concerns the study of symbolically mediated and interactionally coordinated patterns of human behavior, and thus becomes linked in an explicit and natural way to traditional anthropological concerns.

As with any truly original synthesis, the theories of Burke introduce many terminological innovations. Particularly relevant to his analysis of social (inter-) action are categories such as the "pentad" (act, agency, agent, scene, and purpose), the theory of dramatism, the analysis of "motive" in the use of symbols, the role of reflexivity and metalanguage in language use, and the role of "entitlement"—that is, giving "titles," or

attaching descriptors to things in such a way as to constitute the shape of the thing itself—in the creative use of language. Although Burke has described his own general approach as a theory of “symbolic” action, it is now clearer that the methods for the study of action which he proposes are based not only on the analysis of pure symbolism as a distinctive cultural resource, but also on the analysis of semiotically hybrid devices such as indexical-symbols and indexical-icons, as these are understood in modern semiotic theory.

After the Burkean development in rhetorical theory, it has become possible to talk about the “rhetorical structure” of any type of symbol-based interaction, whether large-scale or individual. Thus, it is now commonplace to speak of the rhetoric not only of a particular individual’s speech, but also of large scale social institutions such as Christianity, or Marxism, or even Western thought; of political and historical events such as revolutions, elections, and wars; of the more psychological aspects of social interaction—as in speaking of the “rhetoric” of confrontation, of appeasement, or of hostility; of the rhetoric of genres of discourse, whether spoken, written, or electronically mediated—such as the job interview, the novel, or the television talk show; and of genres of public opinion and collective discourse, such as the discourses of sexism, racism, and multiculturalism. In this widened purview, the study of rhetoric overlaps extensively with the modern field of discourse analysis.

In a discipline such as anthropology, where narrative descriptions of other cultures constitute the central and abiding method of data presentation and analysis, the interest in rhetoric has proved extremely fruitful in a reflexive way as well, in turning the gaze of the anthropologist toward the rhetorically genred character of ethnographic description. As Renato Rosaldo (1987) has pointed out, the ethnographer’s point of view, tone, and evaluative stance are themselves analytic instruments of ethnographic exploration. Different configurations of these devices constitute distinct rhetorical modes or genres of ethnographic description, such as the “appreciative,” the “critical,” the “normalizing,” and the “objectifying” modes. The task of objective description, on the other hand, is not to suppress, ignore, or pretend a transcendence of these modes. It is rather to understand and use (and, where necessary, to contrast and interpolate) the different rhetorical modes of ethnographic

practice in the narrative act itself, thus theoretically grasping and practically controlling the inescapable saturation of the narrative act in rhetorical forms.

ASIF AGHA

SEE ALSO: *Culture; Discourse Analysis; Semiotics; Structuralism and Poststructuralism*

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