Classification of Rhetoric Discourse According to Different Spheres of Life

Posted on May 27, 2018

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Foundations and Classical Categories of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is used to argue and persuade the audience through writing, speeches, or deliberation. It is one of the powerful ways to convey, convince, and gain the trust of people. It has been used for centuries to manipulate audiences and gain political, social, economic, and intellectual benefits. It has been used as a tool of persuasion since the Sophists used it for public debates and political speeches to persuade the public.

The Sophists even formed a school to teach the art of rhetoric to the public so that they would excel in political life. However, Aristotle criticized the Sophists for using rhetoric to manipulate and gain monetary benefits. He came up with three genres of rhetoric—deliberative, forensic, and epideictic—recognizing the importance of rhetoric for the public. Hence, the three modes of rhetoric became an essential part of public and academic discourses, and they are used even today in political, public, and popular cultural contexts. People in today's society use the deliberative, forensic, and epideictic genres to manipulate, convince, and persuade people for political, economic, and social gains.

Aristotle defines the three modes, deliberative, forensic, and epideictic, as being for three different spheres of life. For instance, deliberative rhetoric focuses on the future and deliberation about political discussions and debates through statements to decide whether to take some action or refrain from it based on the consequences discussed in the deliberation. It can be used to decide what is good or bad, advantageous or disadvantageous. Similarly, forensic rhetoric is confined to attacking and defending someone in court cases or by the two parties, and it focuses on the past and is used by the law. It can be used in the declaration of justice or injustice. Lastly, epideictic rhetoric focuses on the present and is used to praise or blame someone. Epideictic rhetoric, also known as ceremonial rhetoric, deals with the state of things at present and praises or blames in an attempt to promote or condemn an action. Hence, the three modes of deliberation were used for judgment to decide whether to do or refrain from an action based on present, past, and future actions. They are used to declare the virtues and vices of an action or person.

Overlap and Practical Use of Rhetorical Genres

However, no line separates the three forms. The three genres are used for distinct purposes regardless of the lines drawn by Aristotle. Although the division makes it easier for Aristotle to define each sphere, people use any rhetorical genre that they see fit for the situation. The speaker can use all three genres in a political speech if that fulfills the requirements and needs of the speech and helps him/her to persuade the audience. Today, in many political speeches, people blame others, boast about their actions, and discuss why they did not implement a plan. For instance, in the "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King blames American society for "segregation and the chains of discriminations." He considers it "shameful" and unjust. He asks for "racial justice." He uses all three devices in his political speech to persuade the audience and to show the urgency of fulfilling the "promises of democracy."

According to Aristotle, political speakers "urge us either to do or not to do something," as is evident from King's famous speech, in which he urged American society to end slavery and segregation. Nevertheless, it was up to the listeners whether to support his cause. Similarly, Bush declared war on terror in a powerful speech using past, present, and future references, strategies, and rationale for going after the terrorists. However, many believe the speech was hurriedly delivered without proper deliberation and an action plan. Regardless, the speech was rhetorically powerful during the crisis and helped people calm down. It was a speech that was delivered to unite Americans and the world in a war against terror, getting assistance from the past experiences of the US and incorporating the present crisis of 9/11. The speech might not follow the strict division of the Aristotelian genre. Still, it did follow the concept of delivering a persuasive speech concerning the past and present and explaining what the nation must do in the future.

Hence, the modern-day audience uses the Aristotelian techniques of oratory and persuasion using logic and argumentation for political speeches, public events, and popular culture texts. The art of persuasion was used in Athens to reach conclusions and find solutions for future and present events. The oratory tools developed and theorized by Aristotle are used for the manipulation of people, about which Aristotle and Socrates had criticized the Sophists. The Sophists were charging a fee and earning money by teaching oratory and argumentation, but Aristotle criticized such an approach to rhetoric. For Aristotle, rhetoric is "universal," "clear," and "useful." The moral purpose of the speaker is also crucial "to discover the means" to be closer to success. Thus, rhetoric is defined as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." However, in the art of rhetoric and oratory, three classes are involved: the speaker, the subject, and the person addressed. The last one "decides the speech's end and object." In contrast to modern-day discourse, most people do not understand the appeals and rhetorical devices used for manipulating and convincing the audience to take an action.

Political Rhetoric and Public Persuasion

Most political speech is manipulative. People want to persuade the audience for future gains by blaming and accusing others and creating great plans even though they might not fulfill the promises they make to the audience. For instance, President Trump promised better healthcare plans and tax cuts for people with a better job perspective, but he has not fulfilled his promises to the people of America. He used rhetoric to come to power and blamed Hillary and Obama for many of the political reforms and their mistakes and won the elections. He used the Aristotelian genre of rhetorical oratory to gain power and get votes, as the provided oratory devices proved useful. Furthermore, the use of rhetoric by Nazi Germany that followed the Holocaust is another horrendous example of using rhetorical discourse to gain power. The use of rhetoric to gain power has become part of modern-day discourses. Be it a TV channel, newspaper, or political speech, all use rhetorical devices to control the audience.

Moreover, most of the time, the orators or writers use the same techniques and modes provided by Aristotle to appeal to logic, emotions, and ethics based on past, present, and future experiences and aspirations. They criticize, blame, and praise people they want to promote and accuse others they oppose and do not want to be successful. Most rhetoric appeals to people's emotions to form empathy, but it is usually used to advance a personal cause. However, it is not always for the advancement of a personal cause. Many human rights advocates use the same strategies of oratory and writing to convince and persuade people about a right cause. Consequently, it is the perceived right cause that the authors or advocates support. For instance, businesses use the three genres of argumentation and oration to promote their products by praising and providing details of the benefits for the future.

The three genres are essential for assessing the appeal and argumentation that various people use to persuade and put forth their agendas. They help the audience recognize and detect problems with the arguments. Although Aristotle puts greater emphasis on the morality of arguments, modern speeches and writings in political and social gatherings do not pay much attention to morality and values, which are important characteristics of argumentation and each of these genres. The division of the three genres helps readers and listeners properly judge speeches and writings. People can recognize the argument, the way it is presented, and the underlying reasons for such argumentation. The defined genres help people decide after realizing all the meanings and rhetorical strategies defined by Aristotle to judge a situation and decide about a problem or person. For instance, the idea of public or political debates on important issues was based on the idea of deliberation provided by Aristotle, in which political candidates engage before elections.

Rhetoric in Education and Contemporary Discourse

Furthermore, rhetoric plays an essential role in modern-day English classes. Although the three

modes are not taught and separated according to Aristotle, they are read and used to write academic papers. It has become “the informing principle for studying” written work (Connors et al., vii). The focus on rhetoric has become an integral part of the writing process because classical rhetoric established the connection between writing and rhetoric (Connors et al.). Thus, rhetoric and rhetorical analysis are crucial for academic and professional circles. In writing, people envision the unknown audience and write about certain issues with logic that is comprehensible to people far away, relating it to dominantly held ethical or social values so that people can relate to them and get persuaded or manipulated.

The three genres help to discern concerns regarding generalizations and unworthy praise, unrealistic and illogical arguments, and made-up ethical values that are part of society and social values. Awareness of rhetoric helps the audience and the writers or speakers to be responsible, as many people will be able to discern fallacies and lack of logic if a person disregards the importance of rhetoric. It helps the audience understand worthy and unworthy praise, manipulation, and authenticity in politics, TV channels, and real-life events. Aristotle and other scholars who wrote about rhetoric have identified the potential misuse of rhetoric for personal gains.

To conclude, the three genres of rhetoric laid down by Aristotle in his book *On Rhetoric* have become part of modern-day discourse. Rhetoric and its use are prominent in all spheres of life, whether politics, corporate life, or entertainment. People praise or blame, decide and plan for the future, and define fine ethical principles or future goals to benefit from them. It has helped to promote humanitarian causes as well as political causes. It is used to manipulate to gain personal or professional benefits. Regardless of how people from distinct spheres of life use it, it has become an integral part of academia, especially the English language. Rhetoric is the science of the English language, and classes around the globe enable teachers and students to analyze and assess the authenticity of a piece of written work or spoken words.

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