

## THE ART OF RHETORIC IN THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> of March a very interesting global conversation was held by Andrea Granelli. Andrea Granelli has had a versatile life and studies; he attended a classical high school in Milan, graduated with honors in informatics and later obtained a specialization in diagnostic methods in psychiatry and the test of Rorschach. He has also a master in business administration. Afterwards he was part of the foundation of Video Online (VOL) which was the first internet provided in Italy (1996), he has been a consultant manager for a company called Kanso, CEO of tin.it. He's experience is mostly in the digital field: creating services, running companies. What makes Andrea Granelli suitable for presenting this conversation is that he puts humanity in his work and his experiences. He strongly believes that there must be a combination between technology and humanity. In fact he founded an association to re-launch the idea of rhetoric called PerLare.



But what is rhetoric?

Explaining it is not easy at all. When someone says rhetoric, usually what comes to our mind is something linked to the ancient Greek tradition, something that has been forgotten throughout time and modern age. But Andrea Granelli's work consist in establishing a connection between the tradition therefore rhetoric and the innovation: the digital era. He explains that Rhetoric is about language but it's a complex and difficult challenge because both of them, rhetoric and language are used as a tool and as a target. Most people think that Rhetoric is about persuasion but in fact is a much broader concept.

To understand better the idea we can use some quotes such as the one by a famous Indian proverb :*"don't trust white men, they speak with a forked tongue"*. This explains that by saying something many interpretations can be understood; we can say something but the meaning is different. It's very complex to understand what people want to say.

Another important statement is from a famous psychologist that says :*" You are perfectly right from your point of view"*.

Those statements show us that rhetoric is about diversity: it's about little differences that can make the difference. The persuasion, the communication, the reasoning, the intuition. All of those aspects interact and rhetoric is about mastering those little differences; it can be seen as a fundamental tool of human behavior. We can say that the inventor of rhetoric was an Italian man named Gorgia da Lentini. He said *" The word has a tremendous power, since from a tiny and invisible body divine creations come to life: it can instill the joy, eliminate pain, enhance compassion, put an end to fear"*. If we think about it, we can see that psychoanalysis uses somehow the same technique: it uses words to change people's behaviors. So a word can be very powerful. Rhetoric is also a way of protection from violence but it also can be the creation of violence. Martin Luther king used it to obtain peace, on the other hand Hitler used it for war, for false news in order to create

consensus. So rhetoric has a double dimension: it can be very good or very bad; it can be very weak or very powerful. It depends on the capability to master the language.

There's an important book on this matter entitled "*it's not what you say. It's what people hear*". Most of the times, when speaking, we don't think about the counterpart. The counterpart plays an important role, understanding his/her point of view, way of thinking and prejudice is essential in order to communicate. It's like using a gun. I can use it either to protect someone or to kill someone. The decision is up to me. Rhetoric works in the same way. We cannot separate ethics from the techniques of rhetoric.

Since we said that rhetoric is about interaction between communication and reasoning we can identify 3 types of speech:

- **Deliberative speech:** (future) used to convince people to do something. Usually considered as a weak type of speech because it refers to the future, therefore it must be persuasive. The aim of this kind of speech is not telling the truth but presenting the best reasonable choice to make with the information you have.
- **Defensive speech:** (past) easier than speaking about the future because here we discuss something that already happened typical of trials.
- **Celebratory speech:** (present) used to talk about good or bad values referring to the present.

When we face these 3 kind of speeches we have to consider the audience bearing in mind that "*every monologue is a dialogue*". The person who speaks has to understand the counterpart and their point of view. One way to establish a good relationship with the audience is to break the ice, reminding people what we are talking about and catching their attention. Remember to the audience the reason why we are here, explaining this implicit technique can be useful to target the audience keeping in mind to be coherent with their view. That's how a successful speech can be carried out.

Now that we described the features of rhetoric we can try to understand the link between rhetoric and digital so we asked ourselves : What connection can we find between rhetoric and digital?

Markets are conversations. Everything is a discussion: blogs, social media, marketing etc. Again, the idea is to link it from past to the modern age: for example to the argument developed by Cicero. Briefly speaking about it the canone consist of 5 parts: inventio (finding good information on internet) dispositio (organizing and arranging the information with images and hashtags) elocutio (having a good verbal skills) memoria (remembering and articulating speaking without a written support) actio (movements of the body and expressions: TED could be considered as a useful tool to learn how to perform as a modern orator)

As Global governance students we found this global conversation very useful because it gave us some interesting tips about rhetoric and how to use it in a proper way. Being global students means knowing how to communicate and how to interact with people. The use of a proper rhetoric is essential in order to discuss with a diversified audience. What we found interesting about this conversation is the humanitarian aspect that seems fading with the digital era.

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