
A Road to Rhetorica: Teaching Rhetoric as Social Sensitivity and Behaviour

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In the preface to his ground-breaking volume on rhetorical criticism Edwin Black stimulates and disturbs the rhetoric-tuned reader with the assumption that

no books seem to inspire a deathlike hush so dependably as those on the subject of rhetoric. Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, for the supreme example, instead of initiating the vigorous discussion and exploration of the subject [...] was followed [...] by two millennia of feeble echoes [...], finally moving Wellدون in the nineteenth century to remark the *Rhetoric* as a 'solitary instance of a book which not only begins a science but completes it.' (Black, 1978, p. xvii).

Black – as a scholar of criticism – urged to retrieve rhetoric from this spiral of silence by wanting variety in the methods of rhetoric and a deeper, wider understanding of rhetorical discourses.

How far have we come since the middle of the last century with our efforts to give rhetoric the voice it deserves? The answer to this cannot be that straightforward and clear. By the end of the 20th century, rhetoric – through recurring fatal phases and revivals – has seemingly been reduced to a rather derogatory term. In general and popular understanding, rhetoric is still about the manipulative use of language to coerce people into believing and doing what they would otherwise not believe or do. It is the practice of stirring emotions and anger with no essential rational input, it is the destituous verbalism and declamation that exploits an unnatural mode of communication. Rhetoric is the opposite of action in everyday language use: it rather misleads or entertains where one has to think,

consider, act, especially when it comes to social and public life. Practically, the intellectual goal is to set it aside, or go beyond all that is rhetoric. There are several reasons offered for this decline by George Kennedy (1980) or Bender and Wellbery (1990). Explanations blame either the lack or – surprisingly – the expansion of democracy and the ways modern scientific thought and methods have over dominated human and political life (Crosswhite, 2013).

Interestingly, despite modern academic distaste in or ignorance towards what rhetoric has to offer, the last century has not passed without pivotal periods in its theorizing. We may arrange these changes under the label of “rhetorical turn” (Simons, 1990), a movement in human sciences motivated by the rediscovery of rhetorical argumentation and the reaction against objectivist quests for certainty in the scientific method, that is, academic positivism. “Rhetoric” – James Boyd White assumed later, in 1985 – “in the highly expanded sense in which I speak of it, might indeed become the central discipline for which we have been looking for so long [...]” (White, 1985, p. 701). This turn offered a view to better see the overarching constitutive nature of rhetoric.

Marking this significant turn, two seminal works were published in the same year of 1958. One was *Traité de l’argumentation – la nouvelle rhétorique* (The New Rhetoric) by Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, the other was Stephen E. Toulmin’s *The Uses of Argument*. Both center around the rhetorical argument as a social, practical tool and a meeting of minds, and they both contribute to the birth of the ‘new rhetoric project’ (Crosswhite, 2010). Nevertheless, it is Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s New Rhetoric that explicitly revives rhetoric via the discussion of social argumentation. They did rediscover rhetoric’s millennia-long history of concern with reasoning about practical matters in conditions of uncertainty. Their radical rhetorical move with the valorization of the audience proved to be a fundamental shift from pure logic to social-psychological settings. As they stated: all argumentation develops in relation to an audience (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 5). These approaches were followed by the wave of „big rhetoric” that have opened up a new horizon for rhetoric in the new millennium (Aczél, 2019a).

Michael Billig stated two decades ago that although the study of rhetoric had always had to fight for its academic credibility, today it is “creeping back into theoretical fashion” (Billig, 1987, pp. 33–34). At the same time, in Central Europe, time seems to stand still as the study of

1 As Edward Schiappa (2001, p. 260) put it with big rhetoric “we refer to the theoretical position that everything, or virtually everything, can be described as ‘rhetorical.’”

rhetoric here still counts as a surprising or at least academically marginal endeavour. Almost thirty years after the rebirth of free Hungarian public life, the term “rhetoric” is still provoking mixed feelings in the country but also in other Central European countries like Croatia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia or the Czech Republic – at least that’s what scholars and teachers dealing with rhetoric often say and share with each other. While at international conferences they recognize common problems and attitudes stemming from the same, mainly historical-cultural root, they also often complain about the lack of incentives to presently study rhetoric and pursue research in the field. Representatives of contemporary academic life have even more arguments when it comes to the hardly or even “un-academic” nature of rhetoric. Among these they often quote its speculative nature in contrast with the required and expected statistical accuracy of contemporary sciences or its outdated terminology that seems overly self-explanatory without updates from modern scientific jargon.

The rebirth of rhetoric in Hungary more than a quarter of a century ago was primarily caused by the growing need to teach the subject as it was included in the basic level syllabus for university training programs in 1991 and later also in the national curriculum. The situation was rendered more difficult in the 90s by the lack of prepared professionals who could teach the subject; the available teachers could only teach rhetoric from a structuralist-stylistic angle as a reinforcement of discourse and style analysis. The integration of reasoning and persuasion into teacher training is still a highly challenging task. As rhetoric cannot be clearly positioned within disciplinary boundaries, we have come to identify it with normative subfields of linguistics such as orthography, the culture of language and proper articulation, which clearly strips the faculty of its original significance as the science of public life Rhetoric considered almost exclusively as a part of linguistics manifests an approach that denies the overwhelmingly visual, – even sensual (Whitson and Poulakos, 1993; Hawhee, 2004; Aczél, 2019a) – social and cultural characteristics of the ancient study. Therefore, the haunting need for the constant rediscovery of rhetoric as the complex creative study of social behaviour remains to be fulfilled. The present paper offers a broad ‘road to rhetorica’, a way to dissolve silence around and within rhetoric and, most importantly, an ancient-new stand to teach it in schools.

Education and rhetoric in Hungarian context

According to the currently effective National Core Curriculum of Hungary (2012, presently under revision), the content elements of rhetoric defined for grades 9 to 12 (ages between 16–18 years) are related to text anal-

ysis, style and argumentation. Key content elements include the structural units and genres of speech and types of arguments — students should be able to identify as well as apply these elements. The approach this curriculum apparently takes to rhetoric is primarily static and not dynamic: it is concerned with producing texts. In speech preparation, emphasis tends to be on construction and expression rather than on argumentation — students often fail to learn and confidently use the latter (Major, 2011). This result-oriented approach (the goal being the creation of a text) leads to teachers and students interpreting rhetoric as a product instead of as an activity, associating it only with certain verbal (oral and written) genres, tools and effects of communication. This insistence on completed texts weakens the perception of rhetoric as an intelligent process utilising attention, invention, situation-awareness and flexibility.

Rhetoric education in Hungary today seems to reflect the process of the general reduction that started with Petrus Ramus in the sixteenth century (Genette, 1977), and first bereaved rhetoric of invention and arrangement (the very steps that enhance cognitive and critical skills), narrowing its leeway predominantly to the linguistic aesthetic repository of elocution. It also condemned the effect of expression as dubious and dangerous, ultimately identifying rhetoric as “ancient stylistics” (Guiraud, 1963, p. 23), or a toolkit of linguistic operations (Dubois et al., 1970). The emergence of an artifact- and operation-centred education with a structuralist, belletristic, neo-rhetorical basis has been thus necessary but ineffectual. To put it more sharply, it did not prove to be an indispensable, durable and likeable practice for either the teacher or the student of today. In what follows, I shall discuss a different understanding of rhetoric and the applicable principles and methods that can serve it (Aczél, 2016).

Rhetoric as a social science

Rhetoric is the most socially-oriented aspect of human communication and its study. It is concerned with the methods by which human interactions help people reach common agreements which later allow societies to make common efforts and perform deeds while forming a functioning community. Rhetoric is concerned with the coordination of social activities using verbal symbols, visual signs and bodily movements (Hauser, 2002, pp. 7–13). As an action, it is characterised by seven factors which also provide the conceptual framework for the theory of rhetoric. Rhetoric is:

- situational action,

- symbolic action,
- interaction,
- social action,
- strategic action,
- creative action,
- ritual and dialogical action.

Based on these factors, the most important characteristics of rhetoric are situational connectedness, mutuality, creativity and strategicity. In other words: rhetoric is not abstract but factual, not monologic but dialogic; it is not merely a mimicry of forms but a creative activity. It is embedded in the social-communal situation to which it can serve as a change agent.

According to Lloyd Bitzer (1980, pp. 21–38) the starting point of any rhetorical statement is the given social situation. In such a way, the central concept of rhetorical communication is the actual context along with concrete human relationships and needs: practical wisdom (*phronesis*). We must, however, presuppose the following criteria:

- 1) people harmonize their needs and wants with the inner mental and the outer physical world;
- 2) if another party enters the interaction, a symbolic, communicative and rhetorical aspect, need, want or problem also emerges;
- 3) the interaction is aimed at recognising, resolving and satisfying this need and pairing it with another social need.

Rhetoric is a social activity as its goal is to enter into contact with at least one other individual and to create and reproduce a social reality. “In other words, people cooperate with each other in social activities aimed at creating compatible interpretations of their situations” (Hauser, 2002, p. 10): thus, rhetoric is the tool and phenomenon of desired cooperation in a given situation. The method of communication used by rhetoric is oriented towards the new but not primarily through being informative: it is characterised more by the ability to reinforce commonplaces (common knowledge) and by the dialogical and creative practice of invoking new points of view. Its ritual always starts by creating a common, new psychological space through grabbing the other party’s attention. Then – building on this new, unfamiliar type of attention – it accentuates already known information employing the contrast of harmonisation and unexpected twists. The seemingly unique content and the universal nature of the structure together create the forces that drive the social-rhetorical ritual.

Rhetoric as the creative study of (strategic) social behaviour

Here we conceive of rhetoric not as a static repository of creating persuasive – often identified as manipulative and thus suspicious – text-products but as an instance of social intelligence: sensitivity (Hart and Burks 1972, 1975) and behaviour (Aczél, 2015). It can provide the individual with the skills of adapting to a community and the abilities of self-actualization and empathy towards others. Hence, it includes the ethical and cognitive skills or know-how (Struever, 1998; Booth, 2003) necessary to interpret and influence social situations. The environment for rhetorical sensitivity is created by human relations and social situations that have affective as well as cognitive components (Aczél, 2016). Rhetorical sensitivity is a character of interpersonal communication that “best promises to facilitate human understanding and to effect social cohesion” as Hart and Burks (1972, p. 75) contended. They describe the rhetorically sensitive person as an individual who willingly characterizes himself or herself as “an undulating, fluctuating entity, always unsure, always guessing, continually weighing [potential communicative decisions]” (Hart and Burks, 1972, p. 91).

They conceive of rhetorical sensitivity as an attitude towards encoding that has five constituents: (1) the acceptance of human complexity as a necessary and desirable condition, (2) the avoidance of communicative rigidity, (3) the consciousness of both the speaker’s position and the constraints of the other within the interaction, (4) the ability to distinguish and decide upon the communicability of different ideas, and (5) the openness towards alternatives in making an idea clear (Hart, Eadie, Carlson, 1975, pp. 3–5). According to the Hart et al. (1980, p. 9) summary, “rhetorical sensitivity is a function of three forces: how one views the self during communication, how one views the other, and how willing one is to adapt oneself to the other.” Hence, this sensitivity entails attention (observation), reflection and sensitivity to norms and deviations: to whatever is unique, different, disparate or identical.

Rhetorical behaviour is a feature of participative, articulate, resourceful, emphatic and active citizens who, while they strive to realize their interests, are also social beings capable of defining their own goals in accordance with the enhancement of collective values. This behaviour is indispensable in the processes, debates and cooperation that creatively nurture co-existence, foster socialization and ensure cultural continuity. The lack of rhetorical behaviour may also be reflected in a specific era by an individual’s lack of self-esteem and the sense of being “superfluous,” of public gloom, and collective distrust. Therefore, learning rhetorical per-

suasion has a much more profound significance and role than merely serving momentary individual success.

In light of the above, we can conceive rhetoric as an intelligence, a kind of sensitivity and a behaviour that enables us to face and manage, in a communicative way, complex social situations. The foundation, source, and medium of rhetorical intelligence are all created in human relations and social situations, in both rational and emotional terms (Darwin, 2003, p. 23). In sum, rhetoric can also be called a practical sensitivity which is rooted in a given social situation and turns that into a fundamentally social world (Burke, 1969, p. 39; Laclau, 2014, p. 438). For a long time self-assurance (assertiveness) has been identified as basic in rhetorical communication. It is time to replace this concept and related interpretations with the idea of the communicator with confidence in self and others: a critically thinking, community-minded and participative person who bears themselves, articulates their standpoint and eagerly shares the common space of communication with others, a person who is self-aware and other-assured. Accordingly, the result of rhetorical practice and education will be the social personality itself rather than the “fine speech” following structuralist/belletristic principles. It will be the engaged, articulate, resourceful and compassionate person who considers communication as a mode of social existence rather than a tool (Fleming, 1998, pp. 172–73). This individual is a subject who is also a collective creature; thus, the output of their rhetorical intelligence is never self-actualization only, but a responsible existence within the community. A criterion for all this is that we conceive of rhetoric as a form of behaviour rather than a tool. Therefore, the education of a rhetorical citizen requires an educational method and vocabulary that help students (and their teachers) identify, interpret, analyze and utilize their own rhetorical experiences, events, and situations (Aczél, 2016).

Teaching a ‘rhetorical citizen’

Ancient and contemporary rhetoricians seem to agree (cf. Lanham, 1976, pp. 2–3) that rhetorical citizens and their behaviour should meet the following expectations. They should

- start to learn persuasive speech early,
- be good observers of the world,
- be interested in public life and grasp the facets of an issue or affair that may concern more people, others,

- love the word: enjoy the potentials offered by language and learn to “translate” one style into another, like verbal play, and recognize whenever someone tries to use them as a means of deception,
- learn to seize the moment, develop their abilities to improvise,
- stretch their memory to develop their understanding,
- recognize that their behaviour is a social ‘performance’,
- familiarize themselves with the phrases, proverbs, wisdoms and emblems of their culture,
- enjoy the intellectual community of more intelligent people.

As the Hungarian speech-therapist Imre Montágh (1996, p. 125) briefly summarized, “The good rhetor is an excellent observer with an advanced ability to grasp the gist, good at inferring, skilled in memorizing, quick to associate and capable to express in a concise and vivid way that which is comprehensible for all.” In addition, Montágh emphasized the mastery of language use and rich vocabulary (based on literary erudition), the power of commitment that makes us authentic and uninhibited, control for ourselves and compassion for others.

In view of all of this, a student should be facilitated to attune themselves to the creation or change of rhetorical situation with the following principles:

- Empathy: using the presumed audience as a starting point instead of oneself;
- Motivation: discovering the opportunities for evoking inspiration and interest in the chosen topic;
- Inventiveness: being unique and personal without offending anyone’s feelings or taste;
- Ethics: being all about – and responsible for – the community without losing one’s personal voice;
- Discipline: being creative in finding what but self-controlled in choosing how to communicate;
- Consistency: accepting that the arrangement can be persuasive in itself, be consistent;
- Originality: avoiding borrowed worn-out common phrases and speaking in one’s personal language.

These factors can reinforce that the goals of education and development formulated within the core curriculum presuppose rhetorical knowledge as an organic element. Based on the above, the fundamental keys and principles of (teaching) rhetorical sensitivity in teacher training programmes can be listed as follows:

1. Rhetoric is an inseparable element of human self-expression and communication: it is an integral part of all human interactions.
2. Rhetoric is the communicative element of social existence; it is not only a method of persuasion but also a method of listening and understanding.
3. Rhetoric is more than simply an element of the linguistic code, it is not only one part of education concerning a given native language. It might be interpreted as a complex, comprehensive competency, communal literacy or social intelligence that, as such, exhibits biological, psychological, sociological, anthropological and technological characteristics.
4. We approach rhetoric the right way if we see it as an ethical-cognitive ability instead of simply as a system of methods and tools to help us create texts. This ability and sensitivity is important in helping individuals to an understanding of undecided human-social situations, to the creation of refined actions and discursive strategies that in turn motivate other individuals. As such, rhetoric should be a part of every educational subject and cultural area.
5. The foundation, source and medium of rhetorical intelligence are provided by human relationships and social situations not only in a rational but also in an emotional sense.
6. The goal of rhetoric is to educate empathetic, articulate, inventive, participating and sensitive citizens. This person is an individual with a personality and also a social creature whose rhetorical intelligence is never concerned solely with self-propagation but with community life and the enrichment of common values. This requires that we consider rhetoric as a behaviour instead of an instrument.
7. Rhetoric is not the inventory of creating texts but the complex system of abilities and skills made up of attention, empathy, imagination and emulation, the expression of emotions and understanding. Therefore, rhetoric education could be structured as follows:
 - grasping rhetorical intelligence, improving communicational attention and rhetorical sensitivity;
 - the communicative description and exploration of the situation while assessing its cultural references;
 - the dynamic of the situation's elements and functions;
 - invention: creating the situationally sensitive message (questions, tropes, reasons);
 - genre-awareness: choosing the audience, code, format, display and channel of the message consciously;

- the pragmatics of the rhetorical message: intentionality and structuring;
 - the variance of the message: translation from situation to situation, from code to code;
 - the analysis of the effect.
8. Communication built on rhetorical intelligence is vital to the debates and co-operations that creatively nurture communities. It is also fundamental to a type of coexistence that supports socialisation, to a type of understanding that ensures the continuity of culture and the processes of remembering and renewal. (Aczél, 2015)

Three phases of teaching rhetoric

One of the main challenges of teaching rhetoric as the creative study of (strategic) social behaviour is whether we can reconfigure the educational program so that it could assume the process-approach rather than remain focused on the product or procedure. In other words, we are to decide if we can accept that the communicative-pragmatic sensitivity and behaviour which manifest itself in speaking constitute a much better measure of rhetorical proficiency than individual speech artifacts.

If we do, then invention has to be reclaimed for rhetoric from Petrus Ramus, and rhetoric education should be started with the development of critical thinking and rhetorical analysis. Only then can we create and shape the rhetorical space attached to context and situation, to be followed by the instruction and practice of debate as a form of behaviour in dialogical communication. These three phases can also be grasped through the conceptual triad of (1) analysis, (2) creation and (3) encounter. In this way, first, we teach students open, exploratory inquiry, systematic analysis, and the bold formulation of statements; second, the creative-productive processes of articulation, expression and speaking; and third, we develop the skills required to participate in encounters that emerge in conflicts and disagreements, which can induce changes.

Critical thinking and analysis

The aim of the first phase of the process is to clarify the nature of issues, topics and stances, and to develop critical thinking (Bowell and Kemp, 2002) and analysis. The analytical method used in encouraging critical thinking is critical rhetoric, which is also an important procedure in research-centred education. The basic principle of this method is seeing humans as the creators of rhetoric, language as the medium for rhetoric and communication as the purpose of rhetoric respectively (Black, 1978; Foss,

2009). Reasonably, rhetorical analysis can be applied to advertisement reels, video narratives at community sharing sites and comments to on-line contents or interviews, news and scientific lectures as well as typical public speeches (tributes, ceremonial speeches, parliamentary contributions, or political campaigns). The procedure of rhetorical analysis can be applied to (1) exploring the meaning and functions of the situation and speech acts, (2) examining the issue, topic or idea, (3) analysing the modes of reasoning and proofs, (4) studying the structure of the communication, (5) discussing the elements of expressivity, (6) analysing the mode of performance and (7) examining the medium (Aczél, 2016).

The process of rhetorical criticism begins with description, continues with analysis, is summarized through interpretation and ends in evaluation. In each of these study areas, it is essential to raise questions precisely and openly, and to reveal one's own personal relations (Hart and Daughton, 2005, Stoner and Perkins, 2016). Rhetorical analysis is also a rhetorical act, a specific explorative-assertive and an argumentative way of writing. The constant elements of critical analysis are (a) setting the problem, (b) formulating the basic question, (c) describing the selected rhetorical act and artifact, (d) presenting the method and aspects of analysis, (e) summarizing the results of analysis, answering the basic question and (f) indicating the further challenges of analysis (Foss, 2009, pp. 9–21). Rhetorical criticism as the facilitator of analytical skills is complemented by the acquisition of rhetorical invention as a process. In the present conception of teaching rhetoric, argumentation is considered not a part of text construction or expression, but an element of attention and a way of thinking whose nature is defined by the dynamics of raising questions and making claims. This view is based on the distinction that argumentation can be interpreted as the construction of arguments, as a product; a rule of constructing arguments, as a procedure; or the counterposition of arguments, as a process (Wenzel, 1992).

Depending on the aspect assumed in its description, argumentation can have several definitions. On the one hand, when we think of arguments as a set of statements, argumentation can be considered an outcome or product. This approach may be attributed primarily to logic, since it studies the abstract relations between specific statements. On the other hand, if argumentation is described from its practical point of view, then we can see a process where participants pose arguments for their own or against each other's stances. This method is applied in the approach assumed by rhetoric and dialectic. Rhetoric explores how effective the orator is in persuading his audience through his speech. In contrast, di-

alectic examines the interaction of two participants in the argumentation. Throughout the analysis, it focuses on how the debating parties exchange specific arguments, and whether they comply with the rules predetermined by the given situation. (Forgács, 2015, p. 1094)

Hence, the argument as a result is described by logic, as a procedure by dialectic and as a process, by rhetoric, respectively. Again, that is why the process-centred approach should replace the product-centred one in rhetoric education.

One of the possible modes of process-like argumentation (i.e., the one preparing for interaction) can be grasped through the following ten steps:

1. Recognize or select the phenomenon or problem/challenge.
2. Survey the audience.
3. Raise questions.
4. Articulate the topic statement.
5. Examine topic statements, based on whether they are evaluative or proposing claims.
6. Explore the potential refutations of and alternatives to topic statements, and examine the degree of disputability.
7. Define concepts related to the statement, but note that differing opinions may involve conceptual differences.
8. Articulate the stance related to the statement, based on its function as an evaluation or a recommendation.
9. Create the logical framework, a system of arguments for the given stance: gather, sort, and arrange arguments and reasons (using statistical data, laws, rules, stories, beliefs, and *topoi*).
10. Review the logical framework in terms of the conceptual system and logical-rhetorical relationships. (Aczél, 2017)

When finishing these ten steps, students have not yet completed text artifacts either on paper or in their minds. Instead, they can see their own mental maps, the organism of thinking, drafted in the form of claims, relations, concepts and questions.

Creativity and speaking up

The second phase of education for rhetorical behaviour consists of speaking as a creative act. In the culture of digital “new media,” a number of alternatives to school-based education are available. Hundreds of thousands of people enjoy scientific courses, short and flash talks, and several weeks long online courses by renowned training institutions, which all

serve as information sources generated through sharing knowledge and experience. These alternative sites combine experiential knowledge acquisition with the characteristics of rhetorical behaviour: resourcefulness, vivid description, simplicity, the use of narratives, palpability, and contrasts. For example, the scientific and informative talks of TED.com are always based on some problem that concerns many people, a particular point of view, insightful descriptions, precise differentiation, disciplined content-filtering, time management and the aim to mobilize (make people think and raise awareness). That is why they seem more comprehensible and colourful, and leave a deeper impression on their audience than school classes do.

Speakers who consider the addressee a subject-like, thinking human being similar to themselves, not as an object, possess the properties of modesty, high-level presence in the situation, attention and self-reflection. In such a way, speaking uses genre as a recurrent unit of typical encounters and experiences, and infers it from the mental preparation conducted in the first phase. The dichotomy of evaluation and recommendation gives rise to the classical triad of speech genres: one that evaluates, considers, confirms and judges; the other that recommends, initiates, discourages or encourages; and the third that induces empathy, engages, identifies or alienates. Actually, these three speech genres (fact, action, value, Heinrichs, 2007) are three modes or linguistic-pragmatic-aesthetic categories of rhetorical behaviour and encounter.

The instruction of structuring principles for speaking is suited to the social situation, goals and the intended effect to be generated in and in cooperation with the addressee. It depends on the imaginability of collective discovery and the potential processes of an attitudinal change. In this sense, parts of the speech are not content-related but, for both the communicator and the addressee, stimulating units that draw and maintain attention, engage the audience (introduction, narrative), enable emotional attachment (digression), encourage causal and analytical thinking (proof and refutation), demand participation (enthymeme), generate the joy of structure (conclusion), foster imagination (tropes), record what has been heard (figures of speech) and elevate the situation to an event. The good speech is a building where you can easily find your way around, which makes you feel at home and can be visited from time to time – because it is based on the holistic logic of oral cultures (Ong, 1982). Hence, rhetorical communication also makes use of visual-spatial intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Then, at the second phase, the cognitive framework created in the critical preparation should be embedded into the dynamic and interactive process of communication, of speaking up.

Connecting and debating

The third phase in rhetoric education is teaching debate as an encounter. In accordance with the suggestion by Ankersmit (2003, p. 20), disagreement is a creative source for all human relations and communication. There can be a strong sense of security in a relationship or community where parties are governed by identical opinions or the fear of debate, but their ability to change is bound to be weak. Although they may seem to be ideal, debate-free relations and societies are more vulnerable and exposed than communities that are ready for debate. Debate generates knowledge, shapes experience, facilitates inquiring, critical thinking and attention techniques, and may foster a participatory culture of engagement. It is a communication genre which allows the parties to match, counterpose, and (in the agreement phase) reconcile their stances in order to reach a decision. Indeed, a debate is a conflict by nature, but as such it shall not be necessarily threatening, coercive or destructive. Disagreement, thus, in debate is not impoliteness or harshness, but an opportunity to seek new perspectives — it is the most efficient way of making decisions. In this way, debate can be considered an intellectual struggle that has a stake but enables preparation through an all-round approach, allows us to prepare thoughtfully, gaining experience in argumentation and having a responsible attitude towards the other. The parties to a debate represent disparate stances. Therefore, on the one hand, both parties are forced — by the very presence of the other — to scrutinize their own stances in order to filter out inconsistencies. So, they encourage each other to behave in a self-controlled and attentive way. On the other hand, a debate between these parties does not mean that they disagree. Accepting the other's point may also lead to the extension of our own beliefs, without giving up our conviction. Thus, debaters are not petty squabblers, but observant, restrained and responsible communicators. A decision made during the debate usually derives from the community which provides the context for the debate. Consideration in good decision-making is based on the effectiveness of the parties in exploring and analysing the subject matter, in reasoning and recounting proofs, in constructing their argument and in refuting the points proposed by the other party.

There are several models for debating competitions which are fruitfully applicable in secondary school classroom-based instruction with appropriate preparation, among them the US Public Forum Debate or the

widespread and enjoyable British Parliamentary Debate. Both formats have clearly defined methods, concepts and rules that can be easily adapted to specific linguistic and cultural features. Hence, there is no point in further elaborating them here. A point that should be emphasized, however, is that debate can also foster growth in skills needed for cooperation and consensus. As Maxine Hairston (1974, pp. 210–11) assumes, in the process of dialogical debate, the debater should first give a brief, objective statement of the issue under discussion, then summarise in impartial and precise language and emphasise values, the differing opinions of the opponent/audience and their own opinion on that issue. Moving forward, they can present their own side of the issue, listing its foundational values and motives and compare the two (or more) positions, highlighting their common ground, outlining how their position could alter or complement that/those of their opponent(s). Finally, they should propose, based on all of the above, a solution to the debated issue, the initial problem. The prevalence of this model does not depend on practice only. It depends on developing an attitude to debating that focuses on curiosity, open-mindedness, the opportunity to learn and a friendly as well as forthcoming attitude. It does not imply some kind of false sense of security but, much more, commitment and confidence.

Conclusions

The study of rhetoric has been fighting for its academic and educational credibility for centuries. Although considered to be indispensable in forming a communicator, its place and role in both student and teacher training still holds seemingly little significance and thus requires reconceptualization. Rhetoric education in Hungary (and presumably in more Central-European countries) is still suffering from the effects of the political and social system that only came to an end at the final decade of the 20th century – a system that oppressed persuasive-deliberative-dialogic discourses altogether. On the one hand, there is an urgent need to translate foundational works (on argumentation, rhetorical criticism, applied rhetorical research) and keep pace with tested methods concerning rhetorical theory and practice. On the other hand, new aspects should be integrated into the definition of rhetoric and rhetorical skills. These new aspects could lead us, professors, lecturers and teachers of rhetoric to change the pathway of rhetoric education.

The present paper introduced the interpretation of rhetoric as the creative study of (strategic) social behaviour. It aimed to point at the differences this view of the ancient faculty can offer in comparison with the text- (product/procedure) based approach that is generally exploited in

secondary schools at present. By identifying rhetorical sensitivity as the core aim of learning rhetoric, the structure and outcomes of teaching rhetoric could be outlined, that is, the rhetorical citizen who is sensitive to the actual situation, holds confidence in others, has analytical and formative skills, and feels ready to participate in social interactions.

Three phases could be proposed for the teaching program of rhetoric. One that addresses critical thinking and through this, breeds rhetorical critical skills. One that supports communicative creativity and improves the multimodal formation of communicative acts and one that opens up the social space for cooperation and debating. With highlighting the key principles that could govern this teaching programme, this paper aimed to frame a new understanding of rhetoric as a social science that has an overarching nature regarding community and social skills. This new approach (Aczél, 2019b) entails a view that rhetoric should work for and within sustainable human communities. Every rhetorical practice should start with the world and not the word and end with a change that serve good human ends. This present essay means to be a humble contribution to a new era of teaching rhetoric infused by this apprehension.

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