

Introduction

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The field of rhetoric – from both a practical and a theoretical perspective – is highly relevant, not only for conducting debates in the public domain, but for analyzing and evaluating them as well. The idea of democracy is, after all, closely intertwined with the ideal of making transparent decisions based on high quality open discussions in the public domain. Pericles discusses this close relationship as early as the middle of the 5th century BC in his famous funeral oration and panegyric of Athens and the Athenians:

Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the state as well: even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well-informed on general politics – this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all. We Athenians, in our own persons, take our decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussions: for we do not think that there is an incompatibility between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated.¹

From classical antiquity until the present time, much attention has been paid to questions like: how should public debate be organized and conducted so that it contributes to decision making? And how – in that light – can public speakers effectively construe their message in order to persuade an audience or – in other words – bend its opinion?

Nowadays, research on rhetoric and its relationship to discussions in the public domain has developed into an important area of interdisciplinary scholarship. Theories, methodologies and insights from different academic disciplines are confronted and combined: fields such as classical

¹ Thucydides (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by R. Warner. London: Penguin Books Ltd., p. 147.

studies, argumentation theory, philosophy, logic, linguistics, history, law, sociology, political science, public administration, criminology, psychology and media studies. The objective of this current collection of essays on persuasion in the public domain is to give an overview of the state of the art in this field of interdisciplinary scholarship and of the different approaches and methodologies that it contains, explained and illustrated with relevant examples and compelling case studies.

The book is divided in five parts, each with a specific theme: Fundamentals of rhetoric (Part I), The rhetoric of verbal presentation (Part II), Rhetoric and the media (Part III), Rhetoric and politics (Part IV) and The rhetoric of topoi (Part V). The themes are overlapping rather than mutually exclusive which means that the various chapters are organized according to their main perspective, but also that all five themes are – to varying degrees – addressed in every chapter.

Fundamentals of rhetoric

The first part of the book focuses on fundamental aspects of the relationship between persuasion and public debate from both historical and theoretical perspectives.

In Chapter 1, *Ineke Sluiter* explores the metaphor of the ‘marketplace of ideas’ in debates about freedom of speech and political deliberation. Starting from a study of the legal case against the controversial Dutch politician Geert Wilders, Sluiter takes a look at the archaeology of the concept in ancient Greece, fast-forwards to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, analyses the nature of the frame of the ‘marketplace’ and examines three subsequent theories that take their lead from this metaphor: (I) marketplace mechanisms as a way of eliciting information from a group in order to make the deliberative process more effective, (II) the analysis of the metaphor as a vehicle of social criticism and (III) the consequences of more recent insights into the functioning of the actual economy for ideas about freedom of speech. After a brief return to the Wilders case and the ‘rhetoric of free speech’, the chapter ends by briefly proposing an alternative model for thinking about free speech: an evolutionary theory of rhetoric.

In Chapter 2, *Manfred Kraus* studies the relationship between rhetorical exercises and a society’s value system. It is argued that class room exercises in rhetoric have always been used, at the same time, for conveying

moral, social, religious and/or political values which may either be in accordance or at variance with a society's prevailing value system. An interesting case is rhetorical education in late antiquity which, although embedded in the environment of a highly centralist and monarchic form of government, still exhibited a strong classicizing trait, praising the democratic and egalitarian values of classical Athens. Using as an example the 4th century *Progymnasmata*, a textbook of rhetorical exercises compiled by the Antiochian sophist Aphthonius, which takes a decidedly liberal, democratic, anti-monarchic and legalistic stance in a monarchic society, and a pagan if not entirely secular stance in a basically Christian environment, the chapter poses the question as to how these exercises were implemented in the classroom and what impact they had on society. In comparison with medieval and early modern parallels, raising this question also highlights the contemporary problem of how one chooses appropriate topics for rhetorical exercise in an age of political correctness.

In Chapter 3, *Marie Formarier* discusses the musical quality of speeches. Rhetoric was extremely powerful in Antiquity as speeches were the only media that gave information about politics. Consequently ancient speakers such as Aristotle or Cicero knew very well how to be persuasive, to attract and keep people's attention; in other words to communicate efficiently. In fact, they were very well aware of the persuasive power of the musical quality of speeches. This chapter elucidates the fundamental principles that determined the use of melody and rhythm in ancient political discourse and clarifies the formal characteristics that were commonly exploited in both musical and rhetorical melodies and rhythms through a complex mimetic process. Ancient theorists used to believe that rhythm and melody could have an impact on the hearer's feelings, beliefs and decisions. This interaction between emotions and political decision-making obviously raises deep ethical concerns as – even today – it can result in political manipulation. Finally, inspired by these ancient rhetorical theories on melody and rhythm, the chapter opens perspectives for oratory analysis.

In Chapter 4, *Christian Kock* presents a practical reinterpretation of ancient *stasis* (*status*) theories which defined the available strategies, or lines of argument, for criminal cases. Central were the three *status rationales*: the conjectural, the definitional, and the qualitative, equivalent to the questions: What are the facts? How are the facts to be categorized? What particular circumstances characterize them? While these questions problematize

the facts at issue, another main component of *stasis* thinking concerned the *status legales*, i.e., the questions which problematized the laws by which the facts were to be judged. Some theorists also offered lists of strategies for ‘practical issues’, i.e., political debates. Kock suggests a way of generalizing and integrating these strategies into one scheme which maps out all the strategies which are available in any kind of social disagreement. More importantly, the scheme may also help clarify, for everyone involved, what a disagreement *is* about, and what it *is not* about.

Part I concludes with *J. Antony Blair’s* discussion, in Chapter 5, of the relationship between rhetoric and argumentation. Blair describes four ways in which rhetoric and argument, or argumentation, were thought to have been related, after which he comments on some of the implications of these conceptions. The fact that different theorists understand rhetoric, argument and argumentation differently has to be taken into account. In some views all argument is rhetorical, but not all rhetoric concerns argument. In others, argument and rhetoric overlap but neither one completely encompasses the other. In a third view, the rhetorical is just one perspective to take on argument, among others (namely logic and dialectic). In the fourth understanding of the relationship, rhetoric is the enhancement of argument, sometimes legitimately and sometimes not. In the discussion, problems are found with all four views. The first has a too narrow conception of logic; the second, a conception of the domain of rhetorical argument that is too limited; the third, a tendency to reduce to the fourth; and the fourth, too restricted a conception of rhetoric. The principal culprit behind some of these flaws is said to be an insufficiently expansive understanding of rhetoric’s internal commitment to reasonableness.

The rhetoric of verbal presentation

The second part consists of chapters 6 to 10 and focuses on the relationship between a message’s form and its persuasiveness. It is concerned with stylistic choices regarding the formulation of a message and the use of tropes and other rhetorical devices.

In Chapter 6, *Daniel J. O’Keefe* discusses the relative persuasiveness of alternative message forms. Social-scientific experiments that address this matter focus on establishing well-founded generalizations about persuasive effects; generalizations such as these naturally provide corresponding principles of effective rhetorical design. O’Keefe focuses on research examining the rel-

ative persuasiveness of gain-framed messages (which emphasize the advantages of compliance with the communicator's recommendation) and loss-framed messages (which emphasize the disadvantages of noncompliance). There has been considerable speculation about whether these two appeal forms differ in relative persuasiveness, either in general or for particular kinds of advocacy topics. And although a great deal of experimental evidence has accumulated on these matters, it has not been systematically retrieved or analyzed – until recently, in a series of meta-analytic reviews. The findings from these reviews turn out to be instructive, not only about the persuasive effects of gain-loss message variations, but also more generally about how experimental social-scientific research concerning persuasion should be performed, reported and interpreted. In particular, the history of gain-loss message framing research illustrates the continuing challenges embodied in the task of developing dependable generalizations about effective message design.

In Chapter 7, *A. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans* investigates what role the stylistic device of *praeteritio* can play in arguers' attempts to reconcile their rhetorical with their dialectical aims in the argumentation stage of a discussion by maneuvering strategically. In her discussion of *praeteritio* she thus makes use of the theoretical framework of the Extended Pragma-Dialectical approach to argumentation that Frans van Eemeren and Peter Houtlosser developed over the last ten years, which consists of an integration of rhetorical insights in the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation. First, she pays attention to the ways in which *praeteritio* can be realized in discourse. Next, she gives an analysis of the general effects that the use of *praeteritio* may have due to the presentational means that are employed. Finally she focuses on the argumentation stage and discusses the ways in which *praeteritio* may contribute to arguers' dialectical and rhetorical aims when presenting and criticizing arguments.

In Chapter 8, *Henrike Jansen, Marianne Dingemanse* and *Ingrid Persoon* argue that the order of information presented in the antecedent and the consequent of an argument's inference license determines whether an argument is interpreted as either a causal or symptomatic one. This conclusion is drawn on the basis of a reformulation of examples of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments as arguments presented in the 'standard' way. Arguments which appear causal when they are presented as *reductio ad absurdum* arguments appear symptomatic when they are reformulated as arguments presented in the standard way. That is not to say that these arguments are, or become, causal or

symptomatic in essence, but only that their presentation affects the initial perception of an argument type. However, there is a limit to the reformulation of arguments. It is shown that causal arguments that were originally presented in a standard way cannot be reformulated as *reductio ad absurdum* arguments. A subjunctive *if...then*-clause cannot contain an information structure which starts with the later event (in the *if*-part) and is then followed by the earlier event (in the *then*-part). The same holds for some examples of symptomatic argumentation which also contain a temporal difference in the antecedent and consequent of the inference license.

In Chapter 9, *Jaap de Jong* and *Bas Andeweg* discuss some rhetorical developments which have taken place in the way that speeches of Ministers and State Secretaries are written in the Netherlands. Every Dutch Minister and State Secretary presents dozens of speeches every year. Fifteen years ago, most of these speeches were written by civil servants, the policy experts of the departments; over the past ten years, however, all the governmental departments have expanded and now include an agency of specialist speechwriters. What are the main rhetorical differences between the speeches written by the civil servants and the speeches written today? An analysis of 66 speeches reveals the following: the speeches became richer, stylistically spoken, and shorter; they contained more humor, comparisons, anecdotes and examples, and the style became more personal. The introductions of the speeches became longer and the closings fulfilled more rhetorical functions. All these differences indicate more rhetorical care and growing craftsmanship in this type of Dutch speech writing.

In the last chapter of Part II, Chapter 10, *Hilde van Belle* discusses style and argument in the genre of newspaper columns. Columns are a popular genre, yet it is hard to sum up their basic features. In order to explore this phenomenon, Van Belle first tracks down the intense correlation between style and argument in the history of columns. Second, she looks at old and new theories about rhetorical figures and their argumentative function. Finally, she combines these lines of enquiry in a proposal about the actual function of columns and concludes that they make up for the (necessary) blind spot in journalism, i.e., the fact that transparency (neutrality, normality) is the effect of a very strict and traditional low style of writing. Columns are not so much free spaces for political ideas, it is argued, but rather, they are free spaces away from the very strict style prescriptions and traditions employed in the rest of the paper.

Rhetoric and the media

Part III consists of chapters 11 to 14 and focuses on public debates in, and persuasion through, the media. With regard to bending opinion and the use of rhetorical techniques and devices, the role of the media can hardly be overestimated, especially with respect to public debates on social problems.

In Chapter 11, *Joel Best* discusses the rhetorical construction of a specific type of social problems: future problems. He shows that attempts to draw attention to future social problems are inevitably vulnerable to challenge – how can one claim to know what the future holds? He argues that four issues shape the rhetoric of future claims: prediction (what will occur?); magnitude (how big will the problem be?); probability (how likely is it?); and timing (when will it happen?) and that claims regarding each of these issues can be contested. Uncertainty about what the future holds – as well as the competition for public attention – encourage an adoption of rhetoric that makes the future problem seem as serious as possible.

In Chapter 12, *Peter Burger* and *Lotte Anemaet* explore the controversial issue of ‘drink spiking’: is it a genuine crime problem or an urban legend? They illustrate that most of the online discussions of this topic feature personal accounts of alleged victims. How do these victims establish ethos in the face of widespread skepticism? Conversely, what rhetorical devices do debunkers use to dismantle the victims’ credibility? Most previous research efforts in this field were carried out by folklorists and social psychologists who did not employ a rhetorical framework, with the notable exception of Oring. Burger and Anemaet seek to expand Oring’s ‘rhetoric of truth’: an enumeration of credibility-enhancing techniques, gleaned from a collection of orally communicated legends. Their model aims to further the understanding of the way extraordinary experiences are constructed in online environments.

In Chapter 13, *Willem Koetsenruijter* and *Gabry Vanderveen* examine the way media construct stereotypical images of victims and offenders by using established sets of characteristics. They call these sets ‘frames’. Media use these frames as a rhetorical device to convince the public of the guilt or innocence of the parties involved. By using a series of content analyses, the authors provide empirical evidence for ideas which are then developed in analytical and qualitative research about stereotypical victims and offenders. The case they use to achieve this is the story about the missing American girl Natalee Holloway and her (presumed) offender, the Dutch adolescent Joran

van der Sloot, published in June 2005. The research reported in this chapter is part of a broader multimedia research project about the way in which Dutch media presented the Van der Sloot/Holloway case visually and verbally. In this chapter the authors focus their attention on the photographs which were published in newspapers, magazines and tabloids.

Part III concludes with *Susan Hogben's* discussion, in Chapter 14, about how environmental ethos can be built. Demonstrating environmental credentials or being 'green' can accrue important financial and reputational advantages for corporations. Building such an image as this is often a rhetorical matter. Environmental ethos can be built on the judicious and accurate use of practical wisdom, a display of shared virtues or virtuous character, and by demonstrating goodwill. Corporations are routinely using brand and product advertizements to do this. Recently, attention is being drawn to assertions that appear to overstate the environmental benefits claimed by corporations. These address both linguistic and visual argument. However, adjudications by the UK advertising regulatory authority do not treat the text and image with rhetorical equity. On the basis of the analysis of a corpus of complaint-generating advertizements, Hogben reveals that low modality linguistic claims such as 'ecological' or 'low emissions' are consistently rejected as misrepresentative. However, low modality images such as sketches or cartoons are either ignored or deemed to be merely fictions and thus not misrepresentations of alleged environmental impact. Only high modality images, deemed to represent reality, attract critical re-appraisal. Attributing different truth-values to images in this way means – the author argues – that corporations can exploit visual modality to build environmental ethos without rebuke.

Rhetoric and politics

In Part IV, which consists of chapters 15 to 18, the focus is on several aspects of the most notable type of public discussion: the political debate. How does it work, how is it conducted and how do politicians try to persuade whom?

In Chapter 15, *Cezar M. Ornatowski* proposes a rhetorical framework for examining collective identity formation and transformation in terms of seven constitutive dimensions: *membership* (who are we?), *origin and history* (how did we become who we are?), *location* (where are we?), *internal relations* (how are we organized?; how do we relate to each other?), *external re-*

lations (who are our others?), *shared values* (what things do we hold in common?) and *shared purpose* (what are we striving for?). These dimensions represent *topoi* of collective identity in the rhetorical sense of *loci communis*, places of argument (analogous to Kenneth Burke's Pentad of Act, Agent, Agency, Scene and Purpose) within which collective identities are constituted, debated and transformed through a variety of discourses and practices.

In Chapter 16, *Bart van Klink*, *Olivier Lembcke* and *Pablo Leandro Ciocchini* start off from the observation that, in their fight against terrorism, modern states seem to install a permanent state of exception. They focus on the role that the notions connected to the Rule of Law play in key speeches delivered by two political leaders who had to defend exceptional measures which were taken in reaction to terrorist actions and threats: the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the current Prime Minister of Spain, Jose Luis Zapatero. The central research questions they address are: How are the anti-terrorist measures justified in the speeches at hand? Are they, legally speaking, created "from nowhere", or are they still related in some way to positive law?

In Chapter 17, *Janet Takens*, *Anita van Hoof*, *Jan Kleinnijenhuis* and *Wouter Atteveldt* discuss so-called 'populist rhetoric'. New political parties, which have recently gained extensive popular support in the Netherlands, employ a communication style that attracts media attention. In this chapter, the authors focus on three of the characteristics of this communication style, namely the emphasis on party leaders (personalization), the narrow issue agenda and the use of populist rhetoric. They study the rhetoric used by new parties, while taking into account who is voicing this rhetoric, and which issues they are discussing. Election coverage of two Dutch news broadcasts and five national newspapers in the three months preceding the 1998, 2002, 2003, and 2006 Dutch national elections were analysed by using a Semantic Network Analysis. The results indicate that the media depict new parties as voicing rhetoric through their party leaders, while employing a narrow issue agenda, and the established parties as adjusting to that communication style when new parties gain popularity.

In the last chapter of Part IV, Chapter 18, *Ton van Haften* discusses the influence of political culture on the way that parliamentary debate is conducted. Contrary to what one sees in, for example, the British or French parliament, the debate in the Dutch parliament can be described as a rather

formal and clinical discussion which, in ideal form, consists of the rational exchange of arguments. Rhetorical techniques are only used in moderation and are generally not appreciated very much by Dutch members of parliament. Within the framework of the Extended Pragma-Dialectical Argumentation Theory and, on the basis of results of political-historical research, Van Haaften attempts to characterize the nature of Dutch parliamentary debate as a culturally determined, specific type of communicative activity. To achieve this he examines a debate on 'Islamic activism' which was held in the Dutch Lower Chamber in 2007 and, using this case, the author illustrates how the debating style of the controversial Dutch anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders challenges the dominant debate culture in the Dutch Parliament.

The rhetoric of *topoi*

The fifth and last part of this book consists of Chapters 19 to 22 and focuses on *topoi* as places to find arguments and as techniques of argumentation, for example, the techniques for framing an audience or the types of argument used in a legal discussion. What role do *topoi* play in public debate and how can they be used persuasively?

In Chapter 19, *Baldwin van Gorp* and *Margot van der Goot* investigate how citizens respond to persuasive messages about sustainability. Sustainable agriculture and food production present a complex field in which stakeholders need to look for the most effective arguments to communicate that their production methods, in particular, are sustainable. To study this persuasive communication framing theory, a constructionist perspective is used. From a previous study conducted by the authors, six frames are identified that stakeholders use in their communication about sustainable food and agriculture. In this current study, four focus groups were conducted in Belgium to identify how participants respond to texts that used these six frames. The analysis leads to four main findings about how frames work with respect to the abstract issue of sustainability in the agriculture and food system: simplification, figurative analogy, causation and cultural resonance.

In Chapter 20, *Anders Horsbøl* challenges the view that attitudes towards genetically modified (GM) crops in agriculture are 'utterly resistant to persuasion', as is suggested in a review of the literature. Methodologically, this is achieved by studying opinions as they emerge in situated interaction, in this case in focus groups interviews with both GM experts and laypersons

without specific knowledge of GM crops. In this chapter, Horsbøl analyses the laypersons' responses to persuasive expert utterances as inventive contributions to the discussion, not just as reactions showing either support or rejection. More specifically, he analyses the *topoi* in the sense of argumentative 'places' which are realized by the laypersons in dealing with, and making sense of, the new knowledge presented by the experts.

In Chapter 21, *Lisa Storm Villadsen* introduces the notion of 'rhetorical citizenship' and discusses its relevance to rhetorical studies through a reading of a contemporary case of political discourse. An examination of critical reactions to two controversial statements illustrates how disappointed expectations to leading figures' public statements led to criticism of their enactment of citizenship and a questioning of their rhetorical agency. The overall claim is that the case suggests that an underdeveloped understanding and appreciation of rhetoric's role in public deliberation can have detrimental effects to such deliberation, including an active or more indirect exclusion of particular points of view, a deferral of certain discussions, and a less tolerant debate culture. It is suggested that public, political debate would benefit from increased attention to, and tolerance of, various manifestations of rhetorical practice, e.g., by combating essentializing argumentation which equates dissent with otherness and embracing a view of debate as productive, not destabilizing for the community.

Part v, and the book itself, conclude with *Eveline Feteris'* discussion in Chapter 22 of strategic maneuvering in legal discussions. Participants in a legal process often use linguistic arguments to support their claim. In linguistic argument it is argued that the proposed interpretation of a rule is based on the meaning of the words used in the rule in ordinary or technical language. The reason why linguistic arguments are chosen as supports for a legal claim is that they are considered to have a preferred status in justifying a legal decision and, for this reason, in rhetorical terms, constitute a *topos* in legal discourse. However, this preferred status can also be misused for rhetorical reasons. In this chapter, the author analyses and evaluates two examples of a form of strategic maneuvering with linguistic arguments that often occurs in discussions about the application of legal rules and explains how the strategic maneuvering derails. It becomes clear that the strategic maneuvering with linguistic arguments in these cases consists of a complex form of strategic maneuvering that constitutes a combination of two maneuvers.

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² For the proceedings of this conference, see: Haaften, T. van, H. Jansen, J. de Jong and W. Koetsenruijter (Eds.) (2009). *Rhetoric in Society. Papers Second Conference (CD)*. Leiden: Rhetoric in Society. The first 'Rhetoric in Society' conference took place at Aalborg University, Denmark, in November 2006. For a collection of papers that arose from this conference, see: Dam, L., L. Holmgreen and J. Strunck (Eds.) (2008). *Rhetorical Aspects of Discourses in Present-Day Society*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.