The McCarron Lectures*

Lecture 1: Introduction to Rhetoric and Communication

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Abstract
The lectures in this series open with general comments about rhetoric, rhetorical questions, moral problems, and issues relating to the connections between emotions and persuasion. Even though persuasion may be a foundation point of rhetoric, beginning with Henry Johnstone's arguments, the opening lecture teases out why rhetoric should be understood more broadly and positions upcoming lectures in the realm of scholars' rhetorical thoughts both ancient and present.

Keywords: rhetoric, persuasion, Henry Johnstone

Résumé
Les cours dans cette série commencent par des commentaires généraux sur la rhétorique, sur les questions rhétoriques, sur les problèmes moraux, et sur les rapports entre émotions et persuasion. Même si la persuasion peut être à la base de la rhétorique, le premier cours, en commençant par les arguments de Henry Johnstone, indique pourquoi il vaudrait mieux comprendre la rhétorique dans un sens plus large et situe les cours à venir dans le contexte de réflexions sur la rhétorique provenant de penseurs anciens et modernes.

Mots clés : rhétorique, persuasion, Henry Johnstone

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Introduction
People are often surprised to hear that *rhetoric* is an academic concept, mainly because they are accustomed to hearing the word used in a negative way. This is largely because there is a tendency for some journalists to use the term when describing what might be called *empty talk*, as when they complain that people want *more substance* from a speaker and *less rhetoric*. The belief seems to be that rhetoric is opposed to truth, that it constitutes an obstacle impeding our path to certainty, and, perhaps, that it wastes time when matters could be worded more plainly and more directly.

However, while this is not an unusual way of using rhetoric nowadays, it is technically incorrect. The history of rhetoric is not at all the history of empty talk, it is the history of various speech modalities aimed at convincing people of particular points of view, among other things. This does not mean that modern usage is unimportant or that it lacks a historical foundation. Indeed, contrasting rhetoric and truth is itself a rather old practice. In fact, traces of this argument can be found in the debate between Socrates and the sophists, and the terms of the argument were not terribly different from the positions staked out today. What strikes me as particularly remarkable is that after centuries of advances in the field of rhetorical studies, the term continues to be used with such casual inaccuracy.

In addition to the common assumption that rhetoric refers to nothing more than empty speaking, the word is also often applied to various forms of speech that are regarded as disreputable, dishonest, or untrustworthy. A recent Google search for the term yielded news reports with headlines that included words such as "shocking rhetoric," "furious rhetoric," "Trump's rhetoric" (no surprise there), and "costly rhetoric." There was also a reference to "'fairness' rhetoric," where the quotation marks around *fairness* suggest that whatever is being discussed is not really fair; here, rhetoric means deceptive language. Another headline advises that "rhetoric is no substitute for funding," a claim that makes no sense in relation to the word's traditional meaning but is consistent with contemporary usage that places it in opposition to meaningful action.[1] Yet another headline describes rhetoric that is "over the top," a phrase that is plainly meant to be derogatory since it points to the existence of something we might call *hyper-rhetoric*, which would certainly be awful. Somehow, it would seem, language infused with rhetoricality can go too far—even over the top—and in doing so tends to lead people astray. Perhaps what the headline writer means is that rhetoric, while it often goes too far because it is, after all, rhetoric, can even go further than too far. Where this would take a reader is hard to say, since it would appear to constitute a kind of language that is more rhetorical than rhetoric itself.

We can gather two things from this unscientific Google sample. First, headline writers and reporters frequently use *rhetoric* in place of *language* or *discourse*. This is not always wrong, necessarily, but the writer risks diluting the specific meaning attached to the concept of rhetorical language. Second, what is commonly conveyed in such headlines and news accounts is the assumption that rhetoric is a form of empty, misleading, or deceptive communication. These negative connotations are probably justified in some situations, but none of these derogatory implications align with the customary meaning by which rhetoric was understood for centuries. It is clear, in other words, that everyday parlance has moved from the traditional understanding of rhetoric as the study of the art of persuasion to a different conception.

This lecture series on the history and theory of rhetoric will include discussions of several philosophers from ancient Greece, including the rhetorical theories of Plato and Aristotle, alongside analyses of the work of many contemporary thinkers, such as Chaïm Perelman, who often self-identify as rhetoricians. It will include at least one "accidental" rhetorician, the logician Stephen Toulmin; he was designated a rhetoric scholar by communication theorists before he even knew what the title meant.

Literary conceptions abound in the history of rhetoric, alongside the more philosophical aspects of the field. Thus, it is important to examine the work of Kenneth Burke, an American literary scholar and rhetorician who is frequently described as the author of the most significant body of rhetorical scholarship since classical times. As I have been influenced by Burke's ideas, the section on Burke will include a rhetorical analysis partly based on Burke's thinking, an analysis that I originally presented at a rhetoric conference. This will show not only how one might extend Burke's thinking, but it will also help to show exactly what is meant by rhetorical analysis more generally.

Of course, other figures in the history of rhetoric will appear along the way, and several applications of rhetoric beyond textual analysis—visual rhetoric, for instance—will be analyzed. This exploration will show that rhetoric is important to the construction of various discursive practices, and that rhetorical analysis helps us understand the structure of arguments and the motives that engender and sustain different forms of explanation. It will reveal the extent to which rhetoricality is a foundational part of all aspects of human communication.

What is rhetoric?

Rhetoric is an elastic term. In its most common meaning, rhetoric deals primarily with the communicative practice of persuasion, including the study of various strategies and tactics people employ in their efforts to persuade others.[2] In that respect, rhetoric is sometimes regarded as the study of techniques for effective public speaking. Thus, in some colleges, rhetoric is taught in programs of speech communication with a focus on performance and style, which makes sense to a large extent. The field of rhetorical strategies is a dense terrain; it encompasses a range of philosophical problems, including debates as to how persuasive discourse should be understood in relation to the nature of truth, and how we should think about rhetoric in relation to matters of moral obligation. As we enter into the world of philosophy, perhaps an example would be helpful.

Beginning students of rhetoric frequently ask how objective a text, speech, or form of discourse must be if it is to be regarded as truthful, and to what extent language can be embellished with persuasive ornamentation before it falls outside the boundaries of strict truthfulness. These questions raise ancillary questions that cut across disciplines. For instance, is rhetoric inherently a problem for those who advocate for rigorous adherence to protocols of unadorned truth telling? Must we choose between objective reporting and rhetorical style in every discursive situation? Or perhaps that question is a straw man and no such thing as unadorned language exists? Moreover, given that I have just asked about the relation between truth and persuasion in respect to linguistic adornment or enhancement, you might now wonder how emotions fit in. Emotional displays – called *emotional appeals* in rhetoric – can sometimes sway us to accept an argument because we are moved by the passion of the speaker more than we are persuaded by the logic of the argument. When someone we love sheds tears in the act of trying to persuade us, we might abandon our interest in the truth of their argument in deference to appeasing their emotional needs. Does this mean that emotions stand in opposition to truth seeking?

In fact, now that I have introduced the subject of emotions, how do we locate compulsion and coercion in the field of rhetoric? Are these behaviours understood as conven-

tional forms of rhetorical practice, or do they fall into some other domain of human communication? One common response is to say that coercion can never be regarded as a technique of persuasion, that forcing people to do your bidding is precisely the opposite of persuading them. If this is true, perhaps the question is simply wrong-headed, and coercion and persuasion can never be allies. But certainly, there are times when coercion involves techniques far more subtle than brute force, and it can be difficult to determine the definitional boundaries between absolute force and subtle manipulation. To think otherwise is to ignore the fact that all speech has a rhetorical dimension to a greater or lesser degree, for all speech aims at moving an audience in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways. "Speech in its essence is not neutral," Kenneth Burke explains, for "far from aiming at suspended judgments the spontaneous speech of a people is loaded with judgments" (Burke cited in Jasinski, 2001, p. 513). Recognizing that speech is not neutral does not amount to the claim that speech always involves force or outright manipulation. However, it does suggest that we are mistaken if we view language as merely innocent. As the field of semiotics shows, the difference between the denotative and connotative meanings of words can be substantial. Rhetoric concerns itself to a considerable extent with this difference.

The problem of how rhetoric should deal with the emotions is very old, and even Aristotle found it confusing. His perplexity was not simply a result of the problems raised by the status of force or manipulation in rhetorical thought, for Aristotle was also interested in the so-called basic emotions, such as pity and fear, and he wrote at length—though not always consistently—of how the emotions should be understood in his own theory of rhetoric. You might agree that forcing someone to do your bidding is not a proper form of persuasion, but what about using fear to get your audience to agree with you? After all, fear is not coercion, so perhaps frightening someone into agreement is a sound rhetorical strategy.

The main difficulty with this line of reasoning is that whereas fear can be a great motivator, it is not clear that using it is an ethically appropriate rhetorical practice. Placing fear in the domain of the morally ambiguous is not necessarily to rule it out on all occasions, however, and rhetoricians have long debated the ethical status of what is known as the *fear appeal*. Some have argued that it is perfectly legitimate to use fear to move your audience, while others claim that fearmongering is reprehensible. Perhaps it is perfectly fine from an ethical point of view to scare someone into doing your bidding if your wish is to see them escape a dangerous situation. And the corollary would be that it is not ethically appropriate to scare someone into doing your bidding if your goal is to advance your personal interests. The fear appeal would thereby seem to be a highly contextual issue.

Complex and philosophically charged arguments are an enduring part of the history of rhetoric, and the question of the appropriateness of appealing to fear, force, and even pity have engaged generations of rhetoricians. The fundamental problem with which rhetorical scholars have wrestled is that it is difficult to be certain of whether using fear to gain compliance is a mode of persuasion or something else. And if fear is something else, what sort of thing is it? The simple answer is that it is *affect*; using fear or sympathy to realize your goal is to play on the emotions of your listeners. Thus, we come face to face with the

age-old question: Is it proper to place the emotions within the definition of rhetoric? Or should emotions be seen as playing a largely ancillary role in the task of persuasion?

Many have claimed that employing fear and other emotions is not an appropriate rhetorical practice. Does this mean that only logical arguments can be regarded as properly rhetorical? This might seem reasonable at first look since rational arguments are open to debate while emotional pleadings and outbursts defy the application of logical deliberation. And yet, the strict use of logic also presents challenges for the student of rhetoric. Consider that persuasion is unnecessary in revealing the truth of mathematics; does this mean that logical argumentation is as unrhetorical as an emotional appeal? In other words, logical demonstrations that occur as early as grade school mathematics are not presented as acts of persuasion but as revelations of universally true statements. I can demonstrate to you that three times three equals nine, but it would be absurd to claim that this is something to persuade you to believe. Could this mean that rhetoric—or persuasion—is never concerned with learning in the way that logical demonstrations are concerned? Or is it more correct to say that rhetoric aims at a different kind of learning than logic? Moreover, if emotions are problematic for ethical reasons and if pure logic has no need of persuasive language to prove its propositions, what is left for rhetoricians to work with?

You might wonder why rhetoric scholars bother to debate these sorts of questions. After all, if someone can persuade you to do what they want by appealing to your emotions—by gaining your pity or by scaring you into compliance—then possibly the issue is simpler than I have been suggesting: rhetoric is the study of how people seek to persuade other people in various ways, and among the techniques commonly employed we can include manipulation, force, pity, and fear. This formulation sounds good on the surface; however, it overlooks the larger moral questions that underlie debates about acceptable forms of rhetorical appeals, and for some rhetoricians, it is simply unethical to scare, bully, or manipulate others into doing what you want. Rhetoricians are not immune to the pangs of a guilty conscience; they often raise moral objections to some of the strategies people use when trying to gain compliance from others. Thus, in addition to the epistemological issues raised in discussions of rhetoric—issues relating to truth—there are also moral questions at the heart of rhetoric studies.

These problems only increase in complexity when cultural institutions are added to the discussion. Do teachers persuade, or do they indoctrinate? Are politicians playing on our weaknesses with campaign promises we suspect they have neither the intention nor the capacity to keep? Heated arguments concerning pedagogical indoctrination and political promises continue in the world of rhetoric studies. Hence, you can see why rhetoric scholars have been engaged in ethical debates for centuries as they argue over the appropriateness of certain persuasive strategies. Whether these are presented in institutional settings, political campaigns, religious sermons, or news reports, we are wise to be on our guard against what Neil Postman memorably called "the seduction of eloquence" (Moyers, 2019).

When rhetoricians wonder about the acceptability of scaring audiences with graphic images of lung damage caused by smoking to gain consent (a fear appeal) or screening a film about homeless children to solicit charity donations (a pity appeal), they might

be regarded as drawing attention to the boundary that some say divides legitimate rhetoric from outright manipulation. This may be true in many cases, but we still face the problem of knowing with certainty which side of the line we are on. Some people today would argue that persuasive practices previously rejected as immoral are now completely normal, especially in a world where GoFundMe appeals are widely used for coping with the economic consequences of personal tragedy. These practices come close to the sort of pity appeal that many traditional rhetoricians found reprehensible. Nonetheless, you can see why many people today regard crowdfunding as a good illustration of modern charitable solicitation, an alternative financing model that uses traditional rhetorical strategies to alleviate personal distress. If rhetoric is an elastic concept, is this not an example of that flexibility? Perhaps there is no moral issue at the heart of rhetoric studies at all?

Rhetorical questions

Let me draw your attention to something you may not have noticed. Throughout these opening comments, I have been engaged in a common rhetorical strategy in my efforts to engage you in the course material. I have used rhetorical questions to make a point without necessarily committing myself to a particular stand. Rhetorical questions are not intended to elicit answers that would satisfy the literal wording of the question; rather, they are statements and observations in the guise of questions. I have tried to move you along, as it were, on a stream of information that includes such questions stationed at strategic junctures. The function of these questions is to encourage you to adopt a position of curiosity. For instance, I asked, "Does this mean that emotions stand in opposition to truth seeking?" This sentence is formed as a question, but it is really a statement concerning a debate in rhetoric that goes back to Plato. However, rather than state the bare facts of this debate, I used the question format to make the point more forceful. Why would a rhetorical question be more forceful than a statement? One reason is that questions are more euphemistic and less confrontational than direct statements, and thus their effect is more readily absorbed. This is because we do not tend to resist questions as much as we resist assertions. Indeed, you have probably used this strategy many times yourself, even if you were unaware that it is a time-honoured rhetorical tactic. For instance, when your friend offers to drive you home after a party, you might ask, "Do you think you should be driving?" In couching your concern in a question, you can express your apprehension without making a direct accusation; you make your point without being overly aggressive. Some rhetorical theorists claim that with this question you are not really expecting a response; rather, you are trying to provoke reflection by the would-be driver. You may well be hoping that your friend will agree with the statement behind the question rather than treat your comment as a literal question. A rhetorical question is an effective way of conveying to your friend (*persuading* your friend, to be more exact) that they may have had too much to drink and should not get behind the wheel. Framing your concern as a question highlights your uneasiness and softens the accusation that might have been expressed with a more direct declaration. The rhetorical question can be more powerful than the corresponding statement in whose place it stands.[3]

Rhetorical questions are helpful in diverse situations. We use them when there is no obvious answer, when the answer is so obvious that the question makes that fact apparent, or when the impact of the question is more effective than the answer in moving

the audience to adopt the questioner's point of view. Going back to the rhetorical question concerning emotions and truth, I would suspect that while the issue might have occurred to you periodically, you have probably not thought very deeply about whether emotions are opposed to traditional avenues to seeking the truth.[4] People use rhetorical questions to move and to persuade. Sometimes rhetorical questions are meant to persuade you of the possibility that an issue is complex, and though you might answer "yes," there is every possibility that it would be a provisional answer pending more detailed study. Hence, the value of a rhetorical question is in its effect rather than in the answer that is offered. In the case of the question of whether emotions obscure truth seeking, it cannot easily be answered, but is an observation concerning the messy and unresolved nature of moral quandaries that continue to bedevil rhetoric scholars. By drawing your attention to the use of rhetorical questions, I also hope to show the embedded nature of rhetoricality in everyday language.

I have given you a general introduction to some of the themes I will be discussing; I have also introduced you to an important rhetorical practice, the rhetorical question. To provide you with a firmer sense of some of the philosophical issues I have been describing that underlie the study of rhetoric, I want to look at an article by Henry Johnstone (2007) entitled "The Philosophical Basis of Rhetoric," which deals with a core argument that informs several things that we will be considering. It will, therefore, be helpful in giving you a sense of the scope of the philosophical (and communicational) issues raised in rhetoric studies.

Henry Johnstone's twilight zone of persuasion

Johnstone's (2007) article, which appeared in the journal *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, argues that rhetoric is an essential quality of human nature. This claim is advanced on the basis of Johnstone's understanding of rhetoric as comprising more than persuasive language, though he also shows how his premise can be understood in comparison with more classical definitions of rhetoric. His thesis is that "*rhetoric is the evocation and maintenance of the consciousness required for communication*" (p. 21). Thus, Johnstone says that without consciousness, we would be incapable of communication, and without rhetoric, we would lack that form of human consciousness he says is indispensable for communication. Of course, if rhetoric is the principal determinant of human consciousness, then this would entail a rethinking of the idea of rhetoric as well as a reformulation of the standard notion of communication. And this is precisely what Johnstone argues. He arrives at his conclusion, however, by following a rather complicated route.

The argument begins with Johnstone (2007) claiming that if something—anything, including rhetoric—is to have a philosophical basis, then it must be essential to human beings. This is mainly a framing device that sets things in motion. While he returns to the question of exactly what constitutes a philosophical basis later, the answer is plain and the details of his response to his own question need not detain us at this stage. The main point to take away here is that Johnstone believes that we can start our journey into how we understand the relation between rhetoric and consciousness by considering how rhetoric is essential to human nature, and he accomplishes this goal by showing what it is about human nature that distinguishes us from animals. What makes people

different, he suggests, is that unlike other living creatures, people do things with a conscious understanding of the goals that we are pursuing. Whether that activity involves fishing, carpentry, or tennis—to use his examples—people do the things that they do because they intend to do them. While animals act on intentions, too, they also rely heavily on instinct. In this respect humans can be distinguished from other life forms.

This idea about humans being intentional creatures provides Johnstone (2007) with an opportunity to make his first observation about the connection between rhetoric and consciousness. He says that we can know that rhetoric is essential to people because, whether a particular group of people practices rhetoric or not, the idea of rhetoric will still be essential for this group of individuals because the *possibility* of practicing rhetoric is, as he puts it, always "in the cards" (p. 15). By this phrase, he means that rhetoric is an inherent potential in all people, something all humans can engage in whether they are currently practicing it or not. To prove this point, Johnstone (2007) says that even if we ceased to engage in rhetoric, it would be the result of "a positive attitude; the belief, for example, that rhetorical activity is out of date or immoral" (p. 16). In other words, we would have to make a conscious decision not to practice rhetoric because it is otherwise natural for us to do so. To take a different example to help make this clear, it is natural for humans to use language, but it is theoretically possible to imagine a world where people stopped talking by exercising their willpower to restrain themselves from speaking.[5] To decide to stop speaking—or to decide to stop using rhetoric—requires a determination that Johnstone (2007) describes as a "positive attitude" (p. 16). We could do it, but it would be extremely difficult because it runs against our natural inclinations.[6] Hence, this shows us that rhetoric is a part of our natural disposition, since our refusing to be rhetorical would require an active turning away from rhetorical practices. We could not just stop being rhetorical, in other words, without making a conscious decision to cease rhetorical behaviour. To stop seeing, you would need to make a conscious decision to keep your eyes closed, and thus seeing is an inherent (natural) capacity for humans.

Johnstone (2007) then examines two reasons that could be cited to support the idea that rhetoric is a part of our inherent makeup. He calls the first argument the *naturalist* position. This is the argument that our propensity for rhetoric is an endowment of our evolutionary heritage. But why would that be the case? Johnstone says that it is because human beings are naturally prone to conflict, and persuasion is a good way to avoid fighting. Rather than engage in a physical fight, we could resolve our disagreements with words. Being rhetorical, in other words, might be a product of evolution. As Darwin might have said (though he did not), rhetoricality among humans is naturally selected for.

To explain this point, Johnstone (2007) asks us to consider the possibility that because people in a pre-civilized state were naturally "bellicose" or "warlike," rhetoric arose as a way of allowing them to settle disputes without killing one another. In this scenario, rhetoric—or persuasion—appears on the scene as a technique for preventing violence. Those humans who possess the gene for being rhetorical, persuasive, and conciliatory would thrive and thus pass on this genetic endowment to their offspring. Those humans who lacked this genetic heritage would go to war and die, possibly leaving no ancestors—or leaving only ancestors who also had this genetic package and would thus con-

tinue in their warlike ways. Being rhetorical, then, might have been to our evolutionary advantage, and for that reason would have become an integral part of our biological natures.

This would suggest that rhetoric is a part of the civilizing process by which humans ceased to be driven entirely by their more instinctual drives or passions and began to use social codes and cultural practices—negotiation and dialogue, for instance.[7] This is an old argument, and it is not a terribly strong one, as Johnstone (2007) admits, because it flounders on the fact that rhetoric could also be responsible for causing violence rather than preventing it! Rhetoric may have arisen, in other words, to help us go to war, not to prevent us from doing so. The Christian Crusades, for instance, resulted from the Catholic Church preaching the demonization of the Islamic world and persuading its followers that Islam represented a spiritual enemy to Christianity. This prejudice was tied to the promise of heavenly grace for all who would join the militias that set out to bring the Holy Land under Christian rule. Hence, the church used persuasion to get people to do its military bidding. Indeed, Johnstone says, one could argue that most armed engagements involve a good deal of rhetoric in the form of propaganda. Hence, the naturalist explanation for rhetoric is not terribly helpful.

The so-called pragmatic view claims that rhetoric is a result of the uncertainty of our actions, and our subsequent need to use persuasive discourse to encourage ourselves and others to move ahead, even though uncertainty marks our path. But this argument is also weak because it is hard to see how we can move from the idea that all actions are uncertain to the idea that rhetoric is a part of our natural inheritance. To put the matter plainly, many things are uncertain—travelling to school each morning is an adventure from which some people may not return—but it does not follow that we need to persuade ourselves to get aboard transit and risk the dangers of travel to get an education. Indeed, if this were the case, then we would need to persuade ourselves of every single decision we must make every day. After all, it is always possible that I could choke on the coffee I am drinking right now, and since I am alone, I might see myself as taking a potential risk with every sip I take. But it seems ludicrous to suggest that I need to practice some form of self-persuasion every time I want a gulp of coffee, that I must persuade myself that the pleasure of coffee outweighs the remote possibility of injury. Some things are rather trivial even though they involve a measure of uncertainty. So, while it is true that we live with constant uncertainty, and while it is also true that we use various forms of persuasion—including self-persuasion—to deal with the fact of this uncertainty, rhetoric is just one of several different strategies we might pursue to deal with this uncertain world. A different strategy we might choose is indifference, the very opposite of rhetoric. Rather than persuading ourselves and others as to how we should act in an uncertain world, we might throw up our hands and leave everything to fate—a sort of stoical approach. Hence, the pragmatic view, though perhaps more interesting owing to its kinship with existentialism, also fails in Johnstone's view.

Having dispensed with the naturalist and pragmatic views—the only two possibilities he considers—Johnstone (2007) offers his theory on why rhetoric is an essential part of human nature:

> My own argument for the necessity of rhetoric to man [*sic*] is that rhetoric is implied in the very activity which is supposed to supersede it; to wit, the communication of objective fact. (p. 17)

Though this sentence is short, it makes a couple of significant points and deserves close consideration, especially as Johnstone returns to these points several times in his argument.

Johnstone (2007) says that "the communication of objective fact[s]" (p. 17) is an activity that is ordinarily supposed to supersede rhetoric. In other words, the communication of straightforward information is superior to an attempt at persuasion. The claim that the communication of objective facts should supersede rhetoric likely seems a peculiar claim on the face, but it is based on several centuries of opinion suggesting that the communication of objective facts is somehow superior to persuasion precisely because some philosophers have argued that things that are objective are better than things that are subjective. To make this plainer, let me return to an example I have already used: basic mathematics.

If I tell you that two plus two equals four, there is no doubt about the truth of the matter. That two and two is four is an objective fact, and there is no need for persuasion because there is no possibility of debate. However, if I try to persuade you to see a film that I think is excellent, I am expressing an opinion, and opinions are simply not equivalent to truth as it is manifested in the propositions of mathematical equations. You might reject my arguments about the value of the movie I praise because, for instance, you do not like films of that genre, detest the director, or have a low view of the movie's cast. Opinions can be disputed, debated, and argued over. No such disputation or debate can occur, however, regarding the true, objective fact that adding two and two yields four. And it is for this reason that some thinkers contend that objective claims are superior to opinions. This argument translates further into the idea that persuasion is inferior to logical demonstration. After all, so the argument goes, objective facts are plain and unvarnished truth, but persuasion involves judgements, conjectures, and faith. Objective facts are known; opinions can only be believed.

So, in stating his own argument, Johnstone (2007) is highlighting a distinction between facts and opinions, truth and beliefs, and objectivity and subjectivity, a distinction that stretches back into antiquity. But Johnstone further claims that the question of whether the communication of objective facts is superior to rhetoric is not the only point of interest here, for he regards rhetoric as inherent in the very act of communicating objective facts. To repeat his words, "rhetoric is implied in the very activity which is supposed to supersede it" (p. 17). This means that rhetoric is implied in the communication of objective facts, the very kind of communication many have believed supersedes rhetoric. Johnstone seeks to erase this distinction between objective facts and opinions insofar as he says that rhetorical activity—persuasion—is involved in both cases. Johnstone wants to challenge the claim that there is no rhetoric, no persuasion, in objectively transmitted communication. This is an interesting point mainly because it seems to most people to be counterintuitive. To bring his argument fully into the open, Johnstone leaves behind his opening analogy—our connection to animals—and moves on to consider the world of devices.

When talking about the ways in which humans and animals are different, Johnstone (2007) made the point that human behaviour results from decisions, willpower, and intentions, whereas animal behaviour is largely (though not exclusively) based on instinct. In speaking of computers and devices, Johnstone suggests that we must shift our focus because devices such as computers are certainly not at all similar to animals. His first point is that people are sometimes inclined to identify their interactions with devices as a form of "perfect" or "absolute" communication because such communication involves no persuasion, only the transmission of objective facts. Whereas I have to coax my cat to hop on my lap—that is, I have to persuade him—I never have to persuade or coax my smartphone to do what I want it to do. That suggests that we can interact with devices to an extent that is remarkable for being completely focused and relatively error-free. This is a curious argument in many respects, but it is part of a timeless theory about the possibility of a perfect language, a language that is so complete, so transparent, and so obvious that no one ever misunderstands or misinterprets any message communicated in it.[8] Because Johnstone's writing is cryptic, even telegraphic, it requires patience to work out what he is getting at, but let me try to explain how his appeal to the image of the computer is meant to illuminate the foundational character of rhetoric in his theory of human nature.

Information and arguments

So, what if we could communicate perfectly without the use of persuasion? Johnstone (2007) presumes his readers will understand that when he talks about "suppressing rhetoric in favor of communication" (p. 17), he is not really splitting rhetoric and communication apart entirely, even if it looks that way. Instead, he is asking what might happen in an imaginary situation where information could be transferred with such complete accuracy that there would be no need for persuasive discourse. That is, imagine a world where I could communicate with you without the need for persuasion because my wishes would be perfectly transparent to you; that is, my intentions would somehow enjoy the condition of being objective facts, and, as such, you would understand absolutely.

Something rather odd would occur in this imaginary scenario, for such perfect communication would mean that you could not actually agree or disagree with me. Agreement and disagreement would both be equally superfluous and unnecessary. Perfect communication would mean that you would know the truth of the situation and act accordingly; you would do so because it was the right thing to do, not because you agreed with me. When I communicate to you that the square of the hypotenuse of a triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides, I am not asking you to agree with me but to see this as an eternal truth. Thus, to ask for your agreement to a mathematical truth is nonsensical, for the issue of truth is not a matter of agreement but a matter of understanding. As I mentioned, this is a rather old argument, though Johnstone has updated it somewhat with his reference to computers. How old is this line of thinking? One of the first people to consider this problem was Aristotle, who said in his book *Rhetorica*, "nobody uses fine language when teaching geometry" (Book III, Chapter One, 1404a).[9] In other words, I only need to demonstrate for you the principles of geometry, I do not need to persuade you of their truth, that is, use "fine language." A perfect language, then, would have the rather counterfactual property of

never being able to convey ideas with which you could or could not agree, for it would only transmit absolute, universally agreed-upon truths. This would be rather odd, but it is the logical consequence of trying to imagine a perfect form of communication.

In such a world, there would never be a need for strategies of persuasion since understanding would follow completely and naturally. This would be a world—an imaginary world, of course—lacking all necessity for rhetoric, and this world, Johnstone (2007) says, can best be "exemplified by a system of devices designed to receive, store, manipulate, and transmit information" (p. 17). This world, which does not exist, is at least imaginable insofar as we "interact" with numerous digital devices today, giving commands to these devices in various ways. Indeed, in some cases, the interface between people and machines has become almost seamless, as with smartphones that can discern spoken language and respond in kind. However, it is important to note that devices such as this imitate speech rather than speak. Also, there is no obligation on our part to be more or less persuasive in our interactions with such technologies, for they are unable to respond better or worse to rhetorical appeals. Saying "please," for instance, does not improve performance unless the program is designed to respond faster or more accurately to expressions of politeness. But even if you were to use polite language when speaking to your device, the machine can only respond in accordance with a program, not in consequence of it having the capacity to understand the social values of etiquette. A programmer could design a voice-activated program that responds to requests by saying, "Ask nicely," but you would likely only be annoyed by this intrusion rather than feeling guilty at being impolite or abrupt.

Johnstone (2007) complicates the issue with his next observation. He says that such perfect communication as we might imagine we enjoy with devices such as computers is not communication at all. As he points out, when we use a computer, it only seems that we enjoy absolute communication because we are in total control of the machine. However, he argues that "this absolute communication is identical with absolute noncommunication" (p. 18). This is perplexing—perhaps even paradoxical. How can absolute communication, which can be described as *perfect*, be equivalent to noncommunication, which is anything but perfect?

What Johnstone (2007) means is that because our communication with devices such as computers requires only direct commands—and because the device can never refuse those commands but must deal with our words *exactly as it is programmed to do*—we only feel as if our communication is absolute, complete, or perfect. For example, imagine that the voice-recognition program on a smartphone never gets anything wrong. In such a circumstance, one might say that one's communication with the device is perfect because no errors ever occur, that one enjoyed perfect communication with the device. However, Johnstone's point about noncommunication being equivalent to perfect communication may now be clearer, for it would now be fair to ask the obvious question: is communication of this sort really communication? The issue Johnstone raises with this question is whether the smartphone could ever refuse our commands, and the reason he asks is because he regards the possibility of refusal as the quality that transforms our command into a legitimate form of communication. Devices, in other words, have no free will. The prospect of so-called

perfect communication would seem to be possible only with machines because machines have no agency.

We will come back to free will along with Johnstone (2007) momentarily. Right now, however, let us take up one of his questions since I have referred to it more than once: could a computer refuse your command? The answer is no, of course, for a computer is programmed to respond to the information we input with nothing other than outputs determined by the programming. It does not think about anything because it is a machine. Why is this relevant? Well, a person might not respond as we intend or anticipate for a variety of reasons, and the fact that someone might refuse to comply, or to agree, shows that we do not control their "output" as we control the output of an electronic device. This is because when we communicate with people, their agency (free will, consciousness) enters into the picture. Machines, on the other hand, have no agency. Hence, Johnstone writes:

> We can actually communicate nothing to the machine; we can at best get it to accept. The issue here is not whether the datum is true or false; it is only whether the recipient can judge it false, or ignore it altogether. Hence, in our dealings with a computer, we have not suppressed rhetoric in favor of communication; we have simply been discussing a situation to which rhetoric and communication are alike irrelevant. (p. 18)

So, when we "communicate" with a machine, the fact that the information we convey is understood without error only appears to be a form of perfect communication; neither communication nor rhetoric has occurred.[10] However, the device is not listening in the way that people listen; it is not processing information the way that people process information; and it is not acting on that information in the way that people act on information. Hence, there is really no communication with the machine at all. Giving commands to a machine, such as typing on the keyboard, is not a request that it transform your keystrokes into letters on the screen, for a machine has no way to refuse your input or question your actions. Indeed, talking about a machine's "refusal" is to anthropomorphize the machine, for no machine ever genuinely refuses. Absolute communication, then, is non-communication. Real communication entails that the receiver respond to the information in a way that he or she deems most appropriate. Machines cannot do this.

This portion of Johnstone's (2007) argument may be a bit difficult, so let me offer an additional account to make it clearer. Communication theorist Gregory Bateson once offered an argument similar to Johnstone's, though he presented his explanation in a more visual way. Bateson asks you to imagine that you kick a stone across the ground. Why does the stone move? The energy you generate when you strike the stone with your foot is transferred to the stone, and thus the stone moves. As physics tells us, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Hence, the stone moves not because it wants to, or because it thinks moving is the best way of reacting to your kick, but because inanimate things such as stones are subject to the laws of physics. Typing on a keyboard, then, is similar to kicking a stone.

Now, Bateson says, imagine that you kick a dog—not a nice thing to do, but bear with me. What happens? The dog will probably also move, though not simply in compliance

with the laws of physics. The dog's response to the kick is not a consequence of the transfer of energy generated by your foot but a behavioural response to the message expressed by your kick. The kick is a message to the dog that the animal interprets before responding. The dog may turn and bite or run away, or, if the kick is gentle, move out of your way without any signs of annoyance. A stone, however, is like a machine in that it has no choice but to "act" by moving. The dog has choices, although these are limited by contextual circumstances and instinct. In communication theory, we describe the difference by saying that the dog *behaves* while the stone *acts*. Hence, a dog is more similar to a person than a machine insofar as it responds to the kick as a message.

Communication with the dog, in Johnstone's sense, is *real* communication since the animal's response is based on its capacity to interpret the meaning of a gesture. Real communication, then, is not the apparently perfect (or absolute) communication that happens in our information exchanges with machines. Real communication occurs when it is possible that what we say might be rejected, reformulated, disputed, accepted, or ignored. Real communication transpires when certain agents (humans) engage in some form of information exchange that is neither perfect nor absolute.[11] Perfect communication is noncommunication; imperfect communication is genuine communication.

So, maybe all we need to do to make our communication with devices more closely resemble our communications with people is to create machines that make mistakes, just as people make mistakes, or create machines that reject our appeals, just as people sometimes reject our appeals. Perhaps we only need to design machines that argue with us, love us, joke about the command we have just entered, or maybe turn themselves off in a hostile gesture of outright refusal. Johnstone (2007) imagines building such a machine, that is, a machine that would allow us to communicate with it as we communicate with people, a machine that makes mistakes. But the problem here is that such a machine would only make mistakes because of a) a defect in its construction or b) because of its programming. It may have a bug in the system that leads it to interpret 14 for 15, Johnstone muses. But these are not the sorts of things that happen when humans refuse our commands, dispute our arguments, disagree with our opinions about movies, or challenge our points of view. Humans may not follow our commands, but their failure to do so cannot be described as a malfunction. Thus, a machine built to make mistakes is still not a thing with which communication in a human sense is possible, since the machine's errors are as perfectly logical as its correct responses. Both result from the internal programming, which the machine itself exerts no control over. Johnstone therefore says that

> we cannot use machines, or systems of them, to illustrate the thesis that there are cases of communication requiring no rhetoric, because machines do not exemplify communication in the first place. As soon as we approach genuine communication, we depart [from] the world of the machine and we set foot in a domain requiring rhetoric as an inextricable adjunct or aspect of communication. (p. 21)

You will note that Johnstone refers here to *genuine* communication. With this phrase, he is referring to communication that transpires between persons, not communication that occurs in any other circumstance. And for communication to be genuine, it must

include rhetoric, the very thing that is missing from our interactions with devices. Johnstone (2007) then offers the thesis I cited at the outset of this discussion concerning rhetoric as being necessary for the creation and preservation of consciousness before asking the essential question: "supposing that all genuine communication does require rhetoric, what does all of this have to do with the evocation and maintenance of consciousness?" (p. 21). His answer is to engage in a long discussion of the interface. I will try to make my explanation somewhat shorter than his account.

Johnstone (2007) points out that interfaces are physically peripheral but essential to a machine's functioning, such as a keyboard, for instance. An interface is something that transforms human actions (such as typing) into electronic impulses that are transferred to the device's electronic circuitry, its brain. Next, Johnstone asks us to imagine a device such as a computer that possesses consciousness. How and where we would locate its consciousness? Consciousness of this sort, he explains, would be found in the space between the computer's internal components and its external peripherals, namely, its interface. Somewhere between the keyboard, for example, and the processing unit of the computer, we would be able to point to its consciousness. Why? The answer is found in this mysterious sentence, "now, if the phenomenon [of] *being conscious of* is something that is to occur, or is to have an analogue, in the machine, it seems plausible to look for it in the relation between what lies on one side of an interface and what lies on the other" (p. 22). We need to take a closer look at this argument.

In his reference to *being conscious of*, Johnstone (2007) is invoking the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, though he makes no reference it. Nonetheless, the point is this: all consciousness is consciousness of something. That means that when you think of yourself as a conscious being, you note right away that your consciousness is never blank; it is always an awareness of something. That something may be an object in the world, such as when you are conscious of the words on the page you are reading, or an idea in your mind, such as when you are conscious of the meaning of those thoughts. You may be conscious of your phone, which has just started ringing. When you reflect on the fact that being conscious entails being consciousness of something, you are conscious of the fact that you are conscious of your effort to think of yourself as being conscious!

Being conscious of—I am going to use that as a technical phrase—is a minimum requirement for human consciousness, and Johnstone (2007) presumes that were a machine to be conscious, it would be conscious in this same way; that is, it would be conscious *of something*. But consciousness of something requires that whatever that something is, it must be separate from the thing that is conscious. There must be, as he says, distance between the conscious being and the thing of which it is conscious. I can only be conscious of the Taylor Swift song playing on my computer right now because it is not a part of me; there is some distance between me and the music such that the song is something that I can be *conscious of*. My internal awareness of Swift's music requires that the music be external from me. So, too, with ideas. Thoughts in our minds are distant from our awareness of them because, to put it plainly, we are aware of them. We think about them because they are things about which we can think. The idea of distance, then, is more metaphorical than literal, but it is a form of distance, nonethe-

less. Thus, machines cannot be conscious because they are never able to achieve this required distance:

> The relevant kind of distance is that between a person and what is communicated to him. It is this distance that permits him to accept or reject the proffered datum. The only reason why such distance is not available to the machine is that it is impossible to maintain the distinction between the two sides of the interface. (p. 22)

Because you can think about the things that someone is telling you, those things are not completely absorbed into your consciousness at the moment your ears detect the words. Rather, you process the message that is contained in the sounds of the words and decide how you will respond to it. We hold ideas at a distance to evaluate them before accepting or rejecting them. Language is an interface, then, that allows for the sort of distance that enables you to deliberate, mull over, consider, and decide on. Ironically, then, while the idea of the interface is commonly applied to computers and not to people, Johnstone (2007) finds it especially useful in explaining why we are conscious and machines are not: because our interface is the distance that exists between our minds and the world. In concluding this part of his argument, he points out that we could imagine a machine being conscious only if it were possible to design an interface that allowed for the machine to judge things rather than just accept the input from the interface—a keyboard, for instance, that would say, "Should I accept or reject the sentence this human just typed?" Johnstone bluntly says this is not likely ever to happen.

Consciousness thus requires an *interruption* between the world and the information we process that is conveyed to us via the various channels by which we encounter the world: sight, sound, smell, touch, and other forms of embodied awareness of the world. But we are never simply united to the world through our senses (interfaces) because there is always a gap, an interruption between the flow of information and our processing of that information. As Johnstone (2007) puts it:

> To be conscious of something is always to interrupt the unity of the transaction between subject and object. Consciousness confronts the person with something radically other than himself. I have the power to accept or reject a datum [a single piece of data] only because I am not the datum. (p. 23)

This image raises the question of how things that are outside get inside; that is, how can the data of the world be converted into conscious thinking? When I see the stapler on my desk, how does that visual experience become an image of that object in my mind? Johnstone wisely drops this question as soon as he raises it because it is irrelevant to his purpose and more important, perhaps, it is an intractable philosophical challenge! Instead, he returns to his notion that rhetoric is the evocation and maintenance of consciousness and describes the concept of a reflexive rhetoric, the idea that when presented with objective facts, such as a computer's output, an individual works on persuading himself (reflexively) as to the accuracy of the data. This is a small digression from the conclusion toward which he now moves, so let us not allow the matter of reflexivity to detain us here. The summation Johnstone provides in tying things together is more important to our purposes.

Johnstone (2007) begins the synopsis of his argument by saying that he will not compare his theory of rhetoric as the evocation and maintenance of consciousness with other accounts of rhetoric simply because he has neither the space nor the inclination to do so. However, he admits that he should probably compare his theory to the most common definition of rhetoric, namely the claim that rhetoric is the art of persuasion.[12] To do this, Johnstone immediately mentions something I touched on, the problem of distinguishing between things that are the "legitimate concern of rhetoric," and those forms of communication that resemble persuasion but may fall outside the boundaries of rhetoric. Here Johnstone mentions the problems of coercion (forcing or compelling people), brainwashing, and subliminal stimulation, and he asks how we could know for certain whether such things are forms of genuine rhetoric. His answer is ingeniously informed by the argument he has offered thus far: something can be considered a form of rhetoric if it evokes and maintains consciousness. Since brainwashing bypasses our capacity for rational deliberation—and since coercion forces us to do things against our will—then it is fair to say that these practices do not engage or involve consciousness in the way that he has explained it. In the case of being forced at gunpoint to comply, one does not have an authentic opportunity to exercise one's free will and deliberate the proper course of action.

> The armed bandit evokes fear, not consciousness, although perhaps he incidentally communicates something in the process. Brainwashing depends upon a physiological deprivation. Although we may say that it causes a state of consciousness, it would be incorrect to hold that it evokes the state. Unless we are taking poetic liberties we do not say that A evokes B when A merely causes B. The wind does not evoke the slamming of the door. (p. 25)

This paragraph neatly summarizes one of the main points of Johnstone's (2007) argument. Let me put his points in slightly different terms.

In real life, we must address ourselves to people with language, and in that act, we make our intentions known and communicate to them both the meanings of our words and the intentions that lie behind those meanings. We do not cause things to happen in people's minds with our attempts at persuasion because people are not like the stones that we kick across the ground, as Bateson argued. People hear our words, process the messages contained in those words, and then come to their own decisions. The speaker *evokes* deliberation rather than *causes* deliberation.[13]

Computers have no intentions, and thus they cannot use rhetoric; according to Johnstone (2007), they do not even really communicate. Thus, when we use genuine communication, we are making our intentions clear in the act of addressing people, and this process evokes (rather than causes) consciousness. When I tell Siri that I am angry with her, my iPhone program responds with one of a few stock phrases, such as, "I wonder what that's like, being mad?" My words cause the program to respond, but I do not evoke a response from Siri. On the other hand, if I tell a close friend that I am angry with him, this phrase evokes a conscious reaction tinged with a range of possible emotions and cognitions. Human communication is the precise opposite from what occurs in giving commands to a device, and what makes it different is the *addressive* aspect of communication.

What do I mean by the addressive aspect of communication? I am referring to the idea that all communication is addressed to someone. This can be the speaker herself, of course, but we commonly think of people as speaking to other people (though they may, with limited success, speak to non-human beings, such as when they praise their dog). When we speak, then, we are oriented to other people and seek some of kind of sympathetic connection with them. Unlike a machine that might produce outputs that sound like language, humans speak with the intention of being understood, of moving their listener to identify with them, of establishing a relational bond that exceeds a merely functional dualism of speaker and hearer. We utter words *to* others for a purpose, and in doing so we make evident both the consciousness that guides our speaking and the consciousness that allows for the meaningful interpretation of our words. Being attuned to other people in this way is both the addressive and the rhetorical aspect of language that underlies our sense of consciousness. This sympathetic connection to others is the rhetorical dimension of communication, and it is this same rhetorical aspect—the sympathetic connection—the evokes and maintains consciousness, as Johnstone (2007) claims.

Other writers have explored similar territory, and in bringing my analysis of Johnstone (2007) to a close, let me cite one of these people. In his book *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke (1969) says:

> Thus we … come upon another aspect of Rhetoric: its nature as *addressed*, since persuasion implies an audience. A man can be his own audience, insofar as he, even in his secret thoughts, cultivates certain ideas or images for the effect he hopes they may have upon him; he is here what Mead would call "an 'I' addressing its 'me'"; and in this respect he is being rhetorical quite as though he were using pleasant imagery to influence an outside audience rather than the one within. In traditional Rhetoric, the relation to an external audience is stressed. Aristotle's [*Rhetorica*], for instance, deals with the appeal to audience in this primary sense. (p. 38)

I want to add to Burke's comment a very short sentence from the philosopher James Carse (2013), who avows that "A robot can say words but cannot say them to you" (p. 51). This is a claim that may require a few moments reflection; however, I believe that it explains nicely the central point of Johnstone's (2007) argument. Rhetoric is that aspect of communication that orients us toward others. It is our reason for speaking, the motive behind our communication, the purpose for which we reach out to be understood. Robots, Carse says, may imitate speech very well, but that is all they do: imitate. Their words, to use a colloquial expression, are empty, for there is no consciousness behind their utterances. Speaking *to* someone rather than speaking *at* them is not solely a matter of attitude—though attitude is not entirely irrelevant either. Speaking *to* someone is an illustration of consciousness at work, for only conscious beings can address their communication to others. It sounds like a small thing—to speak *to* as opposed to speaking *at*—yet it is an enormous intellectual achievement, on par with *being conscious of*. Speaking *to* rather than speaking *at* indicates that one is aware of what one is trying to communicate; one has the intention to communicate those thoughts or ideas; and one recognizes the reciprocal consciousness in the other being to whom one is oriented, that is, to whom one addresses oneself. And the moment we

talk about motive, orientation, purpose, and intention, we are talking about the rhetorical aspect of human nature. Thus, Johnstone can say, with solid support for his argument, that rhetoric is the evocation and maintenance of consciousness.

Conclusion

My analysis of Johnstone's (2007) argument shows why rhetoric should be understood more broadly than as the art of persuasion; however, persuasion is still the foundation point of rhetorical studies. Despite the fact that rhetoric has evolved into a more complex field of study than its initial theorists in ancient Greece would have predicted, the concept of persuasion is still the central issue in all texts concerned with rhetorical analysis—no matter how complex the definition of rhetoric has grown.[14] So, while the conception of the term *rhetoric* will expand to include ideas about addressivity, motive, and identification, keep in mind that rhetoric is rooted in the study of persuasion, even as it has grown to include practices, techniques, and procedures that might not seem directly connected to persuasion. For example, you might be wondering why identification would be considered an aspect of persuasion, but as you will find out in due course, identification is now, for many rhetoricians, the term they prefer to the word *persuasion*. Nevertheless, regardless of how things have changed in the sphere of rhetorical scholarship, they have remained rooted in conceptions of persuasion, as these were first set out by ancient authors.

Lecture series overview

While this lecture series seeks to offer an overview of rhetorical thought from ancient times to the present, it is not a completely comprehensive account. However, although I have left out large swaths of history during which substantial developments in the understanding of rhetoric were achieved, this selectivity is in response to both space constraints and the interests I happen to bring to the study of rhetoric. Of course, to mention my personal interests simply leads to the question of why I chose some things and not others. Why have I given certain writers a more prominent place in my discussion and even overlooked some writers?

The best answer is the informal answer: I am drawn to particular theorists because I find their ideas are similar to my own thinking, and people tend to be more easily persuaded by those with whom they feel a bond of identification. This makes sense at several levels, including the rhetorical, though it might seem a blatant celebration of personal taste over objective analysis. However, it is probably the most accurate reason, for even academic writers are prone to preferences and penchants. However, let me intersperse a few formal explanations for why I have included some rhetoricians and ignored some others.

The lecture series begins in the ancient world, starting with the Presocratics, continuing to Socrates and Plato, and culminating with Aristotle. I believe this treatment is justified by a) the foundational nature of their work, and b) recent interest in the contributions of Presocratic thinkers to later philosophical traditions. Indeed, the Presocratics contributed significantly to the development of the central questions that bedevil current rhetorical scholarship—especially as those questions were presented in the works of Plato and his pupil, Aristotle.

I have chosen not to pursue a methodically chronological account, for I then pass over centuries of rhetorical scholarship, including the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment. These omissions understandably leave me unhappy, yet compressing the historical component makes it possible to focus on thematic possibilities. What I mean is that I have chosen to give a sense of the key concerns and debates in the history of rhetoric rather than a complete historical picture. There is sufficient history, I hope, in our travels through the age of classical Greece to satisfy you, but I do not deny that there would be considerable value in discussing at length the work of Roman rhetoricians, such as Cicero and Quintilian. The Augustan writers of the Roman period did much to define the scope of contemporary thinking about rhetoric, but it is simply impossible to include everyone. Choices had to be made, and I am the one making those choices.

Once we have discussed some of the ancient world's approach to rhetoric, we will follow a line of thinking that leads us directly to the work of Kenneth Burke and Stephen Toulmin. Both produced an enormous range of material in communication studies, literary scholarship, and philosophy, and going through their respective texts helps to show the enduring legacy of both Platonic and Aristotelian thinking about persuasion in the contemporary world. Kenneth Burke, as I mentioned earlier, was one of the most important figures in modern rhetoric. His work shows obvious affinity to Aristotelian ideas but his thinking is also indebted to Plato and the significance of the struggle over the moral and epistemological problems raised by the study of persuasion. Burke wrote a good deal about motives and developed an elaborate theory of identification, or what he refers to as *consubstantiality*. He also framed many of his analyses through close textual readings of a diverse body of material ranging from Shakespeare to myth, proverbs to theology, poetics to McLuhan. Burke's legacy remains a rich source for modern researchers; in fact, there is an internet site devoted to the study of his ideas. He is also one of the few people we will discuss whose scholarly work has been given its own name: Burkology.

Stephen Toulmin is a rather different figure; he is connected to analytic philosophy rather than literary studies. Trained as a logician, Toulmin described his major contribution to rhetoric as an unintended rediscovery of Aristotle. Toulmin (2003) says that after he published his book *The Uses of Argument*, he realized that he had only recapitulated many of the arguments made by Aristotle in his text *Topics*. This is a slight exaggeration, of course, and there are plenty of ideas in *The Uses of Argument* that indicate the originality of Toulmin's thinking. Though his debt to Aristotle is considerable—if somewhat accidental—Toulmin's work has advanced the study of rhetoric by his demonstration of the value of argumentation theory as an important adjunct in rhetoric studies. In addition to his analyses of the procedures of everyday arguments, Toulmin is widely known now as the formulator of the Toulmin model, which maps the ways everyday arguments are structured and has found a home in more disciplines than it is possible to count. An important figure in modern philosophy generally, Toulmin contributed to a number of areas, especially ethics. However, our focus will be on his development of an approach to argumentation theory that was taken up by rhetoricians and makes him one of the twentieth century's most significant innovators in rhetorical theory.

Although for centuries rhetoric was considered the queen of the academic disciplines, its fortunes faded somewhat at the start of the last century. One of the reasons for its decline as an academic discipline was the arrival of quantification methods in the social sciences. As I describe it, the art of rhetoric gave way to the science of coercion in the early decades of the twentieth century. Psychologists and other researchers in mass media, propaganda, and marketing began to dominate the field—or, more properly, they began to redefine the field by focusing less on persuasion as the consequence of human interaction and more on compliance as a consequence of adept marketing strategies. A guiding principle behind these new scientific approaches was the establishment of techniques for evaluating the success of messages—mainly mass-mediated messages—by the assessment of audience response through various statistical measures. The idea that people could be persuaded with the methods laid out by Aristotle, for instance, was not abandoned entirely, but his ideas became less important to researchers focused on numerical tabulations as opposed to prose analysis. One of their main goals was to determine the effectiveness of advertising (and other kinds of mediated outreach) by measuring the post-marketing sales numbers that followed the broadcast of a new media advertising campaign. The measurement of audience response has never disappeared, nor was it entirely ignored by Aristotle, who was keenly aware of the need for keeping your message in line with your audience's interests and moods. But in the twentieth century, the rise of media technologies and sampling techniques made it possible to rethink persuasion as less concerned with individual temperament and motive, and more concerned with point-of-sale behaviour.

This lecture series will cover other topics, including a discussion of visual rhetoric, an example of how to conduct a rhetorical analysis, some words about religion and rhetoric, and a consideration of the relation between rhetoric and hegemony. I will also have something to say about behavioural economics and rhetoric. Finally, I have also included a discussion of the rhetoric of forgiveness, something I happen to be involved in from a research standpoint. Naturally, rhetoric can be applied wherever there is an effort to move an audience or influence an individual, and thus my choice of forgiveness is merely evidence of my current preoccupation with a particular form of interpersonal communication. Many other subjects could be studied from a rhetorical standpoint, including art as a mode of persuasion, political speeches as acts of identification, museums and commemorative spaces as sites of memory and rhetoric, and so on.

Notes

1. When politicians offer thoughts and prayers following a tragedy, such as a mass shooting, they are sometimes accused of using meaningless rhetoric, where political action (background checks for gun ownership, for example) would be more valuable. *Rhetoric* is used as a substitute for *empty*.

2. This definition is a common beginning point for most discussions about rhetoric. At its heart, then, rhetoric is about modes of persuasion. However, the apparently simple idea of persuasion is actually complex, and for that reason, rhetoric "has always concerned itself with the human capacities to reason, to create, to imagine, to move and be moved by means of language" (Poulakos & Poulakos, 1999, p. ix). Hence, while the study of rhetoric traditionally starts with such phrases as "The art

of persuasion," contemporary analyses of the persuasive functions of language are more extensive than was imagined in the texts of classical Greece.

3. In his *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*, James Jasinski (2001) writes that "a rhetorical question is commonly defined as a query posed by an advocate for which a response is not expected … . Understood in this way, rhetorical questions can be seen as a way of making *indirect* assertions or *claims*" (p. 494). Later we will note that rhetorical questions can be understood under the definition that Aristotle proposed for something he called the *enthymeme*.

4. If this is something you have thought about previously, it might have been expressed in the form of efforts to remain calm and focused, to "keep your feelings in check" or to avoid "letting your emotions get the better of you." These common expressions indicate an awareness of the possibility that our emotions can interfere with clear thinking and pose a potential problem in getting to the truth of the situation as that would be determined by rational deliberation. I am not suggesting that this happens all the time. Rather, I am pointing out that in the Western tradition, we are frequently encouraged to suspect our emotions of sabotaging our efforts to reach the truth of the matter.

5. The movie *A Quiet Place* (Krasinski, 2018) shows the difficulty of choosing not to speak.

6. A negative attitude would suggest that something just atrophies and dies away; a positive attitude is the result of a conscious decision.

7. The most famous expression of this argument is Sigmund Freud's (1929) *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

8. Creating a perfect language was the unrealized ambition of the philosopher Gottfried Leibniz. There is a wonderful book by the late Umberto Eco (1997) that examines the history of the search for an ambiguously perfect language.

9. This is the translation by W. Rhys Roberts (Aristotle, 2001), whose wording makes the point I want to relate rather obvious. The point is that the teaching of geometrical truths (or any truths) requires no persuasion.

10. Of course, the word *understood* is incorrect since computers do not technically understand anything at all. For a similar reason, I would dispute Johnstone's use of the word *accept* in the quotation above. The limits of everyday language!

11. When you apologize to someone and they say they accept your apology, the gesture is meaningful because of the possibility that they might not have accepted it. However, it is essential that people are free to accept an apology if their forgiveness is to have any meaning. As Johnstone points out, information exchanges with machines lack the possibility of refusal.

12. Johnstone is referring to Aristotle with this definition, though, as you will note in the lecture on Aristotle, this is not an entirely accurate account of Aristotle's thinking. However, as Johnstone correctly notes, it is certainly the most widely cited definition of rhetoric.

13. I am presuming the argument that certain human behaviours such as deliberation can never be caused, only evoked. As a further example, I cannot cause you to be sad, but I may be able to evoke sadness by narrating a tale of despair to which you have

an emotional response. But whether you feel sad upon hearing my narrative is not at all in my power. I can try to evoke an emotional response but I cannot cause one.

14. Of course, many ancient scholars of rhetoric were aware that rhetoric was but a particular aspect of human communication, and for that reason, they did not limit rhetoric to the study of techniques of persuasion.

Websites

GoFundMe, https://www.gofundme.com/
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