Ioana JÎJÎIE MOROȘANU *

Affectivity – at the Border between Psychology and Rhetoric

Abstract: What moves masses of people? Are we rather emotional or rational beings? What emotional impact do the words we transmit to our interlocutors have? These are just a few of the myriad questions that researchers in various fields have wanted to answer. From a psychological perspective, emotions influence our attitude towards others and how we react in certain situations. Over time, the question of quantifying the extent to which they are the result of social learning or genetic inheritance has been raised. On the other hand, rhetoric speaks to us about passions as emotions in action produced at the level of an audience through discourse. What is interesting is that the modalities of manifesting emotional experiences have evolved to guide us to cope with the crucial events in our lives, as well as how the speaker manages to determine them at the auditory level has changed. It is fascinating how the two domains manage to analyze the affectivity from different perspectives, but how neither would make sense without the other. Therefore, in the following article, I will cover, under the umbrella of interdisciplinarity, the common aspects that can be extracted from the psychological and rhetorical theories.

Keywords: rhetoric, psychology, emotions, affectivity, passions, mechanisms, speech.

1. From ideas to emotions

Each of us is composed of two infinitely important parts of our existence as human beings. Each of us is made of body and soul. With this analogy in mind, the article delineates the general lines of the term affectivity. Why did I start with this specific analogy in mind? Because even the concept of affectivity would not have existed scientifically if two fundamental perspectives of understanding the term – psychological and rhetorical – had not been outlined. And, in my opinion, the psychological perspective is like a soul because it analyzes affectivity from any person's intrinsic characteristics point of view and the psychological mechanisms underlying the interpersonal relationships dominated by affectivity, while

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* PhD Student, School of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy and Socio-Political Sciences, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Romania; email: ioanamorosanu93@gmail.com

the rhetorical perspective focuses more on how affectivity is manifested externally through language, nonverbal behaviors or paraverbal items; thus, through the rhetorical aspects, affectivity is exposed in front of a public like a body.

When we talk about affectivity, we will automatically think of human emotions. When considering the nature of emotions, we must take into account subjective experiences, verbal descriptions, emotional responses and influences, behavioral expressions, but also subsequent consequences. The relation of these behaviors can be characterized by consistency or there may be discrepancies between them. Depending on the origin, some researchers consider emotions to be biological or physical (Panksepp 1988, 37-73), or psychological (Lazarus 1991, 819-834), but we can also look at emotions from the perspective of cognitive processes where those are subordinate to informational processes in the human brain.

Common to all these approaches are ten basic emotions (Eckman 2003, 10-17): interest, happiness, surprise, anxiety, anger, disgust, dissatisfaction, fear, shame, and guilt. How people express their emotions can be changed by family, society and cultural influences. Learning their various forms plays an important role in determining what is considered socially or culturally right as an emotional expression in a given situation. From a rhetorical point of view, the affectivity and the emotions take the form of the pathos that reprints the emotional states of the audience in front of which a speaker supports his speech. Regardless of the domain or discipline, one of the aims of oratorical art is to persuade the public, and this could not be achieved without the induction of a specific emotional state to the audience. The question is how can we generate emotions at the level of an audience only through our speech?

The stimulating sources of the pathos are represented by the systems of values and beliefs to which the speaker must align the speech. There are also several techniques by which it can induce desired passions – and they come from what we call logos. Specifically, I think that how a speaker selects his ideas that will form the discourse is responsible for generating specific emotions at the level of the audience.

1.1. *A cognitive point of view on how emotions work*

Although the idea that a good discourse is the one that has strong arguments is rooted in the collective mind, we must mention that these arguments do not address strictly to the public intellect. The arguments used by the speaker, those confessions of facts, data or results of an expert's report, even those are mere statistics that modify the audience's affect. A successful speech is one where the raw arguments manage to generate emotions at the public level. But how can we do this? First of all, we build

our arguments by combining two types of judgments: those of fact and those of value. If the factual judgments will give credence to the speaker and thus gain public confidence, the valuable ones will address to his affective side. The speaker has a set of knowledge, valuable experiences, just like his audience. Through discourse, they finally collide and those common experiences and values that resonate both ways will cause emotions.

When a speaker gives a speech with a persuasive intent, the question that arises is which part of the soul should be assessed: the affective or the rational? The intuitive answer would be that affection should be his main focus, but in this case what would be the purpose of grounding a discourse on logical arguments or factual judgments? If the speaker generates pathos at the level of his audience and by the call to reason, how exactly does this process work? Recently researchers in cognitive science have proposed the hypothesis of the existence of two distinct cognitive systems (Kahneman 2011, 39). These two systems are sometimes called implicit and explicit, although some theorists prefer to emphasize the functional differences between the two and not their connection with the idea of consciousness. To avoid any kind of confusion, they were called System 1 and System 2. System 1 is generally described to be a universal form of cognition shared by both humans and animals. It represents systems combinations that run in terms of autonomy. System 1 includes the instinctive behaviors that are innately planned, and its processes are most often described to be formed by the learning produced by the creation of neural networks. The processes are fast, parallel and automatic through their nature, only their final product is held by the conscience. On the other hand, system 2 was developed more recently than the previous one and is considered to be purely human. The processes of this system are much slower and sequential and appeal to the person's working memory, being closely linked to memory. Despite its limited capacity and low-speed, system 2 allows for the development of an abstract and hypothetical type of thinking that S1 could not trigger. For example, when it comes to the decision-making process, most of the time we tend to act from the perspective of past experiences, using solutions that have worked before. Such intuitive decisions need minimal reflection from one person. But we can also make decisions by building mental models or simulations of future possibilities. In the general sense, mental models (Rickheit 1999, 6) represent an area of dynamic symbolic representations of objects or external events presented within a natural or artificial cognitive system. They have a series of properties that differentiate them from the rest of the symbolic representations, among which are the ability to generate descriptions about the purpose and architecture of a system, explanations related to the condition and functionality of a system, as well as predictions.

Through his speech, an individual will address first to his audience's S2 system, the conscious one, through which the information is analyzed.

Through certain discursive techniques such as humor or irony, the speaker manages to diminish the rational barriers of the public, thus communicating the message to the S1 system, hence generating emotions.

At a rational level, we can notice that people sometimes prefer certain ideas and disregard others. Not only do they like those ideas, but they adhere to it. This cohesion between a person and an idea is also rooted in the idea of beautifulness. Beauty attracts humans because it is associated with pleasure. We love certain ideas because they resonate with our values, which, of course, we consider beautiful since we have acquired them and they represent ourselves. In this case, the speaker has the opportunity to juggle with those speech elements that determine the beautiful or the ugly and are proper to arouse the passion that he wants to. It is in the interest of the speaker to find the right means to illustrate within his discourse those instances of the beautiful with which the audience resonates, to fulfill their ultimate purpose, namely to generate a certain attitude or behavior. And this is where the emotion comes into play.

1.2. *A rhetorical – linguistic point of view on how passions work*

From a linguistic perspective, discursive aesthetics is closely linked to establishing the beauty of a discourse. By the aesthetic act (Nasta and Alexandrescu 1972, 449) we understand that way of perceiving the objects of the outer world that acts as a mediator between the hybrid multitude of disparate impressions and the analytical proximity of the phenomena, which we call scientific. In the aesthetic act, whether he or she conceives an oratorical discourse, we dissociate from the world of sound and light impressions the inner images of objects, their shapes, colors, types, sounds, as distinct from us and reflecting the object world. This typical feature gives the object certain integrity or a kind of personality.

Thus, the beauty of the discourse is also embodied by the concept of style. The style with the highest chances of generating passions at the level of the audience is, of course, the sublime style. If temperance was the characteristic considered essential to the simple style, the boldness to the limit seems to be the dominant note of the sublime style. This style raises the hearts and minds of the listeners and can cause the most unstoppable passions both in one person and especially in the masses. The basic principle of the sublime style according to Cicero (1942, 45) consists in the fact that: there is no limit in the choice of arguments, in their organization and ordering, in speech decoration, in the use of metaphors if in this way we can "shake" the public with regard to his beliefs, feelings, attitudes or actions, and this in a way that produces delight, which amazes.

We cannot speak about style or elocution without detailing the idea of figurative language through which the process is possible. The figurative

language can convey emotions not only through the musicality, the visual or auditory image it generates or through the beauty of the chosen words but also through the logical inferences that link the arguments that are finally included in a rhetorical figure. Perelman considers that the rhetorical figures are not merely simple accessories, effective tools in elocution construction, but each of them represents an argument in itself in the context in which they are integrated into a discourse. Among the rhetorical figures with the highest cognitive, argumentative, but also emotionally load are irony, metaphor and the call to humor. All of these have in common the relation between reality and appearances. If in the case of irony, the rhetorical figure expresses the opposite of the expectation determined by reality, the metaphor is a complex comparison between two different realities that we would not have thought to bring in the same context. This relation to reality and expectations, especially to the expectations of the auditor, leads to an analysis of emotions that are generated with their confirmation or rejection.

Also, along the rhetorical figures, the story (Sachs 2016, 25) as a discursive technique can induce emotions. People who listen to a speech will react emotionally to stories and will internalize them much more easily, facilitating persuasion. Stories are a special type of human communication designed to convince the audience of the storyteller's vision of the world. Each character has a purpose, according to their values, faces difficulties along the way and succeeds or fails, depending on the story's vision about how the world works. And, the stories that will matter in the discursive "ocean" and that will succeed in winning the "war" of narratives will not only be the ones that amuse but those that matter emotionally, those that will awake strong emotions in the listener and will be memorable enough to determine people to act in a certain direction. Why? Because stories are the rearrangement and retelling of our experiences with the world in a way that will make others want to hear and learn from them. They allow us to make order in the chaotic, otherwise insignificant, experience of our senses by editing the irrelevant details, defining the cause of each effect and giving meaning to the string of things we have seen, felt or simply imagined.

2. Charisma's passional force

Up to this point, going through the main perspectives through which emotions were understood – psychological and rhetorical – and also the sources through which they are generated, we can see that passions, as they were first understood by Aristotle (2004, 186), represent the common point of the two perspectives. Next, it is very important to analyze how a person can put all this information into practice to generate public-level passions to

turn them into their followers. Such an individual in the rhetorical sphere is considered to be a charismatic speaker. We can see the answer given by Daniel Goleman (2017, 23), who pointed out that charismatic leaders, who are usually charismatic orators, have always played a crucial emotional role. The first leaders of humanity – from the chief of the tribe to the priestesses – largely disbanded because their way of imposing themselves was convincing on an emotional level.

Charismatic leaders, in constructing their prescriptive mental models, emphasize the goals – normally positive, future-oriented ones. These prescriptive mental models tend to emphasize goals and not causes in their discursive and feasible manifestations. The causes that apply in the available descriptive mental models will be those that are retained by charismatic leaders in building their prescriptive mental model. But charismatic leaders, in shaping the model, tend to keep causes under control as a result of people's actions. In consequence, these leaders define future goals that direct others towards actions that ultimately lead to these goals. In other words, charismatic leaders see people as creators of their destiny through the actions they take on a set of known, relatively unambiguous causes. Charismatic leaders should encourage people to act on the causes relevant to achieving their goals. How leaders can motivate this type of action is role modeling and self-sacrifice, but also through communication. Not only does charismatic leadership require communication (Fiol, Harris, and House 1999, 449-482), but it also involves a mass appeal designed to build engagement and encourage followers' actions on the causes relevant to achieving their goals. Thus, charismatic leaders exert influence and maintain control through goals, while allowing followers the freedom to act on the causes that will lead to the goal.

From the rhetorical perspective, the charismatic leader represents an embodiment of the ethos, and one of the qualities of this element of the oratorical triad to which the speaker can appeal in support of the speech to generate certain passions at the audience level is represented by the non-verbal part of the speech. By gesture we want to convey something more than saying the word directly, we want to emphasize the message transmitted. And, since what we can finally convey through a discourse are emotions, then it is fair to say that gesture is an efficient mechanism for generating passions. Today's leaders should resort to influence and not control, and influence is based both on the ability to understand the other's perspective – the active listening of the interlocutor and non-verbal behavior – and the ability to communicate congruent, to align words in body language. And the gestures, posture, gaze and all other signals that go with the message, encode the mental and emotional state of a person to correctly interp-

ret or misread these behavioral cues as reflecting the respective states. Moreover, what underlies emotions generating through gesture is called mirroring (Feyereusen 2018, 22). In other words, mirror neurons are activated by a particular action, but also by observing the same actions. According to some authors (Iacoboni 2009, 14), this system emphasizes the automatic resonance mechanisms that allowed people to imitate and empathize.

Starting from the idea that political leaders can provoke emotions (Lanzettta et al. 1985, 85-116) and convey impressions through their nonverbal communication style that includes both voice qualities and facial expressions, we can say that charismatic leaders can have the same effects at an audience level. Effective political leaders often show charisma in convincing voters that they are the best option. Thus, charisma can generate emotions in people through nonverbal aspects of communication.

In a series of experiments conducted from 1982 to 1989, Roger Masters and Denis Sullivan (1990, 35-47) explored how the facial expressions of leaders perceived in the television environment affect the viewers' emotions, emotions, and political attitudes. Their theoretical approach joined the ethological (van Hoff 1969, 9-81) and social psychology perspectives with their work on the role of impressions and emotions in shaping political attitudes. Ethological theories emphasize the importance of facial expressions in signaling the attack, escape or submission within the power relations established at the primate level.

The authors developed the hypothesis that such facial expressions are among the significant stimuli that can be determining for attributing the characteristics of the leaders, but also the emotional reactions towards them. But the facial expressions of leaders, if repeatedly observed, can change the attitudes of the viewers by directly generating emotions (Zajonc 1982, 117-123) or attributing traits (Albeson et al. 1982, 619-630) that affect attitudes toward the leader. Rather than directly affecting attitudes, facial expressions can generate attributions of traits that, in turn, provoke emotions that in turn affect attitudes. On the other hand, the observer's emotional responses to the leader's display may generate attributions of traits that, through a rather cognitive process, shape attitudes toward the leader.

Alongside nonverbal, the paraverbal represents a means of transmitting charisma to an audience. Starting from Aristotelian theory, the voice has been considered to be a means of hypocrisy and certain vocal tones are normally associated with certain emotions. I also think that certain inflections of the voice arouse at the level of the audience certain reactions that can materialize in emotions if they are kept long enough. Thus, a low-pitched voice, with lower speed, can induce calm and goodwill in the au-

dience, while an alert, high-pitched voice can stir the audience. When it comes to voice inflections, emphasizing a meaningful idea for speech through a higher pitch and slower cadence, as well as alternating it with a series of arguments presented more smoothly, can create a favorable framework for public persuasion.

3. Conclusion

We can see the importance of interdisciplinarity in outlining and explaining a vast concept as affectivity. Without the psychological perspective, we could not understand why a group of people would follow a certain leader who from a rational point of view does not have a well-founded substrate, while without the rhetorical perspective we could not see the realization of truthful experiences at the level of a group of people and we could not understand what mechanisms caused certain emotions in people after the verbal or nonverbal communication took note. Especially since interdisciplinarity and affectivity have at least one thing in common – they connect so different intellectual and spiritual baggage to harmonize the society in which we live.

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