Elements of a New Rhetoric in Foucault's Work

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Abstract—The principal objective of this study is to present and discuss the elements that emerge from Michel Foucault's archeological undertakings, which, in our view, configure the existence of a new rhetoric that deals with what the French philosopher called the rarefaction of the subject and rarefaction of discourse in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France (Foucault, 1996). This new rhetoric would be in charge of reflecting and analyzing the phenomena that result from both the rarefaction of the subject and the rarefaction of discourse, that is, such rhetoric invests in what is responsible for imposing on the speaking subject what to say and how to say it. Therefore, it turns to certain mechanisms of control of discourses that Foucault presented in The Discourse on Language, a work that completes five decades of its publication. This Foucauldian rhetoric also has as its main function to deal with the history of the present, that is, to reflect on what we do and think at this exact moment, which, in turn, would be in charge of contributing to the history of how we became subjects in a culture like ours, at this stage of high modernity and the Information Age. From this perspective, she would be interested in the processes of identification and subjectivation that result from the ways in which we become subjects. In short, it is a study that seeks to present elements that demonstrate the emergence of a new rhetoric that emerges from the work of Michel Foucault, who, according to Deleuze (1992), increasingly invested in a generalized pragmatics.

I. INTRODUCTION

The influence of Foucault's work in the field and studies of language is so remarkable that Deleuze even noted that the renowned professor at the Collège de France increasingly invested in a generalized pragmatics (cf. Deleuze, 1992, p.112), as His undertakings prove this and allow us to think about a pragmatic rhetoric that emerges from the theoretical machinery that reflects Foucauldian thought.

The discussion we present here is in charge of highlighting the elements that allow us to think and defend this point of view that gives rise to this pragmatic rhetoric, implicit in Foucault's undertakings and thought. To do so,

we try to demonstrate these elements, and then discuss the contours of this rhetoric in relation to what we know as classical rhetoric and what has been called new rhetoric.

In these terms, the discussion plan was designed to bring to light such evidence that there is a latent pragmatic rhetoric in the endeavors carried out by Foucault. His book Archeology of Knowledge and his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France are the two most concrete examples of the existence of such pragmatic rhetoric; in other words, these two works manage to demonstrate that the thinking developed by Foucault was also capable of decoding a pragmatic rhetoric around the production of knowledge and power when he sought to make history of the way in

which we become subjects in a society like ours, and when he sought to write the history of systems of thought.

Therefore, the plan of this discussion is structured in three main moments in which we reflect on this field of knowledge called rhetoric that emerges in Hellenic culture with the aim of first persuading, a certain public linked sometimes to the political circle, sometimes linked to the legal circle, later, it ends up literally becoming a synonym for the art of speaking well. In the second moment of the discussion, we try to deal with this knowledge as a form of expression of Western thought; that is, as a way of ordering ideas in the West which, in turn, is in the order of discourses and in the emergence of human sciences and in the field of empirical knowledge.

Now, this mode is responsible for what Foucault called the rarefaction of the subject and the discourse and, consequently, for the discursive practices and discursive formations or even for the discussion he carries out on parrhesia in his latest studies. It is precisely from there that we discuss this pragmatic rhetoric that Foucault had to deal with to enter the order of systems of thought in the Western world and to be able to write the history of how we became subjects in this culture. Finally, we try to discuss the similarities between this pragmatic rhetoric that we find in Foucault and the main questions of the New Rhetoric presented by Perelman and Obrechts-Tyteca.

II. CLASSICAL RHETORIC: ARISTOTLE AND THE STUDIUM GENERALE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The set of knowledge about metalanguage (discourses about discourse) that we know today as rhetoric, has its origins in the 5th century BC in the region of Magna Grecia, precisely in Sicily. Corax and his pupil Tisias are credited with his creation. The diffusion, in Athens, would occur soon after, thanks to the master Gorgias, considered a peripatetic, the way in which the sophists, who traveled from city to city, were known in that period. What is known about Corax's work is that it disappeared, but Cicero and Quintilian make some quotes from his work about his rhetoric. A century later, when rhetoric was already Athenian, Aristotle presents a treatise called *Τέχνη ρητορική* that brings the study of rhetoric closer to philosophical thought, defining it as "the art of extracting from any subject the degree of persuasion it entails" or as "the faculty of discovering speculatively what in each case may be capable of persuading." (cf. Barthes, 2001, p.15). It is in this way that rhetoric assumes the rhetorical perspective of proof, reasoning, and approximate syllogism (enthymeme). But extended to the literary field (which was not its original purpose), it develops as an

aesthetic of the public, "more than an aesthetic of the work." (Barthes, 2001, p.16).

During the Middle Ages, this set of knowledge appeared institutionally as part of the *Studium Generale*, given the importance that the great thinkers of both Hellenic and Latin cultures gave it. Now, if rhetoric gained this dimension in classical culture, it is because, from an early age, it was associated with power in its relationship with knowledge, mainly through institutional support. In other words, those who wanted to stay in power, as well as those who desired it, had to have this knowledge that the sophists believed made men virtuous. Finally, by expanding his domains, Aristotle made it possible for rhetoric to reign for approximately twenty centuries, seeing "disappear, without being moved or altered: Athenian democracy, the Egyptian kingdoms, the Roman Republic, the Roman Empire, the great invasions, feudalism, the Renaissance, the monarchy, the French Revolution" (Barthes, 2001, p.7).

Without a shadow of a doubt, the theoretical aspects of this metalanguage called rhetoric contributed to giving a certain limit to the way we think in the West, that is, rhetoric helped to shape the way in which Western thought should be expressed both in public and in writing. Associated with power or the way of knowing to deal with power, rhetoric has become part of Western culture, penetrating its innards, nourishing the processes of subjectivation and identification, acting directly on the way in which the sciences were constituted and, on the form, how literature has developed in the last twenty centuries. The traces and traces of this rhetoric can be found in various discursive materialities. It is from them that Foucault develops means to analyze the pragmatics of the subject that results from this pragmatic rhetoric, as we discuss in the next lines.

III. PRAGMATIC RHETORIC: A REFLECTION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

Aiming, at the beginning, to create a theory that was focused on discourse itself, with the objective of dealing with Western thought, Foucault ended up coming across discursive practices that cannot be analyzed other than through the prism of the relationships between knowledge and power. However, to reflect on the discourses and such practices, he developed a series of expressions that take us back to this pragmatic rhetoric that resulted from this entire culture that developed around classical rhetoric, responsible for ordering and giving limits to Western thought. Political rationality, hermeneutics of the subject, rarefaction of the subject, authorship, will to truth, will to

know, parrhesia are some of these terms, as we mentioned before.

When we come across the study carried out in History of Madness in the Classical Age, his most controversial book, we realize how Foucault dedicated himself to the way in which arguments about madness enabled the exclusion of subjects considered crazy from social life (cf. Araújo; Milanez, 2018). In other words, we can say that in this work Foucault demonstrates the way in which rhetoric dominates our bodies under the pretext of reason in the face of unreason. It is interesting to note that Foucault did not just focus on speeches, including as part of his corpus, paintings and other pictographic elements as a rhetorical expression of thought in the Renaissance in transition with the Classical Age. In Order and Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences, Foucault makes a point of dedicating the entire first chapter to the discussion of the way in which the painting, Las Meninas, by Diego Velázquez manages to express, with the internal logic of the painting, the era representations; in other words, we have an analysis in which we find not only the representation that could occur as pure representation, but the way in which we are placed in a kind of "large virtual cage" (Foucault, 1981, p.4).

Well, if in the History of madness in the Classical Age, Foucault works on the link between exclusion and truth in the midst of the way in which the "'scientific psychiatry' of the 19th century became possible" (Foucault, 1978, p.295), in Words and Things, he is committed to creating a history of épistémè, seeking to deal with the verisimilitude that united and ordered words and things. But are questions linked to verisimilitude and truth recurrent in several of Foucault's endeavors, an echo, perhaps, of Aristotle's rhetoric that has become part of the Western way of thinking?

By "truth", said Foucault, one must "understand a set of regulated procedures for the production, law, circulation and functioning of statements." (Foucault, 1979, p.14). In these terms, it "is circularly linked to systems of power, which produce and support it, and to effects of power that it induces and that reproduce it." (1979, p.14). This fact reminds us that rhetoric, as Aristotle thought, has no firm commitment to the truth, as the act of persuading is not directly linked to the truth.

In Discourse on Language, Foucault deals with the will to truth as something that appears when Hesiod and Plato decided to establish a certain division, "separating true discourse and false discourse". For Foucault, it was this division that undoubtedly gave "its general form to our will to know." (Foucault, 1996, pp.15-16). From then on, she didn't stop moving, because "Everything happens as if, from the great Platonic division, the will to truth had its own history, which is not that of the truths that constrain: history of the planes of objects to be known, history of the functions and positions of the knowing subject, history of material investments, instrumental knowledge technicians." (Foucault, 1996, p.17).

Perhaps, we could think of Aristotle as the first to seek to reduce the effects of this will to truth, responsible for our will to know, by bringing classical rhetoric closer to philosophy and dialectics. Placing it at the center of his concerns, Foucault seems to demonstrate, in his endeavors, the pitfalls of this will to truth by asking "what is at stake, if not desire and power?" (Foucault, 1996, p.20). Now, this will to truth has institutional support and distribution to exert "a kind of depression and a power of coercion" on other discourses (Foucault, 1996, p.18).

Discourse on Language is full of clues that could appear as elements of this pragmatic rhetoric that we are dealing with here (cf. Araújo, 2020). The rarefaction of the subject is another tangible example of this, as it is in charge of controlling both what is said and who speaks, because of this, "not all regions of discourse are equally open and penetrable, some are highly prohibited (differentiated and differentiating), while others seem almost open to all winds and placed, without prior restriction, at the disposal of each subject who speaks)." (Foucault, 1996, p.37).

Although the discussion about parrhesia (or parrhesia) is linked to the phase that corresponds to the last Foucault, it certainly cannot be thought of without contrast with the rarefaction of the subject, because they seem to be opposite sides of the same coin, both are forms of social control and we all know well that, in a society like ours, "one does not have the right to say everything, that one cannot speak about everything in any circumstance, that anyone, in short, cannot speak about anything." (Foucault, 1996, p.9). But what about parrhesia? Under what circumstances could one speak frankly to someone in a society like the one in which the Hellenic culture took place?

In The Government of Oneself and Others, a course that Foucault taught at the Collège de France between 1982 and 1983, parrhesia appears, initially, in the discussion about the constitution of the subject's ways of being based on the practices of the self that took place during the 1st century AD, still in Antiquity; therefore, Foucault encountered parrhesia at the moment he posed the question of the government of self and others. On that occasion, he stated that "I would like to try to see how truth-telling, the obligation and the possibility of telling the truth in government procedures can show how the individual constitutes himself as a subject in the relationship with

himself and in the relationship with the others." (Foucault, 2010, p. 42). The Greek word parrhesia is originally used in the sense of "'saying everything', but in fact it is translated, much more often, as free speech, freedom of speech, etc." (Foucault, 2010, p. 42). In this case, the word parrhesia means "a virtue, duty and technique that we must find in the one who directs the conscience of others and helps them to constitute their relationship with themselves." (Foucault, 2010, p.43).

In practice, this virtue was one of the three criteria, necessary and sufficient, to construct and characterize what Hellenic culture had as something that each man should observe in life in order to relate to himself and to others. So, it was necessary to respect: a man of age, a man of good reputation and a man of parrhesia, because those were the three criteria. Parrhesia, as Foucault demonstrates, had an important place in Hellenic culture in the first century AD, because it was associated with truth. It was, through parrhesia, that everything could be said, frankly, and old men, with a good reputation, also had to be men of parrhesia. Truth and parrhesia were part of the Greek world, of everyday life, as the government of oneself and others went through parrhesia. Finally, in this society, what today translates as speaking frankly, was, "in any case, saying all the necessary truth, and saying it in a certain way that is precisely parrhesia" (Foucault, 2010 p.43).

As can be seen so far, Foucault managed to find a series of reflections on the effects of classical rhetoric on Western culture, as we said before, that is, there are concrete examples that can help in new fronts of work that emerge in contemporary times, especially in what concerns refers to discursive materialities such as those of the pictographic world (paintings, graphics, moving images, etc.).In the New Rhetoric, as we will see later, there is an update of the theoretical discussions initiated by Aristotle and carried out by the Belgian school. This space is certainly not enough to point out all the possibilities within pragmatic rhetoric, but the discussion is provocative.

IV.   THE THEORY OF ARGUMENTATION IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES: AN OPENING TO DIALOGUE

The considerations we have just made regarding the emergence of pragmatic rhetoric, which we find in Foucault, are in charge of contributing to the discussion that has been made by New Rhetoric, initially presented by Chaïm Perelman in collaboration with Lucie Olbretchts-Tyteca. This New Rhetoric, contemporary with Foucault, appears precisely in 1948 with Perelman's research undertaken with Olbretchts-Tyteca. In the following

decade, the results of this research reached the world with the publication of Treatise on Argumentation: the new rhetoric, a work preceded by Rhetoric and Philosophy: for a theory of argumentation in philosophy. As the title of the founding work of this New Rhetoric makes evident, the research carried out by Perelman and Olbretchts-Tyteca focuses on questions linked to argumentation.

The rediscovery of classical rhetoric in our present, by these researchers, gave rise to new questions resulting from the careful reading carried out, above all, on the work of Aristotle, who is considered the father of the theory of argumentation. In other words, the reflections coined by Aristotle on argumentation are the main link between classical rhetoric and contemporary rhetoric that drastically opposes the Cartesian tradition, based on the formulation of logical reasoning and carried out by neopositivists.

The New Rhetoric conceives of argumentation, which is at the center of its interests, as something linked to the adherence (acceptance) of whoever occupies the role of interlocutor. Without this adherence there can be no argumentation, since it presupposes dialogue, its necessary condition of existence. For this reason, these authors dedicate themselves to the study of discursive techniques that allow the provocation or invitation of minds to adhere to the theses that are presented for their assent. It is from these studies that the notion of audience appears as a key concept to express this adherence on the part of those who appear as possible interlocutors, which configures the need for an audience so that arguments can be made. Contrary to such adherence, violence appears as the term that expresses this opposition to adherence through consensus and understanding, that is, this violence occurs because the necessary audience for argumentation cannot be obtained. These two concepts synthesize, in a way, this theory of argumentation spread by this New Rhetoric which, alongside this pragmatic rhetoric that we find in Foucault, can appear as another means of reflecting on who we are who use language that expresses what we do, do we think?

V.   CONCLUSION

Throughout this discussion, we sought to find, in Foucault's work, some elements that demonstrate the emergence of a pragmatic rhetoric, with which we can verify the effects of classical rhetoric on Western culture. In other words, this study compactly presents an initial discussion that aims to contribute to the new discussions that the New Rhetoric brings from the second half of the 20th century. Therefore, this pragmatic rhetoric that emerges from the undertakings carried out by Foucault invites us to perceive the rarefaction of the subject and

discourse, that is, with it we can reflect on the way in which institutions act on us, controlling discursive practices and who puts them into practice. In practice. The issue of parrhesia is also part of this pragmatic rhetoric, although many consider parrhesia to be an anti-rhetorical expression. In short, here we sought to present only a part of this perspective on the emergence of such pragmatic rhetoric; it is a demonstration of the flavor it can provide to those who dare to taste it and follow the opening that this discussion has raised. The work from now on is to organize all this information around this emerging pragmatic rhetoric to give it the contours of this project that we present in this discussion in this draft phase so that it meets this demand that intends to answer a series of new questions that may arise. of work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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