

Retoryka i pieniądze

Rhetoric and Money

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SPRAWOZDANIE/REPORT

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Sprawozdanie/Report: The International Conference *Rhetoric in Society 7. Rhetoric as Equipment for Living*, September 11-13, 2019, Ghent University, Belgium

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Between September 11-13, 2019, Ghent University in Belgium hosted the biennial international conference of the Rhetoric Society of Europe *Rhetoric in Society 7. Rhetoric as Equipment for Living*. The conference was organized by the Department of Educational Studies of Ghent University.

The topic of this year's edition focused on Kenneth Burke and his famous description of human beings as "symbol-making, symbol-using and symbol-mis-using animals". The aim of the conference was to explore how rhetorical concepts, theories and methods from a broad range of rhetorical traditions can be used as tools – equipment – to make students, teachers, scholars, activists and citizens "symbol-wise", to understand the way linguistic, cultural, narrative and affective symbols work and to develop critical engagement with those symbols. The organizers also wanted to explore if and how rhetoric can still be relevant in an increasingly media-saturated knowledge society that is continuously in transition and is becoming more complex and paradoxical by political, economic and cultural differences on a global scale.

The topic drew attention of many graduate students, rhetorical scholars and researchers from all around the world. Each day of the conference consisted of at least one keynote lecture and two or three papers and panel sessions, which makes an impressive number of almost 150 participants. The topics of panel sessions drifted from *(Re)tracing rhetorical power, Temporal Topoi in Rhetorical Practice to Religion and Rhetoric, Ancient rhetorical tools and exercises: an equipment for contemporary citizens?* to *Sensorial Rhetorics and Rhetorics of Science & Technology*.

Furthermore, the program of the conference consisted of a number of round-table discussions, a plenary panel on silence, performance and listening as equipment for living and a session that showcased content from *The Wordman*, a feature-length documentary film that focuses on the life and times of Kenneth Burke.

Among the invited keynote speakers were David Gruber from the University of Copenhagen, Lisa A. Flores from the University of Colorado, Boulder and Gert Biesta from Maynooth University. On September 10, the first day of the conference, David Gruber, who is Assistant Professor at the Department of Media, Cognition and Communication at the University of Copenhagen, gave a speech *Mixing Up Material-Semiotic Rhetoric: What Can A Milkshake Do?* In his speech Gruber analyzed the rhetorical power of milkshakes thrown at the U.K. politicians, e.g. the (in)famous scene of a milkshake thrown over Nigel Farage on May 20 this year. Following Kenneth Burke and being “symbol-wise” about this form of political protest, Gruber underlined the constitutive role of “thing-power” amid the representation of “milkshaking”. He argued that rhetoricians must pivot to see as suspect the rationality of symbol wisdom and allow themselves to be moved and influenced by the character of matter energy (things) and cultural signs (symbols). During his speech, Gruber also tried to stir discussion about material-semiotic conception of rhetoric which blends with aesthetic sensations into Kenneth Burke’s philosophy.

Lisa A. Flores, Associate Professor of rhetoric culture in the Department of Communication at the University of Colorado, Boulder, active member of NCA (National Communication Association) and the book review editor for the Quarterly Journal of Speech, gave her speech on the second day of the conference. In her lecture *Equipped to See Race: On Excess, Collapse, and the Rhetorical Force of Racial Recognition* Lisa Flores argued that discourses surrounding undesirable migration turn on what she named collapse-frames of particular bodies merging with articulations of particular kinds of movement. Flores stated that race is made discursively and always anew in tension with or response to fears that it does not exist. This, how Flores called it, “vulnerable ontology of race” troubles everyday presumption of racial difference which is verified by the physicality of racial-marked body. She underlined that every day racial recognition equips citizens concerned about the instabilities of race and migration to manage and control the shifting impermanence of race. At the end of her speech, Flores argued that rhetorical scholars must also interrupt the functioning of racial recognition to cultivate and sustain racism.

The third keynote speaker was Gert Biesta, part-time Professor of Public Education at Maynooth University, Ireland, part-time Professorial Fellow for Educational Theory and Pedagogy at the Moray House School of Education and Sport at the University of Edinburgh, and co-editor of the British Educational Research Journal and associate editor of Educational Theory. In his paper *A matter of understanding? Reconsidering the anthropology of education*, Gert Biesta showed that the recent turn in education from teaching to learning which puts the

emphasis on students and their sense-making relies strongly on Kenneth Burke's famous definition of human as "a symbol-making animal". Biesta focused on the anthropology of education, trying to explain to what extent we can and should assume that education is indeed first and foremost a matter of understanding or whether we need to think of human being as a being who can be taught or receive teaching.

Alongside three keynote speakers on the second day of the conference there was a special plenary session during which Cheryl Glenn from Pennsylvania State University, Shirley Wilson Logan from the University of Maryland and Krista Ratcliffe from Arizona State University explored the powerful and metalinguistic work rhetoric performs through silence, performance, and listening. Cheryl Glenn showed how marginalized groups use silence as an effective rhetorical tactic. Shirley Wilson Logan considered how representations evoked by the rhetorical performances of nineteenth-century women could shed light on current responses to rhetorical performances. Krista Ratcliffe, finally, addressed the challenge of listening across political affiliations, posing rhetorical listening as an alternative approach that generates reciprocal respect.

During this year's edition of *Rhetoric in Society* conference participants who are graduate students had a possibility to take part in a contest for best conference paper announced by the organizers. The winner of the prize in 2019 was Kacper Andrychowski from the University of Warsaw whose conference paper *In Search for Polish Ideographs – Comparison of McGee's (1980), Pisarek's (1992; 2002) and Kłosińska's (2012) Theories* was chosen the best. Beside the diploma the winner got two very interesting books: *Political Theory Between Philosophy and Rhetoric* by Giuseppe Ballacci and *Conflict, Co-Operation and the Rhetoric of Coalition Government* by Judi Atkins. Both books were funded and published by Palgrave Macmillan.

There were also two important announcements given in Ghent this year. The International Rhetoric Workshop organizing committee stated that the next edition of IRW will be held on July 8-10 at Colegio de San Luis (COLSAN) in San Luis Potosi, in Mexico. Further information is available on www.internationalrhetoric.com/workshop-2020/. The next edition of *Rhetoric in Society* conference will be organized by Universität Tübingen in Germany between 26 and 28 May. For more information, follow Twitter #RiS7.

Rhetoric in Society 7 was one of the best conferences I have ever been to, concerning both organizational and material matters. Again, after the IRW 2018 last year, the city of Ghent and Ghent University created a wonderful venue for rhetorical students and researchers from all disciplines and from all around the world. Each panel I attended was chaired very well and skillfully and there was

always time and opportunity to ask questions to speakers. From my point of view as a young scholar at the very beginning of his career, it was also of great advantage to meet many famous researchers in one place and have a little talk with each of them, which is what Ghent always guarantees. We are all looking forward to the next edition of *Rhetoric in Society* and other conferences organized by the Rhetoric Society of Europe. See you all in Tübingen!