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VISUAL AND DIGITAL RHETORIC:
THE EXPERIENCE OF COMPREHENSION

Research on rhetoric is often limited to the history of the question and the analysis of rhetorical techniques from the classical rhetorical canon. However, in the modern world, this is not enough. This article is devoted to the study of questions about visual and digital rhetoric: your interrelated areas that play a key role in the modern information world, because with the help of rhetoric, various models of reality are tested, mastered and constructed. Because rhetoric by its very nature acts as a mechanism for constructing and interpreting models of reality, performing a key role in the formation of public consciousness. Within the framework of this abstract, we will consider the main aspects of the study of these disciplines, as well as their impact on the formation and perception of messages in modern society. Due to the rapid development of technology and constant changes in the media environment, philosophical analysis of visual and digital rhetoric is becoming a necessary tool for understanding the essence of new challenges. Visual rhetoric can create specific frames of perception, controlling the audience's attention and influencing their interpretation of events and phenomena. Digital rhetoric studies the impact of digital technologies on communication methods, language use, and the effectiveness of persuasion in a digital environment. Philosophical analysis of these areas becomes particularly important in light of the rapid development of technology and dynamic changes in the media environment, and therefore in the human consciousness. The philosophy-based approach allows for a deeper understanding of the nature and differences between visual and digital rhetoric, their roots, and ethical aspects. The philosophical approach allows us to ask solid, fruitful questions about how visual and digital media influence our beliefs, values, and cultural norms. Philosophy manifests the potential challenges and risks associated with the use of visual and digital means of communication, as digital rhetoric faces a number of challenges, such as excessive amounts of information, ephemeral messages, awareness of falsehood-authenticity, technical limitations, and others. The article justifies the importance of philosophical analysis in the context of the modern information landscape, helping us to interact more consciously and effectively with these powerful means of communication and expression. The article provides a framework for critical thinking that allows society to adapt to constant changes and develop in conditions of information saturation.

Keywords: *rhetoric, philosophy, visual, digital*.

To discuss contemporary visual and digital rhetoric, let us first turn to the history of rhetoric. The term «rhetoric» is derived from the ancient Greek word «ῥητός», meaning spoken, agreed upon, permitted, justified by unwritten law. Rhetoric, as a philological discipline, exposes techniques and catalogs them, although this may detract from the enjoyment of the text.

As a philosophical discipline, rhetoric raises questions about understanding and explanation, freedom, and responsibility. The sophists were the first to develop rhetoric, interpreting it as a science of persuading anyone of anything. They believed that the most important skill was to charm with speech.

Plato, however, critiqued the sophists and rethought the goals and tasks of rhetoric. The philosopher considered the search for truth to be paramount, where participants in dialogue share a common purpose. Although this approach allowed rhetoric to acquire ethical support, it did not address rhetorical tasks directly.

Aristotle resolved these tasks, providing rhetoric with a theoretical and ethical foundation. Aristotle identified clarity as the chief quality of speech, distinguishing persuasion

from manipulation. According to Aristotle's vision, the task of rhetoric was to make moral principles, the foundation of social life, more convincing than selfish and material-practical considerations. In other words, the metaphysical component should be no less significant than the commercial one.

Hence, we will correlate successful speech with the principle of persuasiveness. Persuasive means lucid, vivid, justified, thoughtful, powerful, and vibrant.

Persuasion is the art of prompting people to do things they typically wouldn't. Aristotle defines rhetoric as the ability to discover potential means of persuasion concerning any subject. By imposing your viewpoint, you carefully choose words and shift the audience's perspective towards your desired goal.

Consider a scenario: someone is given a small, nondescript gray stone packaged in a beautifully adorned box for their celebration. Without explanations, the recipient is guaranteed bewilderment. We ascribe greater value to things we consider extraordinary. What's special about a pebble found on the road? However, the giver then reveals that it's a genuine moon rock collected by Neil Armstrong and his team during the 1969 Apollo 11 lunar mission. Suddenly, the pebble becomes extraordinary. Or, perhaps, it's a fragment of the Berlin Wall preserved after its fall in 1989? Alternatively, the giver might claim it's a piece from the ruins of the Temple of Artemis, burned by Herostratus in 356 BCE. Fact remains fact: it's just a stone. However, if we carefully choose words and imbue the pebble with certain qualities (historical significance, geological rarity), its value multiplies manyfold. For a specific person. If the gift recipient has never heard of Herostratus, Artemis, or her temples, a gap of misunderstanding arises. Our rhetorical efforts are in vain. But if we manage to utter words that resonate with the interlocutor, persuade them? We achieve our intended purpose.

Rhetoric posits that every speech creator must be unique, unlike others. Hence, the fundamental requirements: speech should convey something new, be fitting and correct. Such a speech emerges when a rhetorician can listen and comprehend the hopes and aspirations of their audience. Across different epochs, these aspirations varied. Therefore, let's continue our brief journey into the history of rhetoric.

In the late antiquity era, the art of oratory occupied the highest position in the education system. In primary school, students were taught to read and write; in secondary school, they learned to understand and appreciate ancient authors, while higher education focused on active mastery of rhetoric.

The specificity of medieval Byzantine and Western European rhetoric lies in its primary emphasis on preaching and theological polemics. Rhetoric is indispensable in this context.

During the era of rationalism, rhetoric somewhat yielded its positions, as it was considered that reason is powerless without experience and logical deduction. Rhetoric was supported solely by the education system. Hence, in the 17th to 19th centuries, rhetoric began to be regarded as a science of argumentation predominantly in written discourse. The societal significance of oratorical speech diminished during this time, while the importance of written literature − religious and political essays, philosophy, documents − increased. Consequently, private rhetoric gradually developed, formulating rules for creating specific types of works: legal speeches, sermons, letters, business documents, and so on.

The events of the 20th century sharply posed the problem of manipulating consciousness through mass media to philosophy and science. Interest in rhetoric grew as it became evident that understanding the technical intricacies of mass information could empower individuals to be relatively independent from mind control. In the 21st century, rhetoric experiences a new flourishing. It is no longer just a science but a fashionable one. Being successful now means learning the art of persuasion and applying it skillfully.

In the modern world, where visual and digital communication tools have become an integral part of culture, the study of metaphor in the context of these means is gaining increasing relevance. The question of metaphor in digital and visual rhetoric can be considered from various philosophical aspects: ontological (as means of communication and interaction in the online

environment); ethical aspect (questions about the ethics of using visual means to manipulate the audience or the ethics of using rhetorical strategies in the digital environment); epistemological aspect (how we gain knowledge, how it is formed and perceived through visual means, and what challenges it poses to our understanding of the world); hermeneutic-phenomenological aspect (to reveal different meanings and subtexts, search for meanings).

Let's create a typology of metaphorical strategies based on the embodiment method. Visual rhetoric does not include audio impressions and can create meanings without words or with a minimum of words because it uses images, colors, shapes, and composition to convey ideas and create impressions [Foss, 2004]. Such rhetoric can be as powerful and effective as oral or written rhetoric because it influences our perception and understanding of the world around us. Not every visual object is visual rhetoric [McComiskey, 2014]. What can turn a visual object into a communicative artifact is a symbol that conveys something and can be studied by rhetoric.

Visual rhetoric can influence the perception of reality by viewers, shaping their beliefs, thoughts, and relationships with the surrounding world. For example, the dramatic conflict between the title and the image sometimes becomes scandalous, becoming the point of meaning. For instance, in Constantin Brâncuşi's sculpture «Princess X» (1915–1916), viewers see an erect penis, while the author insisted that it depicts a self-absorbed princess.

Visual rhetoric can create specific frames of perception, managing the attention of viewers and influencing their interpretation of events and phenomena. It can be used in advertising, political campaigns, mass media, and other contexts where effective communication using visual means is important. For example, the painting «Uncle Bens and Viola on Treasure Island» demonstrates an ironic collision of identification codes: traditional intimacy with borrowed clichés. It blends together phantasmagoria based on a local myth and the primitiveness of the collective unconscious. Thus, visual rhetoric can have a significant impact on society, creating or exposing certain ideas, norms, values, and ideals [McComiskey, 2014].

Visual Rhetoric and Cultural Context: Visual rhetoric can be a reflection of cultural values, beliefs, and stereotypes [Blair, 2004]. It can use visual elements with specific cultural content to communicate with different audiences based on their cultural background. Thus, dispersal and unity are the oxymorons of Malevich, intended to encircle the beginning and end of world art history.

Visual Rhetoric and Ethics: The use of visual rhetoric can raise ethical questions. Visual images can be used to manipulate emotions, create stereotypes, or even cause harm through the use of images that offend or discriminate against certain groups of people.

Visual rhetoric can be a source of creativity and expression of individuality. It can reflect a unique style, views, ideas, and expressions of the author. For example, if the image of a ray is presented through coloristic means in Rembrandt's «Danae», such visual prescription pulls along the word. The beam as an «agent» of light becomes the subject of representation in the painting of the French Impressionists. Going outdoors, these artists set out to «portray» the very light and shade vibration of the air, using basic colors, an open stroke, a system of juxtaposition of values (a certain ratio of light and shadow). The beam as an optical illusion of a light flow can be especially clearly seen in the painting of O. Renoir. In Impressionism, the beam freed itself from the layering of literary style of previous centuries.

Visual rhetoric can reproduce aspects of time, preserving and transmitting history, cultural heritage, and changing trends and styles [Hocks, 2003]. It can influence the perception of time, evoking a sense of nostalgia or a deficit of the future depending on the visual elements and composition used.

Studying visual rhetoric can contribute to the development of critical thinking, as it requires the analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of visual elements and composition. The ability to recognize different visual strategies and their influence on perception can help develop critical thinking and critical analysis of visual messages.

Visual rhetoric represents an interesting field of research in philosophy because it reflects the complex interplay between visual elements, communication, subjective perception, ethics, creativity, and societal influence. However, visual and digital rhetoric are sometimes blended.

Digital rhetoric is a relatively new field of study that explores the impact of digital technologies on communication methods, language use, and persuasive effectiveness in the digital environment. Digital rhetoric relies on various methods to study different types of information, such as code, text, images, videos, etc. It involves the examination of various aspects of digital communication, such as the use of social media, email, websites, and other digital communication channels [Zappen, 2005]. The mythologization of the world related to technologies, especially the computer and digital space, is the sphere of everyday empiricism where the overlay of the sacred onto the profane occurs most visibly and in a tangible form. For instance, electricity becomes a bloodstream metaphor, and electronic devices are likened to the brain. According to Jean Baudrillard [Baudrillard, 1981], we encounter duality: metaphor is both a discourse about the thing and the thing itself. It is precisely as discourse about the thing that a message is formed based on the principle of operational preference or imperative. For example, the iconic code reproduces a real object that can be recognized by a number of essential features. He models the world with the help of well-established legends and myths, conveys socially significant attitudes, creates a unified picture reflecting the global vision of the world from the perspective of a separate community. Such a code can be considered as a model with which a message can be generated. Unlike the iconic code, which has a creative beginning, the meme, on the contrary, disorganizes reality, distorting attitudes. The purpose of the meme is to integrate into the information field, destroy a fragment of this field and in return give out a copy of the fragment with the opposite meaning. The effect is to generate laughter, which disarms those who try to adhere to traditional values.

Digital rhetoric raises new ethical questions, such as the use of persuasive methods in the digital space, data manipulation, fake news, digital activism, and more [Handa, 2004]. Digital rhetoric significantly influences society, including politics, culture, the economy, and other aspects of life. It affects the formation of public opinion, stereotypes, values, and information perception in the digital environment.

Digital rhetoric interacts with internet culture, including the use of memes, hashtags, internet slang, and other digital expressions to create persuasive messages. In the digital environment, visual elements like photos, videos, graphics, gifs, and other visual tools play a crucial role in information creation. Simultaneously, they may impoverish language [Hodgson, 2017].

Digital rhetoric faces several challenges, such as an excess of information, the ephemerality of messages, awareness of truthfulness-authenticity, technical limitations, and more. Studying digital rhetoric can help identify the development prospects of this field, including the creation of new methods and strategies for effective digital communication.

Culturally, digital rhetoric is conditioned, as different cultures have their own norms, values, beliefs, and communication methods. Investigating digital rhetoric can help reveal the influence of cultural contexts on the perception and use of digital communication tools.

Let's summarize: visual and digital rhetoric interact with each other and can have common aspects, but they also have distinct features. Here are some possible differences between visual rhetoric and digital rhetoric:

-Media Format: Visual rhetoric conveys messages through visual elements like images, graphics, photos, videos, etc., whereas digital rhetoric encompasses a broader range of digital communication tools, including written text, sound, video, graphics, interactive elements, etc.

- Audience Interaction: Visual rhetoric may be more passive, displaying visual elements perceived by the audience, while digital rhetoric might involve more active audience interaction, such as commenting, social media engagement, collaborative content creation, etc.

- Technical Capabilities: Digital rhetoric utilizes various technical capabilities of the digital environment, such as interactivity, animation, hyperlinking, multimedia, etc., enabling the creation of more complex and layered messages. In contrast, visual rhetoric may be more static with limited technical possibilities.

- Context of Use: Visual rhetoric can be applied in various contexts like art, design, advertising, etc., while digital rhetoric is used across a wide range of digital media such as websites, social media, email, messengers, applications, and other digital platforms.

- Dynamics and Variability: Digital rhetoric can be more dynamic and variable as it can be edited and adapted in real-time based on the communicator's and audience's needs. Visual rhetoric, on the other hand, may be more static with fewer opportunities for changes.

- Cultural Aspects: Digital rhetoric may reflect features of digital culture, incorporating memes, hashtags, emojis, and other digital elements with their own semantic and cultural nuances. While visual rhetoric may reflect cultural aspects, it is less dependent on digital elements.

- Ephemerality and Persistence: Digital rhetoric can be ephemeral, spreading quickly and widely but also vulnerable to oblivion and loss in the digital space. Visual rhetoric can be more persistent and enduring, especially in art, where it can be preserved for a long time.

In the context of comparing visual and digital rhetoric, several important philosophical considerations emerge. Visual rhetoric, grounded in perception through sight and visual elements, emphasizes the role of images, symbols, and art in communication. It raises questions about the nature of beauty, perception, and subjectivity, sparking discussions on how visual impacts shape our perceptions of the world.

Digital rhetoric is linked to media technologies and interactivity, posing philosophical questions about virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and digital manipulation. Digital tools not only enable the creation and dissemination of information but also allow control, prompting discussions on the ethical and socio-cultural aspects of power in the digital era.

Comparing visual and digital rhetoric also touches on the dimensions of time and space in communication. Visual rhetoric, based on static images, focuses on the moment of perception, while digital rhetoric provides opportunities for interaction and long-term impact, prompting reflections on our relationship with information in the long run. Additionally, philosophical analysis allows us to ask questions about our ability for critical thinking and analysis in the context of both types of rhetoric. What skills and knowledge are necessary for the effective interpretation and evaluation of visual and digital arguments? How do we develop critical thinking and media literacy in the conditions of the modern information landscape?

Thus, the philosophical comparison of visual and digital rhetoric provides a deeper understanding of the nature of communication, its evolution, and its impact on our understanding of the world. It also helps identify philosophical dilemmas and challenges facing contemporary society in the context of the information age. This topic should be further explored through the lenses of hermeneutic and phenomenological practices.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Дослідження риторики часто обмежуються історією питання та аналізом риторичних прийомів з класичного риторичного канону. Проте у сучасному світі цього недостатньо. Ця стаття присвячена опрацюванню питань про візуальну та цифрову риторики: двом взаємопов'язаним областям, які відіграють ключову роль у сучасному інформаційному світі, оскільки за допомогою риторики апробуються, опановуються і конструюються різноманітні моделі реальності. Тому що риторика за своєю природою виступає механізмом конструювання та інтерпретації моделей реальності, виконуючи ключову роль у формуванні громадської свідомості. В рамках даного абстракту ми розглянемо основні аспекти дослідження цих дисциплін, а також їх вплив на формування і сприйняття повідомлень у сучасному суспільстві. У зв'язку зі стрімким розвитком технологій і постійними змінами в медійному середовищі, філософський аналіз візуальної та цифрової риторики стає необхідним інструментом розуміння сутності нових викликів. Візуальна риторика може створювати специфічні кадри сприйняття, керуючи увагою глядачів і впливаючи на їх інтерпретацію подій і явищ. Цифрова риторика вивчає вплив цифрових технологій на способи комунікації, використання мови та ефективність переконання в цифровому середовищі. Філософський аналіз цих областей стає особливо важливим у світлі швидкого розвитку технологій і динамічних змін у медіа-середовищі, а через це і в людській свідомості. Підхід з використанням філософії дозволяє більш глибоко зрозуміти характер і відмінності візуальної та цифрової риторик, їх коріння та етичні аспекти. Філософський підхід дозволяє задавати ґрунтовні плідні питання про те, як візуальні та цифрові засоби впливають на наші переконання, цінності та культурні норми. Філософія маніфестує потенційні ризики, пов'язані з використанням візуальних і цифрових засобів комунікації, бо цифрова риторика стикається з низкою викликів, як от надмірна кількість інформації, ефемерність повідомлень, усвідомлення брехливості-справжності, технічні обмеження тощо. В статті обґрунтовується важливість філософського аналізу в контексті сучасного інформаційного ландшафту, що допомагає нам більш свідомо та ефективно взаємодіяти з цими потужними засобами спілкування та вираження поглядів. Стаття надає фреймворк для критичного мислення, що дозволяє суспільству адаптуватися до постійних змін і розвиватися в умовах інформаційного насичення.

Ключові слова: *риторика, філософія, візуальне, цифрове.*