Arthur Schopenhauer's Place in Classical Rhetoric's Evolution

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Summary: The material presents Schopenhauer's contribution for rhetoric universal history. Using the content of the Eristic Dialectics' tract and the writing style, the philosopher of Berlin re-established the link between philosophy and rhetoric and extended on about a century and so the existence of classical rhetoric.
Key words: rhetoric, philosophy, eristic dialectics, rhetoric stratagems.

1. Philosophy and rhetoric

Virtually, Arthur Schopenhauer is an idealistic philosopher[1], from Plato's stirps, passing through Kant's vision and Indian traditions (*Upanişade, Vede*, and Buddhism). Outwardly[2], the world is prevalent by the wish of living, a law common to all creatures, from the elementary forms of existence to those endowed with consciousness. This law stimulates the individual, obliges him permanently to confront collectivity, through a permanent fight of conservation and self-assertion. The general effect is an immense and continuous distress or, in the happiest case, boredom. For the looser the result is suffering, for the winner – boredom[3]. Of these two rods, man cannot liberate himself but through his aesthetic experiences and, more profoundly, through *nirvana*, assuaging the will of living.

The everlasting fight with the others that inner will imposes to people is manifested on all plans, including the plan of current discussions, which Schopenhauer often compares them with the frequent duels in that time. Or what are the odds of a duel? You want to win, by all means, because otherwise you will be defeated, murdered or, in the best case, wounded and, in any case dishonoured. It is understood that in a duel each fighter protects his truth.

The absolute truth, that Plato, Kant or more recently Hegel, Schopenhauer's contemporary were talking about, it didn't exist, in fact in the latter's opinion.

Accordingly, the philosopher created a small rhetoric discourse, which he presented in front of his students of Berlin University, in the academic year 1830 – 1831, entitled *Eristic dialectics or The art of being always right*.

We very well know that the essence of the discourse of a villain ante-speaker is the absence of any principle in debating the subject and in the approaching of general argumentation and details. Formally, this means combining logical series in argumentation and contra-argumentation, misapplying the subject, the voluntary confusion between truth and false, in a word, "hazy water", with the purpose that the interested party should fish where the pray is. This ignoble tactics is found in the strategies described by Schopenhauer almost everywhere because a rhetoric principle is not ever, practically "pure", even in its misery, meaning it does not appear singularly, but in the strangest combination with others, and does not appear in its authentic evolution, exemplified by the classical rhetoric manuals and in the patterns' books (*topoi*), but appears mostly "as if…", "as a kind of…". We may say that in such a "technique" even the deceits are… deceitful.

About the 29th stratagem ("the diversion") Schopenhauer said that it was mainly "instinctive". In fact, almost all are more or less instinctive. Wise people, as well as those with reduced intellectual capacities use them with the same frequency and the more aggressive they are – by nature or by their surroundings, the more they use them, perfecting them naturally, spontaneously, without aiming at this and without being conscious of this.

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[1] He considered that a true philosopher cannot be but an idealist.
[2] As we know, in Plato's opinion objects and human beings do not have a true existence: the world changes all the time, but is never there.
[3] A Schopenhauer's thinking sounds like that: „I suffer or I bore myself, so I exist."

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We may say that the only handicaps in the natural using of those strategies or at least some of them are education, culture and religion. The moral perceptions that the didactic authorities (parents, school, mass-media, society), aesthetic and cultural (formative values of art products, of philosophical systems, of rights, etc.) and divine authority (Christian moral and all the other types of religious moral) inoculate to us, forbid us to reach them, because they teach us the fact that they are parts of human being "low products" along with lying, theft, killing, sins like greed, alcoholism, adultery, etc.

Are all those "strategies" only samplings of people's perversity, decay and primitive, instinctual simplicity?

The rhetoric figures of speech described in the philosopher's Academic course in Berlin may be equally instinctive or elaborated, may be "indecent" (germ. *unverfroren*) or moral, as well as they may be either popular, vulgar, in the pejorative meaning of the term, or cultivated by the most elevated spirits.

Enlarging the analogies' frame, we may say that in the same conversation of popular background we could find even the most subtle figures of thinking, of ambiguity (substitution, attenuation, irony, simulation, etc.) and the most primitive ones. Why do we have to name only the latter strategies? Etymologically, we should rather name the first ones like that, because they are developing during time and they are prerequisite theoretically preparing, they are forming a cultural larger basis and a systematisation power with more pronounced spiritual finesse. And the latter we should literally call "elusions"! In fact, all are parts of the same big family of figures, simpler or more complex, of language, namely of thought and speech. It is true that some times, such "figures" are listed as elements of "high style", intellectual, in writing, that we objectively suppose to be more elaborated. This is the case of 36th stratagem, of which Schopenhauer directly said that it was used even by his German contemporary philosophers, which approached a scientific and grave superiority issuing ineptitudes followed by ripper and unreal examples. But those who researched during centuries the art of speech knew, on the one hand, that every *figure of speech* (*recte* "stratagem", "elusion", etc.) may be used either in a simple, spontaneous discussion, or in a philosophical, scientific, moral-formative, of great aesthetic, literary work. We may say about the mechanism and the rhetoric effects of *chiasmus* and *homeoteleuton* (the repetition of endings in words, a near rhyme) that they belong to high style. In fact, they appear in vernacular speech[4].

On the other hand, the most *figures of speech* have many levels of complexity: they may be either simple, usual, even primitive, appearing in complicated, subtle forms; may be mixed, more or less resembling, or may be partial or truncated, etc.; or may be spontaneous, in oral speech, or meticulous, in writing, organized in a structure which is sustained by a verbal, academic architecture, may be either witty, bright, sheer, touching softly the interlocutor spirit, or artless, bruised, destroying totally the contra argument of the ante-speaker (speaker, interlocutor).

Going back to Schopenhauer in order to approve him, when he said that the 2nd and 3rd strategies were "a kind of" *mutation controversiae* or that the 20th stratagem was "an application" of the so called by classical rhetoric *fallacia non causae ut causae*. "The diversion" (cf. 29th stratagem) is an intermediary stage between *argumentum ad personam* and *argumentum ad hominem*.

Regarding the "high" and "low" figures of speech, the long theory of "the authority argument" (comparing to the others) of 30th stratagem, is among the few ones in which we categorically distinguish between enlighten and primitive spirits. This does not mean that some would not use this stratagem, but it means that educated people have more possibilities to use it efficiently. Schopenhauer showed that educated people, those who represent something in their field, hardly or at all recognise other people as "professionals". It is interesting the lucid-ironic position of the philosopher towards people that "know everything" about their field/profession they are specialised for (see 30th stratagem). On the other side, in his theory, there are simple people, who accept as much notoriety in so many fields as their own knowledge and abilities are more limited. Schopenhauer categorically classifies the Manichaeism of the spirits in their debate of ideas: cult and illiterate (germ. *gelehrten* vs. *ungelehrten*). The latter compulsory used "the

[4] Cf. P.Gh. Bârlea, *Contraria Latina, Contraria Romanica*, Editura ALL Educațional, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 228-232.

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authority argument" for their thesis, as "a mutual understanding". This not means that the others, educated people, could not use it. On the contrary, analysing Schopenhauer's advice, we came to the conclusion that those could do it in many situations:

a. Using among them this type of argument, meaning they relate on authentic values of human spirit;

b. Talking about valuable authorities and ideas, their less educated interlocutors can not repel because they are not familiar with them;

c. Taking advantage of the ignorance of some interlocutors, they can imagine convenient names and ideas, which they can misinterpret in certain quotations.

At the end of the 30th stratagem, the author said that good people, arguing with gregarious spirits, must be advised to resign and use themselves the same procedure, for their interlocutors' sake. In fact, there is no resign. By his nature, people adapt to the situation, saving themselves with the most adequate means possible.

2. The style of Schopenhauer's lectures

The current rhetoric handbook constituted the content of an academic course that Arthur Schopenhauer lectured at Berlin University, as a private-reader, in the academic year 1830-1831. More precisely, we are talking about some course notes, proved by the numerous "assignations", "notes", and "additions" of the text that the author had never published, because he never found the time to review it and to finalise it in a unitary and a publishing form[5]. In 1851 he continued the ideas of this book in the philosophic dialogue *Parerga and Paralipomena* which brought him consecration.

That is how we explain those come-backs, parallelisms, developments from the explicative texts and representation of the strategies that we discussed above. Those observations are found in the work's structure and they constitute the most conspicuous and accessible aspect of it[6]. The truth is that, generally, the style of Schopenhauer's works represents Schopenhauer man. Consequently, Buffoon's thesis is confirmed here completely, more than it was needed.

The Romanian translators of his fundamental work, *The world as will and representation*, confessed that only when they had started work they understood why a philosopher so loved by T. Maiorescu, M. Eminescu and *The Junimea* and post *Junimea* groups by those who started modern Romanian culture, in general, remained untranslated in our country for so much time, excepting the aphorisms and other secondary works[7]. Criticising the contemporary philosophers and also his forerunners, the "rebel" Schopenhauer called down to them for the fact that they hid their theories' basic flaws in the so-called academic style, in the elegant sentence, "lofty, elevated". We found the idea all over his writings, from the exposing article "*Academic philosophy*" to his latest works. In the tract "*Eristic dialectics*" those example comes as a study natural good for the 3rd stratagem that called Hegel without a doubt, or in 36th stratagem in which the beneficiaries are taught to overwhelm the adversary with grandiose quotations (even invented), with an ambitious language, etc., as, otherwise, proceeded – they said – some author's contemporary German "philosophers".

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[5] After the delayed success of the main works, the publishers started to exploit the older, original works. The course notes entitled „ *The art of being always right or Eristic dialectics*" have been published for the first time, after the author's death by Julius Frauenstädt, in *Arthur Schopenhauers handschriftlicher Nachlaß*, Brockhaus, Leipzig, 1864.

[6] In fact, reviewing some texts is a part of Schopenhauer's style. Even works that he approached more and ran back over systematically and published only after he had given a „unitary" form („simple and solid", an he self appreciated his work) are followed by „supplements", etc., which means that his thought dynamic was in agreement with the stated idea in these works, that "nothing is static but beauty". Thus, *Die Welt als Wille und Vortstellung* „The world as a will and representation" is formed by a first unitary volume, in 4 big „books", summarising 71 of paragraphs (vol. I – 445 p., in the above Romanian version), followed by 5 supplements: 2 at the first book (17 chapters, 300 p.) forming vol. II, then other 3 supplements, one for each of the following 3 books (summarising 33 chapters, 450 p.), which form vol. III of the book. Therefore, the supplements represent almost double of the proper text.

[7] Emilia Dolcu, Viorel Dumitraşcu and Gheorghe Puiu, *Notă asupra traducerii*, in: Arthur Schopenhauer, *Lumea ca voinţă şi reprezentare*, vol. I-III, Editura „Moldova", Iaşi, 1995, p. XIX.

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Schopenhauer oppose against those not only his ideas, but a proper, "free chosen" style, in which everything, from the general architecture of the sentences to the terminology, from the examples quotations to the use of negation, are original.

At the sentence level, Schopenhauer's syntax was declared by specialists as a true nightmare. Tree like sentence, with more than 20 clauses, described, of course, mainly the proper philosophical text in "The *World as will...".* But, the luscious style appeared in "*Eristic dialectics*", less symmetrical and less difficult than in the most elaborated Greco-Latin texts' writings. In addition, Schopenhauer omitted the subject, if this was once used in a sentence, used a common predicate once, even if in the rest of the sentence it was repeated in many forms (circumstantial, towards subjective clause, etc.). The affirmative answers were placed very far, as the Romanian translators remarked. The anacolutha, real or apparent, were very frequent. The 10th stratagem, for example, was written by a long single sentence, the affirmations were expressed by negations, and these may take a double form, unaccepted in general, by German language logic.

In the descriptions of the stratagems, there were only 3-4 to 10 clauses, because the texts were expressed as "pills", for the practical, strict use of the text. But the difficulties are the same. The style of "recipe", due to the nature of the text imposes, for example, using the impersonals forms of the key-verbs. Beyond the great differences in expressing the impersonal in different languages, the author changed the form in his language (*Man kann* „man can", „we can", etc., *man merkt* „man understand", „we understand"; *es weiss* „it is known, it is understood" *es legt* „it is placed"; *wir haben* „we have", etc.), sometimes so unexpected, as we don't know to whom the discussed argument is referring to. For our Romanian version, we used mainly I person in plural in order to call the direct beneficiary of the success' "recipe": "let's avoid the avulsion of the approvals…", "let's approach a serious tone…". It seemed to us that this solution marked some solidarity between the author and the reader. As we said, the author often changed his language formula, wherefore in Romanian we should have changed the formulae: *we can / it is possible / you can /* (the speaker) *can*, etc. We followed these changes only in few places, using, for example, the future indicative form, the 2nd person plural, "*it will get you out of the mess*", the conjunctive with hortatory value, when the original did not mark a direct addressing to the receptors (students / readers), cf. the 1st: "*let's extend*", the 38th: "*let's approach a personal tone*", etc. We avoided the perspectives' superposition, because, if the author presented in the same sentence the argument used in both perspectives (argument and contra-argument, logical clause and its reciprocal), then sometimes we do not understand who is the emitter of the discussed message and who is the receptor. The latter was designated, mainly, by the term "adversary", "enemy", etc. But, mostly Schopenhauer said, simply, "he" or leave the roll of the subject to the verbal termination. Or, if the emitter subject was expressed also by the pronoun "he" or, vaguely, by the verb termination (e.g. answers), the reader did not understand who was fooled by whom, using the above stratagem. In the 9th stratagem, for example, the second sentence begins with "he" („*er weiss dann nicht…*"), without someone being called in the first sentence, and the last sentence is ambiguously written. The 9th, 10th, 11th, stratagems were full of "he" pronoun or verbs in the 3rd person that we did not know what they were referring to. For the same reason we shorted the sentences. Romanian language tolerates the ample sentence, the rhetorical periods, but we considered that, in this case assembling and reassembling such psycho-logical and psycho-linguistic mechanisms are becoming more efficient by adopting some short and clear sentences. This thing allows us a more precise marking of the subject and underlining of the opposites "we" vs. "they"; "you" vs. "they", "you" vs. "he", etc. Harder to solve were the situations in which the author makes an assertion using a negative context and vice-versa. It is the case of 12th stratagem, in which the example about the figurative denomination, *recte* "nicknaming" things, situations, beings, is functioning in reverse towards the theoretical formulation of the principle.

Moreover, receiving the Schopenhauer's text, including the translation, is difficult because of unexpected passing from German to Latin or Greek. The author addressed evidently to educated

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people[8]. Implicit, he introduced in the discourse speciality terms and expressions, even sentences hardly giving their equivalent in the modern languages (*nego majorem, nego minorem* „neg majora, neg minora", i.e. „I deny the predicate, I deny the subject"). Talking about a speciality language, neither these rare translations and, sometimes, nor the explanations of the context were not enough for an uninitiated. In addition, sometimes the same term was differently explained, in different contexts, see the case of the figure called *apagoga*, from the preliminary theoretical text, *The fundament of any dialectics*, also found in the content of the 24th, 25th stratagems, paralleling *instantia*, the Latin equivalent, but with other meaning. The first was named and then explained by its representation in Greek, the second was named in the modern language (German), and then rewritten in Greek and Latin without determining whose language *enstasis* and respectively, *exemplum in contrarium* belong to, and finally the content was explained.

Taking into account the same educated public, the author referred to antique authorities – Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, to works like *Hippias major* – without worrying for the quotations' accuracy and the texts' references. Furthermore, the quotations and the references to personalities and works of all world cultures were specific for him. Moreover, regarding his auditory culture, his contemporaries, in general, not only that he did not translate the foreign quotations, but sometimes he did not transcribe them integrally, cf. *Intellectus luminis…* of 35th stratagem. The Latin and Greek maxims, the sayings, fix formulae for many ethics, philosophic concepts, in general, were taken from the current speech of the German intellectuals of the century. That is how we explain the mix of linguistic levels and registers, the association of high, literal style with familiar, colloquial students' style.

The colourful vocabulary, greatly used in his writings, was a particular cause of Schopenhauer's receiving. At first, he shocked, like his entire style, and provoked reservation towards his work. Later, this free, unconventional style, appealed to the public and not by chance the youth and the middle class were those who ensured his entrance on the narrow stage of the century's celebrities. Besides the freedom of the others levels of the language, the vocabulary constituted, as we said before, an aspect of his original style. The terms of standard literary language and those of logic, of rhetoric specialities, combines with the terms of many human knowledge fields: *apagoga* (as above) is not at first explained, then *osteology*, etc. But he went further, using terms from usual language and even from the popular register, or, as we said, from students' slang, from young men interested in duels' style, etc. In the 18th stratagem, there was an expression that we translated in Romanian by "let's break the cat", in other paragraphs we preferred a more neutral equivalent.

The metaphors, the metonymies and the synecdoche, the epithets, the comparisons, the iterations, are not only direct or indirect theoretical, but also used in the text, in a very personal manner. Near a scientific term he placed a popular epithet, near a philosophic principle, expressed in Greek or Latin, he wrote a slang explanation, etc. The above translators of *The world as will…* stated at the end of their translation: "we thought that he is the writer with the richest vocabulary in the world"[9].

This is the general impression that the lecture of his works produces. In the special case of the little rhetoric hand book, many expressions and formulae of non-academic language represent, in fact, a sample of stylistic subtlety, because the author did not anything else but adapting his discourse form not only to the receptors, as we said before, but also to its content. The vulgar, usual feature of the described argumentative procedures is underlined by using the vernacular expression in the explaining of the functional mechanism and of the contexts that can be used. Therefore, unacademic expressions of those equivalent with the Romanian forms "*to make someone lose his head*", "*to confuse*", "*to make fun of somebody*", "*to judge wrongly*", "*fight*" are from the stylistic field called "the terms attribute". In the same respect, the frequency of some areas represents a

[8] In this case, the first level of the receptors was that of the students. In the first half of the 19th century, any German student was forced to know Latin and Greek, even if he studied medicine, sciences or technique. More over, this was compulsory for the "humanists" – letters, philosophy, history, theology.

[9] Emilia Dalcu, Viorel Dumitrașcu, Gheorghe Puiu, *loc. cit.*

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perfect adequacy of the form to the content. Dishonesty is the base for the most used processes in this manner of involving in a debate of ideas. Conclusively, the word *baffle* is frequently found in these texts. The 16th stratagem is exclusively concerning with this "method", the *baffle* being defined as "dishonesty argue, seeing the details". Others terms, from the same semantic field are: *art, elusion, trick, slyness, illusions* (cf. 25th, etc.).

The idea of "interlocutor" itself was designated by terms as *adversary*, *enemy*, etc. Frequently, he do not name it, using, as we showed before, a personal pronoun, which accumulates, from the context, a large despise burden, inconsideration, hate: *he, this, that*, or using the verbal termination written before ("*er macht*"). Since the fundamental metaphor of the verbal dispute was the duel, fencing terminology, of fight in general, dominated the texts: *guns, to disarm, to arm, to capitulate, to punch, punch, feint, etc.*

Schopenhauer did not avoid any of these categories of words, expressions, verbal images. On the contrary, he used them with a certain luxury. When he wrote those course notes, he was in a war with the whole world, especially the academic one. But, in the case of these texts, the expressions represent even the essence of the message: in order to win, you should fight, by all means; you must be tough, not gracious or generous. Not because he agreed with that – the theory of art's redemption, of moral and mercy will constitute the axis of his philosophic system – but only he knew very well that his way of thinking, of acting and of speaking is planted in the human being from the day he was born. His direct, brutal advices send us to what we usually call "a primitive way of having a discussion".

In the content plan, the central idea is that no trick is too infamous to win a dispute. The only scruple is having no scruple in choosing the means to win in the dispute you engaged to. In the expression plan, those ideas correspond to total freedom in choosing the words, in forming the clauses and sentences.

Seduced by the author personality, by the title of this tract and the small dimension of the text which made him accessible, I started its translation with my soul. But soon, we ware obliged to see that the difficulties are far greater that those humanly predictable. So I appealed to the older translations in Italian, French, etc. Their first impressions were extremely unpleasant. Some of those versions seemed realised by translators who did not know either the base-language, or the target-language. Then I was forced to accept that the numerous compromises (long sentences in French – *horribile dictu* – etc.) are suggested by the original text's nature.

Therefore, if the readers of the current edition will reproach something like before, we shall not mind so much. We shall receive gratefully the critical observations and we shall be pleased with the only merit of announcing to the Romanian language readers an interesting contribution to the universal history of rhetoric, due to one of the brightest spirit of modern world.

3. Conclusions

i. Arthur Schopenhauer brought back rhetoric under the philosophy wing, when it had started to be mistaken for stylistic, literary theory, communication theory, because he bounded the philosophic concept of "truth".

ii. Therefore, classical rhetoric prolongs its existence to another century and so.

iii. Moreover, this makes the object of a lucid analysis, due to one of the most lucid mind of modern era.

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