

Rhetoric finds its roots in ancient Greece. Aristotle, one of the earliest teachers of rhetoric, recognized that conflict would always be part of human interaction because people differ in opinions. This aspect of human relationships is extremely important because human evolution and progress depend on the individual's ability to work as a group. Acting as a group is only possible when members agree on a course of action. Discussions among the members are necessary to make a collective decision and the key to avoid delays in taking action lies on the ability to win over the will of those in opposition.

Rhetoric is the study of how to overcome resistance by presenting one's ideas effectively with the ultimate purpose of persuading others to agree with one's thesis. Aristotle's teachings provided a framework to define a thesis, look for arguments to support it, and techniques to effectively deliver the message to a specific audience in a particular situation. He emphasized the importance of five ingredients that work synergistically to present an effective discourse: 1) Invention - quality of content, 2) Arrangement - order of ideas, 3) Style - the character of the speech, 4) Delivery - voice and body language, and 5) Memory - fluency, a perceived confidence. The choices made on these five areas, are conscious decisions with the purpose of causing an effect on the audience. Aristotle also proposed that evidence is based on ethos, pathos, and logos.

Rhetoric is applied by rhetors and rethoricians. Rhetors use rhetoric to persuade an audience, rethoricians to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the rhetor's efforts. Rhetors use rhetoric methodology to guide their choices on invention, arrangement, style, delivery and memory. The success of a rhetor also depends on being clear about the purpose of his discourse, knowledge of his audience, and his choice of genre to deliver the message. Rethoricians use rhetoric principles to evaluate the effectiveness of the rhetor's choices. The method used by rethoricians to criticize texts was fairly the same until the last half of the 20th century when, due to the change of values and communication media, new methods were developed to analyze texts by magnifying the underlying messages; they are called rhetorical perspectives.

The Neo-Aristotelian perspective was the perspective used during the thousands of years that rhetoric has been practiced. It helps the rethorician to discover persuasive strategies in discourse, based on Aristotle's five canons.

The Narrative Perspective focuses on the moral of a story, the Dramatistic on the justification of breaking rules of living, the Marxist on the understanding of who dominates and who is subdued, and the Feminist on the gender roles in terms of appropriateness and desirability. These four perspectives were deemed necessary to address the changing social dynamics.

The Illusion of Life Perspective focuses on the role of music and lyrics in persuading an audience, the Visual Pleasure Theory Perspective on the influential role of visual images, and the Media-Centered Perspective on the media's persuasive effects. These three perspectives handle the influence that communication media has on delivering a message.

Rhetoric is the means by which communication is enhanced to increase the chances of achieving the expected results. At the same time, rhetoric is also the means by which an audience can evaluate and understand the true messages contained in a text and make an educated decision to accept or reject them.