

The voice and emotion: a tribute to rhetoric

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We live in a period of great developments in linguistic studies on orality, phonetics, phonology and prosody, which, allied with the parallel developments in the studies of cognition, pragmatics, the corpora, the contributions of phono-audiology and the new technologies, are demonstrated to be more and more exhaustive, complex, and sophisticated.

In this context, important as well are the studies on the quality of the human voice. It is known that the human voice is an extremely flexible medium and one of the most important forms of transmitting and exchanging information between people. It is also known that the voice's messages tend to be more or less "colored" by emotional meanings, positive or negative, subtle or strong, which constitute an important source of voice variation. Thus, the voice acts like a powerful messenger not only of the linguistic content of speech, but also of the physiological and psychological state of the speaker. The notion that changes in the expression of the voice can be caused by emotions is attributed to Charles Darwin (1872 - 1934).

The emotions, for their part, are interesting to many sciences like psychology, philosophy, sociology, and communication studies, among others.

The current theories of the emotions do not share a consensus. For example, there are theories that divide the emotions into primary (basic) and secondary. Others include factors such as valence and activity; still others distinguish emotion from affect. They understand that affect is bio-physiological, is a more primitive response to a stimulus, and that emotion is of a cognitive nature.

Although there is no unanimity among theorists of emotion, there is a consensus among them as to the existence of primary emotions, which are universal, not dependent on culture, and which include joy, fear, terror, sadness, disgust, and surprise (Murray e Arnott, 1993), understood as responses to environmental events. These primary emotions can be also characterized as high activity (terror) or low activity (sadness) emotions and reflect a context between nature and man.

The secondary emotions, for their part, are affected by culture, like, for example, love, empathy, uncertainty, and timidity, and hence some of them may not be universally recognizable across world cultures.

Whether primary or secondary, affect or emotion, these manifestations emerge in different forms: by facial expression, by movements (gestures) and by the quality of the voice. Various authors today are interested in the quality of the voice and, mainly, in the relation between emotion and voice. This topic has been widely researched, both theoretically and empirically, from diverse foci. For example, there are studies that are dedicated to the study of the relation of voice, emotion and culture; of voice, emotion, and personality; of voice, emotion, and smile, of voice, emotion, and gender. There are studies related to the production and reception of emotion in the voice and to the phonetic description of emotion in the voice. There are studies that analyze the interaction between acoustic data and linguistic data for the recognition of emotion in the voice; experiments for the automatic recognition of emotion in the voice, studies for emotion in speech variation, the simulation of emotion of the voice in speech synthesizers.

Despite all this wealth, rarely in these studies is there found any mention of the great

contribution of the classics to this theme. In relation to emotion, one cannot forget that Plato and mainly Aristotle were the precursors of this study, with the latter, due to his contribution, being considered the father of human psychology. Nor can the important contribution of the Stoics to the emotions be forgotten.

But, the rhetorical studies on pathos and persuasion and on the importance of the voice in the transmission and reception of emotions were chiefly important.

In this study, I intend to return to the contributions of classical rhetoric on this theme, through a survey of the primary sources of this ancient art, mainly the Rhetoric of Aristotle and the Rhetoric to Herennius, On Invention, and On Oratory of Marcus Tullius Cicero, with the aim of showing that there are many today, to a certain extent, "reinventing the wheel."

There is no intention to disparage the present state of the art, but to contribute to the recognition of the importance and current relevance of the work of the ancients, revaluing rhetoric and attempting to overcome the prejudice of which this art is still a victim today.

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