

Babeş-Bolyai University

Cape Town University

RHETORIC OF CRISIS AND POLITICS OF HOPE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workshop: Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 21-25 June 2010

PARTICIPANTS:

Ciprian MIHALI, PhD, Associate Professor, scientific director (UBB, RO)

Philippe-Joseph SALAZAR, PhD, Distinguished Professor, scientific director (UCT, SA)

Ian GLENN, PhD, Professor (UCT, SA)

Emilian CIOC, PhD, researcher, *young researcher* in the project (UBB)

Sergio ALLOGGIO, PhD, researcher (UCT, SA)

Ştefan MAFTEI, PhD, assistant, research team member (UBB, RO)

Laura ILINESCU, PhD candidate, research team member (UBB, RO)

Lorin GHIMAN, PhD candidate, research team member (UBB, RO)

GUESTS:

Ion COPOERU, PhD, Associate Professor, UBB Cluj-Napoca

Camil UNGUREANU, PhD, Visiting Professor (Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona)

Ruxandra CESEREANU, PhD, Associate Professor (UBB, RO)

Radu BOGDAN, PhD, Junior Lecturer (UBB, RO)

Ana Enache, PhD candidate (UBB, RO)



University "Babeş-Bolyai" Cluj-Napoca



University of Cape Town

RHETORIC OF CRISIS AND POLITICS OF HOPE

Workshop, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 21-25 June 2010

June 23, 2010

- 9h00 – 10h00: **Ian GLENN**, *Sports events and nation-building: the rhetoric of advertising and the Soccer World Cup in South Africa in 2010*
- 10h00 – 11h00: **Sergio ALLOGGIO**, *Rorty and Lyotard on Politics and Justice*
- 11h00 – 11h30: Coffee break
- 11h30 – 12h30: **Camil UNGUREANU**, *The Place of Rhetoric in Habermas and Derrida*
- 12h30 – 15h00: Lunch
- 15h00 – 18h00: *Hope and Solidarity in "post" Societies* (panel coordinated by **Ciprian Mihali**). Interventions: Ruxandra Cesereanu, Ion Copoeru, Laura Ilinescu.

June 24, 2010

- 9h00 – 10h00: **Philippe-Joseph SALAZAR**, *Rhetorical Categories on Justice*
- 10h00 – 11h00: **Stefan MAFTEI**, *Hope, Dissent and the (Un)rhetorical Presidency: Managing Democracy in Post-1989 Romania*
- 11h00 – 11h30: Coffee break
- 11h30 – 12h30: **Emilian Cioc**, *Engineering Hope. Promissory gestures in politics*
- 12h30 – 15h00: Lunch
- 15h00 – 18h00: *Democracy postponed: Fallacies in the Crisis Discourse* (panel coordinated by **Emilian Cioc**). Interventions: Radu Bogdan, Lorin Ghiman, Ana Enache.

June 25, 2010

- 9h00 – 12h00: Prospective analysis of the project.

GENERAL PRESENTATION

The workshop *RHETORIC OF CRISIS AND POLITICS OF HOPE* held at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca represented the third common working session with the attendance of Romanian and South-African researchers accordingly to the Realization plan scheduling activities in the research project *Rhetorics of social justice and deliberative perception of the rule of law in post apartheid South-Africa and post communist Romania*. The first common workshop was held in Cape Town in July 2009 having an introductory purpose, while the second workshop—*Post-Communism, Post-Apartheid: Truth, Reconciliation and their Plural Norms*, 9-12 September 2009—was dedicated to more specific issues approached in a comparative framework. The third workshop was meant to link previous themes and research results to present-day issues, related especially to the global financial crisis.

SCIENTIFIC PRESENTATION

“Post societies”—and post-apartheid South Africa and post-communist Romania among them—are unavoidably related to hope-oriented social and political experiences. In this perspective, “transition” can be described as highly structured frame dealing with time, hopes, promises, commitments and also failures, perjuries or disappointments. In addition, our leading idea for this workshop is to analyse the ways in which the recent and ever more dominant discourse of crisis affects the representation of Romania and South Africa in terms of transitional societies.

Presentations delivered in this context constitute elements of a work in progress. They are partial results of the research carried out in the framework of the project. We present hereafter a series of abstracts summarizing the communications given by the participants.

REPORTS ON INTERVENTIONS:

LECTURES:

Philippe-Joseph SALAZAR

Title of the intervention:

Some Rhetorical Categoremes regarding Dissent and Justice

Report on the intervention:

My point of departure in tackling tensions between rhetoric oriented readings on certainty, democracy, beliefs and institutions is philo-logical, in the frame of mind of Émile Benveniste's *Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*. To do rhetoric is, for me, to pay attention to words and arguments shaped by words in situations of exigency, as mental institutions. Dissent is a game with exigency, what we also call in rhetoric "the rhetorical situation" whereby more than communication is set in motion: that is, acts—performatives acts—of solution-scenarios that side-step dogmatic or accepted consensus. Or, to re-use Lévi-Strauss's notion of "mythème"—that is stories and actions that express a unit of signification which, in turn, sheds light on behaviours and beliefs—, to do rhetoric is to pay attention to rhetorical categoremes, or "rhetoremes". That is, to go to the foundation and, within language as presence to the world, and rhetoric as presence to the *polis*, to trace, for what concerns here today, the site of dissent. My first remark refers to the discussion we had in this group regarding the rule of law, *l'État de droit*. It has to do with the State and dissent. What interests me is the propinquity that "State" and "dissent" entertain. My second remark concerns justice and dissent. Again, I pay attention to the words and therefore I observe an analogy: to dissent is to judge. My third remark concerns the intention of dissent, that is, a critique of the State which may be regarded as a direct challenge, perhaps even an upset. With regard to justice, it is clear that the judgment passed by an act of dissent is a censoring judgment. My final remark concerns actors of dissent who make a stand in the name of a sense of justice. In rhetoric, to make a stand is to apportion blame and perhaps praise, in any event to perform values. An act of public dissent says as much about the content of the claim as it does about the ethics of who makes the claim. To a large extent the validity of a dissent is judged by the conduct of the dissenters.

Emilian CIOC

Title of the intervention:

Engineering Hope: Promissory Gestures in Politics

Report on the intervention:

In a famous paragraph illustrative for the genealogical inquiry, Nietzsche asks: "What is a belief? How does it originate? Every belief is a considering-something-true." Duplicating this interrogative gesture and taking a similar aim, we attempt to formulate and develop the following question: "What is a hope? How does it originate?" At this point of the exploration it is pre-cautious not to hastily assert that every hope could be described as "a considering-something-

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true". Nonetheless, these questions need further scrutiny and some accuracy could be provided by a careful examination of the way in which hope originates, a kind of phenomenology of hope intended to expose generative structures involved in its appearance. Two sets of readings—Edgar Allan Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum* and Stanley Kramer's *Inherit the Wind*—endorse the introduction to this phenomenological approach. Such a perspective enables us to comprehend that hope knows itself vulnerable, insecure, uninsured, doubtful, erratic, radically exposing anyone hoping. Making a promise is therefore a sort of supplement of insurance, of confidence, of anticipated reparation involving the vulnerability of the one making the promise. Revisiting authors such as Machiavelli—with his "wise Prince", whose wisdom is explicitly related to given faith and omission—, Ernst Bloch—with his political principle of hope—, Jacques Derrida—in respect to what he describes as testimonial machinery—, Günther Anders—formulating a radical critique of hope as an almost transcendental illusion—, or the legal theory, we endeavour to describe these industries of hope. Considered accordingly to such historical, etymological or conceptual protocols, the expression "engineering hope" could then mean the skill and the power to produce hope, to produce and cultivate faith and confidence without proofs, a confident wait of nothing determinate. But it also could mean an untrustworthy skill, a competence hard to say if loyal or deceitful, if its performance lays on deception, on fraud or on the most responsible and upright gesture defining humanity.

In our view, analysing the relationship between hope and politics exceeds the simple record of promises—and most of all, broken promises—made by politicians in order to stimulate hope and thus get votes. At stake are not so much possible measurements or exposing procedures of the ways in which societies and groups are manipulated by different industries of hope. Our interest is not simply to denunciate failures and perjury, but to look at the possibility encrypted in the hope itself to be manipulated. Another kind of critique is necessary. This inquiry is committed to look for resources in order to elucidate the machine in charge of producing hope and consequently the supplementary device of promise. The political sphere, according to the general opinion, is what knows no mandatory force, sanction or compulsory character, refusing all accountability other than electoral. In political terms, hope is the vulnerability of community itself, that which exposes it to every specter, illusion, delusion, enlistment and mobilization. Inherently constitutive as it may be, it also functions as the supreme device of capture and capitalization.

Sergio ALLOGGIO

Title of the intervention:

Rorty and Lyotard on Politics and Justice

Report on the intervention:

This paper examines Richard Rorty and Jean-François Lyotard's views on progress, justice and political deliberation. In Rorty, my analysis focuses on the nexus between individual and national progress and the role that inspiring stories play in that relation. My emphasis turns then to the creating process of the political "we" in Rorty's post-metaphysical philosophy. Solidarity, progress and narratives of maturation are the crucial concepts that I link in order to achieve a positive content for Rorty's turn to cultural politics. In Lyotard, the notion of "différend" is the key

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concept in his formulation of postmodernity as a politics of endless conflicts. Examining the way in which *differends* are always reduced into litigations, I briefly consider both the necessary hallucination behind the creation of a political we and Lyotardian wish for justice. At the end, I assume Rorty's neo-pragmatism and Lyotard's universal paralogism in a relation of productive tension: each side can be seen into the other as a changing colour prism which points, as I argue, to a rhetorical mythography of what is evident.

Camil UNGUREANU

Title of the intervention:

The Place of Rhetoric in Habermas and Derrida

Report on the intervention: Rhetoric and Justice in Habermas' and Derrida's Late Work

Camil Ungureanu's presentation (The place of rhetoric in Habermas' and Derrida's late writings) dealt with a comparison between Aristotle's, J. Habermas' and Derrida's conception of rhetoric. Against an influential interpretative trend, Ungureanu made the case that Derrida's view of rhetoric carries on and revisits the main tenets of Aristotle's conception of deliberative or political rhetoric, namely ethos, pathos and logos. Finally, Ungureanu also showed that Derrida's conception displays important advantages with respect to Habermas, which tends to reduce rhetoric to deliberation or rational argument.

Ștefan MAFTEI

Title of the intervention:

*Hope, Dissent and the (Un)rhetorical Presidency: Managing Democracy in Post-1989
Romania*

Report on the intervention:

The main purpose of the paper is to suggest a rhetorical reading of the Romanian terms *democrație* "democracy" and *națiune* "nation" – terms which usually refer to a collective political identity - through the lens of presidential speech. We will use the method of inquiring into the old and the new historical circumstances and rhetorical practices that have been leading to the present-day phenomenon of "managing" democracy through "political" (*partisan, party-related*) speech. Throughout the course of the paper, in terms of contemporary politics, we have not used the terms *political rhetoric* or *political debate*, because there was our conviction that what we are really dealing with in political speeches is really a political debate about political issues, i.e. issues that concern the Romanian people as a *political body*. Therefore, we have constantly referred to the term "management" (of democracy) in a critical manner, because we believed that the present-day technique of managing and instrumentalising notions about collective identities, a technique which is widely used in Romania, at all levels of government and media is not enough to sustain in itself a political debate on political issues. The initial focus of research was a reading of samples of political or literary discourse – covering a time span of nearly three centuries of so-called "Romanian" history - samples which are referring to the two terms mentioned above:

nation and *democracy*. Generally, it will be observed that *democracy* is not a widely used term in Romanian political language and that, sometimes, the other term, *nation*, appears as its rival. In some cases, the term *nation* will not refer to its political field at all: it will, unfortunately, be referred to as an anti-political term in a political situation. The same is true about *democracy*: in some contexts, *democracy* and the political will be given an opposite understanding from what we are referring to today. In short, *democracy* will simply be coined as anti-political. The second focus of research was the post-1989 political presidential discourse, which epitomizes, in our view, the contemporary Romanian political self-understanding. Terms such as *democracy*, *nation*, *reform* were read into the contexts of presidential speeches, presenting and commenting on fragments from the presidential speeches of the three post-1989 Romanian presidencies.

PANELS:

Hope and Solidarity in “post” Societies

(panel coordinated by Ciprian Mihali)

In “post” societies—post-apartheid, post-communism—and for very different reasons, solidarity came to play a very important part. It is the main interest of this panel to discuss some of the reasons why present public and political discourse seems strategically committed to the idea of solidarity. Participants are invited to reflect upon the plural meanings and functions that hope and solidarity are assigned in transitional societies and, more generally, in crisis situations. As we programmatically consider them, hope, confidence, trust and solidarity are infra-political values at least in the sense that they precede any social engineering and are structurally heterogeneous to state-related policies. Therefore it would be of a certain use to clarify under what conditions these infra-political elements acquire political dimension, economical utility and social significance. An all the more valuable investigation given that in our days solidarity is somehow globalised, exceeding transitional contexts and accompanying crisis-related discourses and practices.

Democracy postponed: Fallacies in the Crisis Discourse

(panel coordinated by Emilian Cioc)

This interdisciplinary panel undertakes to draft a questioning of the presently dominating discourse of crisis both in its presuppositions and consequences, theoretical and pragmatic. Although—or precisely because—the trope of crisis and the public discourse operated on this ground are very rarely subject to sustained critical inquiry, it would be of great consequence to call into question its structuring elements. An investigation formulated with resources specific to argumentation theory is able, and it is our central idea, to prove that the envisaged discourse cannot function without a series of fallacies. Therefore the panel represents an invitation to

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evaluate the argumentative consistency and rhetoric performance of this discursive procedure. If it is quite possible to identify various forms of fallacious stratagems inherent to the crisis discourse, yet another aspect is to be carefully considered. Operating mainly as a justificatory procedure, the discourse of crisis serves to restore objective and undisputable certainty and, as a result, postpones democracy, *i.e.* a certain type of deliberation-grounded decision making process. In democracy, a decision involves deliberation and persuasion, incertitude, non hegemonic positions. Democracy postponed means a claim of final objectivity interrupting deliberation, indetermination, it means assuming that an undisputable truth has come to manifestation. Democracy is in this way suspended, denied, relegated. It is highly probable that such a situation produces a significant mutation in the representation of emerging democracies such as post-communist or post-apartheid political communities.