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Three dimensions in rhetorical conflict analysis: A topological model

Kurzfassung: Konflikte sind in menschlichen Beziehungen allgegenwärtig, ebenso Rhetorik in Konfliktsituationen. Die rhetorische Analyse läuft daher Gefahr, Konflikte und ihre verschiedenen Lösungsansätze als selbstverständlich zu betrachten. „Rhetorik“ wird in den Sozialwissenschaften oft als vorwissenschaftlicher Begriff verwendet. Dasselbe gilt für „Konflikt“ in rhetorischen Untersuchungen. Es besteht daher ein Bedürfnis nach konkreten Analyseinstrumenten. Der vorliegende Aufsatz schlägt ein topologisches Modell zur Analyse von drei Dimensionen der Rhetorik in Konflikt*lösung*, Konflikt*management* und Konflikt*austragung* vor und erläutert es am Beispiel der berühmten letzten Rede von Martin Luther King Jr. „I’ve Been to the Mountaintop“.

Abstract: Conflict is omnipresent in human relations. So is rhetoric in conflict situations. Hence, there is a danger of taking conflict and its different forms of resolution for granted when we do rhetorical analysis. “Rhetoric” is often used as a general and non-scientific term in the social sciences; the same is the case for “conflict” in rhetorical scholarship. Hence, there is a need for concrete analytical tools. This article suggests a topological model to analyze three dimensions of rhetoric in conflict *resolution*, *management* or *handling*. Using “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop”, the famous last speech of Martin Luther King Jr., as an example, I use the model to give an analytic overview.

1. Introduction

Conflict is omnipresent in human behavior. So is rhetoric in conflict situations. Hence, there is a danger of taking conflict and its different forms of resolution for granted when we do rhetorical analysis (Gorsevski, 1999, 2004). The breadth of the categories “conflict” and “rhetoric” also makes it difficult to work with their interrelations, especially from a cross-disciplinary perspective. As political scientist Bryan Garsten writes about rhetoric: “The word is so vague, and used in so many different senses, that any effort to discuss all of them would soon dissolve into a muddle.” (Garsten, 2011: 160). “Rhetoric” is often used as a general and non-scientific term in social science; the same is the case with “conflict” in rhetorical scholarship. If rhetoric is to contribute to our scientific knowledge, we need to develop analytic tools. That is why this article suggests a topological model to analyze three concrete dimensions of rhetoric in conflict *resolution*, *management* or *handling*.

The three rhetorical dimensions I propose are:

1. normative
2. tropological
3. ideological

This is a pragmatic rather than an ontological division. As with many categories in rhetoric they interact. And they are an attempt to describe – not every aspect of communicative action – but a comprehensible part of it. Hence the term *dimensions*. This can be modestly compared to the way we use the three basic forms of appeal in classical rhetoric: *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*, which also describe different aspects of the object they analyze.

In this topological model, the rhetoric we try to understand can thus be examined to find: 1) a normative concept of conflict, 2) a narrative or metaphorical portrayal of conflict, and 3) a concept of conflict that reveals an underlying ideological analysis or viewpoint. I emphasize that these are *rhetorical* dimensions. I will make use of ideas that originate outside the realm of rhetoric but still have relevance for our discipline. However, the dimensions focus on how we *do things with words*, that is, how we perform actions through communication (Farrel, 1993, Kjeldsen, 2014). The model in Figure 1 illustrates the analytical tool I propose:

I emphasize that this is a *practical* model, as it should be useful for analyzing rhetoric (in the broad sense, as symbolic actions, political speeches, debates, etc.) where conflict plays an important role. It is a *topological* model because it does not require a particular procedure. A speech act doesn’t “start” with a concept of conflict or a dimension of rhetoric. These aspects interact in a dynamic relationship, and the purpose of the model is to give a bird’s eye view of this. Thus: this is *not* a model for solving conflict. It is *not* a proposal for how to use communication to resolve conflict. It is simply an attempt to describe how we can get an *analytic overview* of communication in conflict.

As a companion throughout the text, I have chosen “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” the famous last speech that Martin Luther King Jr. gave the night before he was murdered on April 4, 1968. The speech is exemplary of the

elements I outline in the model. The speaker was possibly the most notable peace rhetorician of the 20th century, and the speech a wonderful and rich body of what we might call *rhetorical citizenship* (Kock & Villadsen, 2012). Furthermore, it also shows a self-reflective awareness of rhetoric in itself. (As when he evokes the Good Samaritan by recounting a trip with Mrs King to Jerusalem, where they rented a car to drive to Jericho. "And as soon as we got on that road, I said to my wife, 'I can see why Jesus used this as the setting for his parable.' It's a winding, meandering road. It's really conducive for ambushing.")

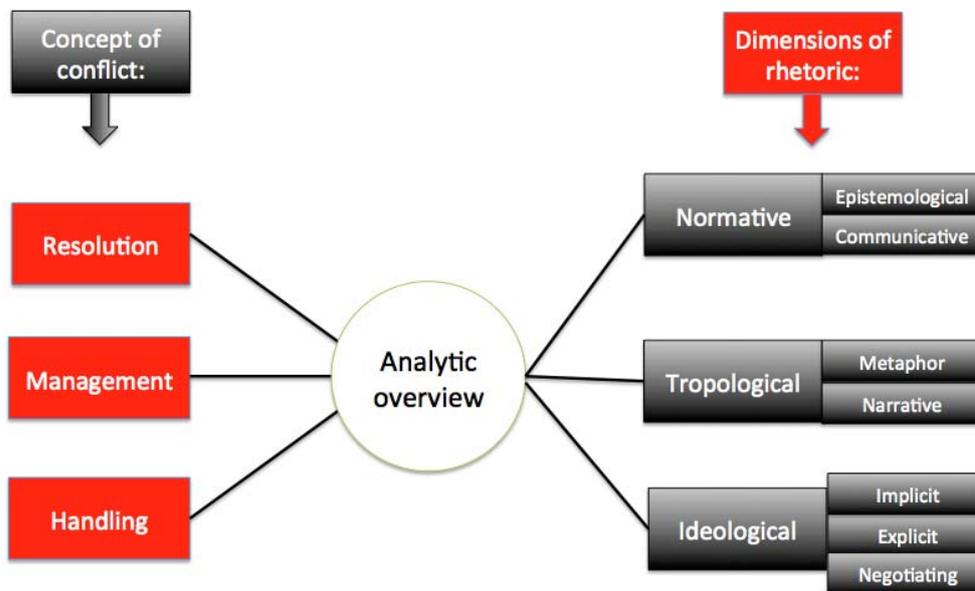


Figure 1: Model for rhetorical conflict analysis

2. Rhetorical starting point

As Thomas B. Farrel has shown, a modern conception of rhetoric should include rhetoric as *practical reasoning* (Farrel, 1993: 72). When we reason with ourselves about conflicts, read about them in the news, or stream news reports in real time, we apply rhetorical tools for interpretation and reasoning. Still, the word "rhetoric" is usually applied in a narrower sense. Most of the time, in everyday speech, rhetoric is considered either the "makeup of language" or mere "form without content." In both social science and the humanities many scholars use a concept of rhetoric as "emotional speech," or suppose that rhetoric means communication where "form" is somehow more important than "content." In political theory, "rhetoric" can for instance mean a form of communication with great emotional appeal, rather than a discipline (Chambers, 2009: 324). As Bryan Garsten describes this perspective: "arousing emotions can help make deliberation possible, but is not a constitutive part of the activity of deliberation." (Garsten, 2011: 163). In the discipline of rhetoric, the rhetorical technique of dismissing something as "mere rhetoric" makes just as much sense (in a scientific context) as saying: "Ah, that's just communicative action." "Rhetoric" can never be good or bad *per se*, since it is quite difficult to point to the moment when one stops being rhetorical. When do we cancel our subscription to rhetoric, and what are we left with then? The naked truth? What we *can* talk about in a meaningful way is empty rhetoric, hateful rhetoric, deceitful rhetoric, etc. Since this might be a point of confusion between disciplines, it is useful to make clear when a text subscribes to the "broad" perspective of rhetoric. This article makes an effort to do just that.

3. Conflict: three approaches

The word conflict derives from the Latin, *conflictus*, past participle of *confligere*, to clash or collide, but also "to be in conflict" (De Caprona, 2013: 1082). As a basic working-definition, conflict can be described as "parties with contradictory goals" (Galtung et al., 2002: 3). But as with rhetoric, conflict studies form a wide field of scholarly activities. This multi-disciplinary background is also the case for more specific research on conflict and

communication, and is mentioned by Carcasson, Black & Sink in their overview article on "Communication Studies and Deliberative Democracy" (2010). For this analysis, let us simplify and suppose there are three major approaches to conflict:

Conflict resolution has as its starting point the assumption that generally conflicts can be resolved: "Conflict resolution is about accepting a conflict, recognizing that there are ways out of it, and engaging in some tacit or explicit coordination, without which none of these goals can be achieved." (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). A fairly well accepted view is that in itself conflict is not negative. "Conflict is ubiquitous, violence is not" (Galtung et al., 2002: 151). Conflicts can be used to achieve a better outcome for all parties. Criminologist Niels Christie claimed that, "We have to organize social systems so that conflicts are both nurtured and made visible and also see to it that professionals do not monopolize the handling of them." Further: "Conflicts ought to be used, not only left in erosion. And they ought to be used, and become useful, for those originally involved in the conflict." (Christie, 1977: 1-15).

Conflict management is an approach less inclined to look for a final resolution or transcendence of conflict. It might even be the approach that sees some conflicts as unresolvable. Like the materialistic analysis of the conflict between labor and capital: never resolved, but managed in different ways, for instance through negotiations between trade unions and business-leaders, the cornerstone of the so-called Nordic model. In conflict management you can work with the assumption that all parties involved in conflict should be able to live with the results of negotiation, without losing anything vital. But you don't believe that the conflict is merely an obstacle you have to overcome on the way to a better future. Some conflicts are bound to be renegotiated again and again.

Let us add *conflict handling* as a third, heuristic category. This is where the realist approach to international relations might fit, originating in a Hobbesian world-view. Conflict is perceived as an inevitable part of the world, and we are able to study the strategic manoeuvring and multitude of motives of power-holding entities. There is naturally an equally wide range of perspectives within this category. Steven Pinker argues convincingly that the world is becoming less violent. At the same time he points to psychology and neuroscience to show how we are tempted by the possibility of revenge, domination, and other "inner demons" (Pinker, 2011: 482-571). *Conflict handling* can be seen in the religious metaphors of "good vs. evil" and "light vs. darkness," the narrative engines of countless Hollywood films. Take the "might is right" morality of Carl Schmitt, defending the "night of the long knives" as "höchste Form administrativer Justiz" (the highest form of administrative justice). In this approach, conflicts cannot really be resolved or managed. They have to be won, and the adversary must be beaten, converted or annihilated. The third category should be included because it is a quite common way to go about conflict, and possibly the most common way we see conflict portrayed in fiction.

The differences between real life conflict and fictional conflict are obvious. But we might see useful similarities in their rhetorical expression. As long as we accept the idea that being exposed to others' language and ideas affects our own language and ideas, fiction is important as a model for conflicts. A special characteristic of fictional conflict representation is that it has the possibility of changing conflict, negotiating it, and so forth, *simply by representing it*. This is especially significant in historical dramatic works, where text meets audience. Stephen Greenblatt would say this is affected by social energies: "Mimesis is always accompanied by – indeed is always produced by, negotiation and exchange." (Greenblatt, 1997: 12).

4. Normative dimension

Rhetoric as a *techne*, with a conscious relationship to its performance, is impossible without some normative considerations. This is the case, from the most basic ideas of language and its role in society to procedural claims about how we should negotiate future actions. Let's divide this approach into two levels: The *epistemological level* considers how rhetoric constitutes human beings and society and also the relationship between rhetoric and truth. The *communicative level* deals with what rhetoric we should expect from an honorable person, and the norms and procedures of conflicts. We mostly don't enter conflicts reflecting about the nature of language. Still, the view someone holds on the first level might affect her view on the second.

What do we consider on the epistemological level? Aristotle places rhetoric at the core of his *zoon politikon* definition, a precondition for both society and man: "(S)peech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man..." (Aristotle: 1.1253a). Oratory constitutes humans and societies. The same is expressed in Cicero's *De Oratore*: "For the one point in which we have our very greatest advantage over brute creation is that we hold converse, one with another, and can reproduce our thought in word." (Cicero: I.VIII.32.) One could argue that Aristotle and Cicero simply refer to "language," but both describe a form of communication including performativity and intent. To persuade, in Antiquity, was part of the task of anyone who had the knowledge and privilege to speak. It was expected, and thus had a different normative value than the contemporary meaning of the word, where we tend to believe it is better to be "informed" than "persuaded." The value of persuasiveness is expressed clearly by Isocrates:

Because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear to each other what we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish....and if it were not for these ordinances we should not be able to live with one another. (Farrel, 1993: 58).

It is true that classical rhetoric was thought of as persuasion: but as George Kennedy puts it, "by that they meant something more general than persuasion understood by a modern social scientist." (Kennedy, 1999: 3). Persuasion was the norm for communication. This is the underlying theme in Plato's brilliantly normative attack on the Sophists in *Gorgias*.

Let us look at the most influential modern philosopher on questions of communicative norms, Jürgen Habermas, whose notion of rhetoric may seem almost Kantian in its dismissiveness. For instance, he directs strong criticism at deconstructionist and post-structuralist influences in the social sciences, claiming that Heidegger and Derrida "provide grounds by fleeing into the esoteric," or "by fusing the logical with the rhetorical," they create "an amalgam that resists 'normal' scientific analysis at its core." (Habermas, 1987: 336). In the essay "The Normative Content of Modernity," he strongly criticizes Heidegger and Derrida's "lubrications on technology," claiming that they are insensitive to the "ambivalent content" of modernity and its achievements. And further: "That the self-referential critique of reason is located everywhere and nowhere, so to speak, in discourses without a place, renders it almost immune to competing interpretations." Habermas is critical of a deconstruction of reason and the attack on what we might call enlightenment values, but he still acknowledges rhetoric's omnipresence in human affairs:

Even the normal language of everyday life is ineradicably rhetorical; but within the matrix of different linguistic functions, the rhetorical elements recede here. The world-disclosive linguistic framework is almost at a standstill in the routines of everyday practice. The same holds true for the specialized languages of science and technology, law and morality, economics, political science, etc. They, too, live off of the illuminating power of metaphorical tropes; but the rhetorical elements, which are by no means expunged, are tamed, as it were, and enlisted for special purposes of problem-solving. (Habermas, 1987: 209).

Habermas sees that "the normal language of everyday life is ineradicably rhetorical" but claims that rhetoric is "tamed and enlisted for special purposes of problem-solving."

This is a good argument against the simplifying idea that "everything is language" or "everything is rhetoric." But his claim can also be simplifying in the sense that Habermas, who is otherwise sensitive to the idea of negotiation, excludes the dynamic relationship between a person and her rhetoric. We use narratives and metaphors, "tamed" if you will. But the rhetorical encounters of our lives also "use us," enlighten us, and affect the way we think about the world. The relationship between the individual and her rhetoric doesn't have a fixed starting point, it's an on-going dynamic relationship, constituting and negotiating each other, day after day.

Is there a connection between the epistemological and the communicative levels? Aristotle makes the almost epistemological claim that "generally speaking, that which is true and better is naturally always easier to prove and more likely to persuade." (Rhetoric: 1355a). Cicero, who has a more cynical view of the public, questions this presupposition on the nature of truth and rhetoric:

Now nothing in oratory, Catulus, is more important than to win for the orator the favor of his hearer, and to have the latter so affected as to be swayed by something resembling a mental impulse or emotion, rather than judgment or deliberation. For men decide far more problems by hate, or love, or lust, or rage, or sorrow, or joy, or hope, or fear, or illusion, or some other inward emotion, than by reality, or authority, or any legal standard, or judicial precedent, or statute. (De Oratore, II. Xli.177-179).

As Gery Remer has pointed out, this does not mean that Cicero thinks all orators are free to manipulate people's feelings. He also notes the importance of making impulses "obedient to reason" (Remer, 2004: 150). And more importantly: "Cicero's seemingly contradictory views can be reconciled if the orator's actions are justified by some higher end, particularly the republic's good." That brings us to the classical notion of a rhetorical ethos, that rhetoric is vital in constituting society. With Cicero, the normative considerations always depend on the uniqueness of the (political) situation.

5. Normative dimension: communicative level

As we know, Aristotle examined the danger of rhetoric. He equates it with all good and useful things:

If it is argued that ... an unfair use of ... of speech may do a great deal of harm, this objection applies equally to all good things except virtue, and above all to those things which are most useful, such as

strength, health, wealth, generalship; for as these, rightly used, may be of the greatest benefit, so wrongly used, they may do an equal amount of harm. (Rhetoric: 1.1.12-14).

Communication and its ability to do harm is directly relevant for the contemporary debate about our increasingly multi-national public sphere. The Internet has made the issue unavoidable: from the cartoon-crisis in Denmark, the Middle East and West Africa in 2006, to "the great firewall" of Chinese censorship. The European Council's extensive campaign for "human rights online," which even includes training in writing blogs, petitions, reports, etc., summarizes much of the dilemma (www.nohatespeechmovement.org). In Norway, the terror attack of 22/7 2011 motivated a debate about the "responsibility of speech" and "freedom of speech," as well as several research projects on online deliberation. Even though all these cases vary in their political and cultural foundation, they still have normative similarities: It's a debate about a debate, profound discussion about recognizing each other's legitimacy, or simply reflections on "proper behavior."

Rhetoric offers many warnings against bad taste. The topic is elaborated on in Cicero's explanation of humor in *de Oratore* (II. Iviii. 236-289). It is not so much a normative question as a question of *efficiency*. Roman public life had a broad definition of proper language. When we read Cicero's explanation of "bad taste," it finds it mostly deals with mocking people because of their "physical blemishes" or "ugliness." Cicero warns against humor becoming "mere buffoonery." The most important question in the classical tradition is probably not "how should we speak," or "what are the procedural or structural frameworks for public speaking," but rather "what is the speaker's character?" The speaker's character and message are intertwined. This can be observed in Aristotle's concept of *ethos*, Cicero's longing for "the great speaker," or Quintilian's hope that there will arise someone who will be *both a good man and a good speaker*. (Andersen, 2004 :216). This is what Protagoras, in Plato's words, would promise his students:

Young man, if you associate with me, on the very first day you will return home a better man than you came, and better on the second day than on the first, and better every day than you were on the day before. (Plato, 1999).

As mentioned earlier, this is Cicero's crucial point. He himself writes: "The wise control of the complete orator is that which chiefly upholds not only his own dignity, but the safety of countless individuals and of the entire State." (*De Oratore*, 1.32). Cicero's most profound ethos is the community, which he paradoxically describes as swayed by emotion. The uniqueness of any political situation means that the public man should make his decisions based on interpretation. This might be called pragmatism without principle, but as we know, Cicero fought for the Republic with such dedication that he was murdered. Reading Cicero as understood by Quentin Skinner might provide a further explanation. Cicero's writings are actions, he wants to show his knowledge at the same time as his purpose and political standpoint (Skinner, 2013: 103).

Much of current academic work on norms of rhetoric in conflict is either inspired by, or in opposition to, Habermas' theory of deliberative democracy. Habermas' analysis of both the public sphere and communicative action is extremely broad and deep. It's both an empirical analysis (of how the public sphere actually functions in liberal democracies) and a theory of procedural and normative ideals. Important in this context is Chantal Mouffe, who has criticized the paradigm of deliberative democracy by proposing an alternative model called agonistic pluralism. She claims that the Habermasian concept of the public sphere misses the "ineradicable character" of "antagonism and power" (Mouffe, 2000: 13). Portraying the notion that politics consists of "domesticating hostility" rather than reaching "rational consensus." (Ibid), Mouffe's perspective can be useful in the sense that it opens conflict to voices that are easily judged as aggressive or emotional. But on the other hand, her critique of Habermas can be met with the objection that Habermas himself doesn't draw a normative border that excludes "emotional" communication. Media scholars Karppinen, Moe & Svensson (2008) have made an interesting case for "theoretical eclecticism" as an answer to the theoretical divide between Mouffe and Habermas. They argue that "the public sphere is best understood as an arena of articulating expressions of both solidarity and difference, and in a general sense, this understanding is shared by both Mouffe and Habermas." (Ibid: 8).

Rhetorician Christian Kock has revitalized the ancient debate between philosophy and rhetoric, but also made a significant effort to position rhetoric as a social science and a theory about democracy in its own right. In the article "Norms of Legitimate Dissensus," Kock attacks on two flanks, criticizing both the reception of Habermas' discourse ethics and the pragma-dialectical school (as represented by Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst) and claims that:

(S)ince even reasonable people arguing reasonably cannot be expected to reach consensus, we may conclude that a set of norms that posits eventual consensus as the goal of reasonable discussion, such as the argumentation theories of Habermas or Pragma-Dialectics, is not applicable to practical reasoning. (Kock, 2007: 10).

Turning to John Dryzek's concept of meta-consensus, he argues that people who argue about wedge issues like immigration and freedom of speech:

(M)ight use any and all of the resources of rhetoric to help them compare the weights of the pros and cons. Indeed, rhetorical resources are all we have to help us compare those weights and decide on the issue, since they cannot be weighed, measured or calculated in any objective way. (Ibid: 13).

Kock writes: "Since Plato, it has been a prevalent idea among philosophers that when we discuss any matter, the discussion works the same way as in chess, or at least it should if we are reasonable." Here Kock makes it a bit easy for himself, first describing a vulnerable position, and then pointing out that, "not all argumentation is about whether statements are true, because some argumentation is about what to do." Still, Kock gives a valuable corrective to the idea (that originates from a simplified reception of Jürgen Habermas rather than from Habermas himself) that debates and discussions are solely about finding the truth and reaching consensus. A fair reading of Habermas needs to consider *what types of question Habermas is trying to answer* (Bjoldal, 2012). If we tried to find the answer to "What does a good debate look like?" we might be disappointed. But if we look at his *Theory of Communicative Action*, where the theory "takes on a special significance: to it falls the task of reconstructing the formal-pragmatic presuppositions and conditions of explicitly rational behavior" (Habermas, 2004: 2), we see that Habermas is working within a specific philosophical tradition, in a dialogue with the Frankfurt school's work on rationality, and is engaged in philosophical work within an idealized, but empirical framework.

Nevertheless, Kock proposes some useful "norms of legitimate dissensus," e.g., "For any point where dissensus exists, debaters must give reasons ..." He underlines that, "if a debater does not recognize the acceptability, relevance or weight of one of the opponent's arguments, he must give reasons for this non-recognition." This can inspire a normative standard for rhetoric in conflict.

Simone Chambers has proposed a distinction between "plebiscitary rhetoric" and "deliberative rhetoric," where the former is monological and has "its interest in power over truth and a strategic stance toward communication" (Chambers, 2009: 328). Deliberative rhetoric, on the other hand, has normative value and "is not simply an eloquent and truthful speaker with all the facts right. Deliberative rhetoric creates a dynamic relationship between speaker and hearer." (Chambers, 2009: 335). For our context of rhetorical conflict analysis, Chambers' normative suggestions for "the features of asymmetry and mediation" are relevant, especially her suggestion of a "semi-Socratic approach" to "enhance and multiply citizen-citizen encounters" (Ibid: 340). This is especially the case, when we look at contemporary debates that have degenerated into what Kock would call "a predictable orgy of name-calling" (Kock, 2007: 194). Chambers suggests a bridge between the mini-publics (toward which a lot of deliberative democrats have turned their research interest) and the mass public, thus creating a "critical yet receptive audience."

To conclude: If we are to analyze the normative dimension of rhetoric in conflict, we can consider the following questions, more or less inspired by discussions over normativity and the public sphere. These include epistemological questions like:

- Is there an idea about how rhetoric can affect conflict outcomes?
- Is there an understanding of what level of hostility we can endure and still have a debate? (Mouffe)
- Do the parties in a conflict give real reasons for their arguments, or do they offer mere spin? (Kock)
- Is there agreement about the procedural rules that we can use to face conflict? (Habermas)
- Can we organize the debate to promote critical but receptive deliberation? (Chambers).

From the ancient sources to contemporary life, the normative dimension of rhetoric in conflict has one specific requirement that differentiates it from the tropological and the ideological: To be able to reflect on the way and with what means we use language in conflict, we need to observe others and ourselves from an analytic viewpoint. *We need to step outside the situation.*

There are many possible examples from Dr. King's speeches. Reflection on the how of bringing about peace is a natural strategic method for pacifists.

We don't have to argue with anybody. We don't have to curse and go around acting bad with our words. We don't need any bricks and bottles. We don't need any Molotov cocktails. We just need to go around to these stores, and to these massive industries in our country, and say, "God sent us here to say to you that you're not treating his children right."

In "I've Been to the Mountaintop," Dr. King gives a normative guideline for how the civil rights movement should speak, both with words and actions (in this case consumer activism). At the same time, he builds a normative bridge between words and actions, implying how the one can lead to the other.

6. Tropological dimension

The topological dimension, unlike the normative, is unavoidable. When we enter the field of language, we encounter a Nietzschean army of what can be very roughly divided into two main tropological categories: metaphor and narrative. Some scholars claim that metaphor is the most important; some that the narrative is the most powerful structuring force. Rhetoric, as we know, has a great arsenal of tools to describe the varieties of metaphor, metonym, parable, simile, etc. When Tutsis were coded as "cockroaches" on Rwandan radio it was a metaphorical code and motivation for what developed into genocide. In the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the competing narratives of the Promised land, Holocaust and al-Nakbah are always hidden below the surface. Let's assume that in some cases metaphor is the most dominant tropological dimension, and in others narrative dominates. The important thing is to locate the narrative and metaphor and question them. Metaphors for starters:

Cognitive linguist George Lakoff, together with Mark Johnson, proposed in 1980 that metaphor is "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action." (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008: 3). They claimed that based on "linguistic evidence" our "conceptual system is metaphorical in nature." Hence the title of the first book in what has become a series of books from Lakoff: "Metaphors we live by."

When a rhetorician reads Lakoff, he has to cope with certain problems, the first being that Lakoff writes as if he invented the 2300 year old concept of metaphor. He also makes the double mistake of describing "rhetoric" simply as the makeup of language, while metaphor becomes a mere function of the brain. (As a distinguished professor once said at a seminar: "Metaphor loses its poetry in the hands of Lakoff.") Many of his communication proposals are also quite weak. For instance, he suggests that the word "tax" should be replaced by "membership fee." People with even minor political experience would intuitively understand that such an Orwellian move would make people less – not more inclined to pay taxes (Pinker, 2006). If we look past these issues, however, Lakoff offers very useful in-depth analyses of metaphorical thinking. Furthermore, his advice on the *deep level* and on framing are important, no matter what side one takes on politics.

In Lakoff's cognitive linguistic theory, metaphor structures our concepts and hence our interpretations of the world. The very first example Lakoff & Johnson use is the conceptual metaphor "Argument is war" – and they show how this is expressed in our daily endeavors:

ARGUMENT IS WAR

Your claims are indefensible.
He attacked every weak point in my argument.
His criticisms were right on target.
I demolished his argument.
I've never won an argument with him.
You disagree? Okay, shoot!
If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.
He shot down all of my arguments. (2003: 3).

Lakoff & Johnson then ask us to imagine a different concept:

Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently. (2008: 4).

Now this might seem as realistic as renaming taxes "membership-fees" for society, but in conflicts it is useful to ask ourselves: Is this metaphor working for resolution or escalation? Does this metaphor leave us with losers and winners – or with allies for future conflict-resolution and peace-making? As Svensson & Vogt suggest, mediators and conflicting parties can be of use in finding new metaphors (2009). One should avoid "Conflict is War" or try replacing it with concepts like: "Conflict is a Knot," hence something we can untie, tighten or loosen. "Conflict is a disease" – something painful or inflamed we can treat. Health journalism, no matter how dry its lifestyle advice, asks a lot of questions that could also be asked in conflicts: What are the causes? Who are the experts in healing? What can provide a healthier environment? An equally interesting metaphor is: "Conflict as part of a journey," where conflict is something we can leave behind, try to escape or overcome, and resolution is something we can land on, reach a shore from, or even walk with the Gandhian chiasmus: "There is no way to peace, peace is the way."

One of Lakoff's main points is that metaphors are embodied. That means, they relate to our physical and evolutionary development. Hence light prevails over darkness, we feel "up" when we are doing well – and "up"

has connotations of being on top of a hill, having the upper hand, etc. When we're not doing well, we feel "down," which is associated with dirt, trash or vermin lurking underground. Analyzing the rhetoric of the first Gulf war, Lakoff claims that the Bush administration switched from using the metaphor "lifeline of energy" to "the rescue narrative," whereby Kuwait became "the Arab princess" that needed to be rescued from Saddam. He points out that the conceptual metaphor, which is used in many wars, is: "A nation is a Person":

What the metaphor hides, of course, is that the 3000 bombs to be dropped in the first two days will not be dropped on that one person. They will kill many thousands of the people hidden by the metaphor; people that according to the metaphor we are not going to war against. (Lakoff, 2003).

Tragically, in today's rhetoric on the Iraq war we see metaphors that do not try to conceal violence, but rather make it appear as violent as possible. The communication strategy of so-called Isis (Isil, IS) is extremely brutal, and yet at the same time it draws on one of the most basic Abrahamic religious metaphors: "an eye for an eye," found in the Torah, the Bible, and the Qur'an. It is the same metaphor that Dr. King reframed in his Nobel Prize speech in 1964:

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everyone blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding....

As we can see, the metaphorical turn that Dr. King uses does not just offer a reframing of "the old law." As a leader of the civil rights movement, he expressed a different concept of conflict than the groups opposed to him. Even elements within his own movement wanted a more militant victory strategy. They might even have shared the segregationists' concept of conflict. But Dr. King sees this as a question that needs to be resolved and uses a metaphor that fits this purpose. In Memphis, he reframes metaphor in a different way. Here he starts with an stark image from the probably most dramatic book of the New Testament, Revelations 6:11:

It's all right to talk about 'long white robes over yonder,' in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here! It's all right to talk about 'streets flowing with milk and honey,' but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee.

It is important to recognize that the power of his speeches results from his very clear political aims: Real social change. He offers more than just powerful stories and conflict transforming images.

7. Narrative

In his later work, Lakoff categorizes narrative as a part of framing, and he writes in several passages about how a metaphor creates a narrative, or how narratives are a part of our conceptual system (Lakoff, 2004, 2008). Even though there are several examples of a dynamic between metaphor and narrative, both categories have their own tradition and tools applicable in rhetoric. And, more important for our topic, when it comes to conflict, narrative differs from metaphor in one crucial way: Narratives depend on conflict. We encounter metaphors without conflict all the time; like clouds in the sky. But try to find any memorable narrative that you have encountered that didn't have conflict as a plot engine. This is described in basic textbooks on narrative. Like Michael Toolan's three defining features:

- sequenced and interrelated events;
- foregrounded individuals
- crisis to resolution progression (Toolan, 2001).

In the last bullet point we find conflict, and some sort of change in the state of conflict. As Toolan continues: "In the terms first highlighted by Aristotle, we expect ends as well as beginnings and middles. ... In more twentieth-century terminology, we expect complex motivations and resolutions – even in quite 'simple' tales such as folktales" (Ibid 7). The linguistic term "resolution" becomes too simple in our context, because as we know, conflicts have a variety of outcomes. It is unquestionable that almost all studies of narrative, going back to Vladimir Propp's formalist study of Russian folk tales, include references to "parties with contradictory goals" (Galtung et al., 2002: 3).

Peter Brooks writes in *Reading for the plot*: "Narrative is one of the large categories or systems of understanding that we use in our negotiations with reality,...." (Brooks, 1992) and even more philosophically: "Plot mediates meanings within the contradictory human world of the eternal and the mortal." (Ibid: 112). Less profoundly, we can simply say that sometimes we use narrative to organize the more or less conflicting tasks of our daily lives, and even to understand and take a position on political events. Cognitive scientist Mark Turner writes: "The

everyday mind is essentially literary." (Turner, 1996: 67). He claims that to comprehend a cup of coffee we are dependent on "small spatial stories." This has something to do with our evolutionary development:

Seen in this way, narrative imagining, often thought of as literary and optional, appears instead to be inseparable from our evolutionary past and our necessary personal experience. It also appears to be a fundamental target value for the developing human mind. (Ibid: 19).

What makes the question of conflict in narrative so crucial? First: We can assume that narratives have an important role in organizing and understanding the world. Second: most of us watch or read fiction all the time, fiction that has conflict as a main plot ingredient. Third, as both conflict studies and cognitive linguistics claim: the "deep narratives" in our culture affect our comprehension of the world. This makes the question of conflict, and the proposed outcomes, important in narratives.

It also explains why there is something called "the narrative therapy movement" that specializes in using different forms of storytelling and recapturing in conflict resolution and mediation. A journal established in 2014 is even called *Narrative and Conflict*. In the editors' introduction to the new journal, we read as follows:

...we notice, time and again, that people and communities are determined to hold onto the stories that give them hope and regularly find ingenious ways to breathe life into these narratives. In the interplay of these stories, lives, relationships, organizations, and communities are constructed. In this interplay, there are always counter stories that can form the basis for hope and change. Sometimes they lie in the shadows; sometimes they are muddled and confused; and sometimes they are open for all to see. But narrative conflict analysis and conflict resolution practice seek to hold to the light these counter stories and to focus the building of just and peaceful futures on the back of the hopes that they represent. (Narrative and Conflict: Explorations in Theory and Practice, 2014. Issue 1, URL: <http://journals.gmu.edu/NandC/>.)

In the textbook "Narrative Mediation," Winslade & Monk give the following advice for a narrative mediator:

- Privileging stories and meanings over facts
- Hearing people's stories of conflict as they are produced in discourse
- Clear separation of conflict-saturated stories from stories of respect, cooperation, understanding and peace
- Use of externalizing conversations to help disputants extract themselves from problem stories that have held them in thrall
- Selection of alternative stories for development as pathways out of disputes (Winslade & Monk, 2000: 250).

This is more easily said than done. But if we, once again, turn to Martin Luther King Jr., we find a good example of "privileging stories and meanings over facts" and an "alternative story for development" when he declares to the audience that, "Something is happening in Memphis; something is happening in our world." He educates his listeners at the same time as he frames their struggle as historically significant:

And you know, if I were standing at the beginning of time, with the possibility of taking a kind of general and panoramic view of the whole of human history up to now, and the Almighty said to me, "Martin Luther King, which age would you like to live in?"

I would take my mental flight by Egypt and I would watch God's children in their magnificent trek from the dark dungeons of Egypt through, or rather across the Red Sea, through the wilderness on toward the promised land. And in spite of its magnificence, I wouldn't stop there.

I would move on by Greece and take my mind to Mount Olympus. And I would see Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Euripides and Aristophanes assembled around the Parthenon. And I would watch them around the Parthenon as they discussed the great and eternal issues of reality. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would go on, even to the great heyday of the Roman Empire. And I would see developments around there, through various emperors and leaders. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would even come up to the day of the Renaissance, and get a quick picture of all that the Renaissance did for the cultural and aesthetic life of man. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would even go by the way that the man for whom I am named had his habitat. And I would watch Martin Luther as he tacked his ninety-five theses on the door at the church of Wittenberg. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would come on up even to 1863, and watch a vacillating President by the name of Abraham Lincoln finally come to the conclusion that he had to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would even come up to the early thirties, and see a man grappling with the problems of the bankruptcy of his nation. And come with an eloquent cry that we have nothing to fear but 'fear itself.' But I wouldn't stop there.

Strangely enough, I would turn to the Almighty, and say, 'If you allow me to live just a few years in the second half of the 20th century, I will be happy.'

Dr. King, using both image and story (metaphor and narrative), creates a vision for the movement. The historical significance of his speeches derives from their ability to transform conflict. But if we remove the tropological dimension, what is left? Well, that's a rhetorical question.

8. Ideological dimension

There are several reasons that I propose a third *ideological*, instead of simply a broader normative dimension. Most obviously, the fact that many people have profound disagreements over ideological and political matters but can still be in complete agreement about Kock's "rules of legitimate dissensus." More important: the normative dimension is a meta-dimension. When we talk about how we talk, a level of abstraction is unavoidable. In the ideological dimension, the exact opposite might occur. Our basic ideological beliefs and assumptions affect the rhetoric we use in conflicts. Sometimes we are aware of this, sometimes not. Sometimes we engage in negotiations between the situation and our system for interpreting it. It can even be a source for deep and profound worries (as most people, luckily, are not consistent ideological machines).

The ideological dimension is important in our analysis of rhetoric in conflict, because it reveals something less arbitrary than the inspired tropological dimension, and the strategic normative dimension. It tells us something about how the communicator wants the world to move forward.

Let us heuristically say that this dimension can be divided into three main sub-categories: the *explicit*, the *implicit*, and the *negotiating* level. They interact and all three can be observed, for instance, in a single political speech.

An *explicit* ideological approach is where the relation between the politics of the communicator and the rhetoric of conflict resolution, management or handling are clear, out in the open, and most often expected. This is the case when the ideology and the rhetoric of the conflict are rooted in tradition, as in political rallies, demonstrations or in churches: where the standpoint of the communicator is well known and made explicit in the situation.

An *implicit* approach is a lot more common, because most of us do not want, and probably are not able, to state our entire purpose in all our communications. Does that mean that all analysis needs a sort of "hermeneutics of suspicion"? Not necessarily. It could also be a very natural and matter of fact part of communication. When we read the "Financial Times" we expect the majority of articles to assume that a free market economy is a common good. The implicit level becomes more interesting if the free market is used as a metaphor for other policy areas, in movies, motivational speeches, government brochures – in the ideological aspect of rhetoric that is not considered ideological in itself.

The *negotiation* level is a term I owe to Stephen Greenblatt, whose work on *Shakespearean negotiations* creates possibilities of reading more than poetic conflict management of the Elizabethan era (Greenblatt, 1997). It can also be applied to literature in general. But, and perhaps more relevant in this context: It can be used as a means to understand the choice of political speech acts. Dr. King's political history is far more complicated than this article can show. What we can state is that like all significant leaders, he tried to resolve a very complex conflict. As Lee Sustar points out: "King recognized that he was trying to bridge an ever-widening gap. 'The government has got to give me some victories if I'm going to keep people nonviolent,' he said." (Sustar, 2015).

In "I've Been to the Mountaintop," Dr. King displays both explicit and implicit ideological dimensions. His stand on civil rights is *explicit*. His view on redistribution of wealth is *implicit*. But more interesting, and perhaps most significant, is the way he *negotiates* with the broader American political culture, and its probably most powerful idea, constitutionalism:

All we say to America is, 'Be true to what you said on paper.' If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand some of these illegal injunctions. Maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right.

Great leadership transcends the everyday political and becomes a negotiation of the times themselves. Dr. King didn't achieve many of his goals. The political reality is always more complex than something that can be put into a post hoc ergo propter hoc scheme of speech acts. But we cannot fail to observe how he uses the forces of a highly legitimate political movement that could easily have taken other and more violent turns (certainly, its opponents were violent enough) and connects it with the political mainstream that is the path to real change.

9. Conclusion

Throughout this article my aim has been to illustrate a topological model for rhetorical conflict analysis with theory and examples from the speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop" by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. To summarize the model, a simplified version of it would look something like the example in Figure 2:

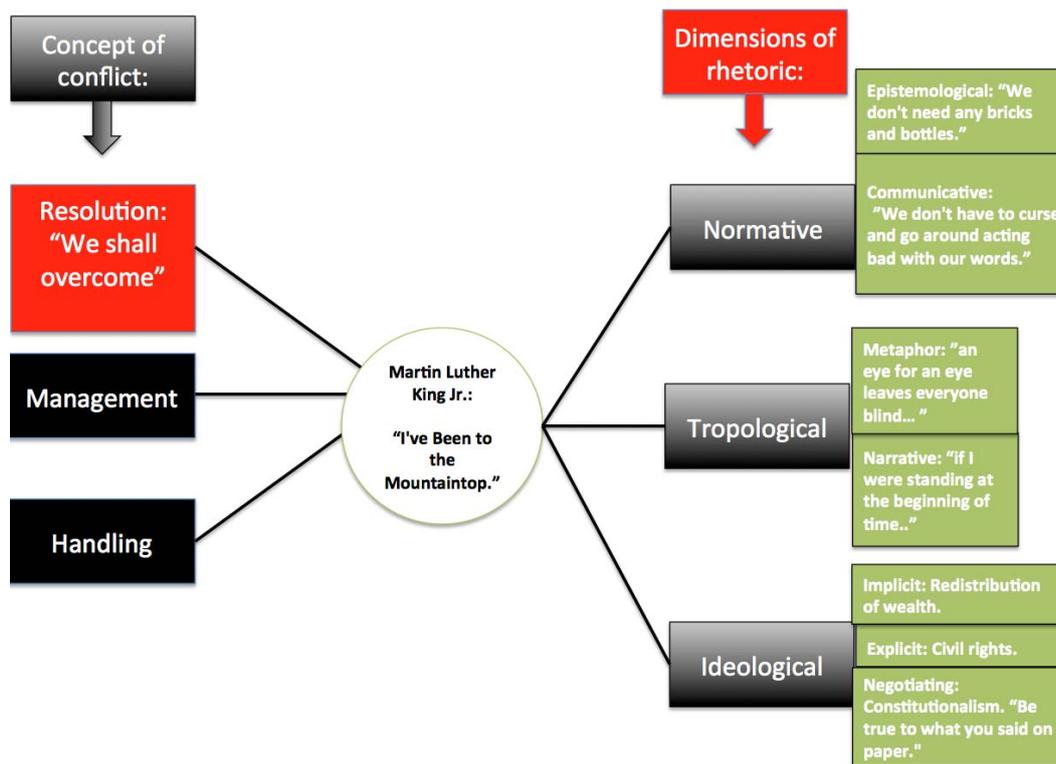


Figure 2: Model for rhetorical analysis of "I've been to the Mountaintop."

Many of the elements above could be more closely scrutinized or debated. Perhaps it is too simple to categorize Dr. King's concept of conflict as mere "resolution." Perhaps it is a stretch to suggest that his normative bridge – between arguing and throwing bricks and bottles – is an expression of an epistemological view: that words lead to actions. But what I think the model does provide is a structured approach to an important speech act and an example of rhetorical citizenship in times of conflict.

To paraphrase Peter Brooks' famous comment, "Storytelling is never innocent," I'd like to end with a less elegant claim: Rhetoric is never innocent, but it's unavoidable. I have tried to outline a structured approach to the rhetorical dimensions of rhetoric in conflict. My aim in proposing these tools is that they can help answer the question about the specific relationship between conflict and rhetoric. There seems to be room for an analytic tool that can improve our interpretation of rhetoric in this most pertinent of social tasks.

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