RIFL/BC(2016): 250-261
DOI: 10.4396/2016BC16

Cultivating emotions: a rhetorical and agonistic framework for political passion.

Mauro Serra
Università di Salerno
maserra@unisa.it

Abstract The role of passions in politics is paradoxical. They are traditionally considered a threat, but at the same time, also as a result of research in neuroscience, we recognize more and more that we can't do without them. Hence a stalemate well represented by the relationship between the two main conceptions of democracy, agonistic democracy and deliberative democracy. The former appeals to the passions but without being able to explain how to urge them without being a victim of them, the latter describes a reason free from passions, but has the problem of engaging citizens and can be susceptible to the charge of motivational impotence. Faced with this situation, rhetoric seems to be a discipline that can provide a theoretical framework to connect fruitfully reason and passions in political sphere. This framework has three distinctive features: the role of *doxa* (belief) as link between reason and passions, an agonistic conception of truth, a tragic view of world based on a deep awareness of the limits of human reason and the belief that rhetorical action is the means by which identities become temporarily enacted and forged in response to the needs of a specific contingent situation.

Keywords: passions, rhetoric, agonism, politics, doxa

Received September 2015; accepted April 2016.

0. Introduction

As known, the relation between passions and politics is problematic. In fact, the role of passions in the public sphere is usually considered in a negative light. Emotions[1] are considered to be the expression of prejudices and vested interests so that it tends to be held that they should be neutralized in order to exercise decisional and deliberative activity which should characterize political life in the most appropriate way. In fact, in this sphere only the adoption of an impartial perspective is able to guarantee the correctness and validity of the decisions taken. On the other hand, if it is true that the history of political thought in the west has been dominated by the conviction that an adequate way of combining reason and passion does not exist, the

[1] I will use interchangeably the terms "passion" and "emotion", since for the purpose of my argument a (however problematic) distinction between the two concepts is not necessary.

RIFL/BC(2016): 250-261
DOI: 10.4396/2016BC16

most recent acquisitions of the cognitive sciences and neuroscience seem to seriously question the possibility of using practical rationality in the absence of passions and feelings, however. This data constitutes an important challenge to traditional theories. In fact, if:

> we are ignoring one essential aspect of our political experience, that is, the fact that we are essentially (though not esclusively) both creatures who feel, and creatures who tend to share feelings, and if we neglect to represent any aspect of this essential fact into our theories of what we ought do and how we ought to do it, then our conclusions will not provide appropriate guidance (KINGSTON 2011: 8).

Facing this challenge, in the following pages I will try to support the idea that rhetoric can still supply useful instruments to outline a theoretical frame which takes into account the data available. In particular, rhetoric seems to be able to offer a suitable theoretical frame for the close interrelation that it establishes between belief (*doxa*) and passions (*pathē*). Furthermore, the merits of rhetoric emerge more clearly by comparing it with some of the main alternative models in circulation today: deliberative democracy, agonistic democracy and a model which is directly inspired by the most recent neuroscientific research. My starting point is thus a brief consideration of these models.

1. Deliberative democracy: the primacy of reason

Now the deliberative model of democracy represents a consolidated theoretical frame with a variety of not completely congruent directions. In substance, the deliberative model promotes democratic practices where citizens play an active role, exchanging opinions and information and reciprocally persuading themselves, offering reasons before taking a formal decision. In reality, not all supporters of deliberative democracy place the same importance on making decisions. In fact, some of them interpret deliberation as an end in itself which produces an open, dynamic public sphere, which in turn generates an informed opinion. In both cases the key term is *deliberation* and it indicates a process including discussion and dialogue where judgments and different reasons are elaborated, defended, criticised and revised. The motivation for giving greater importance to deliberation derives from a sense of limitation of the previous models of democracy – in particular, the aggregative one. According to the deliberative model, a sense of trust in the government and institutions is necessary to maintain our cooperation. If we lose, we must have the sensation of having lost fairly and that the system still deserves our support. The supporters of deliberative democracy obviously place at the centre of their interest the question of how to ensure that deliberation is a process of inclusive communication, adopted in conditions that allow the participants to meet and compare themselves as equals. To be considered valid claims, they must conform to certain conditions or norms. For example, Habermas claimed that deliberative rules are implicit presuppositions contained in every communicative practice. We must presume that an "ideal speech situation" exists in order for us to speak, that is: «Anyone acting communicatively must, in performing any speech action, raise universal validity-claims and suppose that they can be vindicated» (HABERMAS 1996a: 119). All moral expectations imply certain norms of rationality and impartiality that can be found in the procedures of deliberative democracy: this

RIFL/BC(2016): 250-261
DOI: 10.4396/2016BC16

means that these expectations must be interpreted in the universal sense, be sincere and true. So democracy should move towards this ideal, eliminating distorsions of communication and allowing the moral expectations to be collectively convalidated. From this point of view: «Central to deliberative democracy is the claim that dialogue should be transparent and free of the distorting influence of interests and deception» (MARTIN 2013: 110). This is the reason why supporters of deliberative democracy reject passions and emotions. The efforts to change other people's opinions within the deliberative process must only call on reason since it is only rational deliberation that can guarantee transparent communication and consensus. On the contrary, passion is considered a form of manipulation since it supplants reason and pushes the participants to accept arguments on the basis of feelings which are not subject to verification and automatic replies in symbols which do not stand up to rational scrutiny. Now the question is: does communicative action, as it is conceived, actually exist? Obviously, an affirmative reply does not require empirical observation of uses of the language which correspond to an "ideal speech situation", which would be impossible and useless. The crucial point of Habermas' thesis is the following: a society cannot reproduce its cultural tradition nor permit socialization among its members by resorting only to punishment and reward. Given the cognitive nature of these processes, they depend on discursive practices of rational argumentation which can motivate beliefs and actions. Consequently, the question becomes: where do linguistic acts derive their power of coordinating interactions from? Habermas' reply is indicative and problematic:

> […] a speaker can *rationally motivate* a hearer to accept his speech act offer because – on the basis of an internal connection between validity, validity claim, and redemption of a validity-claim – he can assume the *warranty* for providing, if necessary, convincing reasons that would standup to a hearer's criticism of the validity-claim. Thus a speaker owes the binding force of his illocutionary act not to the validity of what is said but to *the coordinating effect of the warranty* that he offers: namely to redeem, if necessary, the validity-claim raised with his speech act [. . .] the place of the empirically motivating force of sanctions (contingently linked with speech acts) is taken by the rationally motivating force of accepting a speaker's guarantee for securing claims to validity (HABERMAS 1984: 302)

In other words, facing traditional fears regarding the role of passions, rhetoric and the construction of discourse, Habermas attempts to save the distinction between persuasion and coercion by hypothesizing an idealized process of persuasion which coincides with communicative rationalization from which all power relations are eliminated. The first distinction is then reinforced by linking reason (conceived intersubjectively) and persuasion. More precisely, Habermas takes the discursive dimension of persuasion, removes its rhetorical and emotional components and merges it with reason. What is required is a rational spur to form beliefs which is called conviction, in contrast with the act of persuasion which is more widely characterized from an emotional point of view. The possibility that a pure reason motivates persuasion and action is, however, exactly what remains problematic and makes Habermas' theory susceptible to the accusation of motivational impotence (ABIZADEH 2007).

2. Agonistic democracy: passions and politics

During her work, Chantal Mouffe has repeatedly emphasized the importance of recuperating passions for political thought and has bitterly criticized those scholars of rationalistic matrix whose relationship with politics, even if it takes passions into account, considers it to be something that has to be kept under control or suppressed. For such scholars, passions are a continual source of instability, at the antipode of reason. On the contrary, Mouffe invites us to see passions as indissolubly linked to politics. They allow collective political identifications and are thus an important source of motivation. Following Lacan, Mouffe underlines the impossibility of ignoring emotional forces that feed and make possible collective identifications. What motivates individuals and makes political action possible is passionate attachment to socially built collective identity. Using Derrida's idea of a "constitutive outside", Mouffe claims that every collective identity presupposes a "they" to whom the emotional strength of the aggression is directed. The affective ties which keep the members of a group united are such that the conflict is an constitutive dimension of politics. The social sphere is divided, like the "self" for that matter. In opposition to the theorists of liberal, deliberative democracy guilty of assuming the perfect transparency of an atomistic and rational " ego", for Mouffe the "self" is divided and does not have an essence nor is it possible to reduce it to an aware, rational "ego". Thus, the subject is formed through a series of imperfect identifications in symbolic order and no identification can capture the totality and singularity of the real body, the close-circuit of drives (MIHAI 2014). Lacking a clear, defined identity, the "self" is impermeable to reason. On the contrary, it is always searching for an elusive identity to invest in affectively. Therefore, our aim should not be to repress passions but to tame them. In the opposite case, we would meet two dangers. Firstly, there is always the possibility that the non democratic parties take possession of passions and use them against the democratic idea. This is the case of the extreme right whose rhetoric often resounds with the anger of the excluded. Secondly, unless democratic institutions provide opportunities for agonistic disputes, passions can burst out publicly in a destructive way as in the case of the continuous revolts of the Parisienne suburbs. Mouffe's most important conviction is that blindness to the affective dimension of politics and its role in maintaining collective identity prevents the liberal and deliberative democrats from realizing the limited role that reason plays in pushing people to take part in politics. It is the power of an idea that inspires imagination and relates the citizens' wishes, pushing them to interact in the public sphere. Obviously, this does not mean that rational arguments do not play a role in Chantal Mouffe's concept of politics. However, what this role could be is not absolutely clear. In fact, she claims, for example, that:

> To accept the view of the adversary is to undergo a radical change in political identity. It is more a sort of conversion than a process of rational persuasion (in the same way as Thomas Kuhn has argued that adherence to a new scientific paradigm is a conversion) (MOUFFE 2000: 102)

But an agonistic conception of democracy must assume that citizens are more than mere slaves of their passions: rather they must be considered potentially able to reply to democratic interpellations and to be partially responsible for their affective manifestations in the public sphere. Should we choose to follow Mouffe in her intention to recognize the role that passions play in democratic practices and in the

RIFL/BC(2016): 250-261
DOI: 10.4396/2016BC16

mechanisms of identification, we must presuppose that individuals are at least partially permeable to persuasion, exhortation and reflection. The same idea of "taming" passions has too strong disciplinary connotations which do not agree with an agonistic conception of democracy that considers citizens as agents involved in collective processes of contestation. Given her understanding of the difference between enemies and adversaries and her insistence on the necessity to redirect passions towards democratic purposes, an agonistic conception of rationality must presuppose that political emotions can be democratically directed, that is to say, intersubjectively and publicly, through persuasion and exhortation. Thus, agonistic democracy must incorporate an explanation of how individuals can be democratically encouraged to take responsibility for their emotions. To keep antagonism at bay or neutralize it, requires the cooperation of democratic citizens as agents whose emotions must be congruent with a public, democratic obligation. However, if Mouffe excludes the possibility that they can be filtered democratically and publicly, she reproduces the same understanding of passions – as passive, uncontrollable, needing to be kept under control – proposed by the theorists of liberal and deliberative democracy. Until we understand that passions presuppose – alongside physiological reactions – thought and reflection, until we understand that they can be socialized to serve a democratic agenda, until we assert their malleability and capacity to respond to persuasion and exhortation in an agonistic context, we will not be able to realize the productive strength they can render publicly.

3. From a neuroscience point of view: which relationship between reason and emotions?

Although the same neuroscience has not elaborated the implications for politics of its discoveries, numerous recent studies in the field of political science base themselves on it in order to explore the emotive dimension of political judgment. For example, George Marcus (2002; 2013) has contested what he considers the dominant position of political judgment in present day political science, which places reason in contrast with emotions and considers that politics needs protecting (through reason) from citizens' passions. He identifies two fundamental ways in which affective pushes, deriving from the limbic system of the brain, contribute to deliberation and decisions. Firstly, emotion indirectly guides strategic choices regarding behavior, modelling our moods. These moods are, in turn, based on emotional assessment to control the execution of habits: we sustain those habits about which we feel enthusiastic and we abandon those that cause us despair. Usual replies guide most political decisions for most people. When citizens take political decisions, for example by voting, their judgments are usually casual, even thoughtless because they are based on patterns of thought and behavior that have emotional salience for them and have become rooted habits. So emotional replies shape the habits that guide most political deliberations. However, emotions can also shake our usual patterns of judgment. This is the second way that emotions condition political decisions. What Marcus calls the brain's surveillance system, which involves emotional responses to external stimuli, acts to scan the environment for novelty and sudden intrusion of threat. In this case emotions signal the discoveries of our continual analysis of the environment, raising the level of anxiety when they perceive novelties or threats, for example, and focalizing our attention on the relevant objects. We are engaged in active deliberative politics when the surveillance system promotes some emotions, particularly anxiety. Active, meditated deliberation needs the stimulus of emotions to realize itself and

DOI: 10.4396/2016BC16

Marcus (with other scholars) underlines the fact that empirical studies regarding behavior carried out during voting confirm this conclusion. Therefore, it is less probable that individuals that remain "dispassionate" about politics judge rationally since they lack the emotional push necessary to motivate more greatly meditated decisions.

While it is beyond the scope of my argumentation to establish if the empirical data confirm Marcus' position, it is, however, sufficient to underline a conceptual weakness in his approach (moreover, already noticed by other scholars, e.g. KRAUSE 2013). Despite the accurate attention paid to emotions, this model of good political deliberation paradoxically tends to neglect their role. In fact, in this theoretical model the role of emotions is either to undermine good deliberation, in the measure in which emotions control our behavioral attitudes which push us to reply to political questions without adequate reflection, or to start good deliberation through emotional signals like anxiety. So Marcus tells us that emotion enables conscious consideration to be invoked for circumstances that merit the use of reason. But how does emotion contribute to good deliberation once in course? What is its role in practical rationality? Although these questions are not formulated explicitly, the impression is that also the model proposed by Marcus results in leaving emotions in the margins in favor of a report which privileges rationality.

To summarize what has been said so far. We have seen three models with the following characteristics: 1) deliberative democracy has no role at all for the passions; 2) agonistic democracy emphasizes the role of passions but has almost no role for rational deliberation; 3) a two-layer model inspired by neuroscience does not provide a real interaction between passion and reason.

4. Rhetorical framework: *doxa* as link between reason and passions

Addressing my attention to rhetoric, I will concentrate on only one, decisive element, the role of belief and its relationship with passions. Let us start from the definition of passions (*pathē*) which Aristotle provides in *Rhetoric* (1378a21):

> Those things which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear and other such things and their opposites (trans. Kennedy).

Although Aristotle does not always explain clearly how emotions produce judgment, a widespread interpretation is that emotions influence judgment through belief. According to this cognitive approach, beliefs determine emotions, whose variations (caused by these initial beliefs) in turn influence other beliefs or decisions (judgments) with regard to actions in the political sphere or regarding the guilt or innocence of a person in the judicial field. Aristotle's discussion of single emotions seems to confirm this interpretation.

> Let anger be [defined as] desire, accompanied by [mental and physical] distress, for apparent retaliation because of an apparent slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those near to one. If this is what anger is, necessarily the angry person always becomes angry at some particular individual (for example, at Cleon but not at an [unidentified] human being) and because he has done or is going to do something to him or to those near to him; and a kind of pleasure follows all experience of anger from the hope of getting retaliation (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1378a30-b2, transl. Kennedy).

> Let fear [phobos] be [defined as] a sort of pain and agitation derived from the imagination of a future destructive or painful evil; for all evils are not feared; for example, [a person does not fear] that he will become unjust or slow-witted but [only] what has the potential for great pains or destruction, and these [only] if they do not appear far off but near, so that they are about to happen; for what is far off is not feared: all know that they will die, but because that is not near at hand they take no thought of (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1382a22-28, transl. Kennedy).

In both cases Aristotle suggests that a thought or belief is essential for emotion. Anger requires the belief that one has been offended without reason whereas fear presupposes the conviction of an imminent evil. In both cases, if thought or belief is lacking, also emotion is lacking. In the same way, if one shows that the reasons for feeling a particular emotion are unjustified, then my emotions should disappear or, at least, diminish. On the other hand, since Aristotle's objective (like all the rhetoric tradition for that matter) is to make the orator able to provoke these emotions, he needs to know what produces them: now it seems that the conviction subject to the whole rhetoric enterprise is that belief (and reasoning) are the core of the question. In order for rhetoric to do what Aristotle wants it to do, it is necessary that emotions can be evoked and eliminated by speech and reasoning in quite a reliable way. So belief acts as a fundamental element in the link between speech on the one hand and passions on the other. On closer inspection, the situation in Aristotle appears more complicated and, for this reason, object of discussion among scholars. In fact, while there is wide consensus on the fact that passions implicate a representational state in Aristotle, on the other hand, the identification of this state is different. For some scholars, (NUSSBAUM 1994) it is a question of *doxa* while for others (MOSS 2012) it is *phantasia*. This is not the place to enter into the details of a complex question which, for that matter, has been reconstructed with a generally convincing solution in a very recent study by Jamie Dow (2015). It is sufficient for our purposes to underline first of all that there does not necessarily seem to be an incurable conflict between the two positions (Dow 2015:183 note 2). Those who insist on the involvement of *phantasia* are more interested in identifying the psychological capacity involved in this activity while those who make reference to *doxa* intend to underline «what really is a crucial and central fact about emotions, namely that they are related to the subject's *perspective*» (DOW 2008: 215). In the second place, the Aristotlean theory of passions in some way seems to presuppose a sometimes problematic relationship between *phantasia* and *doxa*. In fact, as stated in the *Ethics*, passions, even if they belong to the non rational part of the soul, are able to agree with *logos*. Significantly, this agreement is described by Aristotle as the capacity of passions to obey (*epipeithes, EN* 1.7, 1098a4) or, more generally, to be persuaded by reason/language (*NE*, 1.13, 1102b33) or to give attention to it (*EE*, 2.1, 1219b30-1). In any case, the recourse to a series of terms which refer to the sphere of persuasion does not seem casual since it is precisely the structural dependence on conviction and persuasion that allows the differentiation between *doxa* and *phantasia* as Aristotle explicitly states in *On the Soul*:

> It remains, then, to see whether [representation] is belief: for belief also turns out to be either true or false. But, belief depends on credence (for it is not possible for someone who forms a belief not to have credence in what seems to be), but credence belongs to none of the beasts, while many of them have

> representation. Moreover, every belief depends on credence, credence depends on having been persuaded, and persuasion depends on λόγος; but while representation belongs to some of the beasts, none of them have λόγος (Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 3.3, 428a18-24, transl. McCready-Flora: 2011:16 modified).

On the other hand, the link between *pathos* and *doxa* explains why passions are an essentially social phenomenon that can be better dealt with, as Aristotle states, by asking three questions: I mean, for example, in speaking of anger, what is their state of mind when people are angry and against whom are they usually angry and for what sort of reasons (ARISTOTLE, *On Rhetoric*, 1378a25-26).
We can get an adequate idea of the social nature of passions by taking into consideration Aristotle's treatment of shame.

> Since shame is imagination [*phantasia*] about a loss of reputation and for its own sake, not for its results, and since no one cares about reputation [in the abstract] but on account of those who hold an opinion of him, necessarily a person feels shame toward those whose opinion he takes account of. 15. He takes account of those who admire him and whom he admires and by whom he wishes to be admired and those to whose rank he aspires and those whose opinions he does not despise. Now people want to be admired by those and admire those who have something good in the way of honors or from whom they happen to be greatly in need of something those people have in their control, as lovers [want love or sexual favors]; but they aspire to the rank of those [they regard as] like themselves, and they take account of prudent people as telling the truth, and their elders and educated people are of such a sort. And they feel more shame at things done before these people's eyes and in the open; hence, too, the proverb "Shame is in the eyes" (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1384a22-36, transl. Kennedy).

Without denying that shame can have a physical manifestation - someone who is ashamed could blush - according to Aristotle, the causes of shame are directly connected to the position he occupies in a particular social situation. As Daniel Gross writes:

> Shame is a complex phenomenon with a series of enabling conditions and conversely there is shame where social institutions are most dense: where one's reputation really matters, where the opinions of the other are valued, where social rank is effective, where credit can be given and debts owed, where honor can be realized or lost, etc. Passions are, therefore, constitutive of political agency and originate in the shared but contested space between politically and historically situated agents. Indeed, a political community in which every member enjoyed equal status would be completely devoid of passions (GROSS 2007: 42).

5. Heidegger's gaze: rhetoric in the Marburg course of 1924

The constitutive link between *doxa* and *pathos*, or rather belief and passions, and the centrality that this link occupies in the definition of a human being and what characterizes us as humans, constitutes one of the most significant points developed by Heidegger in one of the courses held before the editing of *Sein und Zeit* which finished in 1927. In the summer semester of 1924, Martin Heidegger, then a young professor at the University of Marburg, held a course dedicated to Aristotle's

Rhetoric entitled *Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie*. In the interpretation proposed by Heidegger, *doxa* expresses the authentic "being with one other in the world". In fact, it is characterized by a protolinguistic mood but also by a non meditated perspective. Not being a fully realized mental attitude, *doxa* could seem a way of being which we could share with other animate beings. Not by chance, Heidegger, prior to the critical position formulated in *Sein und Zeit* in 1927, warns us that «the seductive power of the Other constituted in *doxa* can be strong, and what should be a fundamental affirmation of our being-in-the-world can be flattened into received opinion. This is where we return, in a certain undesirable sense, to a nonhuman state» (GROSS 2005: 31). On the other hand, what makes *doxa* a typically human condition is its temporary condition, its opening and the fact that it could always be different. For Heidegger the dynamism that characterizes *doxa* is made possible by *pathos* because without emotions only apathy and a thoughtless opinion would remain. It is only *pathos* that makes *logos* emerge from *doxa*. Without doubt, the capacity to speak is already contained in *doxa* as is the possibility to change someone's opinions and to show things from another point of view (thus *doxa* already indicates a way of being inaccessible to other animate beings). So *doxa* becomes the basis and the reason to speak to each other and negotiate our respective points of view. In fact, although it has a certain tendency towards fixedness, in *doxa* there is always the latent possibility to be different and the tendency to leave the discussion open. At the same time, *doxa* is where dialogue emerges from and finds its motivation and is the object of negotiation in dialogue at the same time. In *doxa* we are already there in the world with others in a way which is at the same time essential, though temporary. Furthermore, it is by starting from *doxa* that it its possible both to articulate the interests in a community and to construct evidence to support our reasoning. It is precisely the placing of every particular *doxa* in brackets that makes us human and thus uncertain, unfinished and subject to desire. We must act in a world which is characterized by mere probability and thus we are susceptible to emotion and change.

Although Heidegger does not make explicit reference to it, still before than in Aristotle, in one of the fundamental rhetorical texts, *Helen's Encomium* by Gorgias, it is possible to find not only recognition of *doxa* as the cognitive horizon starting from which discursive activity in man becomes comprehensible but also the identification of the indissoluble link between *doxa* and *pathos*. In Gorgia's opinion, Helen's action and the attempt to justify her become a paradigmatic reflection on the human condition. «In Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen* human frailties give rise to the first probabilistic epistemology and to an eloquent defense of the art of speech» (GROSS 2005: 32). If men were omniscient, the thing that is explicitly denied by Gorgias in par. 11 of the *Encomium*, every discourse would be true and there would no longer be space for eloquence and passions. In such case, every form of discourse would become superfluous: there would be nothing to discuss, nothing to describe and nothing to debate. It is precisely our limits, the fact that *doxa* (with its inextricable connection with passions, *Hel*. 8-10) represents our cognitive horizon that makes us human (neither God nor animal) and that pushes us to speak and practice eloquence. As men, we live in a world of probability where, on the one hand we cannot take for granted that others share our same opinions and, on the other hand, we cannot think our beliefs are unattackable. In this reality, the rhetorician, or better each man exercising his personal eloquence, does not have argumentation available which guarantees the truth. From that derive not only the fragility that characterizes our condition but also, and it is an aspect which receives greater value

in Gorgias than in Aristotle[2], the inevitably agonistic nature of our linguistic practice. For Gorgias, *logos*, starting from the one formulated by him in defence of Helen, has an intrinsically agonistic nature, always in opposition to another discourse of a contrary nature. The examples Gorgia quotes in paragraph 13 to clarify the nature of *logos* and its powers are extremely clear on this point. Discursive practice of orators, philosophers or even scientists, are invariably characterized by two elements: 1) they cannot rise above the *doxa* which, as we have seen, constitutes the cognitive horizon of man; 2) they are competitive, or better, they are performed in the opposition of (at least) two competing *doxa*. Obviously, Giorgia does not fail to notice that this practice could be transformed in the practice of violence, as the same situation of Helen seems to show. However, the possibilities of avoiding a similar danger are recognized not so much in appealing, as happens for example in Socratic dialogue, to an interior mood of the interlocutors which appears difficult to control though, but rather to the capacity to provide themselves with the necessary tools to take part in a discursive contest. Thus, it is not completely true that it is not possible to avoid the power of discourse. In fact, a way of doing this exists and is represented by the capacity to articulate a stronger discourse than the one proposed by our interlocutor:

> When Gorgias gave lessons in rhetorical techniques, he was handing over to his students an arsenal of weapons to use in convincing others, but at the same time to use in defending against the power of persuading. His instruction was aimed at making his students more powerful but also freer human beings (IJSSELING 1995: 350)

I shall not judge whether this provides a satisfactory answer to all the difficulties linked with the power of the word and its complex relationship with our passions. Rather, one should understand that human beings cannot step outside of the order of speaking and of the constitutive relationship between discourse, passion and belief.

References

ABIZADEH, Arash (2007), «On the philosophy/rhetoric binaries. Or, is Habermasian discourse motivationally impotent?», in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 33, 4, pp. 445-472.

DOW, Jamie (2008), «The Role of Emotion-Arousal in *Aristotle's Rhetoric*», PhD thesis, University of St. Andrews.

DOW, Jamie (2015), «Passions and Persuasion in *Aristotle's Rhetoric*», Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York.

GROSS, Daniel M. (2007), «The Secret History of Emotions in *Aristotle's Rhetoric to Modern Brain Sciences*» Chicago University Press, Chicago-London.

[2] But for Aristotle see the recent ZANGONI 2015, especially pp. 230-241.

GROSS, Daniel M. (2005), *Introduction. Being-Moved: The Pathos of Heidegger's Rhetorical Ontology*, in, GROSS, Daniel M., KEMMANN, Ansgar, *Heidegger and Rhetoric*, State University of New York Press, Albany, pp. 1-45.

HABERMAS, Jürgen (1984), *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, Beacon Press, Boston (MA).

HABERMAS, Jürgen (1996a), «What is universal pragmatics?» in *The Habermas reader*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 118–131.

HABERMAS, Jürgen (1996b), «Discourse ethics», in *The Habermas reader*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 180-192

HEIDEGGER, Martin (2009), *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis

IJSSELING, Samuel (1995), *Power, Language, and Desire*, in B. E. Babitch (edited by) *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, Kluver Academic Publishing, pp. 335-353

KINGSTON, Rebecca (2011), *Public Passion. Rethinking the Ground for Political Justice*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston

KRAUSE, Sharon R. (2008), *Civil Passions. Moral Sentiment and Democratic Deliberation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton-Oxford

KRAUSE, Sharon R. (2013), *Democracy and the Nonsovereign Self*, in James E. Fleming (edited by) *Passions and Emotions*, (Nomos LIII), New York University Press, New York-London, pp. 226-239

MARCUS, George M. (2002), *The Sentimental Citizen: Emotion* in *Democratic Politics*, Penn State University Press,

MARCUS, George M. (2013), *Reason, Passion, and Democratic Politics: Old Conceptions – New Understandings – New Possibilities*, in James E. Fleming (edited by) *Passions and Emotions*, New York University Press, New York-London, pp. 127-188

MARTIN, James (2013), «A feeling for democracy? Rhetoric, power and emotions», in *Journal of Political Power*, 6, 3, pp. 461-476

MCCREADY FLORA, Ian (2011), *Belief and Rational Cognition in Aristotle*, PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan

MIHAI, Mihaela. (2014), «Theorizing Agonistic Emotions», in *Parallax*, 20, 2, pp. 21-48

MOUFFE, Chantal (2000), *The Democratic Paradox*, Verso, London

RIFL/BC(2016): 250-261
DOI: 10.4396/2016BC16

MOSS, Jessica (2012), *Aristotle on the Apparent Good*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

NUSSBAUM, Martha C. (1994), *The Therapy of Desire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ)

ZANGONI, Lara (2015), *La dialettica dimenticata. La topica aristotelica nel dibattito contemporaneo*, PhD Thesis, University of Palermo