

A German version of Kenneth Burke

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In his 1951 essay, “Rhetoric – Old and New,” Kenneth Burke contrasts two constructions of rhetoric that distinguish the traditional view from the contemporary: “The key term for the old rhetoric was ‘persuasion,’ and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the ‘new’ rhetoric would be ‘identification,’ which can include a partially ‘unconscious’ factor in appeal” (63). With this definition and an impressive range of amplifying works, Kenneth Burke has qualified as the magisterial leader of a modern approach to rhetoric, the New Rhetoric, which, from the German research angle, has always been seen as a specifically American phenomenon, considering the US background of other advocates, like Richard M. Weavers, Ivor A. Richards, and the General Semantics scholars.

It was exactly 30 years later that Hans Blumenberg, a German philosopher, published an article which all of a sudden drew the attention of rhetorical scholarship. “Anthropologische Annäherung an die Aktualität der Rhetorik” (“An Anthropological Approach to the Contemporary Significance of Rhetoric”; 429-58) can be seen as the cutting-edge initiation for the rhetorical anthropology approach in Germany. However, Blumenberg, as well as Burke, does not theorize without controversy; his ideas are discussed and promoted, but also challenged. In contrast to Burke, though, Blumenberg has to face a fundamental debate that puts his essential validity into question, that is to say, some German scholars argue that Blumenberg’s ideas cannot be classified as rhetorical ones at all. Thus the critics put into question the relevance of the approach motivated by these ideas; they challenge rhetorical anthropology as a whole.

My hypothesis is that Blumenberg could be seen as a (delayed) German equivalent to Burke. Both Burke and Blumenberg share the same anthropological ideas and the resultant rhetorical concepts. This essential agreement has several consequences: Up to now Blumenberg has been discussed as something which he is not. German researchers have analyzed him as if his was an Old Rhetoric---whereas his formulations are congruent with the New Rhetoric. So what is at stake is a paradigm shift in German rhetorical scholarship based on three assumptions: By my proving him a New Rhetorician, Blumenberg would, firstly, finally be accepted in Germany as a

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rhetorician. Secondly, New Rhetoric would not be a purely American and thus distant phenomenon any longer. And, thirdly, one could recast the “rhetorical anthropology approach” away from its status as a unique set of ideas.

To prove my hypothesis, I will provide a comparison of Blumenberg’s and Burke’s ideas. For that purpose I will present each of them, with an introduction to Blumenberg first and my conception of Burke second. Thereafter, I will juxtapose their ideas to elaborate the substantial parallels and to show the significant conceptual analogies between Burke and Blumenberg. Finally, I will describe the theoretical implications of merging both of their conceptualizations, to wit, that the New Rhetoric can no longer be treated in Germany as a foreign, purely American phenomenon.

2.1. Hans Blumenberg’s Idea of Man and Woman, and Rhetoric

Hans Blumenberg’s essay “An Anthropological Approach to the Contemporary Significance of rhetoric” aims at identifying the human being as a being that is before everything else a rhetorical one. Blumenberg employs Ernst Cassirer’s “*animal symbolicum*” (438, emphasis in original) for that being. Published in 1981, Blumenberg’s combination of anthropology and rhetoric was enterprising enough to induce a lively debate among German scholars forming a whole new research approach: rhetorische anthropologie, “rhetorical anthropology.” Blumenberg’s argumentation unfolds by paralleling anthropology and rhetoric regarding their very constitutive questions. As to rhetoric the primal dispute is that between Plato and the Sophists. Whereas for the Sophists the creature man/woman does not possess truth, as truth does not exist, for Plato truth does exist and it is obtainable by the human being. As far as anthropology is concerned, the question is whether man and woman are to be seen

as a poor or as a rich creature. The fact that man [sic] is not fixed, biologically, to a specific environment can be understood either as a fundamental lack of proper equipment for self-preservation or as openness to the fullness of a world that is no longer accentuated only in terms of vital necessities. Man is made creative by the urgency of his needs *or* by playful dealings with his surplus talents. (“Approach” 429; emphasis in original)

Blumenberg parallels rhetoric’s and anthropology’s antitheses, linking each to their major options: “Man as a rich creature exercises his dispositions over the truth that he possesses with

the aid of the rhetorical ornatus [ornament]. Man as a poor creature needs rhetoric as the art of appearance, which helps him to deal with his lack of truth” (“Approach” 430). Plato’s human being is anthropology’s rich creature, which has to do “with the consequences of possessing truth” (429-30). To the sophists man is anthropology’s poor creature, who has to do “with the difficulties that result from the impossibility of obtaining truth” (430).

Having established these parallel alternatives, Blumenberg makes a decision: his following remarks are based on the assumption that man/woman is the poor being. Having decided in favor of the “creature of deficiencies“ (“Approach” 430), Blumenberg installs two coordinates of human being which he frequently gets back to throughout his argumentation: “Evidenzmangel” and “Handlungszwang“ (“Annäherung” 117)---“lacking definitive evidence and being compelled to act” (“Approach” 441).

The term Evidenzmangel depicts human life as a state of being, where not a single issue presents itself as the better or worse option. Evidenzmangel is the situation which lacks the obviousness that would disengage things from the necessity of being interpreted and construed. Evidenzmangel is “a deficiency of pre-given, prepared structures to fit into and of regulatory processes“ (“Approach” 433). This deficiency is a specifically human one. Man and woman are an anomaly in “nature, which otherwise only presents itself in pure form and regulates itself straightforwardly“ (432). “In the case of man [sic],” Blumenberg writes, “things have come together that have difficulty harmonizing“; to Blumenberg the human being is “a point of intersection of heterogeneous realities” (432).

Handlungszwang is tied to Evidenzmangel: In a world lacking definitive evidence, “Action compensates for the ‘indeterminateness’ of the creature man [sic]” (“Approach” 433). Humans are condemned to act: For a creature “fallen back out of the ordered arrangements that nature has accomplished ... actions have to take the place of the automatic controls that he [sic] lacks” (433). Handlungszwang signifies man and woman’s need to act in order to live, that is, in order to create a reality out of a whole range of possible realities available to them out of their indeterminateness. “To act,” then, means to select and rank the various elements intermingled, to accept some of them and reject others. “The problem of conduct is to assign to one of these elements authority over the others“ (432).

Evidenzmangel and Handlungszwang apply to both the relationship of humans to their environment and the relation of humans to themselves, that is, the self’s relation to the self. As

well as man/woman lacks “specific dispositions for reactive behavior vis-à-vis reality,” he or she “has no immediate, no purely ‘internal’ relation to himself [or herself]” (“Approach” 439, 456). As well as they need to act regarding their environment, persons need to act regarding their self: “The substantialism of identity is destroyed; identity must be realized,” as “being able to live and defining a role for oneself are identical” (456, 442).

From Evidenzmangel and Handlungszwang, Blumenberg proceeds to the animal symbolicum idea. Assuming that the world does not regulate for humans without any effort on their part, the implication is that they are unable to relate to reality directly, that is to say, without intermediation. The “poor creature man [sic]” “masters the reality that is originally lethal for him [as it exceeds the degree of impressions, ideas, possibilities and implications he is able to bear] by letting it be represented“ (“Approach” 440). As he or she is not designed to stand the thousandfold-dimensioned reality, the human creature has to grasp it by reducing its complexity, by outlining it---Blumenberg names that necessity the “creative symbolism with which he makes himself at home in worlds of his own“ (429). Facing an enormously complex reality, humans set substitutes. These substitutes represent reality, they are symbols of reality---thus it is the “animal symbolicum” (438) reacting on Evidenzmangel and acting out Handlungszwang. To Blumenberg it is only as this animal symbolicum that the “creature of deficiencies” (430) is able to live. From this it follows that “the human relation to reality is indirect, circumstantial, delayed, selective, and above all ‘metaphorical’“ (439). This, again, applies to the relation of the self to the environment as well as to a person’s relation to himself or herself. Says Blumenberg:

The process of definition that goes with the role concept---a process upon which the consciousness of identity depends, and with which it can be damaged---is itself rooted in metaphor and is asserted and defended, both internally and externally, by metaphor. (442)

Blumenberg’s idea of rhetoric ensues at this point. As he puts it: “Alles, was diesseits der Evidenz übrigbleibt, ist Rhetorik” (“Everything that remains beyond definitive evidence is rhetoric”; “Annäherung” 111). Man and woman’s reality is what they have made out of their ever-complex environment. As well as the process of definition concerning their identity, their construction and permanent validation of what Blumenberg calls reality is a rhetorical process. Persons erect and protect the identity they have created, may it be that of their environment or that of themselves. Blumenberg employs a major rhetorical term here:

The “agreement” that has to be the goal of all “persuasion” (even of self-persuasion) is the congruence---which is endangered in all situations and always has to be ensured afresh---between one’s role consciousness and the role expectations that others have of one. (“Approach” 442)

Everytime they confront the world, encounter other people or themselves, humans are in need of persuading others or, respectively, themselves of their construction proving true; that is, they are in need of a rhetorical act. “Rhetoric is the effort to produce the accords that have to take the place of the ‘substantial’ base of regulatory processes in order to make action possible” (433).

“Man [sic] copes with the excess of demands made on him by his relation to reality” (“Approach” 439) by stylizing the world around and within himself. However, this construction has to face permanent challenges; it has to prove itself before oneself and others. If it fails to do so, the animal symbolicum would fall back into a state of the unbearable absence of truth. The failing rhetorical act results in crisis. The successful rhetorical act keeps the human role players’ conception of the world (and of themselves) from offense. Rhetoric does not supply persons with truth, but it is the medium through which they create a truth conception and through which they preserve what they have designed as truth. Blumenberg calls this process “the rhetorical shielding” (443). Establishing and preserving make the rhetorical act. Humans cannot do without a provisional truth, as there is “a realm of statements that have very important practical consequences, consequences that cannot be suspended, although in their theoretical status these statements are based, perhaps forever, on an insufficient rational foundation” (“Approach” 448). There is no other way than accepting these assertions, despite their insufficient foundation, because extirpating them “involves bringing practice---which depends on such premises---to a standstill, and thus becomes illusionary” (448).

To sum it up, Blumenberg’s rhetorical concept is based on his anthropological assumptions of Evidenzmangel and Handlungszwang. Everything beyond definitive evidence is in need of being rhetorically enacted, of being represented by an abstraction, reduction, or simplification, that is to say, by symbols. Creating and preserving them define the rhetorical act. Human beings are the animal symbolicum, as Blumenberg considers symbol-making and symbol-preserving constitutive criteria for their very existence:

The circumstance of being compelled to act, ... which demands primarily a physical reaction, can be transformed, rhetorically, in such a way that the enforced action becomes ... “merely” a rhetorical one. (“Approach” 440)

2.2. Kenneth Burke’s Idea of the “Symbol-using Animal” and Rhetoric

With his White Oxen and Other Stories (1924), Counter-Statement (1931), and numerous translations and reviews in the 1920s, Kenneth Burke first appeared as a novelist and literary critic. However, over the years Burke has developed an entire philosophy comprising neo-platonic aspects as well as Marxian and Freudian ones. As Hermann Holocher, a German rhetoric scholar, puts it: “Literatur ist zwar der Gegenstand, nicht jedoch das Ziel Burkes. Sein Augenmerk gilt der Gesellschaftsanalyse“ (“Though literature is Burke’s matter, it is not his end. Rather, what his study aims at is society”; 108.) Looking upon language as the basis of social signification, Burke looks to literature as the symptom of society.

Consequently, Burke considers an author’s work the deposit of ritualized strategies employed by the author to handle his or her life. In The Philosophy of Literary Form (1941), Burke says: “we think of poetry ... as the adopting of various strategies for the encompassing of situations” (3). Burke labels these situations “dramatic situation[s]” (88), as, like in the classical drama, two incompatible principles, moralities, or attitude options are at odds with each other and likely to collide. As Rueckert puts it in his remarkable analysis Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations (1963): “This constitutes the drama ... ---the continuous interaction between agent and scene and between the conflicting impulses within the agent“ (44).

Human life is, for Burke, “the ‘unending conversation’ that is going on at the point in history when we are born” (Philosophy 94). This conversation is a dialectic one; it is a playful act of say and counter-say: “Then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him [sic]; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you” (95). Thus human history is nothing but the seesaw changes in arguments, the seismograph of alternating beliefs which have made themselves generally accepted truths. “History . . . is a ‘dramatic’ process, involving dialectical oppositions“ (93). Speaking of “dialectical oppositions,” Burke has in mind the various options being at man and woman’s disposal in particular situations. As for the question what to do in these situations, humans have “a number of alternatives from which to choose“ (Rueckert 132).

The drama of the human being results from the necessity to select from a “set of values” (Rueckert 132). “The self . . . accepts and rejects various alternatives, merges with and separates from certain things“ (43). Only then can persons live, when they decide, because deciding equals “Sinn aus Wahrnehmungen zu machen” (“turning cognitions into meaning”; Holocher 120). As Roland Barthes put it in his 1978 lectures: “Das eine auswählen und das andere zurückweisen heißt stets dem Sinn opfern, Sinn hervorbringen, verfügbar zu machen“ (“Accepting one thing and rejecting another always means sacrificing meaning, breeding meaning, providing meaning”; 33). Based on the assumption that meaning is the bedrock of living, selecting from the alternatives is not only a privilege, but a vital necessity. “The poet or thinker . . . cannot leave matters at that. Exigencies of living require him [sic] to choose his alignments,” Burke writes in Attitudes Toward History (106). It is this necessity that constitutes the dramatic character of “human affairs” (Philosophy 98). Every issue bears a dramatic potential as every issue implies ambiguities and contrariness, “die vielfältige Identifikationsmöglichkeiten bietet” (“providing various identification options”; Holocher 128).

The dramatic situation is a permanent one, even though not always discerned as a situation of conflict. It is most obvious when social significances are destabilized and deteriorate from their former status of being the “truth” to a new status of being only an option of “truth.” However, the dramatic situation is not necessarily one demanding a revolutionary change, but may be an every-day situation. “Even if there were no important historical changes taking place in society which called into doubt accepted values and conceptions of human purpose,” Rueckert writes, and then quotes Burke, ““The mere changing of one’s glandular system would involve him [or her] in “new situations””(ATH, II, 215-216.)” (44). In short: life is drama.

With this permanent situation, “Existence is a kind of dialectic of division and merger, disintegration and reintegration, death and rebirth, war and peace” (Rueckert 42). Therefore, Burke’s dramatic conception of life and history can be considered the overall principle of being. “Man [sic] in search of himself and toward the better life is, for Burke, *the* universal situation“ (43; emphasis in original). It is determined by the two master motives---fear and desire. What humans long for is identification, that is, “unity, merger, and integration”; what they fear is “disorder, division, and disintegration” (42). The symbol-using animal “attempts to put his self together, to discover and maintain his identity so that he can act purposefully and feel at home in the world” (45).

Persons seek to avoid dramatic feelings, because such feelings are closest to what they fear, “*Entfremdung*” (Attitudes 140, emphasis in original). Therefore, they are in need of reconciling vehicles legitimating their decisions, retroactively, in a highly complex world. These vehicles are symbols. Symbolizing clears a matter and/or integrates the competing principles of the dramatic situation. “To act” in terms of disputing dialectic antitheses, in terms of reflecting and gauging them in a structured and/or dramatically complex world, relies on such prescinding and synthesizing “vessels” or “mergers” (106), which symbols are. They rescue persons from the ever-impending division they fear and ensure the ever-promised identification they yearn for.

Burke concentrates on symbolization through language and describes that act as “erect[ing] a series of transcendental bridges“ or “producing a synthesis atop the antithesis“ (Attitudes 92). Burke names the act of producing a symbol “stylization” (Philosophy 110). In fact, what he names “stylization” in his earlier works is the rhetorical act he refers to in his later works. In the Rhetoric of Motives (1950), for example, he writes: “Rhetoric must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard ...“ (23). What he describes here is the same function he accounts stylization. Stylization, that is to say the rhetorical act, serves to find a way out of the dialectic coppice viable for humans, restricted by their bounded rationality and finite cognitive abilities. Stylization (the rhetorical act, as coded into culture-specific patterns of appeal) is to compensate for inconsistencies and loosen gridlocked antipodes, for securing a person’s identification with himself and his or her surroundings. The symbol provides men and women with the service of avoiding the disruption they fear. Burke has a whole cluster of adjectives describing this conciliatory-salubrious effect of language and the symbols realized through it, for example, “. . . unifying, integrating, transcending; and redemptive“ (Rueckert 48). Based on its function, Rueckert provides us with the following definition of the symbolic (rhetorical) act: “Any act (whether physical or verbal) that is in fact representative of the self which performed it, and any act that has a compensating function for the self which performs it is a symbolic act” (58). From being the tool to handle dramatic situations, it follows that the symbolic action is as ubiquitous as dramatic situations themselves. This tool is essential to human beings, as it means to find a way “out of the wasteland toward a better life through symbolic action” (43).

2.3. Comparison of Burke and Blumenberg

In The Philosophy of Literary Form, Burke illustrates his understanding of symbolic action by depicting an alcohol addict who either drinks or writes, that is to say, whose life is an incessant alternation between the “malign alcoholic spell and the benign literary spell“ (103). The purpose of the story is to point out that symbolic action does not cling to a certain form, but both relapsing into an alcoholic debauch and writing squibs are “different parts of the same spectrum” (103), that is to say, both drinking and writing are “symbolically enacting the [same] mental conflict” (10). The two stages do not conflict, but “are part of the same cluster; they function synecdochically” (104). In my understanding, Burke’s accentuation of the substitutional relation between the physical and the literary action matches Blumenberg’s idea that “a physical reaction can be transformed, rhetorically, in such a way that the enforced action becomes ... ‘merely’ a rhetorical one” (“Approach” 440).

However, this parallel is not a selected point only. It rather suggests a structural analogy between Burke and Blumenberg sharing the same anthropological and rhetorical ideas. Blumenberg’s decision in favor of man as the poor being, of the being lacking truth, that is, definitive evidence, corresponds to Burke’s basic assumption of the dialectic-dramatic space humans are exposed to. Both Burke and Blumenberg prefer to consider men and women’s environment the “result of the complex and ever-changing conflict relation” (Rueckert 42) to praising indeterminateness’s opulence of options available. Blumenberg’s characterization “that in the case of man things have come together that have difficulty harmonizing with each other“ (“Approach” 432) parallels Burke’s “good and evil elements intermingled” (Attitudes 106). Both the authors emphasize the inconsistency symbol-users have to face, with Burke asserting all things’ ambiguousness and Blumenberg diagnosing the “heterogeneous elements“ (“Approach” 432).

Just like Burke’s relating to both the “continuous interaction between agent and scene and ... the conflicting impulses within the agent” (Rueckert 44), Blumenberg’s ideas apply to both the role concept inward, “defining a role for oneself” (“Approach” 442), and outward, “the congruence ... between one’s role consciousness and the role expectations that others have of one” (442).

As well as for Burke, for Blumenberg, too, it follows from that situation, that humans are in need of a medium to come up against the “originally lethal” reality (“Approach” 440). Burke writes about the Perseus myth to illustrate this idea: “Perseus who could not face the serpent-

headed monster without being turned to stone, but was immune to this danger if he observed it by reflection in a mirror” (Philosophy 53). Blumenberg considers “the human relation to reality [as] indirect, circumstantial, delayed, selective” (“Approach” 439). As both Blumenberg and Burke primarily relate to language, speech (and thus style) “is this mirror” (Philosophy 53); “the human relation to reality is ... above all ‘metaphorical’” (“Approach” 439).

In my remarks on Burke’s example of an alcohol addict, I have already shown that both Blumenberg’s and Burke’s idea of “act” is of broader range than that of the popular understanding, which is limited to physical action. Not only is the rhetorical act of the same value as the physical act; it even outranks the physical act. This is implied by Burke’s identifying “the taking of the alcohol” as “the attainment, in a simplified, restricted idiom, of the effects got in a more complex idiom through the writing of the squibs” (Philosophy 104); and it is implied by Blumenberg, too, saying “that without this capacity to use substitutes for actions not much would be left of mankind [sic]” (“Approach” 440). In their conception of the “act,” they even share the same distinction between acting and moving. Holocher writes of Burke’s distinction that moving belongs to the animal aspects within humans; that is to say, “to move” is motivated by the baser human instincts and needs. Man/woman’s reaction to these stimuli is “to move,” whereas “to act” implies judging and reflecting on the situations (Holocher 109). Blumenberg frames it like this: “Action shrinks to reaction the more direct is the path from theory to practice that is sought” (“Approach” 446).

As well as Burke, Blumenberg employs the term “symbol” to label the result of the rhetorical act. Albeit a different terminology, they also share the same idea concerning the accomplishment of the symbols. Burke’s term for it is “stylization,” which means to prefer certain aspects of one thing to the others, and thus accept certain aspects and deny others. Blumenberg rather employs the term “rhetoric.” However, his understanding is in accord with Burke’s: “The problem of conduct is to assign to one of these elements authority over the others” (“Approach” 432). Additionally, neither for Burke nor for Blumenberg is stylization an option, but rather a necessity. To Burke “stylization is inevitable” (Philosophy 110). “Für Hans Blumenberg ist Rhetorik das Medium des Überlebens“ (“To Hans Blumenberg rhetoric is the medium of survival”; 90), Norbert Bolz, a German philosopher, writes in his essay “Das Gesicht der Welt. Hans Blumenbergs Aufhebung der Philosophie in Rhetorik.”

As far as the symbols themselves are concerned, the correspondences are especially striking when Blumenberg and Burke do not only share the conception of them, but even the terms employed. Based on the anthropological assumption that persons depend on tools to ease reality, and assuming that these tools are the symbols they create, Blumenberg centralizes the animal symbolicum. Burke's key concept is that of the "symbol-using animal," which he defines in Language as Symbolic Action (16).

Let me dwell on Burke's definition of "man," or the human, to show how its items coincide with Blumenberg's ideas. Burke writes:

Man [sic] is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal, inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative), separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order), and rotten with perfection. (16)

Though "rotten with perfection" seems to be just another item in a series, in fact, it is the summing up of the four antecedents. The term's linguistic vigor not only results from its position at the end of the definition, but rather also from the paradoxical combination of "perfection" and "rotten." People usually consider perfection a positive thing, so how can it be "rotten"?

To Burke, man and woman's perfection is that they are endowed with speech, an equipment unique among all creatures. Again, it is only on the surface that Burke considers language. In fact, through speech he surveys human conduct: "In the theory of the negative Burke reduces reason and morality (conscience) to language (symbol-using)" (Rueckert 130). This is because speech is based on attitude, which forms morality and reasoning. "These strategies size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude towards them" (3). Symbol-users are the exceptionally endowed animals. Their extra is their reason, enabling attitude, enabling speech.

However, not every extra is a favorable one. Humans are a unique being, endowed with reason and language, but these attributes can corrupt them. Language and reason inhibit any "innocent" action. Innocent action requires an evident world. However, verbal animals are "forsaken by evidentness" ("Approach", 432); through language they have fallen off their very original state, which is what Burke, as well as Blumenberg, regard as the evident, innocent world: "Eliminate language from nature and there can be no moral disobedience" (Religion 187). The idea that

persons have fallen from an innocent state of mind implies that such a condition must have existed somewhere along the way. Interestingly, both Burke and Blumenberg depict their idea of an innocent world by citing the biblical Fall. Along these lines, Eden is the evident, thus innocent, world. The self is „truly at one with its environment“ here (qtd. in Rueckert: 46); identification at its best. Everything being evident in the Garden of Eden, symbolization is redundant. There is no need for a “purgative-redemptive function” (Rueckert 60), there is no need for reconciling mergers or vessels in a self-regulatory environment. In paradise creatures do without symbols, that is, „humans,“ if we may use that term, do without rhetoric. Thus Adam and Eve before the Fall represent Blumenberg’s idea of man and woman as a rich creature, like Burke’s conception of persons enjoying total identification.

As described above, Eden is considered to be a state as desired long ago, that is to say, irrecoverable. After the Fall man/woman is the poor creature respecting the self, suffering division and disorder. To make matters worse, it is man and woman’s own fault. Though forbidden, Adam and Eve eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Tempted by the serpent, they take the bait of achieving knowledge of Good and Evil. Indeed, they are given that knowledge: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew” (New American Standard Bible, Gen. 3.7). Significantly, the first thing Adam and Eve become aware of is themselves: “They knew that they were naked” (Gen. 3.7). Having eaten the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve have gained more knowledge, that is, they are endowed with an add-on, but it does not prove favorable. Instead it causes fear. The act setting man’s expulsion from the innocent state is followed by an action motivated by guiltiness: “I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself,” Adam says (Gen. 3.10). Being aware of oneself means experiencing oneself indirectly. Seeking knowledge, “man” caused disintegration and the irreversible losing of an evident, that is innocent world: “Therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden“ (Gen. 3.23).

Rueckert considers Burke’s concept of the symbol-using animal as the „*secular* version of the Christian drama“ (46, emphasis in original).“ Man [sic] falls every time he follows the impulse toward abstraction which reason and language make possible“ (46). As indicated by Adam and Eve’s hiding in the Christian equivalent, to Burke, “Man is ... of „guilt-laden substance”” (46). Men and women are perfect, they are “complete” in terms of their extra features, but the options these features enable them to be aware of, separate them from „nature, which otherwise only

presents itself in pure form and regulates itself straightforwardly“ (“Approach”, 432). In a state lacking every implicitness, humans cannot react immediately; their directions are indirect ones, since they are required to decide. Blumenberg therefore diagnoses this symbolizing creature with “poverty of instincts” (439). Correspondingly, Holocher writes of Burke: “Reagieren Tiere auf Zeichen instinktgeleitet, so ist der Mensch für Burke das einzige Lebewesen, das Zeichen als Zeichen sehen kann und diese interpretiert” („Whereas animals react instinctively, the human is, to Burke, the only creature perceiving signs as signs and interpreting them”; 110). It is human beings’ perfection that is their problem: being perfect, complete, they always see the two sides of a story, as the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” points at. Man/woman’s perfection results in their sensing an unbearable complexity. However, they cannot accept issues in their entirety, because they would not then be able to act. Awareness of total complexity inhibits action. “Action requires programs” (Attitudes 4), which are a result of human decisions; and any „decision usually sums up,“ or abridges, „a complexity of motives“ (Rhetoric 99). Due to Evidenzmangel humans alone must regulate what to consider right or wrong. As “programs require vocabulary” (Attitudes 4), these decisions are reflected in speech.

The rhetorical act, that is to say the act performed through speech, is therefore a vital necessity to the animal symbolicum. To Burke, „guilt as a permanent part of man’s [sic] condition makes purification and redemption a continuous necessity” (Rueckert, 46). Purification and redemption are achieved through rhetoric, more precisely through symbolic action. Symbolic action is therefore “the secular analogue for Christ, the sacrificial redeemer” (46). In his Matthäuspassion (1988), Blumenberg calls rhetoric the “Heilsgeschichte *in nuce*” (“the salvific history *in nuce*”; 256, emphasis in original), as speech is of hybrid character: it causes human division and, at the same time, it is the medium to get over that division. Symbolic action, the rhetorical act, is the salvation from the vastness of possibilities disposed to man and woman. Bolz writes on Blumenberg’s philosophy: “Wo es Optionen gibt, gibt es Rhetorik.” („Where there are options, there is rhetoric“; 95). This idea matches Burke’s consideration that it is rhetoric that „must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, ... the Wars of Nerves, the War“ (Rhetoric 23).

Against the background of these explanatory remarks, Burke's definition of "man," or the human, can be seen as an over-concise summary of Burke's philosophy. He considers "man" the

"inventor of the negative" (that is, of the alternative, the other option, depicted by the Evil), who is "separated from his natural condition" (that is, expelled from the paradise state of an evident world)

"by instruments of his own making" (that is, eating the forbidden fruit, he gains reason and language)

"goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by a sense of order)" (that is, having to rank reality options to live), "and rotten with perfection" (Language 16)

I have already shown how Blumenberg's Evidenzmangel and Handlungszwang match Burke's philosophy. Now let me give some more analogies concerning Burke and Blumenberg's rhetorical ideas.

Firstly, I would like to address the relation between speech and rhetoric. To both Blumenberg and Burke, speech is rhetoric. As every statement is necessarily a result of stylization, that is, every statement creates and conveys meaning or social significance, via recognizable norms or "styles" of expression, speech can never be non-rhetorical from Burke's point of view:

„Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion'" (Rhetoric 172). Every single word spoken is motivated by the human fear of division and desire for merger. Only in Eden, when the self was „truly at one with its environment“ (qut. in Rueckert: 46), was there no necessity to proclaim identification, thus it was only in Eden that speech was "innocent," that is, non-rhetorical. The same is true for Blumenberg, to whom speech is the medium to defend, "both internally and externally," the individual's "role concept" ("Approach" 119), with "role" signifying the self's role, as well as the role it has defined for its environment. Man and woman are compelled to rhetoric as it "signalisiert ... Gewißheiten, die man nicht haben, auf die man aber auch nicht verzichten kann" ("signals ... certainties one cannot have, but which one cannot do without either"; Bolz 93). Burke described the same tension to his friend Malcolm Cowley in 1947: "How can a world stay respectable with rhetoric, how can a world without it even exist?"ⁱ

Secondly, rhetoric is located on a borderline position by both Burke and Blumenberg. To Blumenberg rhetoric oscillates between "den unerträglichen Grenzwerten des Realen als Trauma

und Simulation“ (“the thresholds of two reality states: reality as a trauma and reality as a simulation”; Bolz 90). I consider this dichotomy as corresponding to Burke’s two anthropological-existential coordinates, division and identification, because reality as a trauma bears division, reality as a simulation provides identification. The strait between is where rhetoric has settled: „But put identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric“ (Rhetoric 25).

Thirdly, I want to discuss Burke and Blumenberg’s shared understanding of historical processes. If man fails “not to encounter contradiction, both in the internal sense, as a problem relating to consistency, and in the external sense, as a problem relating to acceptance” (“Approach” 442)---if the rhetorical act fails---individuals will seek to find other symbols, that is, another speech, to adjust their internal perceptions with external circumstances and vice versa. Blumenberg says, “The deeper the crisis of legitimacy reaches, the more pronounced the recourse to rhetorical metaphor becomes” (452). Both Blumenberg and Burke decode societal changes as symptoms of situations when a majority of people lack the feeling of identification. Holcher writes about Burke’s idea of history and society: „Das die Gesellschaft beherrschende, persuasive Prinzip ist dabei das Produkt erfolgreicher rhetorischer Handlungen.“ (“The persuasive principle ruling society is the product of successful rhetorical action”; 130). As far as Blumenberg is concerned, “Die Realität der Geschichte *ist* die jeweilige Umbesetzung, die sich *rhetorisch* vollzieht. ... Namengeben ist alles andere als harmlos; in ihm vollzieht sich die Ernennung des Geschichtssubjekts.“ (“The state of history *is* the particular reallocation taking place *rhetorically*. ... Labelling is anything but innocent; labelling is appointing the historical issue.”; Bolz 93; emphasis in original).

3. Theoretical range

Having completed the comparison of Kenneth Burke and Hans Blumenberg, I would like to present its theoretical implications for the German perspective. Therefore, I will introduce the discussion on Blumenberg first, because already from the criticism passed on Blumenberg one can deduce that he is a New Rhetorician. Secondly, I will provide further evidence for my hypothesis by assigning the parallels between Burke and Blumenberg to the three major

characteristics of the New Rhetoric approach. To conclude, I will outline the German theoretical area of conflict, in order to locate New Rhetoric, Kenneth Burke, and Hans Blumenberg within this area.

Kenneth Burke's role within the New Rhetoric approach is without controversy. The German Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik (Encyclopedia of Rhetoric) regards Burke as the most influential advocate of the New Rhetoric (Kramer 265, cp. Holocher 108). In contrast, German scholars are highly at variance concerning their understanding and thus classification of Hans Blumenberg. For example, Peter L. Oesterreich, a German professor of philosophy and author of Fundamentalarhetorik, says in his essay "Anthropologisches Argumentieren" (2000) that Blumenberg's conception is just the replication of Sophistic ideas already formulated in Plato's Protagoras, particularly in his Theaetetus dialogue, which directly addresses the issue of Evidenzmangel (cp. Oesterreich 367). Astonishingly, Lothar Bornscheuer, a German professor of literature, identifies the Sophist's ideas as "Gegenwurf gegenüber dem des Evidenzmangels" ("objecting to Evidenzmangel"; 103). So whereas Oesterreich reproaches Blumenberg for rehashing the sophistic agenda, Bornscheuer reproaches him for contravening the sophistic agenda: Blumenberg's alternatives on the animal symbolicum "[gehören] nicht ... zu den anthropologischen Grundvorstellungen der Sophisten" ("are not part of the anthropological basics of the Sophists"; Bornscheuer 105). Hubert Robling, a rhetorical scholar, even challenges Blumenberg's classification as a rhetorician, saying rather that he addresses ethical issues more so than rhetorical ones (2). So does Bornscheuer (102).

Let me dwell on Bornscheuer, as he is probably Blumenberg's harshest critic. Analyzing Bornscheuer's remarks on Blumenberg, what I consider to be the core problem of the German Blumenberg reception emerges. Bornscheuer's criticism is directed at the dichotomy of either humans as a poor or as a rich creature. He argues that Blumenberg considers these options as unrelated alternatives, whereas from Bornscheuer's point of view, they are essentially interlinked (99). In my understanding of Blumenberg, Bornscheuer's remarks are invalid, as they result from a misconception: Bornscheuer interprets Blumenberg wrongly, accusing him of denying any relationship between the poor and the rich creature (102). Instead, Blumenberg explicitly advocates such a relationship, which is best depicted by his word for rhetoric as the "salvific history in nuce" (Matthäuspasion 256): Man is rich with respect to his add-on feature, language. At the same time language puts man in a condition requiring language. Even though

Blumenberg's initial decision is in favor of the poor creature „man,“ he does not deny that there is a connection between the two anthropological options he establishes at the very beginning of his essay.

There is no agreement on this issue either: Bornscheuer does consider man/woman to be the rich creature (106). He does so due to the fact that the Sophists were paid for their service (106), a superficial argument at best, something of a joke at worst. It is in no way adequate to what Blumenberg takes as an indicator for his decision. Blumenberg's index is whether humans possess truth, which makes for the rich creature, or lacks truth, which makes for the poor creature. A profound criticism, from my point of view, would rather question the indicator and/or its evaluation, instead of applying a standard not in the least relevant to the conception given. Therefore, I think, Bornscheuer's reasoning does not prove of value.

Furthermore, Bornscheuer attacks Blumenberg's animal symbolicum, via this tack: “nicht die ›Metapher‹, sondern das konsensuelle Urteil ist das ›signifikante Element der Rhetorik‹“ (“not ‘metaphor,’ but the concurrent verdict, the consensus, is the ‘distinctive element of rhetoric’”; 104). However, Bornscheuer ignores that a society's metaphors are in need of and display the vast majority's agreement. A metaphor will never work, if the transformation constituting it lacks the acceptance of the people it is to appeal to. Thus metaphor *is* the consensus, which Bornscheuer opposes to metaphor.

At this point it becomes clear what is the problem of his criticism in principle. It takes Blumenberg for someone he is not. The German scholars' difficulties with Blumenberg result from classifying him as an Old Rhetorician, whereas he is a New Rhetorician.

To provide evidence for this hypothesis, I have already shown the parallels between Blumenberg and Kenneth Burke. Completing my argument, I would like to assign these parallels to the three essential characteristics of the New Rhetoric approach.

According to the Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik (Encyclopedia of Rhetoric), New Rhetoric's major characteristic is the idea of language as a medium of symbolic action (Kramer 259). New Rhetoric defines man/woman as the creature that employs symbols (Holoher 136). Speech always highlights certain aspects and obscures others of one and the same issue, that is to say, speech produces representatives of an issue. As this limitation is inherent in speech, it is necessarily of symbolic character. Speech cannot appropriately encompass the complexity of the world. Therefore, to reflect reality is to arrange it. From that intractability it follows that the

verbal version of the world displays a “Abweichung der Wirklichkeit” (“a ‘deflection of reality’”; Holocher 138). This deflection, in turn, affects social reality. Linguistic conditions shape the self’s reality (Holocher 140). Burke addresses these issues with his “symbol-using animal” and his idea of the persuasive principle ruling society. Blumenberg’s term for the same issues is the animal symbolicum, which copes with reality’s ambiguous elements by “assign[ing] to one of these elements authority over the others” (“Approach” 432). As Burke does, Blumenberg refers to history as “rhetorische Prägung” (“rhetorical imprint”; Bolz 93).

The second characteristic is New Rhetoric’s broad idea of rhetoric. This notion opposes that of Joachim Knape, a major German professor of Rhetoric, who argues that the rhetorical act is not the use of language per se, but rather a specific verbal act (Knape 65). New Rhetoric advocates do consider “Sprache als immanent rhetorisch” (“speech as inately rhetorical”; Holocher 137). Furthermore, New Rhetoric is not only about speech acted out, but also about everything that happens before. “Zwar verlieren die Autoren nie die produktive Seite der Rhetorik aus dem Blick, aber zunächst wenden sie sich vor allem dem kritischen Potential zu” („Even though the authors never deny the active part of rhetoric, they focus on its discerning potential”; Kramer 260). Burke brings this issue up when writing on dialectic and drama. What he calls “dialectic” is the rather passive part of rhetoric, which, nevertheless, sticks to the active part. Burke considers rhetorical potential to be inherent in every dialectical approach to an issue (Holocher 138). This potential is activated the minute persons open their mouth to speak. The culmination of this understanding is Burke’s definition, “Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. Wherever there is ‚meaning,‘ there is ‚persuasion’” (Rhetoric 172). The same is true for Blumenberg: he abandons rhetoric’s specific, conscious application, illustrating its ubiquitous necessity in every communication, due to the permanently pestering Evidenzmangel. If in every communication the individual’s inward and outward reality concept is in danger of being eroded, there is no situation left innocent of persuasive dimensions, if not intentions.

The third characteristic concerns rhetoric’s function. The New Rhetoric authors emphasize rhetoric’s harmonizing potential. “Das übergeordnete Ziel dieser Praxis ist nach einmütiger Auffassung ‚Kooperation’” („On universal agreement the superordinate of this practice is ‚cooperation’”; Holocher 137). Burke takes this line when centralizing “identification”: “The key term for the ‚new’ rhetoric would be ‚identification’” (“Old”, 63). Blumenberg, too, focuses on the unifying, integrating capability of rhetoric. Saying that “what is important is not to

encounter contradiction” (“Approach” 442) and that “without this capacity to use substitutes for actions not much would be left of mankind [sic]“ (440), Blumenberg is concordant with Ivor A. Richards, another leading New Rhetorician, for whom rhetoric holds as the “wichtigste Instrument der Zivilisation” (“the most important instrument of civilization”; Holocher 136).

By now I have, firstly, presented the parallels between Hans Blumenberg and a New Rhetoric author beyond dispute, Kenneth Burke, and, secondly, shown these parallels to be characteristics unanimously attributed to the New Rhetoric. Therefore, my hypothesis stands established, I submit: Hans Blumenberg should be considered a New Rhetorician.

Not only does this line of argument call on German scholars to reassess Blumenberg, but it also implies that their criticism passed on Blumenberg is criticism passed on the New Rhetoric. This points to a major discussion among German rhetorical scholars displaying two contrarian ideas of what rhetoric is. In the following I would like to outline this discussion as it reflects on the perception of the New Rhetoric, and thus Kenneth Burke, in Germany.

The scholars spareheading the discussion are Joachim Knape, a major German professor of rhetoric, and Peter L. Oesterreich, a German professor of philosophy. Both Knape and Oesterreich have formulated a Fundamentalrhetorik, each claiming theirs to be the definitive concept of rhetoric.

There are three crucial points at issue. The first one concerns rhetoric’s function. Whereas Oesterreich emphasizes rhetoric’s function as a medium of social cohesion, Knape sets two socially conflicting principles for rhetoric: “Das erste Prinzip,“ Knape writes in his constitutive Was ist Rhetorik, “ist die Metabolie, Veränderung oder Wechsel, das zweite Prinzip aber ist die Systase, die soziale Bindung“ („The first principle is Metabolie, change or alternation, whereas the second principle is Systase, the social bonding”; 34). New Rhetoric, however, emphasizes Systase before Metabolie, setting identification as the key term of rhetoric and focusing on rhetoric’s coordinating, integrating, and unifying power rather than on its antagonistic side. Knape considers rhetoric’s function as a social tie as subordinate. On Burke’s identification concept, Knape comments as follows: „Damit ist der (naturgemäß sehr eingeschränkte) rhetorische Beitrag zur sozialen Beziehungs- und Konfliktlösungstheorie angesprochen” („It addresses rhetoric’s (by nature very small) contribution to the theory of social relations and conflicts.”; 85). Thus, Knape has an issue with Blumenberg as well. Just like Bornscheuer he would indirectly accuse Blumenberg of ignoring “daß Rhetorik z.B. auch immer ein wesentliches

Instrument von Macht war” (“that rhetoric has always been an important instrument of power”; Bornscheuer 102).

The second point concerns the scope of rhetoric: Whereas to Oesterreich, „existiert ... das Rhetorische schon lange vor der Erfindung der Redekunst“ (“rhetoric exists already before the invention of oratory”; 354), in Knape’s conception rhetoric is not concerned with man and woman’s general communication skills, but rather with “the specificity of the rhetorical communication situation or process” (86). New Rhetoric, again, is a lot closer to Oesterreich’s conception of rhetoric, considering every speech to be of persuasive character, may it be intended by the speaker or not. This points to another difference between Knape on the one side and Oesterreich on the other side. Knape identifies unconscious elements during the persuasive process as communication handicaps (46), whereas Burke’s definition of the New Rhetoric explicitly includes uncontrolled factors: “The key term for the ‚new‘ rhetoric would be ‚identification,‘ which can include a partially ‚unconscious‘ factor in appeal” (“Old” 63). In accordance with that characteristic, Oesterreich calls Knape’s notion “das Phantasma persuasiver Allmacht” (“the phantasm of persuasive omnipotence”; 359).

However, this difference might be considered as crucial to why rhetoric is of broader scope to Oesterreich and the New Rhetoric than to Knape. One of Knape’s major intentions is not to waive rhetoric’s specific feature; he does not believe in “permanent persuasion” (86). In contrast, Oesterreich regards mere every-day conversation as a rhetorical situation, as to him rhetoric starts with dialectic, that is to say, the play of statement and response. From his point of view, symbol-users are part of that play “vor und ohne Bekanntschaft mit der Rhetorik” (“already before and without knowing the artistry of rhetoric”; 359).

This leads to the third conceptual difference, which addresses their image of the orator. To Knape this is a special entity, which he coins the “handlungsmächtiger Orator” (34). The term is best paraphrased by “the strategic communicator who possesses a maximum awareness and control of influencing factors.” To Knape this specific orator is the “very crucial point of rhetorical theory” (33). His opponent Oesterreich denies Knape’s centralization of the orator as the major rhetorical factor (Robling 2). Oesterreich splits rhetoric, so he assigns Knape’s orator conception to the Kunstrhetorik, ‘artistry of rhetoric’, and labels his own Fundamentalrhetorik as Naturrhetorik, ‘natural rhetoric’ (359), which does not require the orator to be aware of how he

speaks. Oesterreich's conception of the orator can be denominated homo rhetoricus, that is, a creature who acts rhetorically in every situation, even without consciously taking an oratorical initiative (359).

4. Conclusion

It is obvious that Blumenberg, Burke, and the New Rhetoric approach are close by Oesterreich's point of view. However, each of the four named are treated differently in German scholarship. Considering New Rhetoric to be a specifically American phenomenon, it has long been distant enough to pass judgment on it. It might be that the uncertainties concerning Blumenberg some German scholars evince result from this perspective on the New Rhetoric. If they did not stick to the idea of the New Rhetoric as a purely American approach, they might be able to resolve their fundamental difficulties with classifying Blumenberg. Instead of admitting that the New Rhetoric is not an exclusively American phenomenon, they created a new approach named rhetorische anthropologie, „rhetorical anthropology,“ which I consider to have tremendous parallels to the New Rhetoric, so that rhetorische anthropologie could be labelled a German version of the New Rhetoric. Interestingly, the Germans' perception of Kenneth Burke is of a hybrid character. Knape, for example, holds him in high regard for centralizing the author as the text producing authority, at the same time criticizing the rhetorical ideas characteristic of the New Rhetoric advocates, which Burke also belongs to. However, Knape's criticism does not address the New Rhetoricians directly, but instead Oesterreich, who serves as a representative in a sense.

It is difficult to find a reason for the Germans' restraint on the New Rhetoric. A range of problems results from that restraint. Blumenberg might represent only one aspect of those problems.

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ⁱ This is my own translation of the line Holocher cites from that letter: “Wie kann eine Welt mit Rhetorik achtbar bleiben, wie [jedoch] kann eine Welt ohne diese überhaupt existieren?” (108). Unfortunately, I do not have access to the original (i.e. English) version of it.