

## SPEECH AND DEMOCRACY: THE TUTU'S MBEKI'S EXCHANGE

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### Abstract

*The paper is motivated by a sharp exchange of words between Thabo Mbeki, the South African President and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the former Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee which ended in a communicative crisis. Given the premise of Democracy which is based on the freedom of opinion that is reflected through open criticism and debates, this paper studies the power of words in the course of public delivery. The paper examines specific theories of verbal communication and provides a theoretical framework of communicative public discourse which is a crucial factor in securing the essence of Democracy.*

**Key words:** Language, Public Debate, Communication, Democracy, South Africa

### Introduction

An unusual interview took place with Archbishop Tutu when the former Head of the Truth and Reconciliation committee thanked Thabo Mbeki, the South African President for calling him a liar. The Noble Prize receiver for Peace said as follows:

*...disregard for the truth, and a charlatan posing with his concern for the poor, the hungry, the oppressed and the voiceless...I will continue to pray for you and your government by name daily as I have done and as I did even for the apartheid government. God bless you (The Sunday Independent, Feb 6, 2005).*

In this interview Tutu lamented, "I am just sad. Sad for the country. I am just deeply sad. That's all. "These perplexed words were said as a response to the President who accused the Archbishop for denying the truth in his deliberation at the prestigious Mandela's Foundation lecture that marked a decade to the end of the apartheid (Tutu 2004).

The Emeritus Anglican Archbishop's words and the written reply of the President were so sharp and so unusual in their tones that as a result, the South African ruling party, the African National Party (ANC) decided to publish a dissertation, "The Public Discourse in Democratic South Africa"(ANC Today vol. 5 no. 2, 14 January through vol. 5 no. 11, 18 March 2005) in order to clarify the matter of the post-apartheid South African public speech which seems to be in a state of confusion.

We are concerned therefore with forms of public announcements delivered by two of the most influential political figures of South Africa that created a clash. Therefore, the subject-matter of this paper is the nature of communicative political Rhetoric which unfortunately did not take place in the new South Africa.

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The paper's claim is that the form of the speech affects its ways of communication and perception. That is, public debates which reflect differences of opinions are integral part of Democracy and need encouragement. However, the goal of the political speech is to argue and to criticise but the question is how. The intention of effective rhetoric is to build a political discourse which introduces a variety of positions in order to open discussions between the debaters that might lead to dialogues rather than to a communicative crisis.

Nevertheless, the exchange of words between Tutu and Mbeki evoked strong emotional reactions that blocked and in fact prohibited a sincere criticism and consequently a meaningful and fruitful discussion regarding the essence of the South African democracy.

What went wrong? It appears that the problem is rooted in a certain misconception of the power of the words, the way they should be used in order to keep the channel of communication alive. That is, the issue is how speakers should employ their words in order to enable a serious mode of argumentation and reasoning rather than stick in needles in each other. In short, the question is how a polemic public discourse should take place; are their rules of reasonable debate that preserve the communicative avenue in spite of the differences in opinions?

In order to reassess these concerns we need to provide a theoretical speech framework regarding the impact of the public word and its communicative function in the context of a public dispute. What is a dispute, how do we argue a case? We need to understand the complex principles of verbal communication for the sake of effective perception.

Consequently, the present paper is methodological in its essence: seeking to investigate the place and function of the Rhetoric of public discourse as an argumentative means which employs words for the sake of communication. The goal is to provide a comprehensive view of the impact of the word, its reception and the culture of communicative reasoning in the context of the Tutu-Mbeki argument. This linguistic-rhetorical endeavor is presented through the following sub-chapters: The Word and its Impact, Words and Politics, The Essence of Communication, Dispute and Rhetoric; then, given the background and the theoretical framework the discussion moves on to Tutu's address as well as Mbeki's response, searching for the communicative problems.

### **The Word and its Impact**

Before we dwell on the art of Rhetoric we need to present an idea of the notion of the word, asking ourselves whether it is merely an external dress of thoughts or the 'things themselves' which shape our reality. Thus, the Greek Sophists – the first to theorize the power of speech in society – promoted their profession as speakers through the unforgettable words of Isocrates (436-338 BCE), a member of the canon of the Ten Attic Orators. The following conveys his appraisal of the speech as the basis of civilization:

In most of our abilities we differ not at all from the animals; we are in fact behind many in swiftness and strength and other resources. But because there is born in us the power to persuade each other and to show ourselves whatever we wish, we not only have escaped from living as brutes, but also by becoming together have founded cities and set up laws and invented arts, and speech has helped us attain practically all the things we have devised. For it is speech that has made laws about justice and injustice and honor and disgrace, without which provisions we should not be able to live together. By speech we refute the wicked and praise the good. By speech we educate the ignorant and inform the wise. We regard the ability to speak properly as the best sign of intelligence, and truthful, legal, and just speech is the reflection of a good and trustworthy soul. *With speech we contest about disputes and*

*investigate what is unknown...Nothing done with intelligence is done without speech, but speech is the marshal of all actions and of thoughts and those most use it who have the greatest wisdom* (cited in Kennedy 1963:8-9) (emphasis is mine).<sup>i</sup>

Speech is the essence of humanity and without speech civilization will not be established. Only human beings are able to utilize their linguistic skill to create a moving poem of love or to compose their history as the collective memory of the society or to develop an argument through the establishment of a lexical discourse of reasoning. This is the 'glory and honor' of the human gift of language as through language human beings might question and investigate their surrounding and their existence. The human faculty to reason and to inquire provides therefore a unique epistemological insight. Word is a deed, a creation rather than a mere pipe of delivery.

The question is what does speech do? The question revolves around the essence of the words. The critical question is therefore whether language 'stands for things' or whether our language actively shapes the very meaning these things have, so that how we talk about them is the way they are for us. Social practices have their reality in the language used to describe them (compare How 1995:86-87). Language (speech) is instrumental in constructing social realities. Thus, Berger and Luckmann maintain that "the reality of everyday life is ongoingly reaffirmed in the individual's interaction with others" (1967:149).

An extra-ordinary illustration of the power of speech is already conceived through the Biblical world. The act of creation as a speech endeavor is demonstrated through Genesis 1 and Psalm 29:

Then God said: Let there be light; and there was light (Gen 1:3, and see vv. 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26).

The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord over mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty (Ps 29:3).

These verses do not utter mere statements that describe an event. They utter something else, they *do*; they perform. The creation of light, for instance, is an utterance of doing through speech; that is, words act, words perform, the 'performative utterance', as Austin (1996:255-262) coined it. Words have created the world.

Words perform; they don't stay with the speaker. The intention of the speech does not belong to the one who speaks, but is attributed to that speaker later on by one of the listeners. Thus, the intention of the speech act is determined by the listener (Butler 2004:106-07). In this regard, Gadamer's concept of the 'movement' of the conversation is enlightening:

We say that we conduct a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less it conducts lies within the will of either partner. Thus, a genuine conversation is never the one we wanted to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it. The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way, but the partners conversing are far less the leaders than the led (1979:383).

That is to say, we might control the structure of our speech, but that does not mean that we control our hearer's perception. In short, words do function as a two-sided sword: they might communicate as we wished them to do; nevertheless, there is no guarantee: they might take their own route conceived without their sender's control.

This uncontrolled situation that the leaders may be led explains the fear of the public debate, on the one hand, and, consequently, the need to protect the word and its public performance (through the law such as Free Speech) on the other hand.

### **Words and Politics: An Historical Overview**

Given the concern regarding the speakers' control of the audience's perception, we must look at the crucial role of speeches in the realm of Politics as an axiomatic principle of Democracy in spite of the fact that they might be misperceived. The fundamental point is that politics is attached to words. As a matter of fact, the history of Democracy as the political system of the people's government is integrated into the history of public delivery. That is to say, Democracy is associated, actually depended, on public debates, which provide the opportunity for political, social or ideological views to voice their different approaches in order to affect the act of policy making.

Indeed, the significance of public debates and exchange of opinions for the sake of Democracy has been recognised recently through a special committee of the United Nations. The following definition of Democracy (formulated by the Chair of the United Nations International Panel on Democracy and Development) may work for us as a guideline:

[Democracy is] a system whereby the whole society can participate ... in the decision making process and keep control over it ... democracy can be defined as a political system that is capable of correcting its own dysfunctions (Boutros-Ghali 2003:7-8).

In accordance, words, speeches and media columns are instrumental tools utilized by members of the society to participate and keeping control over the decision-making process in the proclamation of Democracy. The State, on its side, is obliged to secure the democracy through the right of verbal and written speech which might criticize the decision-making process. Indeed, taken the South African constitution the law ensures the citizen's freedom of thought, opinion and expression (Bill of Rights, 15, 16).

Clearly, words are the working tools of the politician. Politics, as Max Weber wrote, is the art of demagoguery: "The demagogue has been the typical political leader" (Gerth and Mills: 1958:96). However, looking at the present conflict, the gulf in communication between the State's political leader and the Emeritus Archbishop is not what Weber had in mind as political 'demagoguery'.

The concern is therefore not with the constitution as such but with the form of the delivery as an effective means of fruitful communication. In this regard, notice should be given to a BBC World Service/Gallup International Poll survey which concluded that "only in Scandinavia and South Africa do the majority believe they are ruled according to their wishes" (Cape Times, Sep 16, 2005). The argument between Tutu and Mbeki might question this poll.

The matter of interest is the verbal proclamation which is designed to shape and to affect the public opinion and to defend political or social or ideological positions. Hence, it is not accidental that the history of Democracy is indeed the history of public delivery. It started in Minor Asia, in Syracuse, at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE given the fall of the tyrant Trasibulus. As a result, and without any preparation a great opportunity was given to those citizens who previously were oppressed by the despot ruler. Now, they could claim their stolen property in court.

However, a problem was raised; the victims did not have sufficient documentary evidence to prove their cases. Hence, many of them failed to persuade the judges because they were unable to present a case which was based on the principles of probability rather

than hard facts. In other words, the opportunities for civil and individual rights were granted, but many claimers experienced difficulties in fulfilling their rights because they did not know how to argue a case which lacks hard facts of proof. In short, in Syracuse the system of Democracy as the right of the people's claim was tested on the basis of the ability to argue persuasively a case. Thus, the art of public argumentation, that is, Rhetoric has been introduced through the discovery of the argument of probability, that is, that is, opinion, *doxa* rather than a hard proof. Thus, a new wave of skilled orators who developed the art of public argumentation on the basis of probability (or opinion) to a level of almost irresistible established a powerful movement of talented speakers called Sophists, 'the possessors of wisdom' (Barilli 1989:3-12). Thus, in Athens where Democracy reached its height the major political decisions such as matters of war and peace or taxes were determined in public assemblies where the skilled Sophists argued their case.

However, Democracy was in stake. The problem was that the Sophists, trained on the basis of probability were guided through the principle of winning a case, actually every case regardless of the matter of truth. That is to say, speech in the service of Democracy might be dangerous as the sophisticated orators were able to mislead their audience. In other words, the Sophists adapted themselves to every possible case without establishing moral criteria such as truth as the leading force of their appeal.

Indeed, the Sophists were drastically opposed by two of the chief philosophers of Athens, Socrates and Plato who claimed that public speech is not just a matter of winning a case through every possible persuasive trick.

Nevertheless, the art of public argumentation as a systematic and critical speech exercise has been secured by Aristotle. In his monumental book, Rhetoric, he introduced Rhetoric as a matter of the search for truth but in terms of the criterion of public acceptance. Indeed, agreed Aristotle, truth in the course of public argumentation regarding matters of opinion such as politics, is not a matter of mathematic demonstration. However, there are moral principles or collective memories or social agreements which are generally accepted, and the orators must establish their arguments on the principles of the generally acceptance (for the classical history of Rhetoric consult Barilli 1989 and Bizzel and Herzberg 1990).

Nevertheless, the Sophists' principles regarding the matter of 'truth' are still valid, and the matter has been reintroduced in the current discussion on the merit of Rhetoric. The following remarks conveyed by Stanley Fish – quoting Donald McCloskey's are meaningful in understanding the nature of Rhetoric:

Particular arguments are good or bad. After making them there is no point in asking one last, summarizing question: 'Well, is it True?' It's whatever it is – persuasive, useful, and so forth... There is no reason to search for a general quality called Truth, which answers only the unanswerable question, 'what is it in the mind of God?' (Fish 1989:486).

In short, there is no last ultimate word called truth, and because there is no 'such a thing' we basically argue and argue, which is the realm of Rhetoric given Fish's notion.

Nevertheless, Fish's position has been reconsidered intending to find a valid basis of the act of argumentation as the following discussion is suggests.

### **The Essence of Communication: The Pre-condition**

There is much more. Looking back at the exchange of harsh words between the two South African leaders we need to realize that the form of the speech is an essential bridge in the course of disputation. In other words, an inappropriate employment of a form of speech may cause a contact-breaker in the political dialogue. Consequently, the Tutu's-Mbeki's

experience calls for the introduction of a concept of the art of public argumentation, that is, deliberative Rhetoric. Rhetoric, the art of communicative speech, is a functional instrument for turning upside down severe disagreements and turning them into arguable situations of listening one to the other in a reasonable acceptable manner.

Nevertheless, given Gadamer's notion that the speech rather than the speaker might lead, a question might be still asked: how a successful exchange might take place under the speaker's direction? How people communicate successfully one with the other as they do intend? In other words, what is a communicative discourse? In order to shed light on the act of speech-communication we might take a brief look at Jurgen Habermas' principles of logic communication as he writes:

We can say that actions regulated by norms' expressive self-presentations, and also evaluative expressions, supplement constative speech acts in constituting a communicative practice, which against the background of a lifeworld, is oriented to achieving, sustaining, and renewing consensus – and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims. The rationality inherent in this practice is seen in the fact that a communicatively achieved agreement must be based in the end on reasons. And the rationality of those who participate in this communicative practice is determined by whether, if necessary, they could, under suitable circumstances, provide reasons for their expressions (1984:17-18).

Habermas talks about reaching a consensus through an exchange of claims that are represented through our form of expression which creates a continuing communicative process. This continuing act seeks to reach a consensus which is based on claims of critical validity. The agreement reached through such a process is based on reason – taken as the participants' ability to submit to reasonable arguments – that the claim might be responded to alike through reason. That is, as far as the discussion is confined to critical reasoning, points out Habermas, the act of communication might reach a situation of mutual acceptance. Obviously, this communicative argumentation is valid only when the situation of disagreement is not blocked for argument of reason and had not yet reached the critical situation of a lack of verbal conversation that might lead to a physical explosion.

The goal of the act of communication is to argue by reason. The question is what is an argument? Habermas explains in terms of his approach:

We use the term argumentation for that type of speech in which participants thematize contested validity claims and attempt to vindicate or criticize them through arguments. An argument contains reasons or grounds that are connected in a systematic way with the validity claim of a problematic expression. The "strength" of an argument is measured in a given context by the soundness of the reasons, that can be seen in, among other things, whether or not an argument is able to convince the participants in a discourse, that is, to motivate them to accept the validity claim in action (ibid, 18).

Argumentation is a reference to claims which are tested through the exchange of claims of reason. A good argumentation is measured through its impact on reason, which is reflected in whether the argument might be communicative and reach a response by the participants.

It is important to note that if the sides have not been persuaded by the soundness of reason, and it does not seem to appear that a common agreement has been reached, still, such a situation should not breach the communication. Still the dialogical channels between the arguers should not be ended, as Gadamer has pointed out:

Being in agreement is by no means a necessary condition for a dialogical attitude toward that which is to be understood. One can also behave dialogically toward an expressed meaning whose claim one understands without in the end accepting... To understand

oneself as being addressed by a claim does not mean that one has to accept the claim... In undertaking an argumentative examination, a discourse for the passing a well grounded judgment, one also behaves dialogically at the level of validity... (1979:40-41).

We can reach a situation of understanding the other even if we don't accept the position which is conveyed. However, this level of understanding is in itself a dialogical process which is kept through the validity of the discourse – the essence of the dialogue even if we disagree.

That is, Gadamer's notion of the argumentative dialogue differs from the dialogical concept of Socrates that searches for the truth or Buber's dialogue that sought mutual identification. Gadamer talks about a dialogue of understanding based on valid claims even if the participants do not reach a level of truth or mutual identification. Nevertheless, they preserve the dialogue given the validity of the claims that might reach a level of understanding.

### **The New Rhetoric**

Clearly, Habermas' notion of logical argumentation is the ideal situation that one would desire to adapt to the audience's- speaker's sphere. But, practically the communicative action is not based on logic alone. Thus, when we are engaged in arguing rather than searching for the truth, we need to appeal as there are other influential considerations in addition to reason. As a rule, the public does not respond to the validity of the logical claim only. In addition to the appeal to logic the speakers cannot ignore the complexity and the diversity of their audience's situation which is a composition of various sets of minds, backgrounds, motivations, experiences and feelings. Thus, we require a sophisticated communicative means (Rhetoric) as an argumentative endeavor that does not ignore the validity of the claim, but also utilizes other significant human factors of effect in the course of persuasion.

When we argue by the soundness of reason the argumentative premise is given (induction-deduction). However, when argument is supposed to take place and there is no logic as a causal link between premise and conclusion, the act of arguing is problematic. At this stage, we need to refresh our understanding of the nature of the arguments that take part in the course of the public speech. In this regard, we might advance our discussion through a helpful distinction between two separated notions: logic and argument. Logic is a conclusion about truth and the justification of its acceptance. Logic is without appeal: its propositions are true. However, argumentation, which also deals with propositions, i.e., truth-values, is no more than a substitute, appropriate in nonscientific contexts. A proposition is the point of departure of an argument, that is, Rhetoric. Therefore, Rhetoric works with the conflict between propositions that truth is not convincing 'as such' (consult Meyer 1994:67-68).

The importance of the distinction between the realms of logic and argumentation, that is, arguments in the contexts of scientific versus non-scientific texts, is in making the essential point that argument in the non-scientific discourse (e.g., politics) is not about truth because the argument is taking place in areas where truth is not convincing 'as such'. This is the crux of argumentation that both sides – who are engaged in a debate regarding non-scientific texts – must admit.

Where do we start from? The question is how do we communicate and argue without a common ground of initial agreement not even of truth as the premise of agreement; how do we communicate when we disagree in advance? The point is that public persuasion in

matters of political affairs – rather than scientific texts where “truth” is demonstrated – is not communicative unless both sides: the speaker and the audience share a common ground of acceptance. This common ground functions as a substitute to a mathematical premise for deducting conclusions based on causal link. Rhetoric – seeking to present an effective argument – is concerned therefore in reaching this ground level of a common starting point. Here Rhetoric takes its place: dealing with matters of conflict rooted in disagreements about propositions that are not demonstrative as truth, and hence are not convincing ‘as such’.

Therefore, the basic rule of effective communication is, according to Perelman, the adaptation of the speakers’ views to the listener’s for the sake of creating an accepted point of departure:

To make his discourse effective, a speaker must adapt to his audience. What constitutes this adaptation, which is a specific requisite for argumentation? It amounts essentially to this: the speaker can choose as his point of departure only the theses accepted by those he addresses. In fact, the aim of argumentation is not like demonstration, to prove the truth of the conclusion from premises, but to transfer to the conclusion the adherence accorded to the premises (1982:21).

Therefore, the matter of persuasion is not confined – as many might incline to think – to the truth of the statement because the persuasive endeavor is not a matter of demonstration but an adherence. Two different views – which are not true ‘as such’ – are presented and the role of the speaker is to establish a premise that is accepted by the audience as a pre-condition for a successful act of persuasion.

Then and only then, the mode of appeal might be through reason. At this stage, the orators seek to demonstrate their thesis in a form of *enthymeme*, which is considered the most effective mode of persuasion. The enthymeme is a sort of syllogism (Aristotle Rhetoric, 1355a).

A dispute is the motivation for an act of persuasion and in the course of the appeal certain actions are taking place between the speaker and the hearers. There are certain rules that must be kept in the process. Marcelo Daskal has outlined the basic rules as follows: There is a need he points out to relate to the partner equally, giving the other the proper respect in the act of argumentation. In order to reach a mutual understanding regarding the disagreement there is a need to make a sincere effort to understand the position of the other which is the only way to reach an agreement ( 2004:74-75).

### **Tutu’s Address**

Now, setting up the communicative framework of reasoning we can study the Tutu’s-Mbeki’s dispute in terms of theories of constructive argumentation. we turn to the address that raised the storm. On November 23, 2004 – a decade to the end of the apartheid – Archbishop Desmond Tutu delivered the Nelson Mandela Foundation Lecture that is designed to assess publicly Mandela’s heritage regarding the conduct of the South Africa’s political system (Tutu 2004).

Given the circumstances, a speech by one of the chief architects of the accomplished struggle, raised high expectations of appraising the new democratic government. Indeed, Tutu started his address with a detailed outline of the accomplishments of the South African Democracy in the past ten years. The achievements which he had decided to present to his audience revolve mainly around the daily life of the ordinary citizen. He speaks about a reasonable personal safety, reciting the personal fears at the early period of the transformation such as the safety in the trains and the easier feeling now when toll of 6-8 dead people per day has been regarded as a relief. The situation has been changed, it is



much better now, points out the Archbishop. He also dedicated a significant portion of his speech to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee – chaired by him – when instead of revenge as might be expected the world stood open mouthed at the revelation of such nobility of spirit as victims of often the most gruesome atrocities forgave their tormentors and even on occasion embraced them.

In addition, he pointed out to specific educational projects initiated by white people to promote Black's education, indicating the success of integration given the contribution of devoted individuals. This appraisal: "What Have We Achieved?" takes the major part of the address.

Nevertheless, the conclusion of the address is titled as follows: "What are the failures and challenges"? This portion – which constitutes no more than one third of the speech – happened to be the crux of Tutu's address that evoked the President's strong emotional explosion of anger.

The unexpected took place: The Archbishop sharply criticised a sacred cow of the establishment: the ANC, the South African ruling party that headed the struggle against Apartheid. Tutu's main concern revolved around the fundamental principles of the democratic political practice: the institutions specifically the Parliament does exist, points out the speaker, but they are frozen. The problem –as he sees it – is that the ANC's Parliament members, instead of being active, vital and exchanging thoughts and ideas, are passive and submissive. The notion of a parliament of open debates does not exist for the ANC party. The democratic principles of free speech, independent thinking, and political criticism which are vital for real parliamentary life are ruled out by the authoritarian ANC's government.

This is Tutu's critical assessment of the ten years of democracy of the post apartheid South Africa. Tutu accuses the ruling party for blocking an open debate within itself, creating instead a political monopoly described by him as a single- minded party, which seconds uncritically the President's policy without questioning key controversial issues regarding the social, health and economic policies of the country. Tutu pointed out that the Party's parliamentary delegates were actually silenced for the fear of losing their jobs in case they might express independent critical views. The aim is "not to think that those who disagree, who express dissent, are ipso facto disloyal or unpatriotic (2004:4)." He adds that too many members of the party opt for silence to become voting cattle for the party... "I would have hoped for far more debate and discussion... We should debate more openly" (*ibid*).

In order to legitimize his urge for open political debates Tutu points out that South African diversity should be reflected in the ruling parliamentary party suggesting that there is a gulf between the South African society and the ANC. He calls for a vigorous debate in Parliament where disagreement constitutes part and parcel of a vibrant community.

A political system of fright that silences the voice of Democracy has emerged under the leadership of the State's President, claims Tutu. This is not merely a style of government, points out the speaker, because it affects the quality of life in South Africa. Tutu listed a series of social problems which affect the safety and normality of the South African society. He specifically criticized the direction of the economic growth and black empowerment:

What is black empowerment – he asked – when it seems to benefit not the vast majority but a small elite... "When were the old regime our standards"? (2004:5). He continued by pointing on the poverty of the people and in this context criticized the State's investments in arms rather than in fighting poverty.

This is a very severe accusation that alludes to the ANC situation: a ruling party that is interested in ruling as a goal in itself rather than implementing the values of the struggle for serving the people of South Africa through true and meaningful Democracy.

In short, referring to individual social integration and personal safety, Tutu observes significant points of achievements, but looking at official democratic manifestations of political conduct, the way it works, the absence of free political expression, Archbishop Tutu, a person of high personal quality, a leader of the struggle, and a religious authority known for his constant fights for political and social justice, is highly critical.

### **The Rhetorical Problem: The Demonic Language**

As a matter of fact, Tutu's criteria of the meaning of Democracy as a platform of open debates and criticism of the government, is in concert with the principles of the Mandela Foundation that actually invited his address. Thus, given the constitution of the Mandela's foundation Tutu's criticism is not out of place as the following quote regarding the aim of the constitution may demonstrate:

... generating new knowledge (which) stems from its recognition that understanding the world is not enough. Knowledge should enable us to change and improve the world. Living the legacy of Nelson Mandela means incorporating his values into the work that we do. And that does not only refer to content, it refers to *how we work... there has to be the openness and transparency. And above all, there has to be the belief that no one person or organization has all the answers* (my emphasis).

This is Democracy at its best. Democracy given Mandela's heritage is also a manner of style and by all means is not a monopoly of one person but a work in cooperation.

The question is what went wrong regarding Tutu's criticism: the criticism as such or the rhetoric of the delivery? As a matter of fact, Tutu started the critical part of his address through a deliberate attempt to create a rationale for his criticism, saying as follows:

One of the undoubted gifts we bring to the world is our diversity and our capacity to affirm and celebrate our diversity so that today we have eleven official languages... Our diversity which we must affirm and celebrate is diversity of race, of language, of culture, of religion and of points of view (2004:4).

Aiming to legitimize his criticism for freedom of opinions Tutu seeks to build a common ground of agreement between him and his audience through the premise of the South Africa's diversity.

Then, he deduces the conclusions:

We want our society to be characterized by vigorous debate and dissent where to disagree is part and a parcel of a vibrant community, that we should play the ball not the person and not think that those who disagree, who express dissent, are ipso facto disloyal or unpatriotic (ibid).

This is the speaker's thesis. The fact that he is dwelling on the subject – motivating and explaining the rationale of his criticism – indicates that he is not indifferent to the rhetorical challenge of reaching his sensitive audience regarding his criticism of the ruling party. He makes therefore an effort to present his critical words not given his ethical appeal (the Archbishop) but on the basis of the rationale of his premise, the diversity.

However, at this stage of the address he moved into a sharp criticism, furnished with a strong metaphorical language:

An unthinking, uncritical, kowtowing party line-toeing is fatal to a vibrant democracy. I am concerned to see how many have so easily been seemingly cowed and apparently intimidated to comply (2004:4).

This metaphorical language has switched the tone of the address from the appeal to reason to a striking emotional appeal of depicting the ANC's delegates through slavery's images of submission and following the steps of the other. One notices as well the employment of the sound effect: kow(towring) and cow(ed) intending to point on relationship.

The employment of metaphors causes Tutu's speech to create a new rhetorical impact. What is a metaphor? Historically, the metaphor was taken as part of the language of aesthetics. However, attention should be paid to the work of Lakoff and Johnson who regard the metaphor as a unit of thought rather than an aesthetic decoration or a beautiful dress that adds nothing substantial to the content. For Lakoff and Johnson the metaphor affects our daily life not merely as a vehicle of communication but also as a shaper of our thoughts that determine our actions. Our concept of thinking is actually metaphoric; they argue (1980:3).

Developing his approach Lakoff claims that metaphors are a conceptual map of a mental issue (which is outside language) and we conceptualise through the metaphors from one mental area to another. This enables us to discuss matters through the employment of metaphors.

Of special interest regarding our present discussion is Lakoff's analysis of the metaphoric language of the first Gulf war between United States of America and Iraq.

His opening is alarming: metaphors, he writes, are capable of killing. The American media had manipulated its audience through a calculative set of metaphors that determined Saddam Hussein's evilness in terms of economy: Hussein of Iraq was described by the American media as the one who sits on the nerves of the American economy, as the one who holds American economy in the neck. The metaphors of economy speak to the American audience because they concertise for the people a complex political situation creating concepts within the mind (Lakoff. War).

In this regard, it is useful to look at the work of Ernest Cassirer (1946) who made a strong distinction between the semantic meaning of a word and its magic connotation. The semantic word intends to state the relationship on the basic of clear and rational relationship when the magic word seeks to stir emotions raising specific feelings such as hate, mockery, anger. The magic word is not just a conceptual map but is designed to affect people's thinking and deeds as well. These demon words block any discussion because they are designed to capture the audience as an old myth.

The application to Tutu's address is that his metaphorical language is not designed to open a dialogue with the ANC regarding the situation or just to illustrate a case. His employment of the metaphors of submission indicates that he ceased to use his semantic language which was capable of a rational exchange. On the contrary, he moved to the sphere of the magic, demonic language. The ANC party at the Parliament is mapped in demonic colors which are associated with the previous regime. The feeling of fear and disgust is brought back.

At this point, whatever the Archbishop will say further is unimportant: he has lost the keys of communication; dialogue will not exist anymore. This is the power of the language that carries the speech on its own way, not leading but led (Gadamer); a demonic language that has destroyed its constructive communicative direction.

Tutu's rhetorical tactic is anti-communicative. The point is that a communicative act is an endeavor that takes place between two poles. The speakers seek to communicate their

views, beliefs, in a way that the hearers will accept as their own views and beliefs. In this regard, the mutual relationship that is established through the speech between the speaker and the hearer failed because the way things are delivered are more relevant than the verifiable truth of the message – irrespective of the amount of genuinely carried by the utterance (Sorning 1989:95).

At the end of the day, Tutu's speech does not reveal a sufficient awareness of what is necessary for an open dialogue as he states in his platform. Tutu shoots out but his straightforward bullets do not seem to reach his listeners' minds.

In this regard, and in light of the complexity of the matter of communication, attention should be given to Paul Grice's clarification of the art of clear conversation outlined in his 'conversational implicatures'. Grice advises us as follows:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged... Make your contribution as informative as is required. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required... Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (1989:26-27).

That is, speak to the point; avoid uncontrolled and provocative metaphors that might carry the words to such heights which will be above the control of the speaker.

Tutu did almost the opposite. He is not informative enough. He does not detail his evidence and he does not demonstrate that he possesses adequate evidence regarding the party's political behavior. Through his metaphors he carries his speech to unexpected and uncontrolled direction which actually blocks the reception and ends any possibility for potential dialoguing.

### **Mbeki's Response: The Problem**

Turning our attention to Mbeki's response it must be clear that the President was not indifferent to Tutu's accusations. Indeed, Mbeki encourages open rational debate, referring to a Chinese proverb: "let a hundred flowers bloom: let a hundred schools of thought contend!" (Mbeki 2005). However, the President sharply rejected the Archbishop's accusations regarding the party's monopoly. Mbeki maintains that the Archbishop is an outsider who is not a member of the party, he is not "in"; consequently, he is uninformed and he has no right to criticize the parliamentary inner circle. Thus, Mbeki rejects the criticism through the argument of fault: the government opens numerous channels of communication with the public including seven Presidential Working Groups aiming to discuss major social, educational and commercial issues. However, Mbeki claims, Tutu ignored this mass communicative endeavor because "The Archbishop has never been a member of the ANC, and would have very little knowledge of what happens even in the ANC branch" (ibid). That is to say, the critic is first of all ill informed not because he did not prepare his homework, but because he is an outsider, and as such he is prohibited to criticize. In short, Mbeki criticised Tutu for not being familiar with the facts as well as disrespect for the truth. Mbeki's call for a rational, factual debate that "demands that we should take the effort to think, rather than submit to the dictates of a reassuring herd instinct", is a clear hint to the merit of the Archbishop's statements.

Furthermore, Mbeki disqualified Tutu's criticism because he is not a member of the ANC, raising therefore the question of the eligibility to criticize the party and the government. Thus, in the conclusion of his open letter, Mbeki motivates his response and his engagement with Tutu's accusations by declaring him as an outsider to the national

debate. The leader of the ANC and the President of South Africa ends his reply to Tutu as follows:

All of us have to understand that the rational debate correctly demanded by Archbishop Tutu is about setting the national agenda... This is a struggle about *who shall set our national agenda* and what that agenda shall be (my emphasis).

This is the crux of the problem concerning President Mbeki: The struggle at the end of the day is not over the political truth but about who is eligible to set the national agenda. Mbeki, through his disqualification of the Archbishop's rights has declared his position: the right to set up the national agenda is confined to the ruling party, the elected government.

However, rhetorically speaking the President does not open the debate for a fruitful dialogue regarding the critical issues revolving around the essence of Democracy that have been forcefully raised by the Archbishop's address. As a matter of fact, the President's letter has shut off the debate taking a straight personal tone (*ad hominem*) against Tutu, depicting the Archbishop as ignorant and populist. Mbeki wrote as follows:

We must avoid the resort to populism and catchy newspapers headlines that have nothing to do with the truth... One of the fundamental requirements for the rational discussion suggested by the Archbishop is familiarity with the facts relevant to any matter under discussion, as well as respect for the truth. ...internalize the facts about our country, and respect the truth... It would be good that those who present themselves as the greatest defenders of the poor should also demonstrate decent respect for the truth, rather than indecent resort to empty rhetoric (2005:2).

Thus, Mbeki has applied the *ad hominem* argument conveying a personal attack. This is actually a tactic of the *ad personam*, that is, a deliberate attempt to destroy the opponents' legitimacy to criticise on account of their ethos. The *ad personam* approach seeks to disqualify the opponents on the ground of their personality or ignorance rather than appealing to the readers' reason (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:111-112). That is to say, the *ad personam* tactic seeks, in fact, to end the argument, to shut it off.

Mbeki's tactic intends, therefore, to rule out Tutu's credibility to criticize the government and the party under the President's leadership. In other words, even if the ANC President could provide some answers regarding the issues raised by the Archbishop, he nevertheless – through his employment of the tactic of *ad personam* – is blocking a discussion, a dialogue regarding the issue presented through Tutu's lecture. The essence of Democracy as exchange of opinions and criticism as well is shadowed by the President's personal Rhetoric which seeks winning rather than engaging a debate regarding Tutu's criticism of the essence of Democracy.

## Conclusions

This paper studies the essence of argumentation in the context of the political South African discourse of public delivery. The claim is that the harsh language of the exchange between Archbishop Tutu and President Mbeki is a proclamation of a culture of speech that seeks winning on the account of fruitful communication. The result is that both speakers risk the sacred notion of free political speech and meaningful criticism, and actually dismiss and even discourage the merit of public delivery which is the fundamental manifestation of a true Democracy.

The Tutu's-Mbeki's debate reached a level of explosion, a deadend. Such an explosion of words following a speech event, that was designed to signify the tenth anniversary of the end of apartheid, has been disappointing not just regarding its personal tone but given its

failure to demonstrate to the South African people that speech-as well as public criticism – is important and is not a poison but can be productive if taken under the condition of a communicative act of delivery. Otherwise, the essence of true and meaningful Democracy is in stake.

The paper analyses the matters of public argumentation as a communicative issue. The paper argues that a theory of communicative discourse – and consequently a sophisticated implementation – is needed for the sake of securing the foundations of Democracy.

A speech act is a complex and even painful endeavor. The problem is that speech is not a causal exercise and speakers might not be in control of their words which can be taken by the listeners into their possession when the speakers' initial thoughts are lost. The issue is that debates regarding non-scientific matters, which are in the realm of politics and social affairs, are not subject to mathematical proof and demonstration. Here, the crux of communication is in the essence of the dispute which is not taken as merely an exercise of logos only or the ultimate manifestation of truth ("given only to God"). Instead people, politicians do exist through arguments; however they should know *how*.

That is, argument functions when the case is not provable; the truth is not seen as such. This requires an understanding regarding the essence of argumentation: you build the proper conditions of communication and you seek reasoning making sure to use the proper language which motivates a response of reason rather than an emotional explosion that kills the argument. Thus, at the moment that the other side understands *your* 'truth', that is your position, and your reasoning the door is opened for a reasonable debate when both sides might learn to accept each other even without agreement.

The form of speech is critical in the act of communication. An understanding of the power of the word – not just in terms of persuasion but as a vehicle for winning the battle as a sharp weapon which might stir emotions and holds communication is essential in order to avoid such a use. Thus, a potential danger of breaking the communication exists specifically when the tactics of appeal are taken over by magical words on the account of concrete words that might lead to reasoning. In this regard, the speakers must be well aware of the problem and take special care in their employment of words specifically metaphors, which are, at the end of the day, units of thoughts that might lead to deeds. The speakers might intend to confine their language of argumentation to reason submitting information rather than stirring emotions which might be out of control and will *not* lead to a dialogue.

Dialogue, as we have noticed above, is not a just a matter of acceptance but a process of being engaged in a debate and understanding the other side's position. In short, dialogue is not a winning situation, but the creation of a climate of listening one to the other.

The lesson regarding the South African political rhetoric is that argumentation is an act of communication which intends to avoid personal impressions. Unfortunately, the act of political argumentation in South Africa intends to be personal, *ad personam*, which seeks to eliminate the other side as ignorant or lacking credibility and consequently blocks sincere debate and significant constructive criticism.

South African political rhetoric must orient itself to this process of communication for the sake of keeping its Democracy alive, vital and meaningful. Communication is an open argumentation that secures as a speech act the freedom of speech and freedom of debate. Political communication is not an exercise of power but a verbal art that leads to a dialogue: understanding but not necessarily accepting; however, continuing to argue, knowing that this speech act is the only true manifestation of Democracy.

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<sup>i</sup> The Renaissance poet and Rhetorician Petrarch highlights the importance of speech as follows: 'Eloquence on its own can be of great help to the progress of human life... people are suddenly turned from a most wicked way of life to the greatest modesty through the spoken words of others' (cited in Wickers 1993:31).