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## THE RHETORIC OF RECONCILIATION

This article examines the functioning of rhetoric in public discourse, in particular a rhetoric that emphasizes the importance of reaching accommodation with people and consensus building, called the rhetoric of reconciliation. The conditions for the rhetoric of reconciliation include: 1) a given rhetorical situation that consist of an issue, a conflict situation that can be either viewed as something that has existed for ever and therefore underlies the sources of any relation, or is treated as only a stage in the history of a relation that occurred after a time of agreement and unity; 2) the opening to dialogue that requires primarily self-definition, a definition of one's identity, demarcating boundaries and then, acknowledging the individuality (uniqueness) of the Other, 3) the language of empathy for reducing the degree of defensiveness in reaching an agreement; 4) the ethos of the speaker, based on knowledge, friendliness and openness. An important element of the rhetoric of reconciliation is opening gestures, i.e., such signs and conduct, both verbal and non-verbal, that express a readiness and willingness to dialogue and understanding. However, the rhetoric of reconciliation should be distinguished from the "empty" rhetoric (sophistry) that restricts itself to making gestures only. The difference between them relates to intention – the standing and the attitude of the rhetor, ethical issues and goals to be attained. The "empty" rhetoric suits only immediate and spectacular gestures of reconciliation of expedient nature, whereas the rhetoric of reconciliation undertakes efforts that will last for years or even decades.

**Key words:** dispute, the rhetoric of reconciliation, dialogue, the language of empathy

### 1. Between conflict and reconciliation

It can be said that the nature of social relations and basic everyday life situations is marked by the fact that we live in a society of ubiquitous communication.<sup>1</sup> Thus, by being deprived of one definite type of meta-narrative, we are exposed to a multiplicity and diversity of worldviews that are constantly competing with one another. This means we live in a world where knowledge, needs, interests, value systems and religions are confronted, a world of continuous

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 1. These issues have been extensively discussed, for example, by Gianni Vattimo in *The transparent Society* (1992).

clashes between different visions of the world and of imposing convictions (see Caputo 1993: 102; 1987: 262). Consequently, we begin to perceive the world as a battlefield and people as enemies. The American sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (1999: 3-4) notes that often the easiest way to achieve one's goal is to stand in opposition to someone or something, the most favorable method of discussing an issue is to organize a debate, and the most ingenious way of propagating information is to find people who will express it in an extremely different manner by presenting completely polarized views and opinions on that particular issue. On the contrary, we witness attempts, visible e.g., in social thought of Rawls (1999) or Habermas (1984), to seek consensus, a common language and measures for incommensurable, some kind of communication transparency.<sup>2</sup> Finally, at a political life level, the political correctness is used to deal with social conflicts. However, these issues require a separate discussion.

The linguistic and rhetorical observations of human functioning in such a reality in Poland have resulted in studies on the linguistic phenomena of specific situations of competition and rivalry, i.e. hate speech and hate rhetoric<sup>3</sup>

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2. More on this issue, see Gianni Vattimo (1997: 33-34).

3. According to Głowiński (2007) the basic properties of the rhetoric of hate are, first of all, the dichotomous divisions which have a universal nature and embrace everything within. In terms of grammatical categories it is the us-them opposition. The consequence of such a constructed relation is the exclusion of the possibility for dialogue and predetermined evaluation patterns. The rhetoric of hate does not address those who are its objects. They are not spoken to but are spoken about, and everything that can be said about "them" is meant to bear witness against them and to discredit them. Dichotomous divisions are closely connected with perceiving the world in terms of a great conspiracy. Those standing on the other side are organizing themselves against us, trying to harm us, wanting to take away what is ours. The resulting image of the world thus becomes black and white, and everything is built on antitheses: one's own – stranger, friend – foe, good – bad, true Pole – anti-Pole, patriot – traitor, etc. Another factor distinguishing the rhetoric of hate is absolute truths. These truths always apply to only one side – our side – and we are entitled to them without discussion. These truths are the only right and obvious ones, so they cannot be subject to comments or reflections. Whoever dares to question them becomes, by virtue of that fact, a suspect, and may even have joined the ranks of the opponents. After all, the role of the agent in the rhetoric of hate is given particular attention. The agent speaks truths that are considered to be ultimate and formulates his/her statements in an extremely authoritarian manner. What is important is that he/she does not have to be an authority him or herself, nor have any charisma or merit, because the fact that the ideology he/she represents or what he/she says is considered "right" by others justifies everything (Głowiński 2007: 23-26).

(Kowalski, Tulli 2003; Głowiński 2007), the rhetoric of exclusion<sup>4</sup> (Witosz 2010, Wodak 2008) or the rhetoric of domination<sup>5</sup> (Wasilewski 2006). These phenomena, characteristic for conflict situations, where a conflict, using a term proposed by Louis Kriesberg (1998), is a destructive one, i.e., aiming at overcoming or destroying an opponent and not at seeking or finding a solution to a problem, for several years have been considered predominant in Polish social life (Głowiński 2007, Kowalski, Tulli 2003, Sobczak 2011). Although conflict and its manifestations, such as fighting, rivalry and dispute, constitute an integral part of social life, there is the other extreme – of the peace and harmony achieved by resolving a conflict. Georg Simmel (Simmel 1995), a classical representative of German sociology, considers victory, the situation when the opponent surrenders, as the most radical yet simplest way for ending a dispute. A conflict ended this way is based on a declaration that one of the parties has been defeated and gives up any forms of resistance against the opponent. Besides victory, other ways for ending a dispute include reconciliation and compromise, of which the latter is, according to Simmel, one of the greatest discoveries of humankind (Simmel 1995: 338). The compromise is based on a particular attitude of both parties involved in the conflict. It is achieved through an exchange of an object value mutually acknowledged

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4. The rhetoric of exclusion is present in different ways in various types of discourse, depending closely on a specific statement and its context (Wodak, 2008: 187). However, for it the most important category is the opposition between “us” and “them”. “Us” are people belonging to a given community – social, national, mental, being aware of belonging to it, but also of being dependent on other members of a given group. Limits of belonging to such group are always clearly specified and protect a discourse subject against external influences. Thus, it refrains from a dialog with the unknown. It is not motivated by curiosity, seeking knowledge and understanding of others and the world. This underlays the style of its communication, which is one-sided, aiming at promoting its own perception of the world, own axiological order and own attitudes. “Them”, on the other hand, must be stigmatized and excluded, and basic tools for exclusion are various discreditation strategies, including depersonalization (Witosz, 2010: 15-18).

5. As Jacek Wasilewski shows in his study *Retoryka dominacji* (2006), a relationship of domination can be found everywhere. It is universal amongst people and present at every organizational level. It is a part of cultural non-verbal (e.g., a dominant person can do a specific thing to a subordinate, but not otherwise) as well as verbal behaviors. A dominance can also be achieved and maintained using rhetoric tools. Main dominant rhetoric tools include: designing basic social roles of dominant character such as paternalism and infantilization; controlling a rhythm and a course of a conversation; demanding proofs of respect and emphasizing social roles; categorical directiveness and driving force; a right to identify with a dominant group and to exclude from it; valuation and assessment; unjustified breaking of conversation rules; breaking taboos or depriving of dignity. These manipulations aim at emphasizing powers of the sender and treat the recipient as an object subjected to symbolic subjugating activities. What is important, the dominance may result from a rhetoric organization of a relevant subject and not from the actual social advantage of the sender (Wasilewski 2006:488-489).

by both parties. This value is precisely expressed in other ways. Something valuable is given up because a desired value can be obtained in some other form. According to Simmel, compromise, as opposed to reconciliation characterized by significant subjectivity, is objective because it is reached by mutual concessions which can refer to external criteria independent of the parties involved. This form of ending a conflict depends on the particular skills of the people who locate it in the spiritual sphere of humans and juxtapose it with such human traits as obstinacy. Therefore, assuming the social life oscillates between the two extremes of peace and fight, and the rhetoric of conflict have been theoretically discussed in numerous papers, I would like to explore conditions for existence and characteristics of the rhetoric specific for building peace. This rhetoric attempts to ask questions about possibilities for social consensus and understanding. Considering its objectives it can be termed the rhetoric of reconciliation.

## 2. Conditions for the rhetoric of reconciliation

### 2.1. Myth of hostility „at the source“

The term „reconciliation“ means establishing a close relationship, to become compatible or consistent, to settle or to resolve, as well a situation in which two people, countries, etc., re-establish friendly relations after quarrelling (*Longman English Dictionary Online*). The presupposition of reconciliation assumes that there is some kind of split, division, which is expressed as a conflict, hostility, war, hatred or resentment. These divisions may apply to two situations. Firstly, a conflict can be seen as something that has always existed and therefore lies at the root of any relations. Secondly, a conflict is treated only as a stage in the history of a relation which followed after a time of agreement and unity. A good example of the former situation are, for example, Polish-German relations and

Polish-Russian relations<sup>6</sup>; in the second case these are the post-Solidarity political party relations in Poland after 1989<sup>7</sup>. These two rhetorical contexts require two different types of rhetoric. Beginning with the end, when we assume that first we were one and then we parted, then we build up a rhetoric that refers to the past, to some original state of happiness, a golden age when everything was perfect. We thus show that our common roots – of those who left at some point

6. Relationships between Poland and Russia and Germany have developed for over 1000 years, thus it is difficult to sum them up in a few sentences. However, significant in both cases is that these relationships have been marked by armed conflicts and disputes over borders. Particularly important for these relations are three partitions of Poland by Russia, Prussia and Austria in the years 1772-1795, as well as events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Polish-Soviet war (1919-1921) and German-Soviet pact made in 1939 (Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact) called the fourth partition of Poland as its secret protocol contained division of the spheres of influence in the Eastern Europe: Germans were granted Polish lands up to rivers Narew, Pisa, Wisła and San, and the USSR were given the eastern part of Poland (east of those rivers). Bad Polish-German relations also resulted from other events of the previous century, including Nazi German attack on Poland (September 1, 1939), annexation of Polish lands: the Land of the Warta river, the Silesian voivodeship and the Gdansk district; creation of the General Governorate, the anti-Polish policy, and deportations of Poles to Germany to work as forced labor and to concentration camps. Whereas it can be said in brief that Polish-Russian relationships were affected by events of the twentieth century including the USSR attack on Poland on September 17, 1939, Katyn massacre (see footnote 8 below), and the times of the People's Republic of Poland and its subjugation to the USSR. This complicated history brought about numerous antagonisms, but also stereotypes in Polish perception of Germany and Germans, as well as Russia and Russians (they were discussed in various papers, e.g., *Polacy i Niemcy. Z badań nad kształtowaniem heterostereotypów etnicznych. Zbiór studiów*, ed. K. Wajda or *Obrazy Rosji i Rosjan w Polsce od końca XIX wieku do początku XXI stulecia. Myśl polityczna – media – opinia publiczna*, ed. E. Kirwiel, E. Maj and E. Podgajna).

7. 1989 was a breakthrough year for Poland, and for the whole Europe. Poland underwent a systemic transformation. The country transformed from a communist, centralized system into a democratic republic with government bodies elected in general elections. Since that year, the Polish political scene has evolved continuously. The main successor of the Polish United Workers Party was the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland established in 1990. The former activists of the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity" (NSZZ "Solidarność") were, at first, gathered in parties including the Liberal Democratic Congress, the Democratic Union, Centre Agreement (all established in 1990) or the Christian National Union (founded in 1989). In 1996, the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) was established, consisting of a number of post-Solidarity formations, including NSZZ „Solidarność”, the Christian-Democratic Party or the Centre Agreement and the Christian National Union mentioned above. However, ideological disputes and personal conflicts resulted in breaks and rotations in these parties. Soon some of activists left the Democratic Union establishing the Conservative Party, and in 1994, the Democratic Union and the Liberal Democratic Congress merged forming the Freedom Union. It, in turn, was dissolved, again, following program disputes, and in 2001 some of its members established the Democratic Party and other the Civic Platform, currently having the majority in Polish Parliament. In the same year, the AWS split into the Law and Justice (currently, one of the major opposition parties in Poland) and, now dissolved, the League of Polish Families. This short and brief description is only an indication of complex relations in the Polish political scene. Although in last 20 years in Poland many parties derived and derive their ideological origin from the "Solidarity" movement, yet, despite common background, personal antagonisms and differences in interpreting various historical events make their cooperation impossible and hinder mutual understanding.

– are common, are ours, fraternal, despite the dispersion. As a result we have a mythical basis to reconcile in the first place and, secondly, we do not need to build a new “us”, only to restore the original “us”. We refer thus to an existing community, with its specific features, values, common history and accomplishments. This original “us” is also treated as a kind of commitment, an argument to be used when calling for reconciliation.

A completely different rhetoric is involved in the first case, in which another myth is referred to which proclaims the existence of some “source” of hostility as something that was at the very beginning or that has always existed. For example, in their cultural consciousness Poles are convinced that the Germans – stereotypically presented as Teutonic knights, Nazis and then a leading Member State of the European Union – have always threatened Polish sovereignty (see Bartmiński 2007, Wajda 1991). Similar concerns involve our eastern neighbor, Russia (see Kępiński 1995, Kirwiel, Maj, Podgajna 2011). When this is the case, and you cannot refer to some mythical common past as one unity, reconciliation must be a matter of what is to come. This means then that such a rhetoric must begin its narration with a declaration of closure of the past and an opening up to what is to come, and it builds an area of hope and faith in atonement as something that is yet to be achieved, but is indeed possible. As Bronisław Komorowski said during his speech in Katyń on 10 April 2011, one year after the Smoleńsk crash:<sup>8</sup>

“Whilst appreciating the gesture of goodwill of President Dmitry Medvedev, who bowed his head before the murdered Polish heroes, **we must not forget the past but at the same time we must concentrate on the future. We need not give in to the fatalism of history, the fatalism behind which lurks a temptation of imperial domination or fear of this domination. Poland and Russia, despite all the differences, can shape the relations between the two countries so that this fatalism of the past can be overcome.**” (emphasis mine, BS)

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8. The Smoleńsk crash was the Polish military plane crash that took place on 10 April 2010 in Smoleńsk, Russia. A total of 96 people died in the crash, including President Lech Kaczyński, his wife, deputy marshals of the Sejm and Senate, a group of MPs, commanders of all the armed forces in Poland, the President’s office staff, heads of state institutions, representatives of the clergy, ministries, social and veteran organisations and the families of Polish officers murdered by NKVD officers (the Soviet political police) in Katyń in 1940. The passengers of the plane were a Polish delegation on its way to attend the ceremony to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Katyń massacre. This tragic event first united Poles, but with time it has become a tool of political struggle and a source of conflict between the government and the opposition (in particular by the Law and Justice party headed by Jarosław Kaczyński, the late President’s twin brother).

Referring to mythical thinking has a persuasive dimension in the rhetoric of reconciliation. This way of speaking is meant to justify desired changes in the world, to instill certain action. But before the process of command has been commenced, before the answer is provided to the question as to why a change is necessary, the problem has to be diagnosed – given a name and explained why things are happening the way they are. This is where myth turns out to be useful which, as Roland Barthes (1984: 10-11) says, makes what is cultural seem natural, self-evident, existing from the beginning, the source. Myth requires no justification. It provides and maintains, in turn, a pattern of understanding of the world and humans, it justifies certain processes and their outcomes, and by creating a system of coordinating beliefs that are present within a given community, it maintains the social order.<sup>9</sup> Mythical stories – the myth of a golden age and of disarmament, the myth of a primeval conflict and the vision of a new, better tomorrow explain the nature of relations between the parties and provide a justification for change.

## 2. The Other or a Stranger?

The conflict situation assumes setting up a relation between the parties involved in the dichotomy of: my own group (similar to myself) and the other.<sup>10</sup> The other is a stranger, an enemy, one that has not yet been defined by us. Someone who does not belong to a given community, family; a citizen of another country; someone who is at a distance from one's own group culturally, ideologically, territorially, therefore he/she cannot be trusted. There is no common feature that can be shared, no starting point that could help develop any kind of relation. This division carries certain implications in terms of creating the reality of rhetoric. By creating the "others" they must be endowed with the worst possible features. The others are strange, unpredictable, want to destroy us – one could only expect the worst from them. The enemy is constructed from stereotypes.

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9. The functions of myth have been evaluated by many authors, including Joseph Campbell (1988), Roger Caillois (1999), Claude Levi-Strauss (1991), Bronisław Malinowski (1926), Roland Barthes (1984) and Mircea Eliade (1963)

10. See Social Identity Theory. Henri Tajfel and Hohn C. Turner (1986) explain the effect of own membership in a group on perception of oneself, one's group and other groups. They particularly focus on individuals strive to maintain or improve their self-esteem by becoming members of groups ensuring positive identification or by depreciating a status and a value of other, competitive groups (e.g., by assigning morally negative features to them).

What is alien triggers prejudices, fears and feelings of disgust and repulsion which are deeply rooted in the human psyche and subconscious (Bauman 1991). The category of “foreignness” allows to commence and then justify hostile attitudes and attempts to destroy what is alien.

A *sine qua non* condition for reconciliation thus transforms the Stranger (with all the negative connotations connected with this notion) into the Other. The category of otherness, although often used interchangeably with the category of foreignness, has a different meaning. It is a much broader concept. Every Alien is the Other, but not every Other is an Alien (Witosz 2010: 20). Otherness has many colours. The Other may mean completely “alien”, with whom any communication or agreement is impossible because the temporal, mental or spatial gap is too wide. At this point the notions of otherness and foreignness merge semantically. But the Other can mean as much as differing in relation to something, and then the Other becomes the other extreme of the “same” category. In this case with the Other, which can be a Jew to a Catholic, a Pole to a German or a liberal-minded person to an orthodox-minded one, agreement is possible because the Other is the one we confront. The Other denotes the existence of a difference, but it carries no negative content connected with foreignness (Gruchlik 2001).

This change of perspective, the transformation of the Alien into the Other, does not only provide the opportunity to reinterpret stereotypes and discuss the sources of hostility, foreignness and conflict, but also allows to change the “us-them” relation into an “I-Thou” one. And only this change allows us to transform hostility into partnership, and the sense of feeling endangered, the need to fight and compete into a dialogue.

### 2.3. Reconciliation and dialogue

The base for a dialogue is another prerequisite for the rhetoric of reconciliation. For Martin Buber (2000), one of the most outstanding representatives of the philosophy of dialogue, a dialogue as a form of communication is the result of an encounter with another person, whom Buber calls “Thou”. The encounter gives one the opportunity to establish a real relationship between I and Thou – real as in one where the other person is not seen as an object of observation but as a subject constituting its own entity. The dialogue is not a form of appropriation or reign, but it is based on a double movement: of quasi distancing oneself and of relationships (Kłoczowski 2005: 52-53). The quasi distance means

acknowledging the primordial, fundamental distance, acknowledging the fact that You are Thou. As Buber (2000) concludes, a real conversation, and therefore every valid fulfillment of human relations, constitutes the acceptance of otherness, thus calling someone “Thou” should be embedded in the genuine acknowledgement of one’s separate and personal entity which is ultimately formed and represents a given standpoint. On the other hand, an attitude excluding dialogue is one that objectifies and relegates Thou to the level of It. Where objectification appears the attitude of partnership disappears, and any form of dialogue is out of the question (Jantos 1997: 55-56).

Michał Januszkiewicz (2007: 235-245) specifies three ways of objectification. The first one involves appropriation of the Other. This is achieved in one of two ways: by reducing otherness, i.e. when we reduce the Other to our dimension – we do not discern what is different and only focus instead on what is shared. In other words: appropriation means here reducing what is unknown to something that is known and is a form of “dissolving” the otherness. But the Other can also be appropriated by some form of “repair”. We may want to change the other, convert him/her, make him/her one of us. This appropriating approach is one of domination of one of the subjects and highlights the imbalance of relations of the parties involved. Its result is unifying and destroying what is different. The second way of objectification involves elimination of the Other. If there is no way to include someone in the community, he/she must be excluded. In social life such an exclusion may involve omission and concealment, but in extreme cases – as shown by acts of any violence, including war – exclusion also means annihilation. Thirdly, we can ignore the Other, remain irrelevant towards him/her. Dialogue must obviously have nothing to do with elimination, indifference, but it also has nothing to do with appropriation or bringing down, as Januszkiewicz says (Januszkiewicz 2010: 142), to a “common denominator” because, citing Gadamer:

In mitmenschlichen Verhalten kommt es darauf an (...), das Du als Du wirklich zu erfahren, d.h. seinen Anspruch nicht zu überhören und sich etwas von ihm sagen zu lassen. Dazu gehört Offenheit. (...) Öffentlichkeit für den anderen schließt also die Anerkennung ein, daß ich in mir etwas gegen mich gelten lassen muß, auch wenn es keinen

anderen gäbe, der es gegen mich geltend machte. (Gadamer 1990: 367)<sup>11</sup>

Determining the plane for dialogue requires that first of all one define oneself, one's own identity, one's defined boundaries and then – acknowledge the otherness of the Other. For Emmanuel Levinas (1981) the symbol of this otherness is a person's *Face*, while the symbol of direct proximity is the face-to-face encounter. The condition for this encounter is, however, separation, i.e. perceiving and acknowledging the Other as an individual and holistic being. It should be noted that reconciliation is not based on removing boundaries, as a removal of borders may be an expression of lack of respect for otherness, for what is foreign and different and may even conceal the hidden agenda of incorporating what is other into what is ours. Thus, in fact it is destroying what bothers us and transforming it in the spirit of our "us" by way of coercion, persuasion or manipulation. The Other, as understood by Levinas, is understood as someone absolutely different, radically different. If somebody is entirely different than I am then I cannot categorize him/her according to my imaginative, conceptual and axiological networks. The appearance of the Other puts me in a situation of ethical obligation towards him/her. I become in a sense a servant to the Other, and my task is to respond to his/her call.

An example that reconciliation is not a removal of boundaries, but first of all a highlighting of their very existence and expressing respect towards them, is the ecumenical movement in the Church. The movement's intention is not to eliminate boundaries between the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches. If so, that idea is extended far into the future – to some unspecified time. At the moment, the purpose of reconciliation is to understand where these boundaries lie, what their meaning is and that they need to be respected. The will for a dialogue also forces one to assume a position where a conversation is not so much started with a presentation of one's own convictions, but, just the opposite, with a "suspension" or "bracketing" of one's own beliefs, since to acknowledge the Other is to acknowledge that he/she may be right (Gadamer 2003). Gadamer's approach to the dialogue differs from that of, e.g. Habermas (1984) who

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11. „In human relations the important thing is to really experience Thou as Thou, i.e., to let someone tell one something or to let something be told to one is the core of this relation. This is what openness is all about. (...) The subject does not impose his or her point of view and tries to absorb the other by overhearing its claim. Openness to the other means that he or she listens to and hears the other's claim, and that includes the acknowledgment of the fact that I have to validate within myself something that I may strongly oppose even if there were nobody who could validate it against my will" (own translation).

emphasizes its scientific and argumentative dimension. Gadamer understands the dialog more in the rhetorical and Platonic sense, as initiating a conversation, and participating in a conversation during which readiness to understand and agree is continuously present. Agreement means occurrence of truth, something that the other person wants to communicate to us. It is not an appropriating truth, expressing domination, but rather something born during a conversation, which is conducted in agreement that both parties are open and try to understand each other. In this way we move on to the next condition for the rhetoric of reconciliation.

#### 2.4. Language of reconciliation

It needs to be said that reconciliation is a special kind of agreement, or that agreement precedes reconciliation. There can be no reconciliation without some kind of preliminary agreement on an issue, be it at the political, social, existential or ethical level. Agreement does not mean *a priori* concessions granted to the interlocutor, but is the result of the process of reaching common views. It is an agreement that stipulates the solution to a given problem. It requires that certain conditions be established and that predefined rules be complied with. One of them is definitely that objective criteria be applied. In the rhetoric of reconciliation, justifying one's standpoints requires referring to the rules that have been accepted by both sides – these may include habits, customs, the practices of some given industry, accepted authority figures, consultants or legal acts. There can be no absolute truths spoken by an authoritative entity. The rhetoric of reconciliation also requires the use of a specific language.

In conflict situations there are two communication styles that pertain to the particular attitudes of the agents in a given dispute: the language of aggression/hate, which is characteristic of defensive attitudes, and the language of empathy, which allows to reduce the degree of defensiveness in reaching an agreement (Gibb 1961; Rosenberg 2003; Sobczak 2011). When the narrating subject expects other people to comply with his/her demands, he/she does not respect the rights of others to self-determination and overgeneralizes, and behind his/her statements are ready-made judgments about people and the world – then we are dealing with the language of hate. The language of empathy implies, in turn, sincerity, the ability to listen and understand others' points of view, and the assumption of the equality of communication partners (Gibb 1961). The rhetoric

of reconciliation needs the language of empathy, and thus the use of assertions, not directives. It avoids statements that judge and valueate, preferring instead a description that is most neutral axiologically. Any destructive criticism and interpretation of others' behavior that is based on unfounded superstition prevents reconciliation. The same applies to overgeneralization and the use of quantifiers. References to "all", "many" and "everyone" serve to highlight one's power and advantage, but they are also a means of exclusion. The rhetoric of reconciliation does not introduce divisions and opposing sides, it highlights instead the notion of "community", "cooperation" and "acting together". An example for implementation of such rhetoric was a statement in a TV announcement made by Prime Minister Donald Tusk in December 2012 commemorating the 31st anniversary of the introduction of martial law in Poland. The key word in this message is the word "together":

"We Poles are a great nation and one that becomes stronger when we stick **together**. **Together** we are in a position to help others and enjoy this **together**. **Together** we can build and win. **Together** we can enjoy time and celebrate. Christmas is approaching, it is a time of appeasement. Let us sit around a common table as one Polish family and from now on let us **be together**, because we really have only each other."

"Together" means despite any political, worldview-related or ideological differences. Tusk creates a community based on origin – "we are Poles" – but also activates a myth, deeply rooted in the Polish mentality, that Poles facing difficult situations can work together, unite and walk shoulder to shoulder. The Prime Minister made that appeal in response to statements of many opposition politics who in their rhetoric often refer to division. The divisions make us weak; working together is to give a sense of strength to the Poles.

## 2. 5. Rhetoric of reconciliation versus empty rhetoric

An important element of the rhetoric of reconciliation are the gestures of openness, i.e. such signs and behaviour, verbal and non-verbal, that express one's willingness to take part in a dialogue and mutual agreement. The non-verbal signs are symbolic gestures, such as shaking hands, taking part in anniversary celebrations, and laying a wreath at a place of worship. When they are of a verbal nature they are performatives: promises, commitments but also

– apologies<sup>12</sup>. In case of performatives, conditions to be met for making them effective actions are of importance. They were specified by John Austin. For a successful performative:

“A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,

A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

B.2) completely.

C.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then **a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further**

C.2) **must actually so conduct themselves subsequently**” (Austin 1962: 14, emphasis mine - BS)

In the context of the rhetoric of reconciliation, it seems to be key to draw attention especially to the third condition – the appointment of a certain procedure, uttering some formula in good faith, in this case with the intention of genuine reconciliation. It is not uncommon for gestures of openness to be empty gestures<sup>13</sup>. We can then speak of a superficial reconciliation, as the only thing that has changed is the language of the debate, but not the way the opponents view one another. It is worth asking why, in the context of the rhetoric of reconciliation, the rhetoric so often stops at the level of empty gestures, declarations or for effect. It seems to be a consequence of circumstances, in which it appears. The rhetoric often responds to unusual events, tragic, dramatic or deeply moving ones. Extemporaneity is usually involved and basically neither what is to come

12. Such an apology was made on 7 July 2001 by the then Polish president, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, during a ceremony commemorating the mass murder of Jewish residents of the town of Jedwabne done by dozens of Poles in July 1941. Aleksander Kwaśniewski said then: “Today, as a man, as a citizen, and as President of the Polish Republic, I apologise. I apologise on behalf of myself and those Poles whose conscience is shattered by that crime. On behalf of those who think that you cannot be proud of the greatness of Polish history and, at the same time, cannot feel the pain and shame for the evil done by Poles to others”.

13. As an example let us recall the events that took place shortly after the plane crash at Smoleńsk, when Polish-Russian relations and, nationwide, Polish-Polish relations seemed to have entered into a new phase of truce and reconciliation. A similar situation took place after the death of the Pope, when not only politicians were ready to reconcile, but also the fans and supporters of football teams.

nor what is necessary to make a long-term effort matter. It mainly serves to make a good impression, thus it serves the aims of the rhetorician's purpose of self-presentation or, following Plato (*Gorgias*), what can be called flattering the tastes of the crowds. In that sense it is set on evoking feelings of pleasure and improving the audience's sense of well-being. And this rhetoric, called by Gadamer (2003: 65) an "empty" rhetoric or "hollow" rhetoric, is nothing else but sophistry. Thus it is only a set of actions aimed at persuading or winning over the opponent, no matter whether we believe in what we are trying to convince others about or not. Therefore, on one hand, there is the rhetoric of reconciliation as that type of actions that merely and temporarily hides still existing conflicts; while on the other hand, there is the possibility of such a rhetoric that is capable of transforming both participants of the dialogue. In this type of rhetoric, the speaker tries to convince the Other not in the name of the speaker's own particular interests, but in the name of what the speaker believes in. In this case, that belief focuses on reconciliation. And this, in turn, takes us to the final feature of the rhetoric of reconciliation – to the rhetorician as the subject.

In ancient times the rhetorician had to be a moral person, one who sought the truth, one who served what was just and good. According to Plato (*Gorgias* 487), a person who could judge other people's actions had to possess three features: knowledge, amiability and openness. The rhetoric of reconciliation requires the inclusion of these features into the speaker's ethos. Only a person who is wise, just and believes in the existence of truth and knowledge guarantees that the rhetoric of reconciliation will not stop at the short-term results and at the particular aims of the speaker, but that it has a chance to delve deeper, to aims and values that are more durable and connected with areas of not only knowledge, but also of ethics and truthfulness. The latter is understood, of course, not as a statement that is compliant with reality, but that what is being said is compliant with the speaker's inner conviction.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

The rhetoric of reconciliation, though not a leading one for contemporary society, plays a very important role in it. It leads to a consensus, allows for a compromise, a rebuilding of relationships and construction of good relations. As for

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14. This issue remains in line with Socratic and Platonic rhetoric.

the issue that was raised in the introduction, it must be said that it does not always enjoy as good a reputation as it deserves, for it has strong competition in the form of the “empty” rhetoric. The difficulty in distinguishing between the rhetoric of reconciliation and the “empty” rhetoric (sophistry) consists in, among others, the near impossibility of distinguishing them exclusively on the basis of what they teach. It seems, therefore, that the essential differences can mainly be brought down to two, which are very fine and difficult to estimate: a difference in intentions and a difference in effects. The difference in intentions relates to the attitudes and intentions of the rhetorician and the ethical issues and goals to be attained: are we therefore convincing because of what we believe in or perhaps in the name of self-interest? Do we care about the truth, about what is just and right, or rather the effect, self-presentation and pandering to the audience? Do we want to take possession of or rather respect the Other? The difference in effects, in turn, can be expressed by the words from the Bible: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The “empty” rhetoric exhausts itself in immediate and impressive gestures (without a follow-up). The rhetoric of reconciliation aims at activities that will last for years or even decades to come.

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## Retoryka pojednania

W artykule podejmowana jest problematyka funkcjonowania w dyskursie publicznym retoryki nastawionej na porozumienie i szukanie konsensusu, nazwanej retoryką pojednania. Warunkami retoryki pojednania są: 1) określona sytuacja retoryczna – sytuacja konfliktu, który może być postrzegany jako to, co istniało od zawsze, a zatem leży u źródła jakichś relacji, albo traktowany jest tylko jako etap w historii relacji, który nastąpił po czasie zgody i jedności; 2) otwarcie na dialog, który wymaga w pierwszej kolejności określenia siebie, swojej tożsamości, wytyczenia granic i dalej – uznania odrębności Innego; 3) język empatii, pozwalający zredukować stopień defensywności w dochodzeniu do porozumienia.; 4) etos mówcy, oparty na wiedzy, życzliwości i otwartości. Ważnym elementem retoryki pojednania są gesty otwarcia, a więc takie znaki, zachowania zarówno werbalne, jak i niewerbalne, które wyrażają gotowość do dialogu i porozumienia. Retorykę pojednania należy jednak odróżnić od retoryki „pustej” (sofistyki), która sprowadza się tylko do takich gestów. Różnica między nimi dotyczy intencji – postawy i nastawienia retora, kwestii etycznych i stawianych celów. Retoryka „pusta” wyczerpuje się tylko w doraźnych i efektownych gestach, retoryka pojednania podejmuje wysiłek działań obliczonych na lata lub nawet dziesiątki lat.

Słowa kluczowe: spór, retoryka pojednania, dialog, język empatii