

IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE RHETORIC OF SCIENCE
AND C.FINNEGAN'S BOOK *PICTURING POVERTY*.
PRINT CULTURE AND FSA PHOTOGRAPHS

What is it that makes science scientific? Is that knowledge obtained or the method? These central questions are addressed in the article. The paper offers textual analysis of the articles dealing specifically with the question of rhetoric and science as well as textual analysis of Cara Finnegan's book Picturing Poverty. The article proposes a view that social studies, communication studies or other humanities, which are unified by the passion to rhetoric, must leave testable, universal and non-judgmental scientific knowledge alone and what is more stop exploiting the status of science in their self-representation.

Scientific knowledge: is certain, universal, non-judgmental, because scientist follows "procedures" claims Condit in one of his statements. For the future reference 1 would refer that statement as N1. Procedures make it possible for the results to be testable and procedures reproduced. Condit's statement N2 is as follows "...procedures are designed to guarantee that anything "discovered" by one scientist would also be discovered by the all others" (Condit, 1991). So what is it that makes science scientific? Is that knowledge obtained or the method? It appears that in statement N1 and N2 knowledge and procedures are confused (hopefully deliberately, because if not author is being completely rhetorical without being rational). Knowledge can be obtained by any way only results have to be universal, testable (certain) and non-judgmental. Here the mistake is in extrapolating cause and results, where procedures are rhetorically confused with the results. Scientists would be interested in testing hypothesis about the "impact of Lincoln's Inaugural Address on Civil War" (Condit, 1991) if there was any way to make that hypothesis non-judgmental or at least testable. Absence of the *universality* which will make such a hypothesis unavailable to the scientist according to the Condit to the actually is not the issue. "Scientist *wants* a knowledge that is not contaminated by the need to make human judgments" (Condit, 1991) is also nothing more, but the rhetorical statement in which what *author wants* is substituted with what takes place is science.

Further I will carry out textual analysis of articles dealing specifically with the question of rhetoric and science and textual analysis of Cara

Finnegan's book *Picturing Poverty*... that is itself using rhetorical tools in the analytical study of the rhetorical phenomena. I will prove that social studies, communication studies or other humanities, which are unified by the passion to rhetoric, must leave testable, universal and non-judgmental scientific knowledge alone and what is more stop exploiting *status* of science in their self-representation. Social and communication and humanities fall more into the discourse of the political ideology and are out of the scientific discourse. The only elements that are joint for *both forms of social consciousness* are research as the epistemological methodology and formal, conventional and specialized language.

If that separation would be accepted simultaneous usage of the rhetorical moves and being scientific would not provoke turbulence and uncertainty observed in Cushman and Condit. If Cushman and Condit would accept that they are closer to scholastic, political party ideologists or artists then to scientist their work could have become much more engaging and crucial not just to the general public, but to their target audiences, too. That acknowledgment of the distinct nature of the *sciences* and *social studies* will take off the internal controversies of the text which are built with the intentions to be represented as scientific and deal with the *human element*. Such an unmasking will take down internal contradictions that are present in the text of the Finnegan and at the same time would have brought her book to the exploration of crucial and not obvious findings on "rhetorically available" and involving subjects. Cara Finnegan would acknowledge that photographs of the FSA and *Sivvey Graphic* co-existing in one form of the social consciousness and

serving dominant discourse can't advocate distinct values. Thus Lange's photographs and Taylor's article serve the same discourse and the same purposes. The sentence, "...failure of the photographs to map perfectly onto a social scientist's rhetoric of poverty *may be* an inevitable result of photography's inherent problem of representation" (Finnegan, p. 118) wouldn't appear.

Nevertheless, disagreement on the possibility of the synthesis or co-existence of science and rhetoric doesn't deny accepting the definitions of science and rhetoric as presented in the series of articles. Rhetorical inquiry is viewed here in the same way as by Cushman, "as the search for symbolic forms which transform human experience into social forms of community" (Cushman, p. 1990). At the same time rhetoric activities are present within all of the forms of the social consciousness, because rhetoric appears to be the basic characteristic of the communication and community building. Here I would like to mention that science uses rhetoric, but just as the presentational tool that arranges scientific knowledge in the way appropriate for the non-scientific audience. That function of rhetoric is what Prelli mentions in his article as the "'managerial' rhetorics of science" (Prelli, p. 1990).

Social science of communication is viewed by Condit as part of the science and in fact that is the mistake that makes him force chaste of rhetoric and harlot of communication sciences into marriage. They don't have to be married as long as they are the tools of one form of social consciousness that is different from science. In the further text instead of conventional term "social sciences" I will be using terms social pseudo-sciences, social humanities, social rhetoric or political rhetoric. All those terms can be justified as the substitute for the "social science" as long as all of them are either tools or structures of the political ideology that is *a form of social consciousness* along with other forms such as *philosophy, religion, political ideology, legal consciousness, morality, art and science* (Short Philosophical Dictionary, 2004 p. 319). At the same time political discourse is a dominant one.

One can claim that nevertheless I deny here universality, certainty and non-judgmental results of the social sciences the very terms (e.g. "forms of social consciousness") that are used to justify that position are coming from the social sciences. Here I would argue that the virtual opponent of the purity of science who would blame me of using terminology of social rhetoric himself/herself is seeking for the universal, certain and non-judgmental truth and thus has to choose either between social rhetoric or pure science. Along with that premise about non-

scientific essence of the "social sciences" can be proved through the logical structure article of the proponent of the social science as a science (Condit, p. 1990). The structure of the argument is as follows: science is characterized by some as *universal, certain and non-judgmental*.

"Communication sciences" can't be characterized as having aforementioned three elements. According to Condit that happened with the "communication sciences" after meeting with Dame/Harlot Rhetoric (Condit, p. 1990). There are two possible reasons. Either "communication sciences" are not sciences at all or they are *special* kinds of sciences that involve rhetoric and other non-scientific elements. But as it was previously mentioned author himself has defined science as the process that produces universal, certain and non-judgmental knowledge, whereas "communication science" can have or have not those elements, but what they definitely have is the rhetorical element. Thus according to the logical rule of the *exclusion of the third A* and not-A at the same time are impossible, that is science being and not-being rhetorical is also not possible. If science was using "rhetorical logic" (Prelli, 1990) people wouldn't fly to the Cosmos.

Another logical mistake in Condit's article can be observed when he rightfully claims that, "we should stop seeing ourselves as 'the art of rhetoric' or 'communication science' and begin to see ourselves as 'communication studies'." That statement is consistent with what I have been claiming about social studies not being sciences, but right after that he proposes that, "to ask whether science and rhetoric are compatible is insufficient question" (Condit, 1991) and what is necessary is to know how to "marry" them. But in the next sentence Condit seems to forget what he said in the previous one and goes on with his argumentation ("if we see rhetoric and communication *science...*" and so on) just missing how he defined activity of communication inquiry. Condit through his own example proves that his article is nothing less, but the rhetorical move to protect one of the convenient images about his profession.

It would be right to claim that social "scientists" are *researching, criticizing* and *organizing*, but it would be completely untrue to claim that they are working within the science. Therefore it would be right to call Finnegan an ideological worker (one can probably imply with the very high level of possibility what would be the social class and the ideology she's working for). She can be called researcher, ideological critic, semiotician, but not the scientist. Taking off the status of the science from social rhetorical battles (discourse) would take

off the mask of the innocence from the workers of the ideological frontier and will at the same time take away one of their powerful rhetorical tools.

Prelli proposes topical logic and rhetorical logic as the special kinds of the "scientific" logic. That argument proposes an analogue of "male hermaphrodite" or in other words something completely impossible. Recent Russian produced film *Oligarch* has a scene where future oligarch (at the current point of the story just common economics researcher) is arguing with the party ideological executive about certain realistic, but deeply anti-soviet economical theory. Theory predicts collapse of Soviet economic structure. Future oligarch is protecting his fellow economist's theory but at the same time claims that he is not opposing official ideology. Party executive blames his opponent's logic of being "strange". Future oligarch responds that there can be either some logic or no logic at all. That rhetorical move literally saves his and his friend from jail and prosecutions.

Also Cushman's "logic" in the article appears far more rhetorical than testable. At the very beginning he claims rhetoric to be an inquiry of the same nature as science, while having special characteristic of seeking "certification for the claims in some *ideal conception of good*" (Cushman, 1990, p. 328). Opponent of the Cushman's position can have only one question in regards to his claim that sciences are also rooted in motives and affects. What is the "ideal conception of good" physicist, biologists and chemists have in their inquiry? An important ingredient in Cushman's argument that claims to give the easy proof for the compatibility of science and rhetoric is the "human actions". Human actions are constituted by human organism itself, by human spirituality and by human interactions. Only physiology as the activity inquiring human body can be considered science among the studies that can add to the understanding of the human actions. Analysis of Cushman's argument proves that social studies should not be given the status of sciences.

What should be the status of the social studies? Social studies fall within the domain of the political ideology. Social research is financed either by government or by universities. Universities can be easier depicted as the middle class public that pays professionals for the conventional knowledge that is essential for climbing or staying at the certain place of the social ladder. What is the reason for the social scientist to be critical of given society, political system and apparatus if that society and that government are actually providing for him/her? It seems reasonable that critique of the given stable society can appear only within political or social

dominant discourses. The function of such social critique in those discourses would be an improvement rather than change, whereas in my belief world needs radical change rather than improvement of the given situation. Therefore social research should unmask and social critique should propagate for the radical social change. But obviously that can happen only outside Academia.

From the aforementioned perspective in analyzing any social and political phenomena (FSA photographs being one) one should answer such a question. What is the basic question author tries to answer? "The New Deal instituted a range of material practices in which visual remedies were often positioned as the cure for - or at least the mode for diagnosis of - what ailed the nation. The study explores one of those visual remedies." (Finnegan, 2003) In her book Cara Finnegan attempted to answer the question, *what was the role (if any) of the FSA Historical Section photographs in Roosevelt's New Deal reform?* That is the major foci of the book, nevertheless author doesn't dare to pose it directly most probably because of the impossibility to give true historical estimate of that role. After all in the social research it is possible to give either description of the phenomena or structure whereas answering the question, "*what was the role of the FSA photographs?*" would require precise statistics or at least a survey on the effects of the FSA pictures viewing coming from the 30's. Such a historical statistics is not possible, thus only rhetorical critique and examination of the political economy of the FSA picture circulation and production can be carried out. Finnegan provides sometimes well executed and sometimes poor rhetorical critique and has poor political economy analysis, the best example of the latter being an ambiguous statement "FSA photographs...are ...constructed by and are constructive of the era" (Finnegan, 2003). Acknowledging the importance of the dominant political discourse and belonging of the social studies and some of the art to that discourse I would propose to improve that statement into slightly different, "FSA photographs...are more constructed by the era and less constructive".

Book *Picturing Poverty* by Cara Finnegan as a part of the rhetorical discourse overlaps with the scientific discourse only at two levels. At one level both use formalized, specialized and conventional language and at the other level Finnegan's text as the part of the social "sciences" discourse is exploiting the status of science, although Finnegan is claiming that she is from the "intellectual home of rhetorical studies" (Finnegan, p. 224). If those facts were acknowledged, probably, the means of analysis,

critique and research themes of the book would be different. But even if the theme of the book would, stay the same the general approach and the methodology of the have been quite different. In my understanding acknowledging the importance of the domination of the political ideology discourse over rhetorics of social studies poses another questions: "why was dominant discourse interested in picturing poverty?"; "why was dominant discourse picturing poverty in this and not in the other way?"; "how would poverty discursively and rhetorically represent itself if it had means to?"; "what were the common rhetorical means of picturing poverty?" Nevertheless, basics question, whether FSA picturing helped in Roosevelt's reforms would stay.

Finnegan doesn't concentrate her book on the aforementioned questions, but touches them. In the section on the rhetoric of the Taylor's article in the *Survey Graphic* she comes close to the essential question, but somehow loses it. She describes Taylor's concerns in his article, "Taylor fears social unrest if the poor, particularly, the migrant workers of California, are left to their own devices" (Finnegan, p. 111). Actually, all of the analysis should be done from those perspectives. That is what Chesney calls "political economy" as "the corner stone of the communication studies" (McChesney, 2000) Any further questions such as circulation of the FSA photographs, administrative relations between Stryker and Kellogg or else should be addressed via their potential controversies with the dominant ideological discourse. Here it is possible to mention only potential controversy, because obviously neither government worker (Stryker) nor dominant ideology worker (Kellogg) can not have deviant values or views (if only they are not the spies of the other nation).

It seems that theoretical frame that governs my inquiry into the nature of any communicative act or phenomena (including FSA production) should not have any practical implications on the way rhetoric is viewed and exercised. But in fact that view can be essential in critique of the Finnegan's rhetorical analysis. I will give an example of Finnegan's mistake in the assessment of the rhetorical availability of two Dorothea Lange's photographs in the *Survey Graphic* that according to the Finnegan fail "to map perfectly onto social scientist's rhetoric of poverty" that can be the result of the "inevitable result of photography's inherent problem of representation" (Finnegan, p.118) In Finnegan's opinion Taylor and Lange in their article didn't

escape photography's ability to particularize. That's why picture of the *Migrant Mother* and *Old Mexican Worker* work against the dominant discourse. That in fact is completely doesn't have any ground. One should look on the joint rhetorical effect of the printed text and photographs, rather than evaluating pictures by themselves. Maybe Cara Finnegan was impressed by the pictures herself, but that doesn't mean that all of the members of the audience will have the same *feeling*. Those two pictures make the joint text of the printed and photographic material more opened, but they don't agitate against the strains of the dominant discourse, which is impossible due to the only fact of their appearance in the print.

Overall, Finnegan's book seemed to have only one practical implication. Regardless of the social class of the target audience visual rhetoric has become the dominant tool of agitation and propaganda (at least in the United States), whereas all of the other conclusions of the book regarding FSA photographs being "visual synecdoche" (p. 87), about ambiguous trope of "presence and absence" (p. 93), "rhetorical availability" and "circulation" of the seemed either irrelevant or obvious.

Why am I stating the impossibility of "social science", "rhetoric of science" along with reasonable impossibility of "male hermaphrodite" and at the same time exist within the discourse of the social sciences? I refer myself as the "informational artist" that is a interdisciplinary specialist working within domain of ideology, who is able of creating various informational rhetorically available products. Art includes the knowledge of the empirical rules, political and cultural conventions, critique skills and production skills. The discourse of the social sciences gives the possibility to learn the conventional language, rhetoric and critique skills, which after all can't be substituted by the creativity that also seems to, makes social sciences impossible. That is also one of the ways through which I have judged Finnegan's book: it wouldn't be helpful in creating "rhetorically available" informational product helpful other than through two applications. One attempting to create "rhetorically available" product should hire highly professional artists (photographers, theoreticians, artists etc.) And one should maintain good relationships with the other interdependent ideological institutions. But those conclusions of the book seemed obvious and didn't add to my understanding of the production of rhetorically effective informational products.

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**НЕМОЖЛИВІСТЬ РИТОРИКИ В НАУЦІ ТА ПРАЦЯ К. ФІННЕГАН
«ЗОБРАЖУЮЧИ БІДНІСТЬ. КУЛЬТУРА ДРУКУ ТА ФОТОГРАФІЇ
ЧАСІВ ВЕЛИКОЇ ДЕПРЕСІЇ»**

Що робить науку науковою? Чи це є знання, набуті науковцем, чи метод, за допомогою якого ці знання здобуть? Ці два питання є центральними в даній студії. Автором здійснено спробу текстового аналізу статей, безпосередньо пов'язаних з питаннями риторики та науки, а також книги К.Фіннеган «Зображуючи бідність». Обстоюється думка про те, що у соціальних, комунікаційних чи інших гуманітарних науках, об'єднаних пристрастю до риторики, не варто використовувати універсальні, об'єктивні наукові знання, які можна перевірити, ліпше взагалі не вдаватися до наукової саморепрезентації.