



# The Speech Clinic®



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## **Violence is a fool's rhetoric!**

Once upon a time rhetoric was a subject in Swedish schools. It was abolished because it was regarded as the teaching of manipulation! According to the National encyclopaedia manipulation is defined as *"making secret use of knowledge about an individual's character, wishes and needs, in order to influence the person's opinions, decisions and actions"*. As a matter of fact, it was one of history's most trendsetting philosophers, Aristotle (384-322 BC) who most contributed to spread the importance of influencing others. His definition of rhetoric was to find all that is convincing in any topic and subject. But after 2000 years we have totally rejected reality and decided that it was manipulation and that manipulation was bad and therefore not to be taught in schools. Basta! So we got rid of it, like so many other fine things! If we wanted to ventilate an opinion we could write and hope that someone would mercifully read it. Writing, apparently, was not considered to be manipulation.

Since then, we can hardly claim that we manipulate each other less, rather more! But do we do that in an ethically and morally correct way? Positive or negative? Motivating or demotivating? Do we know how to express ourselves and persuade without ending up taking to violence from an ignorant inferior position? After all, we haven't learnt how to speak? But the subject still has not been reintroduced as a complement to reading and writing. We should ask ourselves, why? We know that public speaking is a scourge to most people. We know that Americans, who have the subject Speech in schools, often overrule us and dominate with their verbal arguments and presentations. We know, that this has to be learnt and practiced. And yet, it is not even close to becoming a subject in schools here, other than sporadic courses. We learn various languages but not how to handle them. We learn to write and to read what has been written, but not to write a speech with our brains and to deliver it from our hearts with feelings.

A further definition of rhetoric, which connects to Aristotle, is that it is a study that focuses on how humans build and change their world with the help of the spoken word, i.e. "influence" and "persuasion". Without that, no change. Verbal persuasion is the most important communication method given to mankind - and the most neglected! The question is if the written language has contributed to a reduced interest for the spoken language. We can write peacefully without being controlled and without being seen. It is safe, it will remain when ready and it can be read again and again. Perhaps writing has led to lack of practice in story telling, which in turn has led to fear of public speaking. Perhaps this fear of speaking in turn has contributed to the enormous amount of writing in the world. This is a circle which is not necessarily evil, yet possibly is a mutually influencing course of events.

But that's not the way it used to be. Stories once were passed on verbally, up to adult age. The story tellers must have been well trained. The listeners must have learnt not only the stories but also the very art of story telling. Those stories were full of manipulation because the objective was to bring up a new generation in a certain direction. OK, story telling goes on also today for the very small, but it stops at some undefined young age, say around eight. Thereafter the kids are just left to a school where the subject Speech does not exist.

If we conclude that rhetoric focuses on influence and persuasion which is a form of manipulation, then rhetoric is the science of manipulation. As we are forced to compete in a shrinking world, we had better quickly adapt the school schedule to reality by reintroducing the subject rhetoric in our schools. This should start in conjunction with the start of reading and writing. If not, we are bound to soon be manipulated out of bounds in this age of globalisation. By whom? By others who have understood, learnt and practiced.

But, of course, there is always violence as an alternative.

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