Using Rhetoric in Persuasive Design: What Rhetoric?

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Abstract: Richard Buchanan and a number of other design researchers have long argued about the synergy and similarities between design and rhetoric. The prospect of a new persuasive approach to design has also been evoked. Rhetoric, however, has a long history and has gone through numerous forms, many of which seemingly fit with Buchanan’s rhetoric. Our long term goal is to define a persuasive approach to design and the effects of such an approach; therefore, as a first step, we need to identify the form that best fits Buchanan’s rhetoric. Using a comprehensive list of influential rhetoricians, we have compared the characteristics of different forms of rhetoric through the ages and found that argumentation should be used for further investigation and development of a persuasive design approach.

Keywords: Persuasive design, Rhetoric, Argumentation

Introduction
Amongst influential contributors on the discipline of design, we find interaction design specialist Richard Buchanan. Since 1985, Buchanan has been discussing many subject, one of them being the links and potential benefits of looking at design through a rhetorical lens. The idea has also been used and discussed by many other researchers in design, before or after Buchanan himself. Kinross (1985) has even written that, in graphic design, a product is never free of a message or at least a persuasive intent, an observation that Buchanan (1989) has argued applies to design as a whole.

Johan Redström (2006) has revisited the idea that all technology is persuasive and, as such, a persuasion-focused approach to design might be an important development for the future or the discipline. He suggests that design could be persuasive, but that ‘persuasive design’ needs to be defined to be understood as its own approach. In order to do so, Redström proposes three objectives: (1) identify how persuasive design is different from the overall design discourse, both in terms of methodology and interests; (2) place persuasion at the
center of the act of design; (3) frame the persuasion within the product or service, making it a vehicle for the thesis proposed by the designers to the user.

Accomplishing these objectives, however, will require a study and translation of rhetoric towards the design discipline. This exercise in itself promises to be a challenge, a larger project than what could be described in this document. Of course, the pertinence of these results is highly dependent on the acceptance of the usefulness of a persuasive approach to design. This aspect will not be debated here, since Buchanan and other authors have provided many arguments towards this goal already.

As a first step, however, we need to establish what form, or forms, of rhetoric, amongst all the forms it took through the ages, best fits with the rhetoric Buchanan is discussing. The goal of this step is not to narrow down the possibilities of the persuasive approach, but to be able to have a complete and coherent discourse on rhetoric to start from. Further studies on the subject may enrich the persuasive approach by integrating concepts and theories from other forms of rhetoric later, but we believe this requires a strong foundation first.

**Identifying Buchanan’s rhetoric**

Rhetoric has been around for a long time. Historians tell similar stories about its origins, some tracing it back to Sicily either from the justice system (Chaignet, 1888) or attributing it directly to Corax of Syracuse, also in Sicily, who trained pupils in the oratory art and persuasion (Navarre, 1900). Authors agree that it appeared somewhere in the 5th century B.C. and that it was formalized in the system that is more familiar to us by Aristotle in the 4th century B.C. (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990).

Since then, rhetoric has been revisited, transformed or realigned by many thinkers, including Plato and Cicero in the classic era, but also by many more thinkers. Certain authors moved rhetoric towards a whole new set of considerations, modifying its nature completely.

**Methodology**

In order to move towards a new approach of persuasive design, we must first establish what form of rhetoric we are talking about. In the next sections of this paper, we will:

- Investigate the characteristics of design that led Buchanan and his peers in their discussion;
- Examine a set of different forms of rhetoric to see which ones best fits those characteristics;
- Discuss which form of rhetoric would most effectively contribute to persuasive design.

This way, we can identify which rhetoric to use when we develop persuasive design into a full-fledged approach.
Links between design and rhetoric

Although Buchanan notes that “it would be unwise to believe that we can reduce design to rhetoric” (2001, p. 201), he underlines many similarities between the two disciplines:

“[D]esign is an art of invention and disposition, whose scope is universal, in the sense that it may be applied to the creation of any human-made product. This makes of design an art of forethought, as traditional rhetorician perhaps regard their discipline as art of forethought in verbal communication” (Buchanan, 2001, p. 191)

On top of the links Buchanan implies in the citation above, others have been discussed. In the following paragraphs we will synthetically expose how both rhetoric and design are persuasive, universal arts, productive arts and uncertain. We will also discuss the respective use of invention, disposition, balance and positioning found in literature. Finally, as an added concern, we will summarize a set of criteria for complexity, as it is also an issue that we need to consider when discussing design.

Persuasion

Rhetoric can be defined as the art of persuasion (Chaignet, 1888; Cournoyer, 2011); its persuasive aspect is therefore hard to debate.

Designers often use persuasion in the work. Negotiations with clients, colleagues or superiors are part of their daily life. This being said, designers also persuade indirectly through the products they make. The target of persuasion is then the users of the product whom are being pushed to new ways of living that include the use of the product.

Buchanan proposes that “all products – digital and analog, tangible and intangible – are vivid argument about how we should lead our lives” (2001, p. 194) and that “design is a debate among opposing views” (1989, p. 95), meaning that a product is a statement that one’s life should be rethought in the light of the existence of the product. It opposes, for example, the new and improved way of life that comes with the use of the product to the current, less optimised way of living without the product.

In the next section, we will consider that a form of rhetoric is indeed persuasive if it frames its activities as a debate and if it suggests a thesis or a specific way of life. This would exclude activities like education where transmission of knowledge is the goal instead of providing arguments in favor of a thesis.

Universal Art

Rhetoric is a universal art in the sense that it is always used in a similar fashion to persuade an audience, whether it is in a political, judiciary, marketing, pedagogical or even ecclesiastic context. It uses its own paradigms and method regardless of the point to make (Buchanan, 1995). Rhetoric is about premeditation of a discourse distinct of the point it is making (Aristotle, 4th c. B.C./2000, 4th c. B.C./2003).

Design is also one such universal art, in the sense that design is about planning and managing constraints of a project. The design process is basically the same, whether the
designer is planning to make a chair, a room, a house, a city block, a billboard or a service. Looking at design through a rhetorical lens enables us to distinguish the acts of design from the acts of making:

“[T]he poetics of products – the study of products as they are – is different from the rhetoric of products – the study of how products come to be as vehicles of argument and persuasion about the desirable qualities of private and public life.” (Buchanan, 1995, p. 26)

Although designers are obviously concerned by the nature of the product they create, those considerations are secondary to the act of design itself, which is, much like rhetoric, a premeditation of the product.

In the next section, we will consider a form of rhetoric a universal art if it is said to adapt to context without changing its paradigm or methods.

**Productive Art**

Based on an argument by Richard McKeon (1987), Buchanan (2001) explains that rhetoric is a productive art in the sense that it links theory and practice, words and things, a link that was lost during the separation of arts and sciences in the Renaissance. Rhetoric is indeed an art that exists to link ideas (arguments) to results (adherence to a thesis), hence it is an art that produces something, much like design that also links ideas (often, needs and constraints) to results products. McKeon discusses the advantages a rhetorical view of products:

“[Rhetoric] opens up possible methods of directing and relating knowledge action and production, by instituting an architectonic productive art of improving and increasing both the production of utilities and goods (*utilia* and *honesta*) and the use and enjoyment (*uti* and *frui*) of the product” (McKeon, 1971, p. 11, cited by Buchanan, 2001)

In the next section, we will consider that a specific form of rhetoric is a productive art if it clearly aims at producing something that will have an effect on the audience.

**Uncertainty**

Persuasion is useless when a demonstration is possible (Aristotle, 4th c. B.C./2003; Chaïm Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958/2008). No one can (or, at least, no one should) debate something that can be shown to be true in the way, for example, a mathematical proof is demonstrated. On the other hand, rhetoric is essential when determining what is likely to be true or best, like in the case of a political debate or a courtroom plea. Rhetoric reigns on uncertainty, where no solution or belief is undoubtable or optimal. Discourses themselves can never truly be the best. Their efficiency is modulated by the context, the orator and by the audience.

Design also deals with uncertainty. Herbert Simon (1969/1996) distinguished between the ‘necessary’ of the sciences and the ‘contingent’ of the artificial. According to him, the notion of empiricism cannot be applied to complex systems that fluctuate depending on the
context. Artificial does not submit itself to reproducibility and, consequently, to demonstration.

Designers also deal with uncertainty in the product they plan and make. Two designers presented with the same task in the same context will most likely come up with two different solutions (Redström, 2006). The capacity to deal with constant uncertainty has been identified as an important skill to tackle design’s ill-defined problems (Cross, 1995). Buchanan discusses the implication of the uncertain nature of design:

> Designers deals with matters of choice, with things that may be other than they are. The implications of this are immense, because it reveals that the domain of design is not accidently, but essentially contested.” (1995, p. 25)

In the next section, we will consider that a specific form of rhetoric is uncertain if it makes clear that it deals with reasonable theses instead of truths.

**Invention and disposition**

Rhetoricians and rhetoric theorists since the Antiquities have agreed that, on top of its persuasive objective, rhetoric offers an opportunity for invention and discovery. Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the technique of discovering the persuasive aspects of any given subject-matter” (Aristotle, 4th c. B.C./1991, cited by Kelly, 2014, p. 720).

Invention is the phase of rhetoric where arguments are discovered and selected (Reboul, 1991). Those arguments are mainly concerned with the orator’s authority and morality, the logic of the thesis and the audience’s passions. They are inspired both by the thesis it defends and those that are opposed to it, either in the same discipline or others. As such, rhetoric stimulates innovation but also pushes the rhetorician to absorb innovations from other disciplines and refine their own position and argument to compete with the others (Buchanan, 2001; McKeon, 1987).

Once at least some of the arguments are found and selected, the disposition phase starts. Its goal is to link the arguments in a coherent discourse (Reboul, 1991).

Invention in design is the first planning phase, finding and selecting features of the product to design and make. Those features are then arranged into a coherent product during the development and user testing phase (Buchanan, 2001). Like in the case of rhetoric, the features of a product are inspired by that product’s main function as well as by other competing products. From this point of view, refining the features enough to win market shares becomes an objective of the project.

In the next section, we will consider a form of rhetoric to include invention and disposition if it promotes the discovery of arguments pertaining to the three considerations (ethos, logos and pathos). Most overviews neglect to mention the disposition part of the process, presumably assuming that it is a logical next step to invention. As such, we will assume that if at least invention is covered, the form will be considered as having both an invention and disposition phase.

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Balance and position

As discussed above, rhetoric mainly considers three aspects of the discourse: ethos, logos and pathos. Ethos is the orator’s authority and morality, logos is the thesis’s logic and pathos is the audience’s passions. The “rhetorical stance”, introduced by Wayne Booth (1963) is described as:

“[A] stance which depends on discovering and maintaining in any writing situation a proper balance among the three elements that are at work in any communicative effort: the available arguments about the subject itself, the interests and peculiarities of the audience, and the voice, the implied character of the speaker.” (Booth, 1963, p. 141)

Corruption of the balance of the rhetorical stance (Booth, 1963; Buchanan, 2001) automatically means that one of the three considerations is underrepresented or otherwise less taken in account, weakening the overall persuasive power of the discourse.

The considerations, as well as the rhetorical stance, have been translated into design by Buchanan (2001) and Grotzsch (2006). Ethos in design, would be the designer or the company’s reputation for doing good products, or the “company identity” (Gotzsch, 2006, p. 21). Design’s logos, or product identity (Gotzsch, 2006, p. 19), is the logic and coherence of the product. Pathos in design, or “user identity” (Gotzsch, 2006, p. 21), refers to social achievements, goals and personal memories associated to the products. Finally, the corruption of the “designer’s stance” (Buchanan, 2001, p. 196) implies an overemphasis of one of the three considerations, would it be an excess of style (emphasis on ethos) or dependency on technology (emphasis on logos) or marketing (emphasis on pathos).

In the next section, we will consider a form of rhetoric to consider balance and position if it mentions specifically the equality of importance of all three considerations.

One more characteristic: Complexity

As introduce earlier, we added one more characteristic to our search for a form of rhetoric that fits with Buchanan’s rhetoric and will enable us to develop a new approach to design: complexity.

Alain Findeli (2001) traces the positioning of the design discipline as a complex activity to an article by László Moholy-Nagy. Moholy-Nagy said: "the key to our era [is being able] to see everything in relationship" (1938, p [nd]. Quoted by Findeli, 2001, p. 10). Findeli (1994) also specifies that a product is designed by keeping in mind the environment in which it will be used and the effects it will have on the world. This human-product relationship is very close in philosophy to the statement that products have a persuasive power on the user, as proposed by Buchanan (1989).

This ability to map the elements of a project was also discussed, even more concretely, by Nigel Cross (1995, 2011) who proposes that the ability to model the elements of a system is an essential skill of the designer.
Because it aligns with both contemporary concerns of design and Buchanan’s statements about the links between rhetoric and design, we will consider that complexity is essential to a new approach to design.

According to Morin (1990), complexity is mainly based on three principles: the dialogic principle, the principle of recursion, the hologrammatic principle.

**Dialogic principle**
The dialogic principle, which can be defined as "the overcoming of antagonisms in a higher construction" (Mucchielli, 2009, pp. 23-24), indicates that the complex is formed through the confrontation of attributes of its components.

In design, we can recognize this principle in the proposed design solutions (the higher construction) that are based on the project's context and other constraints that will be imposed by the designers themselves (Darke, 1984; Hillier, Musgrove, & O'Sullivan, 1972). Jonas (2007), who was inspired by the theory of *autopoeisis*, has also proposed that, in a good design project, each change in a system, e.g. introducing a product in a given context, must be motivated by the interaction of the systems that are already in place; product or projects should be, somehow, the result of a stabilizing macrosystem.

**Recursion principle**
Recursion, or the "circular loop that affect all human phenomenon" (Mucchielli, 2009, p. 24), assumes that each intervention will, in addition to its desired and unintended effects, have repercussions on whoever made the intervention. Each effect will be the cause of one or more other effects.

Each design project will influence the designer, be it in terms of knowledge and experience. Donald Schön (1983) has identified several types of knowledge and attitudes that may be acquired or improved in practice. In addition, the introduction of a project or product will inevitably change the world in which it is introduced.

**Hologrammatic principle**
In the case of a hologram, light beams create a unique image. The hologrammatic principle, then, "shows that the whole is in the parts as the parts are found in the whole" (Mucchielli, 2009, p. 24).

As discussed in previous sections, the product or design project is a unique solution that stems from a system of external and internal circumstances, but also from the set of skills of the designers themselves. Each of the elements of the system that was in place before the designer’s intervention, and their ambition of turning the current system into an improved one, contribute to the product or project that will be designed.
Rhetoric
Having established the characteristics pertaining to both design and what we’ll call Buchanan’s rhetoric, we can compare those to the different forms of rhetoric through the ages.

We will do this using a list of texts and authors gathered in the *Rhetorical Tradition* (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990) which has annotated the most influential texts of the discipline through five eras. The summaries found in the subsections below are all based on this book, unless otherwise noted.

Authors that were not used
Although all authors mentioned in the Rhetorical Tradition (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990) were influential, we only included a select few in our study.

Those included have proposed a significantly unique view of rhetoric that was comparable to Buchanan’s rhetoric. Different reasons were invoked to remove authors from our list of studied forms.

Here is a table of the reasons, with a comment explaining why they were invoked as well as a list of authors that were removed from our list because of it. Some authors could have been classified in more than one line, but they were placed in the line that aligned best with their writings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialectic</td>
<td>Dialectic does not acknowledge the importance of ethos and pathos in discourse</td>
<td>Plato; Ramus; Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing previous works to light</td>
<td>Many scholars have made a mark by preserving or translating work from previous authors. Unless they made some other contribution, we only included the author that inspired them</td>
<td>Quintilian; The unknown author of <em>Rhetorica ad Herrenium</em>; Beothius; Basevorn; Blair; Day; D.J. Hill; A.S. Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social contributions</td>
<td>The author’s contributions were social or cultural, which are not within the scope of this study</td>
<td>Cereta; de Pisan; Fell; Grimké; Gates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on language and style</td>
<td>Many rhetoricians focused their attention to the discourse itself, instead of the rhetoric as a universal art described by Buchanan.</td>
<td>Unknown author of <em>Principle of Letter Writing</em>; Erasmus; Locke; Sheridan; Austin; Bain; Nietzsche; Bakhtin; Richards; Burke; Derrida; Cixous; Kristeva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on other aspects outside of the study</td>
<td>Some rhetoricians have greatly contributed to the field in aspects that were not discussed by Buchanan.</td>
<td>Bacon; Vico; Weaver; Tulmin; Foucault</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Authors that were used
The following is a list of authors that were used in our study.
We provide a brief introduction for each of them and then compare their rhetoric to Buchanan’s in a table.

Gorgias
Gorgias, like the Sophists, believes that truth is not attainable but that we must believe in something to act.
His approach to rhetoric then is to sell (i.e. hide its flaws) provisional knowledge to an audience in a way that “[appeals] to us ethically and pathetically as well as logically” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 38).

Isocrates
Isocrates opposed the Sophists on their moral base, and saw rhetoric as an educational tool, hence not necessarily a persuasive art. Although truth is hard to come by for Isocrates, rhetoric is all about the logical arguments because of their “civilizing power” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 45). He, then, did not promote the necessity of a balance between logic and the other considerations.

Aristotle
Aristotle introduced rhetoric to the system we have come to be familiar with; most of the characteristics discussed by Buchanan were therefore formalized by him. His exact position on rhetoric is difficult to find specifically as his book, Rhetoric, thought to be a compilation of his teaching notes, because he sometimes contradicts itself (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990).
Although ethical and pathetic considerations are discussed at length, Aristotle condemns their appeal, leading us to think he sees them as some necessary evil. Balance of ethos, logos and pathos is therefore not something Aristotle was promoting.

Cicero
Cicero’s rhetoric is very similar to Aristotle’s, his main contributions might have been to further discuss and formalize the latter philosopher’s work. More of a practitioner of rhetoric than his predecessor, Cicero revisits the categories of speech (deliberative, forensic and ceremonial) and canons of composing (including invention and arrangement).
He also integrates ethos and pathos more prominently in his rhetoric, proposing that the morals of the speaker transfers to the audience’s morals.

Augustine
Augustine’s main concern was bringing rhetoric and Christianity together. Scholars have situated Augustine’s rhetoric very closely to Cicero’s but Augustine also borrows Plato’s aim to find truth. Augustine’s rhetoric aims at the transmission of Christian truth, whether it is in ceremonies, education or politics. It was therefore neither about uncertainty nor about debate or persuasion.
GEORGE CAMPBELL
Campbell, a Scottish philosopher, proposed that all human faculties should be addressed to succeed in persuasion. Thinking that rhetoric is mainly targeted at moral reasoning, he refuses the traditional canons – hence the invention and distribution, and consequently the balance – in favour of two persuasive steps: excite and satisfy.

RICHARD WHATELY
Whately furthered Campbell’s effort to update Aristotle’s work, adding a step reminiscent of invention. The notion of balance is still not introduced.

ARGUMENTATION
Perelman and Olbretch-Tyteca, whilst researching arguments, made their way back to classical rhetoric and set up to redefine the discipline. Argumentation, dubbed the new rhetoric was both an update of classical rhetoric and a prescriptive study and classification of arguments. It insisted on all types of argumentation and firmly reintegrated ethos and pathos as main points of consideration.

TABLE OF COMPARISON
Each of the authors has been included in the following table to determine which ones could be Buchanan’s rhetoric.
The study of each author will be made in the form of a table to keep the results easy to consult. Each characteristic will be marked by either a ‘Y’ if the form presents the characteristic, an ‘N’ if it either it does not presents the characteristic or if the characteristic has not been discussed in the form.

A simple point system is used to determine which of the forms is closest to Buchanan’s rhetoric. Every Y will give the form a point. An N will not be awarded a point. All characteristics are valued equally. Only the forms with all possible 6 points will be discussed afterwards.

Note that complexity is not used in this table since it was not identified by Buchanan. The selected forms will however be examined for this characteristic.

For clarity, we will use the following abbreviated forms of each characteristic in our tables:

- Pe: Persuasion
- UA: Universal art
- PA: Productive art
- Un: Uncertainty
- ID: Invention and disposition
- BP: Balance and position
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Table 2  Forms of rhetoric and persuasive arts of the classical era.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Pe</th>
<th>UA</th>
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<th>Un</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>BP</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gorgias’s rhetoric</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isocrates’s rhetoric</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aristotle’s rhetoric</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cicero’s rhetoric</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Augustine’s rhetoric</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campbell’s rhetoric</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whately’s rhetoric</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>

Further investigation

Three forms matched Buchanan’s rhetoric: Gorgias’s rhetoric, Cicero’s rhetoric and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s argumentation. To further our goal of establishing persuasive design, however, one must be chosen. In this section we will discuss each of these above mentioned forms to see which one best fits our future interests.

Translation

First, the next step in our research program will require a studious translation of the principles and concepts of the selected form of rhetoric.

Cicero’s rhetoric proves to be problematic. As Richard Whately effectively puts it:

“He abounds, indeed, with excellent practical remarks — though the best of them are scattered up and down his works with much irregularity — but his precepts, though of great weight, as being the result of experience, are not often traced up by him to first principles; and we are frequently left to guess, not only on what basis his rules are grounded, but in what cases they are applicable. Of this latter defect a remarkable instance will be hereafter cited.” (Whately, 1867, p. 20)

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s Treatise of Argumentation (1958/2008) on the other hand is highly systematic and rigorous. Gorgias’s rhetoric is also systematically described, providing important considerations.

Complexity... and stability

Argumentation follows the principles of complexity. Indeed, it is a higher construction built from the doubt between two or more theses to which audiences can adhere (Chaim Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958/2008), thus following the dialogic principle.

Also, it is based on a system comprising the speaker, the audience and the arguments that "exists in relation to a situation that is defined by them, but that also defines them" (Tindale, 2004, pp. 134-135), which follows the recursion principle.
Finally, it consists of a unique combination of the speaker, the audience and the arguments (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1995; cited by Tindale, 2004) that contains its own limits and its own definitions of criteria for assessing reasonableness (Tindale 2004), thus following the hologrammatic principle.

Furthermore, Perelman and Olbretch-Tyteca (1951) introduce the concept of stability which is highly related to both the recursion and the hologrammatic principle. Indeed, the coexistence of the speaker, the arguments and the audience create expectancy, at least from the audience’s point of view, of constancy in the promotion of theses and values. If an argument or a thesis comes to be disproved, it will taint the orator’s ethos. Argumentation itself is set up so that arguments must be valid to be included in a discourse. Indeed, Perelman and Olbretch-Tyteca (1958/2008) divided arguments in two categories: the ones based on reality and the ones based on preference, leaving no space to fallacies. Crosswhite will even propose that “In any rhetorical situation, certain agreements stand fast or argumentation is not possible” (1989, p. 165).

The Sophist approach confronts ignorance to provisional knowledge and embraces the specificity of context. Its concordance to the recurrence principle, however, is less than clear. In their much focused quest to enable action, the Sophists fail to accept resonance of the perpetrated knowledge and the consequences of them being false. Stability is not possible through Gorgias’s rhetoric and, because of this, it fatally leads to the collapse of any ethos building efforts.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, we have successfully identified several key elements that were the basis of the synergy between rhetoric and design. Their elements were the persuasive and uncertain nature of rhetoric, the idea that it is both a universal and productive art and the inclusion of an invention and disposition phase that balances ethical, pathetic and logical elements.

Amongst three forms of rhetoric that shared all these attributes with design, Perelman and Olbretch-Tyteca’s argumentation was selected as the most satisfying because it was systematic enough to be efficiently translated into design and embraced the complex nature necessary to building a contemporary approach to design.

From this form, we will be able to translate concepts and principles that can further help define the synergy between rhetoric and design, but that can also lead to the definition of a new, persuasive approach to design.

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