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Ingenious Rhetoric: The Visual Secret of Acumen

Acumen, the key to witty speech is one of the most vaguely defined discursive features of rhetorical speech. It delights the mind with the new and the beautiful and rejoices the spirit by the force of ingenuity as treatments of the term assume. Acumen is not a figure of speech that is at hand to be classified easily in the system of rhetorical schemas, it is rather a logic of meaning-making, or – more precisely – a pleasing ligamen joining things and words in speech; a cognitive shift from what is sensed to what is expressed. Hence, for the purpose of my talk I define acumen as a mental operation and a communicative expression that creates metaphors and/or enthymemes. It is the fruit of ingenuity and the resource for the visionary speech.

Having striven to frame persuasive speech in the domain of the visual recently, in this talk I shall aim to revisit the visual nature of rhetorical discourse and reconsider acumen as an inherent part of it. Traced back to Aristotle, Cicero, rhetoricians of the baroque and Vico acumen will be discussed as a cue to rhetoric as visual thinking and verbal mastery.

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Classical and Modern Argumentation Theory in 2003, and gave her habilitation lecture in 2011. Her research interests are focused on the theory and practice of rhetoric. She is author and co-author of four books and numerous essays on verbal and visual argumentation, persuasive communication and (new) media communication. Her recent publications include contributions to the debate on “new rhetoric” and new media rhetoric, among them her papers “Enchanting Bewilderment: Concerns for Visual Rhetoric”, in András Benedek and Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *Images in Language: Metaphors and Metamorphoses* (series VISUAL LEARNING, vol. 1), Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2011, “Mediarhetoric: Complex Visual Literacy”, in András Benedek and Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *The Iconic Turn in Education* (series VISUAL LEARNING, vol. 2), Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2012, “Visionary Rhetoric: Teaching Imagistic Communication”, in András Benedek and Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *How to Do Things with Pictures: Skill, Practice, Performance* (series VISUAL LEARNING, vol. 3), Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2013, and “Expressivity and Emotion in Visionary Rhetoric”, in András Benedek and Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *The Power of the Image: Emotion, Expression, Explanation* (series VISUAL LEARNING, vol. 4), Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2014. She holds memberships in Hungarian and international communication associations and boards. E-mail: petra.aczel@uni-corvinus.hu.