Yanushevich I.A.

Politicians and contemporary tactics of sophistry

Even the luckiest sophistical find which has led her inventor to the victory after exposure leads to defeat. The usage of sophistical receptions often makes the speaking one to renounce common sense, claiming not that he thinks, but what should be spoken. And though modern politicians use logical tricks more likely instinctively and even accidentally, however it doesn't eliminate the effectiveness of these tricks.
Key words: *sophistry, spin tactics, rhetorical figure, politics of politics, politics of truth.*

Навіть найвдаліша софістична знахідка, що привела її винахідника до перемоги, після викриття веде до поразки. Використання софістичних прийомів часто змушує того, що їх вживає, поступатися здоровим глуздом, затверджуючи не те, що він думає, а те, що потрібно говорити. І хоча сучасні політики логічні хитрощі використовують, швидше, інстинктивно, а то і випадково,протее це не зменшує дієвість хитрощів як таких.
Ключові слова: *софістика, спін-тактика, риторична фігура, політиканство, правдива політика.*

Даже самая удачная софистическая находка, приведшая ее изобретателя к победе, после разоблачения ведет к поражению. Использование софистических приёмов часто вынуждает говорящего поступаться здравым смыслом, утверждая не то, что он думает, а то, что надо говорить. И хотя современные политики логические уловки используют, скорее, инстинктивно, а то и случайно, однако это не умаляет действенность уловок как таковых.
Ключевые слова: *софистика, спин-тактика, риторическая фигура, политиканство, правдивая политика.*

УДК 165.745

Yanushevich I.A.,
Candidate of Philosophical Sciences,
Associate Professor of the
Odessa national polytechnic university

Politics is the art of making possible that which is necessary. Like other activities, politics is most often thought to have an essential part (however it is defined: participating in the life of the city, discussing, militating, deliberating, voting, enacting and mandating the application of appropriate legislation, protesting, demonstrating, organizing) and an inessential «politics» or «cheap politics» (what actually used to call «playing politics» or increasingly, in an interesting gesture of disavowal, just «politics»). In compliance with it, everyone, including those most energetically and enthusiastically involved in it, eagerly denounces the politics of politics as a kind of corruption of what politics essentially is or should be, everyone deplores the fact that politics seems to be increasingly bound up in its own politics in this way, and we invest our hopes in figures who seem to be doing politics in the absence of its politics

But this apparently secondary and supposedly debased dimension of politics (its «politics», then, the politics of politics), cannot satisfactorily be thought of in this way as merely derivative or parasitic with respect to a true or essential politics. In fact, it is co-extensive with politics from the start. Our fondest desire may be to find or invent a politics unaffected by the politics of politics (a truly moral politics, perhaps, of the kind Kant seems to encourage), but that desire is metaphysical through and through [1; 50-56]. So-called «cheap politics » is engaged in the politics of politics as soon as that phenomenon is engaged in politics, i.e. from the very first, «naturally» as Aristotle put it. The logos of politics is irreducibly affected by the kind of distortion and deceit that is usually – moralistically – associated with rhetoric or sophistry, with «spin tactics». Politics is always already the politics of politics.

Politicians have a tough job. They must convince the public that their position on the issues is the correct one. They have to be persuasive; they have to get the public to believe that they are trustworthy and know exactly what they are talking about. How do they do this? Some use a kind of strategy – sophistry or «spin tactics».The sophistry is logic to seem correct. The sophist uses only those unfair methods which seem lawful to honest nonprofessionals.

The sophism as reception of training was entered by Ancient Greek sophists in the Greek policies approximately in the V century BC – the professional teachers training notable youth to eloquence, oratorical skill and art of public debate for preparation for political or other career. Unlike the philosophers who were engaged in scientific researches in line with methodology of the institutionalized philosophical schools, sophists were personal hired teachers and relied on the pluralistic methodology aimed at the solution of tasks. Philosophers accused methods of sophists of subjectivity and a relativism that entailed a negative assessment of activity of sophists as sophistical.

Aristotle considered sophisms as a «coaching», but not scientific search of truth, andin his work under the title «About sophistical denials»made the first classification of sophisms – tricks of sophists, having allocated 13 types of the sophisms arising because of ambiguities of a double sort: six of these reasoning connected with turns of speech, and sevenparalogisms, or incorrectly constructed reasoning. Aristotle called a sophism «imaginary proofs» in which validity of the conclusion seems true and is obliged to purely subjective impression caused by insufficiency of the logical or semantic analysis [2, p. 538–549]. Persuasiveness of many sophisms at first sight, their «logicality» is usually connected with well disguised mistake – semiotics: due to metaphoricalness of the speech, a homonymy or polysemanticism of words, amfiboliya and so on, the values of terms breaking

unambiguity of thought and leading to mixture, or logical: substitution of the main idea (thesis) of the proof, acceptance of false parcels for true, non-compliance with admissible ways of a reasoning (rules of a logical conclusion), use «not resolved» or the even «forbidden» rules or actions, for example division into zero in mathematical sophisms (The last mistake can be considered and semiotics as it is connected with the agreement on «correctly constructed formulas»).

In public relations, sophistry is a form of propaganda, achieved through providing a biased interpretation of an event or campaigning to persuade public opinion in favor or against some organization or public figure. While traditional public relations and advertising may also rely on «creative» presentation of the facts, sophistry often implies the use of disingenuous, deceptive, and highly manipulative tactics.It is typically applied to events or situations which are deemed to be unfavorable or potentially harmful to the popularity of a personhis or his political program.As such, a standard approach used in sophistry is to reframe, reposition, or otherwise modify the perception of an issue or event, to reduce any negative impact it might have on public opinion.

The spirit of sophistry was not limited to ancient Athens. Some contemporary social critics compare modern day advertisers, lawyers, and politicians to Greek sophists. Many of these people, the argument goes, are concerned only with convincing you to believe them, not with the truth. Contemporary political world has its own industry of sophists who specialize in churning out clever-sounding arguments which lack the rigors of logical demonstration. Modern policy no less than contemporary Athens, contains many who are gullible enough to believe the latest sophisms. Sadly, such gullible persons can even include the political beau monde.

Politicians are often accused by their opponents of using deceptive sophistry tactics to manipulate public opinion in their favor. Some modern politicians are criticized for spending too much time «selling themselves».Like an advertiser, a politician must convince the public to think that they are the best candidate for the job. While they are urged to stick to the issues, too often politicians resort to attack ads, spin doctors, and damage control. Once in office, some politicians are criticized for relying on opinion polls to make decisions instead of taking a stand and holding to their personal convictions.

In America such sophistical rhetoric has received the nameof «spin tactics». Many politicians are experts at spinning the facts in a way that makes them look better. It does not mean they all do it but if you want to get the public on your side, it's good to have some communication strategies. It's not lying. Okay, some people think spin techniques are deceptive. Is it possible to give some advice in this case? The single advice is to learn how to recognize these techniques. Then you'll know when the politicians are spinning the facts, and you'll be able to make a more intelligent decision about what they're saying. Use these links to decide how much some politicians resemble sophists or «spin tactics».Here is the first spin tactic one should learn to recognize.

Spin Tactic Number 1: Ambiguous speech. An ambiguous sentence is a sentence which would have two different meanings.Now, politicians use ambiguous language to avoid having to say something that some people might not want to hear. Imagine that a politician says this: «I oppose taxes which are bad for the economy» There are two ways to interpret that sentence. Either he opposes all taxes, since they're bad for the economy, or he opposes only taxes that are bad for the economy. How to get it? It's pretty clever. And a politician knows that people who are listening will interpret the statement the way they want to hear it.

Spin Tactic Number 2: Cherry picking. Just as a farmer will pick the best cherries from the tree, a politician will select only the facts and quotes which support his argument. Cigarette companies in the past used to love this strategy. They would carefully select doctors who would say cigarettes were not bad for you. But of course all the other hundreds of doctors were of a different opinion. And here's an example of how politicians use this strategy.

Politician number one says: «I admire Mr. X, but he has made a terrible mistake». Politician number two says: «Mr.Y said today that he admires Mr. X».One can see how Mr. X carefully selected only the part of the quote which he wanted people to know about? Of course, it's much harder to do this in the age of the Internet when anyone could easily look up Ms Y's quote to find out what she really said.

Spin Tactic Number 3: Non denial-denial.Non denial-denial is a term for a way of denying something without actually denying anything. It's a very tricky strategy. Here's an example: «I have no plans to raise taxes». If a politician says:«I will not raise taxes» he could get in trouble later when he does raise taxes. But if he says, «I have no plans to raise taxes», later on he could just say that at that point in time he didn't plan to raise taxes, therefore, he didn't break any promises.

Spin Tactic Number 4: Speak in the passive. A politician can avoid taking direct responsibility for an error by cleverly using the passive voice. Politicians don't like to admit they make mistakes. The phrase: «I made a mistake»,or«I really messed up», similarly as the phrase: «I'm sorry, it's my fault».But any politician prefers not to cast the blame for unsuccessful state management on his own shoulders. Instead, they'll say:«Mistakes were made». The passive voice takes out the person, so you don't actually say who performed the action. Instead of saying:«I made mistakes», the politician can say:«Mistakes were made». This way, he doesn't actually have

to accept the blame for these mistakes. That's a really clever way to spin the information, so it doesn't reflect so badly on him [3, p. 47–65].

Politicians will always use communication strategies to help them «spin» the facts in their favor, sothe only one recommendation is to learn how they do it. That way, one can recognize when the truth is being manipulated to a politician's advantage. Or, if somebody itself has political aspirations, he could even learn to do it yourself.

Actually these structures of «spin tactics» is complex enough to impinge on the issue of truth, no less, the truth of truth, even, in their relation to the politics of politics. We might be tempted to call it a question of the politics of truth. This expression «the politics of truth» is of course still relatively indeterminate, and already has an uncomfortable «sloganizing» feel to it. As it happens, «politics of truth» is one definition Michel Foucault gives of philosophy itself, in the context of his late development of the concept of «parēsia»: a kind of freedom of speech or «fearless speech» as it has sometimes been presented, a kind of «telling truth to power» that for Foucault and many of his enthusiastic followers defines the proper role of the philosopher, at least with respect to the political sphere [4, p. 39–45].

But Foucault's concept of «parēsia» is, actually, quite unsatisfactory to capture what is at stake here. A quick way of stating why is that Foucault repeatedly and insistently needs to separate «parēsia» into a good form and a bad form, the good form being the kind of speaking out that is associated with a famous and seductive image of Foucault himself addressing a crowd through a megaphone; and the bad form being consistently associated by him with rhetoric and sophistry. This attempt to distinguish a good form of «parēsia» from a bad obviously opens a question about «paresiaitself» as it were, prior to its distinction into these good and bad forms. And this will mean that Foucault's analysis founders on a simple fact – that Foucault mentions in passing but never satisfactorily deals with – namely, that «parēsia» is the name of a rhetorical figure, a name, in Quintilian, for example, for the figure of rhetoric that claims to eschew all rhetoric and presents itself as the plain unvarnished truth. Far from being a philosophical answer to politics, or the ground on which the philosopher can occupy a salutary position of robust and recalcitrant exteriority with respect to politics (which is what Foucault wants from it), «parēsia» describes the basic rhetorical figure of politics itself in its politics. In other words, it reiterates the eminently metaphysical claim (boldly or baldly made by every politician ever, of whatever persuasion) to be simply speaking the plain truth in the absence of rhetoric.

This means that achieving the desired position of exteriority, of truth, with respect to politics and rhetoric is not going to be so easy (if «parēsia» itself is a figure of rhetoric), and that by the same taken politics has no outside. This does not mean that it is simple or homogeneous, but that it is constitutively doubled up on itself. Again: politics is always already the politics of politics.

Political philosophy, that rather disreputable, not very philosophical branch of philosophy, has always wanted to get out of politics, to put an end to this politics of politics, by finally speaking its truth, indulging in that insoluble entanglement of teleology and the death-drive that defines philosophy as such – so that, for a quick and easy example, the best image of Kant's «Perpetual Peace» might always be that of a graveyard. But if politics is constitutively the politics of politics, then this ambition is compromised, and political philosophy needs to be quite radically rethought.

REFERENCES:

1. Kant I. Do vichnohomyru // Soch.: v 8 t. – M., 1994. T. 7. S. 5–56.

2. Arystotel Pro sofistychnisprostuvannya // Arystotel' Soch.: v 4 t.– M., 1978. T. 2. S. 535-593.

3. Woolf M. Politics and Parliament: Cost of Government spin operation rises fivefold. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/cost-of-government-apin-operation-risesfivefold-to-acirpound24-since-1997-573906.html.

4. Fuko M. Hermenevtykasubyekta // Sotsyo-Lohos. Vip 1. M., 1991. – 145 c.