# REVIEW ARTICLE

## THE PRESENT STATE OF THE STUDY OF ANCIENT RHETORIC*

Rhetoric, like other faculties, can be viewed in two general ways: as a historical phenomenon or as a systematic discipline. From the former point of view what is most interesting are the differences in different rhetorics and how these differences can be related to art, literature, political and legal institutions, and the philosophical and intellectual currents of various periods and cultures. From the systematic point of view the major focus is on what rhetorics have in common and whether universal, positive statements can be made about what "rhetoric" is, about its parts, its forms. Over the centuries since Plato there has certainly been a great deal of difference of opinion about the nature, limits, and goals of rhetoric, and the debate goes on. The speech communication profession, as it now calls itself, not long ago held two major conferences to try to settle the matter, and reached something less than a unanimous verdict.[1] Among the problems which beg for solution is the relationship of classical rhetoric, either historically or systematically, to rhetoric as a whole. Is this analogous to the relationship of classical architecture to architecture, basically a matter of style and forms, or is it more like the relationship of classical political theory to political theory, even fundamental to the principles and structure of the discipline? In what follows, prompted by the publication of a major systematic study of classical rhetoric, I propose to consider the present state and limitations of the study, both as a discipline and as a historical phenomenon.

During the summer vacation of 1861 G. Bernhardy and his student Richard Volkmann strolled the shady paths of the Rabeninsul at Halle, while Bernhardy lamented the decline of an understanding of rhetoric since the death of Vossius two hundred years before. He urged the young Volkmann to undertake a project to correct the situation. Greek texts were available, for Christian Walz in 1836 had completed publication of his vast series of *Rhetores Graeci*, and Karl Halm was at the time in the process of editing the *Rhetores Latini minores*. What Bernhardy missed was an understanding, on the part of teachers or of editors of non-rhetorical texts, about the system and terminology of rhetoric as taught in ancient schools and known to Greek and Latin writers. Volkmann took up the challenge and produced in 1865 *Hermagoras oder Elemente der Rhetorik*, which in 1872 he much revised as *Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer in systematischer Uebersicht*. Teubner subsequently took over publication, first in an 1874 edition with minor changes and then in an 1885 edition which Volkmann substantially rewrote with especial attention to the historical development of parts of the theory. In 1901, after Volkmann's death, a so-called third edition was published and a sixty-one page summary of this, made by Casper Hammer, was combined with the more extensive work on metrics by H. Gleditsch into a volume of Müller's *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*. Volkmann felt, and rightly, that his work performed its function: by the 1890's German scholars were no longer ignorant of the vocabulary,

**Antike Rhetorik: Technik und Methode*. By †JOSEF MARTIN. ("Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft," zweite Abteilung, dritter Teil.) Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1974. Pp. xi + 420. Mk. 118.

*Einführung in die antike Rhetorik*. By WERNER EISENHUT. ("Die Altertumswissenschaft: Einführungen in Gegenstand, Methoden und Ergebnisse ihrer Teildisziplinen und Hilfswissenschaften.") Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974. Pp. v + 107 + 2.

1. The Wingspread and Pheasant Run Conferences of the National Developmental Project on Rhetoric, reported in *The Prospect of Rhetoric*, edited by Lloyd F. Bitzer and Edwin Black (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971). The report "encouraged" the view that "rhetorical studies be understood to include any human transaction in which symbols and/or systems of symbols influence values, attitudes, beliefs, and actions."

the categories, and the concepts of classical rhetoric. Though probably rarely read through from cover to cover in recent decades, Volkmann's synthesis has remained a standard reference work.

Indeed, it had no competitor until the publication of Heinrich Lausberg's *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (Munich, 1960). This has become better known to scholars in Germanic and Romance literatures than to classicists, at least in America, but it is an important classical reference work which deserves a place in even modest libraries. Lausberg lays out in detailed outline form the rhetorical system of Greek and Latin theorists, complete with exhaustive references to the ancient texts, and he illustrates the system from the literature of western Europe. Thus a rule of Quintilian may equally well bring forth a quotation from Cicero, Racine, Milton, or Goethe. Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, and English literature all become one immense tradition whose common bond is classical rhetoric. The focus is of course literary, to the neglect of the legal or philosophical aspects of classical rhetoric, but that is largely true of Volkmann also. More important, Lausberg's format packs more specific information into only slightly more space, and his separate bibliographic and index volume is convenient and comprehensive. Lausberg effectively, if unintentionally, replaced Volkmann.

We are now offered a third alternative, and an intentional replacement of Volkmann, with the publication in Müller's *Handbuch* of *Antike Rhetorik: Technik und Methode* by the late Josef Martin. Martin had been professor at Würzburg and died in November, 1973, in his ninetieth year: he lived to see the proofs but not the published volume. According to the *Vorwort*, in the final stages of the work he had assistance from Joachim Hopp of Munich. As a replacement for Hammer's abridgment of Volkmann, the new volume is of course a vast improvement; as a replacement for the 1885 and 1901 editions of Volkmann, it was hardly possible for the author not to take some advantage of the progress of scholarship over the decades, especially the early decades of this century. But the work is uneven, misleading in its general picture of rhetoric, and as a whole disappointing. Lausberg remains a more convenient source book.

Martin, like Volkmann, naturally follows the canonical order of the parts of rhetoric, which recapitulate in order the various stages in preparing and presenting a speech. Invention is given nearly two hundred pages, arrangement thirty-four, style eighty-four. These proportions are adequate, but memory is badly neglected with only a page and a half (Volkmann had given it six) and such shabby treatment is not even redeemed by a reference to the major modern study of the topic, H. Blum's *Die antike Mnemotechnik*.[2] The important passages in the *Dissoi logoi* and in Cicero's *Brutus* go unmentioned; the working of the system of *imagines* is left unclear; nothing is said about the use of *commentarii* or the development of shorthand. Clearly Martin had no interest in memory. Nor much in delivery, about which a great deal is known, especially from Quintilian 11. 3, and more can be learned from sculpture and painting. Martin drops back to two pages from eight in Volkmann, heedless of Demosthenes' remark that the three most important things in rhetoric are "delivery, delivery, and delivery." Among other omissions, the parallel of categories in delivery to the virtues of style is unremarked, though that is important for the conception of classical rhetoric as a unified system.

The discussion of invention, arrangement, and style is considerably better, but unevenness is repeatedly apparent in the utilization of secondary sources and in the extent to which there is consideration of the historical development of parts of the theory. Surely it is reasonable to expect that the *Handbuch* would be based on and consistently cite the best modern texts and studies. Yet, unlike Lausberg, Martin provides no bibliography. Nor in his notes does he systematically cite standard modern dis-

2. "Spudasmata" 15 (Hildesheim, 1969).

cussions or variant treatments of problems. Occasionally he refers to Volkmann, to articles in Pauly-Wissowa, or to a very few special studies, and he knows of the existence of Lausberg. On the other hand, Caplan, Hendrickson, Matthes, Quadlbauer, Roberts, Solmsen, Stroux, and many others might as well never have penned a word, and though Radermacher's name appears, there is no reference to *Artium scriptores*.

Though Volkmann was primarily interested in the system of the rhetorical schools in the Hellenistic and imperial period, he acquired a clear understanding of the historical development of that system. Martin fails to grasp it or obscures it. He begins ominously (p. 1) by confusing the date of the fall of the Sicilian tyrants with the date of the arrival of Gorgias in Athens; he continues by combining references to widely separated authors as though they were all equal witnesses to the same standardized theory: page 266, an extreme case, cites Homer, Aristotle, Anaximenes, *Ad Herennium*, Cicero, Virgil, Quintilian, Tryphon, and the Venerable Bede. At times the approach is almost excessively historical, as in the section on epideictic which recapitulates Vinzenz Buchheit's important monograph;[3] at other times, for example in discussing stasis theory, there is little historical perspective, or none. Moreover, sometimes theory and practice are equally illustrated, sometimes only theory is considered. In the opening pages of the volume we are given an irrelevant survey of the orations of Isocrates, but very little is said about later Greek and Roman oratory which was produced by the system Martin describes.

Volkmann called his rhetoric Greek and Roman; Martin calls his *antike*. Neither considered anything except the single tradition of classical rhetoric stretching from the sophists and Aristotle through the professional teachers of the Later Empire. That is a perfectly reasonable study, but it is a pity it cannot be called "classical" rhetoric, for other traditions appear to exist in antiquity and in Greek and Latin. Probably the most significant is Judaeo-Christian rhetoric, whose relationship to the classical tradition is exceedingly complex and interwoven. It has been somewhat studied but is likely to receive greater attention in the future. Still more distant ancient rhetorics are those of India and China. A beginning for study of them was laid by Robert Y. Oliver in *Communication and Culture in Ancient India and China* (Syracuse, 1971). These are important not only in themselves and in their influences, but in our understanding and definition of what classical rhetoric is and what it is not.

Although the definition of rhetoric is notoriously difficult, classical rhetoric itself has certain limits. It is, in one sense, defined by the content of its canon of texts: Aristotle, *Ad Alexandrum*, *De inventione*, *De oratore*, etc. It is further defined by its functions within Greek and Roman political and judicial systems and its role in Greek and Roman education. This political and judicial role changes considerably over the centuries: rhetoric in the Athenian democracy was not exactly the rhetoric of the effete cities of the Roman East in the second Christian century. The most consistent part of the tradition is (pagan) school rhetoric from Hermagoras to Hermogenes and beyond. Within this there are variants—for example, how many and what parts of an oration and in what order, or how many and what kinds of stasis—but they are variations in detail, like the number of columns on the side of a temple. The content of this school rhetoric is what a work like Martin's can hope to describe, and the process would be helped by a clearer recognition of the goal than Martin demonstrates.

The study of the historical evolution and eventual influence of classical rhetoric is a complicated matter, and to my mind a more interesting one than systematic classification, because it attempts to say not only what, but why. It began in the nineteenth century with studies of the history of Greek oratory by R. C. Jebb and Friedrich Blass and moved in a more literary direction with Eduard Norden's *Antike Kunstprosa*, first published

3. *Untersuchungen zur Theorie des Genos epideiktikon von Gorgias bis Aristoteles* (Munich, 1960).

in 1898. Norden's work has long since ceased to be a satisfactory picture of the history of prose style, especially in the case of major authors like Plato, Isocrates, Demosthenes, Cicero, or Tacitus, or in the evolution of a Christian Latin style. Perhaps we need a co-operative effort to write a new history of style by a variety of scholars employing computerized research. For Latin prose A. D. Leeman's *Orationis ratio: The Stylistic Theories and Practice of the Roman Orators, Historians, and Philosophers* (Amsterdam, 1963) is a valuable supplement to Norden. The early history of other aspects of Greek rhetoric was first adequately mapped by Octave Navarre in his *Essai sur la rhétorique grecque avant Aristote* (Paris, 1900). This remains interesting, but in detail has been outdated by Ludwig Radermacher's *Artium scriptores: Reste der voraristotelischen Rhetorik*.[4] The subsequent history of rhetoric was presented by Wilhelm Kroll, *s.v.* "Rhetorik," *RE*, Suppl. VII (1940), 1039 ff. Best in its treatment of the classical and Hellenistic period, Kroll's article becomes less comprehensive and less well organized in its presentation of Roman and imperial rhetoric. My own two books, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, 1963) and *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton, 1972), reflect a predominant interest in the functions of rhetoric and try to integrate rhetorical theory and oratorical practice. A third volume, tentatively called *The Rhetorical Arts of Pagans and Christians, 300–800 A.D.*, makes some slow progress. M. L. Clarke's short *Rhetoric at Rome* (London, 1953) continues to be useful to a variety of readers.

A brief new historical survey of classical rhetoric is *Einführung in die antike Rhetorik und ihre Geschichte* (Darmstadt, 1974) by Werner Eisenhut, professor at the Free University of Berlin. This is a clear, readable, judicious account, which succeeds in avoiding most controversial issues. Although the major orators are touched upon, the focus of attention is on the history of rhetorical theory. In the generally satisfactory chapter on Greek rhetoric, the sophists and Aristotle are stressed, while Plato is not discussed in much detail and the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* is hardly mentioned. The chapter on Roman rhetoric is not so good as that on Greek, perhaps because there are more uncertainties in the subject to be avoided. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is given very short shrift, M. Antonius is given the cognomen Rufus, Neo-Atticism is never explained, and Quintilian is taken out of chronological order to be paired with Cicero. Separate chapters are given to rhetoric from the second century on: "Genera, Ornatus, Tropen, und Figuren" and "Die Klauseln, Cursus," but the treatment is so brief as to be of little use.

Two works have recently appeared which deal with post-classical rhetoric and may be mentioned here. George Kustas' *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* is more than its title indicates: a learned and perceptive account of the various traditions in Greek rhetorical thought from Hermogenes and Minucian down into the Byzantine period. It reveals a good deal about the influence of the classics and deserves to be widely read, though its publication in a scholarly series of the University of Thessaloniki virtually assures its unavailability to most American scholars.[5] A second work recently published is James J. Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, 1974). Part One considers "Ancient rhetorical theory and its continuation." Murphy does not understand sophistry and is weak on the definition and role of rhetoric in later antiquity, but much better on grammar and figures which are important for his subject, and his presentation of Christian rhetoric is stimulating.

The present situation in the study of classical rhetoric seems to me to be essentially as follows. The nineteenth century succeeded in describing the system of classical rhetoric; Martin has added little to what was known. The twentieth century may perhaps claim to have traced its history, but many matters here remain uncertain: we still have not reached a consensus on the composition of Aristotle's

4. *SAWW*, CCXXVII.3 (1951).

5. "Analecta Vlatadon" 17 (Thessaloniki, 1973).

*Rhetoric*, to take a very central matter, and the history of prose style, as I stated above, needs much careful research. Through the efforts of Kroll, Radermacher, Wilamowitz, Solmsen, Caplan, Kustas, Murphy, and others, the major issues have been defined, the general direction of developments clarified. A better history of the whole can doubtless be written, and probably will be, by a scholar endowed with broad vision, retentive memory, and bronze bowels, but the most open frontier now seems to lie in examination of the relationship between the classical tradition and its variants or alternatives within Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or the cultures of Africa or Asia.

GEORGE KENNEDY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL