

Preface

TEACHERS IN ANCIENT TIMES INSISTED THAT RHETORIC—ITS IDENTITY AS WELL as its nature—is best learned through practice, not through reading about it. Such doctrines, of course, keep teachers in business. Nonetheless, theories and manuals of rhetoric demonstrably fall short of the mark, and have done so for twenty-five hundred years. “For all a rhetorician’s rules,” wrote Samuel Butler in 1663, “[t]each nothing but to name his tools.” Often called the world’s second-oldest profession, the teaching of rhetoric has probably derived as little benefit from books as has the world’s oldest profession. Readers, therefore, should not expect to find a “compleat rhetoric” within these covers. Rhetoric is a storehouse of communicative tactics: some are hoary and stale (e.g., “unaccustomed as I am to public speaking,” which was identified in antiquity and preserved as a figure of speech); some are too new to be codified (like “emoticons” in e-mails); most are time-bound, dependent upon audience and occasion.

Given its great antiquity as well as the capriciousness of intellectual fashion, it is little wonder that our subject has been variously defined through the centuries: sophistry, queen of the liberal arts, oldest of the humanities, style, deception, specious reasoning, practical logic, loaded language, purple prose, what my opponent speaks, ad infinitum. Lately, rhetoric has been called “purposive communication”—a stunning neutrality. Our readers, we assume, will have at least some acquaintance with our subject’s scarlet past, and will be neither astounded nor dismayed to discover that they have actually used its tactics from time to time. Indeed, our putative readers will in fact have moved beyond curiosity about such matters as a “simile” (which is nonetheless defined herein) to wondering what on earth a *hendiadys* might be, or how to conceive of a “virtual audience” or a “hypertext.” Given the readers we have in mind, all recognizable words from antiquity have been left intact and more or less in their original Latin or Greek: *eloquentia*, for example, or *mythoi*; or for that matter *encyclopedia* and *rhetoric*.

The Synoptic Outline of Contents at the end of the book offers a quick and easy overview. Because the purpose of that outline was to help us plan this book and keep its parts from becoming disparate, it might prove useful to anyone wondering how some entry (e.g., “Questioning”) fits in or if there is any coherence in a work like this, or in a subject like rhetoric. Obviously, as a glance at the outline will show, we treat our subject as something anchored in the past. At the same time, however, we treat it as something that has a place in the present and is not exactly limited to this or that culture. The history of the art from its origins in ancient Greece is recounted in these pages, in our longest single entry (“Classical rhetoric”). But we attempt also to track that history up to a possible postmodern era—when rhetoric’s media extend from oratory to the Internet, its “commonplaces” encompass data storage and retrieval systems, and its *memoria* conceptualizes “space” on a “hard disk.” Included too is recent work in comparative rhetoric, research into cultures that have not fully experienced the ef-

fects of our classical Western heritage. However pandemic rhetoric itself might prove to be, our subject nonetheless remains deeply ingrained within the academic worlds of Europe, England, and North America, where for centuries it has received its most explicit treatment—and where, moreover, scholarly interest in the subject has recently gained momentum and become a fully international enterprise. In North America, research in rhetoric is now bolstered by five journals, and well over a thousand students are enrolled in graduate programs in the subject. It is noteworthy, however, that our major entry on style and all the entries on figures of speech were composed by non-native speakers of English.

More than three-quarters of our 120 contributors are from the United States. Other contributors—who wrote almost half the articles—come from Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hong Kong, India, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom. Their departmental affiliations are primarily communications and secondarily English; classics is third; rhetoric is fourth, just ahead of philosophy. Other departments and disciplines include French, German, law, comparative literature, music, philology, theology, and sociology.

There are approximately two hundred entries in this volume, ranging in size from very short (about 100 words) for certain figures of speech to our longest entry (16,000 words) on classical rhetoric. Almost every entry emphasizes our common rhetorical tradition, partly as a result of the way this volume was planned. The three modes of proof, the five offices (or arts, or more loftily “canons”) of rhetoric, and the traditional ends of eloquence and persuasion—these were the infrastructure of our project, the antique starting points of our Synoptic Outline, and in the editors’ minds, the very requisites of rhetoric. Most of these matters move in directions unforeseen by our progenitors—eloquence and persuasion, for example. The former has to do with the beauty of an utterance, something that to modern readers might seem either quaint or much more at home in poetry than in rhetoric and something that in these pages just barely escapes its classical foundations. Persuasion, on the other hand, quickly flees those foundations and rushes headlong into the waiting arms of modern social scientists.

Too, in view of the experiential nature of rhetoric, the reader will find much overlapping between these entries. Plato seemed to think that the best rhetoric is a kind of love. Aristotle defined it as a kind of ability. In neither conception is the art itself clearly formulable, nor has it become so, and thus, virtually every entry offers a passage into a complex whole. One will find, for instance, that the entry on eloquence includes a discussion of *inventio*. Turning to the entry on invention, one finds a capsule history of classical rhetoric, where of course, everything seems either to belong or to have gotten started. The entry on persuasion, the other traditional end of rhetoric, leads one through an audience’s emotions, a rhetor’s credibility, and “message characteristics” at least part of the way back to traditional modes of proof, though with little dimming of persuasion’s modernist sheen. The figures of speech, in the eyes of some the very essence of rhetoric, are treated in a long entry by that name; then again in the entry on style; once more in the entry on poetry; and then most are given individual treatment. Nor does the matter stop there: References to the figures, either collectively or individually, are sprinkled throughout this work, indicating their importance certainly, but also indicating the interlocking nature of rhetoric’s pieces. Every entry, in short, could

cross-reference every other entry, including our most defiantly modernist ones. When we came to consider “related subjects” (see the Synoptic Outline), we tried to keep from considering them simply as a miscellany, a nod in the direction of political correctness, or a scholarly appendix. But in order to keep the section from expanding exponentially, we selected subjects that seemed to have at least an indirect bearing on the identity of rhetoric—and wherein there are potential contributors whom we might recruit.

Long—for two and one-half millennia—considered the exclusive pursuit of white, classically-trained males preparing for careers in law, politics, or teaching, rhetoric once formed the very core of the educational curriculum, where it was linked closely with logic and grammar. The link with logic yet stands, but grammar seems to have bowed out in favor of linguistics, a discipline that pervades and gives a certain air to many definitions in this encyclopedia, particularly in that area mentioned earlier, the figures of speech, which rhetoric once shared with grammar. Old-school rhetoricians will surely be flabbergasted to read, for example, that *prolēpsis* is a “permutative metataxeme.” At the same time, however, those same rhetoricians may be gratified to note that, given the many references throughout our entries to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Cicero’s *De oratore*, and Erasmus’s *De copia*, there yet seems to be a rhetorical canon—perhaps made inescapable, like our tradition itself, by the way we planned this volume. Nonetheless, if the wisdom of that canon is attended to in all its impulses toward openness and experience, rhetoricians—old-school or otherwise—will welcome its inevitable expansion to include, say, the contributions from studies in African-American, communicationist, comparative, feminist, and queer rhetoric, all of which are already integral to our subject in a way that the word *related* in our Synoptic Outline might seem merely to patronize. Within this book, however, their contributions are encountered in alphabetical order as matters that seem to have an equally-significant bearing on the whole. The ostensible hierarchies of the Synoptic Outline merely locate what we take to be our foundations.

Those who believe they already know the subject sufficiently well may wonder why an encyclopedia about it has been published. These readers will, we hope, browse this work and find the answer the editors themselves found to their own similar inquiry. There are entries herein that might never have been written, or might not have been so succinctly put forth, without the prompting of a project like this. If some essays are reliquaries, others clearly move our subject toward its fourth millenium, in which it appears that rhetoric will continue to be as useful for analysis as for genesis; that is, as useful for the interpretation of discourse and phenomena as it is for their composition. Finally, although rhetoric is often thought of as a blend of literary and political interests, the subject itself is too seldom viewed discretely, as something that just might possibly stand alone. The “old rhetoric,” one commentator observed, “has been spread over a multiplicity of disciplines”—but not, we believe, to such an airy thinness that something of its integrity cannot be restored.

There are other peculiarities, of course, one in particular: Although rhetoric is a people art, not one person is listed among the entries of this encyclopedia—not even Aristotle, not even Nietzsche. That decision was based on our effort to abstract rhetoric as far as we could, not only from this or that discipline but also from this or that theorist, time, place, culture, and to endeavor to search for its principles. We recognize the paradox, in view of what we take rhetoric to be. It is nearly impossible either to abstract

a temporal cause from its effects or to look anew at a subject anchored in but not confined to an ancient tradition. But the attempt to do so, we believe, sets this work apart from other recent publications as the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition* edited by Theresa Enos (1996) or Heinrich Lausberg's magisterial *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (1960).

There are oversights, no doubt, omissions and errors. But we have done what we could in chasing this Proteus, with more than a little help from Christopher Collins, Merilee Johnson, and Mark Mones at Oxford University Press, who were always ready with logistical support and advice. Oxford, moreover, was the "onlie begetter" of this work, though encouraged from the outset by scholars in the field. Those of us who were drawn to it, however reluctantly at first, gradually became enthusiastic participants, an attitude we hope we demonstrate.

Kenneth Burke dedicates his *Grammar of Motives* (1945) "To Elizabeth / Without Whom Not." I shall follow the example of this master rhetorician and offer similar praise of my colleagues on the editorial board—Shadi Bartsch, Tom Farrell, Heinrich Plett—and of our distinguished contributors. They are truly, in the language of Cicero, the *litterati sine quibus non* of this endeavor.

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