Criteria for Evaluating Classical Rhetorical Argumentation

Hietanen, Mika

2024

scholarship, I examine the spatial mnemonics of the Last Address, a civic initiative to commemorate Soviet-era victims of political terror. Inspired by the German Stolpersteine project that commemorates victims of the Holocaust, the Last Address seeks to install uniform memorial plaques on facades of buildings that served as last known addresses of individuals who died because of political persecution in the Soviet Union. Each postcard-size stainless steel plaque is inscribed with a person's name, profession, and dates of birth, arrest, death, and official exoneration. Attached to the façade of a building where the person lived or worked before their arrest, the sign is meant to be seen by passersby from the street level. I argue that the Last Address is a creative form of spatializing the archive of Soviet political terror. In today's Russia the legacy of Soviet state violence remains controversial and often hidden from public view. In this political climate, the Last Address project not only affirms the value of individual lives cut short but also vividly stages the relationship between memorial signs, memory loci, and their publics.

Rodney Herring, University of Colorado Denver, rodney.herring@ucdenver.edu
Panel: Conservative Rhetoric and the Defenses of Hierarchy
This panel comprises four papers that examine conservative political rhetoric, its characteristics and its theory, from 1776 to the present decade. It thus presents an interesting opportunity for identifying what is continuous and what changes in a body of public address used to underwrite a relatively consistent political ideology. From arguments for the oversight of popular governance by an elite (paper 1) to those that celebrate the elite's control of wealth and power (paper 3), these papers document a persistent distrust of the demos that is accompanied by a faith in the talents and virtue of those most superior in the American sociopolitical hierarchy. But conservatism has not always foregrounded its faith in the elite, especially since, at least by the mid twentieth century, conservatives began to invent a populist appeal. That appeal might extol the local character of a people who feel neglected by a cosmopolitan elite, turning a shared sense of victimization into pride in provincial purity (paper 2). Or it might sow distrust in testimony that challenges a popular narrative, paradoxically discrediting (a segment of) the people while a demagogic authoritarian gives voice to the interests and views of "the (true) People" (paper 4). In all this work, a dynamic relationship between those who should govern and those who should be governed is negotiated. Sometimes that dynamic is explicit, sometimes it is hidden, and sometimes it is cunningly inverted. This panel's papers track the shifts in that dynamic and in the public descriptions of, and prescriptions for, it.

Rodney Herring, University of Colorado Denver, rodney.herring@ucdenver.edu, The Conservative Style in American Politics: Origins and Characteristics
In the spring of 1776, John Adams's evaluation of the then-anonymous author of Common Sense underwent a rapid change. After recommending the pamphlet to his wife on February 18 for its expression of "Doctrines which there is Reason to expect" would soon become "the common Faith," Adams offered Abigail a more sober assessment by mid March: "altho I could not have written any Thing in so manly and striking a style, I flatter myself I should have made a more respectable Figure as an Architect…. This Writer seems to have very inadequate Ideas of what is proper and necessary to be done, in order to form Constitutions." By May, Adams would judge Thomas Paine "a keen Writer, but very ignorant of the Science of Government"—and on the whole, a toxic influence: Paine's proposal for "Government by one Assembly" posed a greater threat to a successful independence "than all the Tory Writings together." It is thus somewhat surprising to find in Adams's own Thoughts on Government, published in pamphlet form in late April, appeals quite similar to Paine's. On two points—their style and the efficacy or danger of unicameralism—both insinuated in Adams's reflections above, the two pamphlets do diverge fundamentally. This divergence poses an important question. What does style have to do with legislative structure? That is, on the one side, how do Paine's "manly" stylistic choices relate to his radical support for unicameral government? On the other, what sort of style demands that a conservative Adams advocate bicameralism? This presentation addresses such questions by examining Adams's "conservative style"—as it both encodes and reflects his distrust of "the People" and a unicameralism that would empower them.

Mika Hietanen, Lund University, mika.hietanen@kom.lu.se, Criteria for Evaluating Classical Rhetorical Argumentation
Antiquity does not present us with any clear set of criteria for the evaluation of rhetorical argumentation, regardless of period. The reason is simple: classical rhetoric is focussed on production, not analysis. However, for neo-Aristotelian rhetorical criticism, it is necessary to arrive at some kind of conclusion regarding the quality of the artifact analysed. In many senses, evaluation is the goal for the rhetorical critic. Consequently, textbooks geared towards neo-Aristotelian analysis either lack evaluation criteria or borrow from contemporary methods. Some standard text-book solutions are simple: the *partes rhetorices* can equally well function as a template for the speaker

as for the analyst, since they stipulate the aspects important for a good speech. But this is not enough, and, also, the crucial *inventio*-part needs specific criteria. This paper argues that, unlike often maintained, e.g., in textbooks on classical rhetoric, the elusive and often difficult to determine persuasive effect, is not the only or even main criterion for the quality of an orator's speech. Already Aristotle's definition indicates that there are intrinsic qualities based on 'the available means of persuasion.' In this overview, I suggest that the available criteria found within classical rhetoric can be combined to form a template for evaluation for the contemporary neo-Aristotelian rhetorical critic. These qualities relate to the 'art' of rhetoric, especially the use of artistic and non-artistic proofs, predominantly in the forms of enthymemes. Also strongly related to the logos-arguments, are the topoi and the *staseis*. Furthermore, the fallacies delineate the boarders of good argumentation, against the backdrop of dialectics, which help us understand how the criteria of rhetoric differs from dialectics. In general, the main criteria are, on the one hand, plausibility, which needs to be assessed based on context, and, on the other hand, to prepon, the appropriate, which is determined at the intersection of speech, speaker, and audience.

Ian Hill, University of British Columbia, ianhill@mail.ubc.ca, Upāya: Buddhist Expedient Means and the Means of Persuasion

The rhetorical theories of Buddhism have barely been explored in English-language scholarship, including the core concept of upāya. Upāya, a Sanskrit term, is usually translated as expedient means, skillful means, or ingenuity. With millennia of usage in many languages, a simple definition of the term is elusive. However, upāya sweepingly refers to the tactics that facilitate the accumulation of merit and wisdom for oneself and others on the path to enlightenment. To situate upāya's importance for the history of rhetoric, the term refers in part to the myriad ad hoc and systematic methodologies developed over the course of Buddhist history that theorize how influence and persuasion work in teaching, preaching, disputation, and interpersonal communication. In order to display upāya's rhetorical import, the paper begins with short overviews of its definitions and functions in several undated Sanskrit texts now known via their still-extant Chinese translations from the 3rd to 5th centuries CE. While The Instructions of Vimalakīrti and The Skillful Means Sutra focus on non-textual influence, The Lotus Sutra espouses a fulsome rhetorical theory that illuminates the "noble eightfold path's" exhortation to good speech (samyagvāc) as it attempts to legitimize the nascent Mahayana school. Buddha had several problems, I argue, that upāya solved: he had to address a near infinity of audiences from the sharp-witted to dullards, communicate an ineffable and incomprehensible doctrine to the profoundest audiences, and theorize how to move all living beings toward enlightenment. From the perspective of Comparative Rhetoric, which studies non-Western, non-canonical, and understudied persuasive milieus from around the world, upāya displays notable overlaps with ideological perspectives on public argumentation. I conclude that upāya facilitates a compassionate worldview when encountered within the context of Buddhism, but it can be considered an uncompassionate by-any-means-necessary series of apologetics to outsiders, or when stripped of its historical Buddhist contexts.

Thierry Hirsch, thierry.hirsch@outlook.com, Stasis/Status Theory: From the Origins to Hermagoras to Cicero

Hermagoras of Temnos (fl. ca. 140–130 BC) has often been credited with the invention of stasis/status theory, a view generally rejected by modern scholarship. Nevertheless, he seems to have played a crucial role by organising it into a highly systematised model that remained very influential in rhetorical theory for centuries. As Hermagoras' works are lost, Cicero's De Inventione (completed in 84–83 BC?) plays an important role in its reconstruction: it is (together with Ad Herennium) the extant source closest in time to Hermagoras and seems to follow his model closely while reflecting on it critically. The young Cicero shows awareness that Hermagoras did not invent the theory of Issues, which allows us to draw some first conclusions about what this theory looked like before Hermagoras. This paper will look at where stasis/status theory may have originated, what it looked like before the mid-second century BC, how Hermagoras shaped it, what we know about this theory between Hermagoras and De Inventione, how the status model in De Inventione seems to have been misread so far, and what the mature Cicero thought about stasis/status theory.

Brooke Hubsch, Pennsylvania State University, bms6044@psu.edu, Civic Silence and Complicit Peace in Demosthenes' "On the Crown"

A significant challenge to both contemporary rhetorical theory and the study of classic rhetorical texts is how we are meant to reconstruct and evaluate instances of silence, both intended and accidental. In Demosthenes' "On the Crown," the Athenian orator offers a brief glimpse into moments of deliberate silence during a pivotal moment of crisis for Athens: the war and subsequent peace with Philip II of Macedon. In condemning moments in which other statesman and Athenians of power failed to speak up during turning points in the crisis, Demosthenes gives scholars