

A STUDY OF THE RHETORICAL THEORY  
OF THEOPHRASTUS

by

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## CONTENTS

|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Chapter I                     |    |
| Nature of the Study . . . .   | 1  |
| Chapter II                    |    |
| The Life of Theophrastus . .  | 6  |
| Chapter III                   |    |
| The Characters of Style . . . | 12 |
| Chapter IV                    |    |
| The Virtues of Style . . . .  | 26 |
| Chapter V                     |    |
| Delivery . . . . .            | 42 |
| Chapter VI                    |    |
| Conclusion . . . . .          | 51 |
| Bibliography . . . . .        | 57 |

## Chapter I

### NATURE OF THE STUDY

Much attention is directed toward Aristotle's Rhetoric as the greatest oratorical handbook from the Greek period; yet little consideration is paid to the work of Theophrastus that completes the Rhetoric by expansion of its vague and underdeveloped sections. Similarly, much attention is directed toward Cicero's De Oratore as one of the foremost Latin oratorical handbooks; yet little study explores the great debt that Cicero owes Theophrastus.

Nearly all of Theophrastus' rhetorical theory has its base in passages of the Rhetoric. For example, the three characters or types of style are an expansion of Aristotle's suggestion of different approaches to speeches delivered with varying purposes. Further, the four virtues of style are based on many ideas that are borrowed from Aristotle and then organized into an easily

understood theory. Delivery was classified as an unavoidable menace by Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> but in contrast, he expressed the opinion that his predecessors' studies of the subject were inadequate. As if following his master's instructions, Theophrastus develops the first theory of delivery. One of the characteristics of Theophrastus' writing demanding inquiry, therefore, is the close relationship between Aristotle's works and Theophrastus' works.

Cicero's debt to Theophrastus is most evident in the fact that a large majority of our knowledge of Theophrastus' theory comes from Cicero's frequent references to the Greek's works. It is clear that Cicero had a great deal of respect for Theophrastus. Perhaps most important, Theophrastus' modifications of Aristotle made the peripatetic theory acceptable to Cicero.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for Cicero's

<sup>1</sup>Rhetoric, 1404a4.

<sup>2</sup>J. F. D'Alton, Roman Literary Theory and Criticism (London, Longmans, Green and Company, 1931), p. 159.

close adherence to the basic Aristotelian theory, later generations are indebted to Theophrastus.

The examination of the rhetorical theory in this paper was originally intended to fill the void often left between Aristotle and Cicero. It soon became obvious to the author that there was so much rhetorical activity during the neglected three centuries that the study would have to be narrowed. Theophrastus was chosen as the subject because no other individual so clearly approximates a direct link between Aristotle and Cicero.

The paper is divided into four sections; a short biography of Theophrastus, a study of the characters or types of style found originally in the treatise On Style, a study of the virtues of style found in the same work, and a study of the theory of delivery found in On Delivery. The format is to explain each of Theophrastus' theories in the context of their importance in his overall rhetorical system and their relationship to the works of Aristotle. Where disputes

exist about a theory (because the original sources are nonexistent this often happens) an objective analysis of the dispute will be presented. The goal of this paper is increased knowledge of the beliefs of Theophrastus and more insight into the unrecorded beliefs of Aristotle on the subject of rhetoric.



Chapter II

THE LIFE OF THEOPHRASTUS

The most significant event in Theophrastus' intellectual life was his first meeting with Aristotle when they were both students at the Academy. The relationship between the Lyceum's first teacher and his pupil was the largest contributing factor to Theophrastus' rhetorical works.

Theophrastus was born between 373 and 368 B.C. at Eresos in Lesbos. He studied for a time under the philosopher Alcippius in Lesbos and then went to Athens to attend the Academy. He remained at the Academy until Plato died and then followed Aristotle to the Lyceum, and soon he was Aristotle's leading pupil.

His relationship with Callisthenes and the mention in Theophrastus' will of land he owned in Stagira suggests that he accompanied Aristotle during the tutelage of Alexander. It is known

that Theophrastus aided Aristotle in scientific research in Asia Minor between 355 and 340 B. C.

When Aristotle fled Athens, he named Theophrastus as his successor at the Lyceum, and when Aristotle died in 322 B. C., Theophrastus inherited his library and was placed in charge of Aristotle's personal affairs.

When Theophrastus began writing, his efforts were based on Aristotle's works. Seth writes that Theophrastus "... made no innovations upon the main doctrines of [his] master, and [his] industry is chiefly devoted to supplementing [Aristotle's] works in minor particulars."<sup>3</sup>

Zeller concurs:

In creative power of intellect he is not indeed to be compared with Aristotle. But he was in an especial degree fitted for the work of strengthening, extending, and completing the system which the latter had left behind him.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>A. Seth, "Peripatetics," Encyclopedia Britannica (1885 ed.), vol. 18, p. 545.

<sup>4</sup>Eduard Zeller, Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics, translated by B. F. C. Costelloe and J. H. Muirhead (New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), vol. 1, p. 351.

But Zeller hastens to add that Theophrastus was not afraid to depart from an Aristotelian idea or even to charge its erroneousess.

Theophrastus also copied Aristotle's method. He believed in arguing from observation through induction. Explaining Theophrastus' logical method, Zeller argues:

Where universal laws fail to explain particular facts, he does not hesitate to refer us back to experience; where no complete certainty is possible he will content himself like Plato and Aristotle, with mere probability; where more exact proofs fail, he, like his master, brings analogy to his aid, but he warns us at the same time not to carry analogy too far or to mistake the peculiar characteristics of phenomena, just as Aristotle had laid down as a fundamental axiom that everything must be explained upon principles peculiar to itself.<sup>5</sup>

The titles of Theophrastus' works indicate that his interests parallel those of Aristotle. Works on the subjects of botany and metaphysics,

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

some short scientific treatises, and the Characters are still in existence. The Characters, the only of these writings even remotely connected with rhetoric, is an examination of the personalities of certain "evil" types of Athenians. It is a keen insight into human nature.<sup>6</sup>

Among the nonextant rhetorical works of Theophrastus are On Enthymemes and two books of Epicheiremes, the latter term having replaced enthymeme as the rhetorical idiom during the Hellenistic period. Among the other works listed by Kennedy as attributable to Theophrastus are an Art of Rhetoric, works on topics, collections of theses, and On the Ludicrous (which led to the theory of the laughable).<sup>7</sup> On Style and On Delivery are the lost works that will be examined in this paper. We know them through later

<sup>6</sup>J. W. H. Atkins, Literary Criticism in Antiquity (Gloucester, Massachusetts, Peter Smith, 1961), vol. 1, p. 155.

<sup>7</sup>George Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion in Greece (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 273.

reference to them, especially by Cicero and Diogenes.

Because his life revolved about his intellectual relationship with the Lyceum and its teacher, Theophrastus naturally used Aristotle's works for his starting points. The end result of this relationship will be explored throughout the remainder of this paper.

Chapter III

**THE CHARACTERS OF STYLE**

Current knowledge of the three characters of style has created more questions about Theophrastus' rhetorical theory than it has answered about that of Aristotle. To understand the importance of the characters of style in Theophrastus' theory each of the characters--plain, grand, and middle--will be examined, and the differing positions concerning Theophrastus' place in their development will be explored.

For explanation of the meaning of the grand and plain styles, Hendrickson relates them to Aristotle's three kinds of proof--ethos, logos, and pathos. Of pathos Aristotle writes, "Secondly, persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs the emotions."<sup>8</sup> Aristotle objected to the exclusive use of emotion, but admitted its

<sup>8</sup>Rhetoric, 1356a13.



usefulness if blended with logic. Relative to logos he writes, "Thirdly, persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question."<sup>9</sup> These two kinds of proof correspond to the two extreme styles. The plain style employs logos exclusively, and the grand style uses emotion or pathos exclusively.<sup>10</sup>

Theophrastus' distinction between the grand and the plain styles is only a slight modification of the distinction between the two kinds of proof. In Aristotle's description of proof pathos is directed toward the orator's audience and its content will vary with different audiences. In contrast, logos varies not with different audiences but with different subject matter.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1356a18.

<sup>10</sup>G. L. Hendrickson, "Origin and Meaning of the Ancient Character of Style," American Journal of Philology, vol. 26 (1905), p. 257.

Ammonius explains the importance of this difference to Theophrastus' theory:

Language is divided into two types, according to the philosopher Theophrastus, the one having reference to the hearers, the other to the matter concerning which the speaker aims to convince his audience.<sup>11</sup>

Concerning this passage, Hendrickson comments:

It is in the explicit recognition of a type of language of style corresponding to the pragmatic aspects of proof and in the sharp separation of this from artistic and emotional aspects of language, that Theophrastus has advanced beyond his master.<sup>12</sup>

Clark describes Cicero's characterization of the two styles as also similar to the emotion-logic dichotomy. The plain style is "... appropriate to the statement of facts and to proof."<sup>13</sup> The grand

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 257. Note that artistic is used in a different sense than in Aristotle's description of artistic proof.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Clark, Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education (Morningside Heights, N. Y., Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 105.

style is the more rhetorical of the two, and is characterized as "... weighty, grand, emphatic, ... should be used to excite and move the audience in action. With Quintilian in agreement, he recommended it as especially useful in peroration."<sup>14</sup> Because Cicero borrows so heavily from Theophrastus, it is possible that Theophrastus is also the source for these descriptions of the two styles.

After describing the plain style as appropriate for ordinary oral communication, Demetrius attributes to Theophrastus a qualification on the exclusive concern for the strict logical presentation of the argument. In Demetrius' On Style Theophrastus is credited with the belief that an orator should not describe every detail at length;

... but some points must be left to the comprehension and inference of the hearer, who when he perceives what you have omitted becomes not

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

only your hearer but a witness,  
and a very friendly witness, too.<sup>15</sup>

This closely resembles one of the characteristics of Aristotle's enthymeme -- its suppressed premise. More importantly, however, it illustrates a problem with the theory of the plain style and the audience-message dichotomy of Theophrastus. One cannot completely ignore the audience but must adapt to it even in the extreme plain style. Theophrastus' descriptions of the plain style and the grand style are, therefore, known through later rhetoricians.

There is general agreement that Theophrastus recognized a third style, the middle. A dispute exists, however, about the role of this third style in Theophrastus' theory and his recommendations for its use.

One theory was originated by Hendrickson in his 1904 and 1905 articles on style. It is based

<sup>15</sup>Demetrius, On Style, 222.

on the link between Aristotle's Ethics and Rhetoric. According to the theory, Aristotle's suggestion that the artist pursue a mean is applicable to rhetoric as well as to ethics. In the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle writes, "Thus a master of any art avoids excess and defect but seeks the intermediate and chooses this -- the intermediate not in the object but relative to us."<sup>16</sup> And in the Rhetoric itself is found the passage, "... it is plain that the mean is most suitable."<sup>17</sup> When these two passages are applied to the characters of style, they suggest that the middle style is at the mean between the plain and grand styles. Under this "peripatetic mean" theory the three styles have unequal value, the middle style being clearly superior to the other two. The implication is that Theophrastus conceived the middle not as a

<sup>16</sup>Nicomachean Ethics, 1106b6.

<sup>17</sup>Rhetoric, 1414a25.

style but as the style. To complicate the dispute even more, Hendrickson believes that the mean style in Theophrastus' works refers to a mean rhythm,<sup>18</sup> while in a later article Grube agrees that Theophrastus' middle style is a mean, but argues it is a mean of diction.<sup>19</sup>

The peripatetic mean theory has been widely accepted especially on this side of the Atlantic. But in Europe there has recently been a return to the belief that Theophrastus postulated three types of style with equal value, one of the three superior in each individual situation. In the United States Kennedy has supported the European position.

Kennedy's argument is that some idea of three separate styles was familiar even to Plato, and he uses a passage from Plato's Republic for support of

<sup>18</sup>G. L. Hendrickson, "The Peripatetic Mean of Style and the Three Stylistic Characters," American Journal of Philology, vol. 25 (1904), p. 138.

<sup>19</sup>G. M. A. Grube, "Theophrastus as a Literary Critic," Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, vol. 83 (1952), p. 179.

this argument.<sup>20</sup> Further, he argues that by the middle of the fourth century B. C., critics were clearly dividing poetry into three styles, some doing so on the basis of rhythm or pitch following Plato, and others on the basis of diction following Aristotle. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle distinguishes between the types of style on the basis of the types of oratory:

It should be observed that each kind of rhetoric has its own appropriate style. The style of written prose is not that of show oratory, nor are those of political and forensic speaking the same.<sup>21</sup>

Thus we have Aristotle speaking of three types of diction in the Poetics and three types of oratory in the Rhetoric. According to Kennedy's theory, the fusion of these two distinctions of his teacher is Theophrastus' contribution to the theory of

<sup>20</sup>George Kennedy, "Theophrastus and Stylistic Distinctions," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, vol. 62 (1957), p. 94.

<sup>21</sup>Rhetoric, 1413b2.

style:

Now this distinction of three styles on the basis of diction is, as we have seen, a characteristic of poetics, not of rhetoric, and particularly of Aristotelian poetics. Theophrastus seems to have applied the styles of diction as outlined in the Poetics to the types of oratory of the Rhetoric, thus combining two separate distinctions of his master.<sup>22</sup>

To prove his interpretation is correct, Kennedy relies on a large quantity of circumstantial evidence.

First, Quintilian refers specifically to the diction of deliberative oratory and attributes it to Theophrastus. This provides a definite link between the type of diction and the type of oratory. If Theophrastus made the connection for this type of style and oratory, he could well have made the connection for all three types of style and oratory.

Secondly, Kennedy believes that the synthesis

<sup>22</sup>Kennedy, Harvard Studies, p. 98.



of the Poetics and the Rhetoric in Cicero may be copied from Theophrastus. As an example of Cicero's synthesis, Aristotle has a cross reference to the Poetics at one place in his discussion of style in the Rhetoric; in Cicero's discussion corresponding to this passage Cicero takes the material from poetic theory and places it directly into rhetorical theory without the cross reference. Because Cicero relies on Theophrastus so heavily, Kennedy believes this union of Aristotle's two works may be original with Theophrastus.

Thirdly, the sections of Cicero dealing with the relationship between style and types of oratory are sandwiched between references to Theophrastus. Such organization indicates the possibility that Cicero is still working from Theophrastus' model.

Fourthly, the examples used by Cicero to depict the various styles are not the same as those used by Aristotle, but rather are all contemporaries of Theophrastus. Kennedy accepts this as further evidence that Theophrastus is the original source

of the styles.

Fifthly, Grube's presentation of the peripatetic mean theory suggests a mean of diction as Theophrastus' true meaning.<sup>23</sup> Such a position would require unity of the relevant sections of the Poetics and Rhetoric. In the Poetics, however, no one style is singled out as correct. The disagreement between Grube's theory and Kennedy's theory is that Grube believes that the middle style is superior, while Kennedy believes it is equal to the grand and plain styles. The equality of the styles in the Poetics supports Kennedy's theory. On the basis of these five arguments Kennedy concludes that Theophrastus supported a third and middle style of diction, equally acceptable with the other two, and first used by Thrasy machus.

Both Hendrickson's and Kennedy's views have support in the works of the Roman rhetorical

<sup>23</sup>See p. 19 of this study.

theorists. Clark writes:

In Orator Cicero describes [the mean or intermediate style] rather unflatteringly: "Between these two is interjected a mean or moderate style which uses neither the intellectual acumen of [plain] nor the lightning flashes of the [grand]. It is related to both but has the excellencies of neither." Other writers did not join Cicero in belittling the intermediate style, but praised it as the golden mean of the peripatetics.<sup>24</sup>

Clark singles out Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Demetrius as opposed to the position of Cicero.

Using the tendency of Theophrastus to expand Aristotle's theory as a basis for comparison, the distinction between the theories of Hendrickson and Kennedy depends on the section of Aristotle used for Theophrastus' referent. Hendrickson says that the kinds of style are related to Aristotle's proofs, and with this referent the conclusion is that Theophrastus recognized two

<sup>24</sup>Clark, p. 106.

extreme styles and an ideal mean. Kennedy, however, emphasizes Aristotle's reference to styles corresponding to three types of oratory. The conclusion that follows from this referent is that three styles with equal weight were recognized by Theophrastus.

Whichever view is correct, it is obvious that Theophrastus made a significant contribution to the theory of style. Theophrastus took the three characters of style out of the works of Aristotle and converted them into an easily understood theory. The theory which resulted was used nearly universally by the Romans both in theory and in critical description.

Chapter IV

THE VIRTUES OF STYLE

Despite their contribution to rhetorical theory, little is known about Theophrastus' description of his four virtues of style. We do know that Theophrastus emphasized them, but unfortunately we know little of his conception of their place in rhetorical theory or their characteristics. In surveying the knowledge of the virtues that is available, this chapter examines the theories concerning which of the virtues are original and which are borrowed from Aristotle, and then the known position of Theophrastus on the characteristics of the virtues themselves.

Considerable doubt exists about how much of the theory presented in the virtues of Theophrastus was borrowed from Aristotle. It is quite possible that most of this theory was original with Theophrastus. Various authors support theories that Theophrastus copied one, two, three or four of

the virtues from his teacher, and at least one author believes that Theophrastus was not responsible for the virtues at all.

Atkins<sup>25</sup> and Roberts<sup>26</sup> agree that Aristotle outlined two of the virtues, clarity and propriety or appropriateness, but attribute the other two virtues to Theophrastus. Solmsen believes, however, that three of the virtues are from Aristotle, clarity, ornateness, and appropriateness. He also recognizes a chapter in the Rhetoric on the Greek language, but asserts that Aristotle does not intend it as the development of a virtue:

In the field of style or diction Aristotle went a long way towards fixing the "virtues of style," i.e. the qualities which a good speech, or more generally, a good piece of prose ought to possess. He lays down three: clarity, ornateness, and appropriateness ... there is also a chapter on

<sup>25</sup>Atkins, p. 157.

<sup>26</sup>W. Rhys Roberts, Greek Rhetoric and Literary Criticism (New York, Longmans, Green and Company, 1928), p. 51.

... the correct use of the Greek language; but the organization of the material under these headings is by no means complete, and it was left to Theophrastus to put the finishing touch on his master's work here and to reduce this whole part of rhetoric to a hard and fast system.<sup>27</sup>

Kennedy extends Solmsen's position by recognizing all four of the virtues in Aristotle's works:

Only one virtue is there [in the third book of the Rhetoric] recognized, namely clarity, though propriety is appended as necessary. Aristotle subsequently discusses other qualities including ornamentation or weight and propriety, and he includes also a discussion of hellenism which, as we have seen, was really an earlier discussion of purity, but might be taken to refer to good Greek. Thus the four virtues of Theophrastus may be found, more or less in Aristotle.<sup>28</sup>

The difference between the interpretations of Kennedy and Solmsen is, of course, the interpretation of the section on the Greek language.

<sup>27</sup>Friedrich Solmsen, "Aristotelian Tradition in Ancient Rhetoric," American Journal of Philology, vol. 62 (1941), p. 43.

<sup>28</sup>Kennedy, Art of Persuasion, p. 275.



According to Kennedy, Theophrastus' main contribution to the theory of the virtues of style is the organization of the Aristotelian material into clear and teachable categories. This organization was an essential step in the effort to keep Hellenistic rhetoric in balance, that is, in preventing ornateness from dominating the practicing art.

At least one authority, Grube, believes that the virtues are authored after Theophrastus' time and should not be attributed to him at all. His position is that Theophrastus discussed the virtues much as Aristotle had done, but that the formal organization of them into four virtues came later than Theophrastus. Grube recognizes the evidence in favor of Theophrastus' authorship but argues that the evidence is not sufficient to provide proof. However, when Grube's evidence and argument are compared with the support for the other positions, Grube's arguments are easily rejected.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>For a critical evaluation of Grube's arguments see Ibid., p. 274.

Having considered their source and before considering the characteristics of the virtues of style, the relationship between the virtues and the characters of style is important. The virtues obviously describe the criteria for the proper form of the characters of style. In some cases, however, the proper form of the character of style may be achieved despite neglect of one of the virtues. Thonssen and Baird write:

We note the so-called "virtues" or essential qualities, were not necessarily applied to all styles; instead they were often assigned to particular style for which they seemed uniquely suitable.<sup>30</sup>

An example of a virtue applying to specific characters is ornamentation which is not a virtue of the plain style; but may be used in part in the middle style, and is especially suited for the grand style. The source of this

<sup>30</sup>Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, Speech Criticism (New York, The Ronald Press Company, 1948), p. 89.

treatment of ornamentation is Cicero and whether it is attributable to Theophrastus is doubtful.

Consideration of the characteristics of the virtues begins with the first virtue listed by Theophrastus, namely purity. Purity refers to correct word usage. Aristotle recognizes the importance of correct language in the Rhetoric, "The foundation of good style is correctness of language."<sup>31</sup> He indicates that good style has five requirements: (1) proper use of connecting words, (2) use of specific rather than general words for things, (3) avoidance of ambiguity, (4) accurate classification of nouns as to gender, and (5) correct expression of plurality, fewness and unity.<sup>32</sup>

Theophrastus' extant comments on purity are few. Cicero and Quintilian largely ignore purity, probably for two reasons. The first is a reaction

<sup>31</sup>Rhetoric, 1407a18.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 1407a19.

by Cicero to the stress placed on this virtue by the Attics of the Stoic period. Secondly, purity was probably expected to be taught in the home and "elementary school" much as English is today. Clark notes an exception to the silence of the Romans, crediting Quintilian with four sources of criteria for judging correct style: (1) reason derived from study of analogy and etymology, (2) antiquity, (3) the authority of the best authors, (4) custom or consensus of the educated.<sup>33</sup> It is doubtful that these criteria can be traced to Theophrastus.

The second virtue of style which Theophrastus discusses is clarity. Theophrastus definitely borrows this virtue from the Rhetoric:

Style to be good must be clear, as is proved by the fact that speech which fails to convey a plain meaning will fail to do just what speech has to do [ ] to be called speech.]<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Clark, p. 85.

<sup>34</sup>Rhetoric, 1404b2.

To achieve clarity Aristotle suggests the use of common or proper words. He places special emphasis upon clearness as prior to all other virtues because it is an essential characteristic of communication.

Cicero and the Romans spend as little time on clarity as they do on purity, probably because they expected clarity to be taught in the home and "elementary school" along with purity. This does not mean that Cicero did not perceive this virtue as important. He describes clarity as

... talking correct Latin, and employing words in customary use that indicate literally the meaning that we desire to be conveyed and made clear, without ambiguity of language or style, avoiding excessively long periodic structure, not spinning out metaphors drawn from other things, not breaking the structure of the sentences, not using the wrong tenses, not mixing up the persons, not perverting the order.<sup>35</sup>

There is no record of Theophrastus' applying

<sup>35</sup>De Oratore, 3.13.49.

clarity to any one of the characters of style. D'Alton believes, however, that clarity was especially associated with the plain style because the plain style was employed chiefly in everyday speech.<sup>36</sup> D'Alton's conclusion is logically questionable. Clarity should not be any more important in the plain style than in either of the other styles. Clarity is not only important to everyday communication, but is essential to any communication; Aristotle makes this clear in his discussion of clarity.<sup>37</sup>

The third virtue of style is propriety or appropriateness, which Kennedy defines as "The adaptation of the style to the circumstances of the speech, the character of the speaker, the sympathies of the audience and the kind of speech."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup>D'Alton, p. 84.

<sup>37</sup>See quotation on p. 33 of this study.

<sup>38</sup>Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion, p. 276.

In brief, this definition implies that proper style is a function of context.

Style must first of all be appropriate to the type of oratory. Aristotle observed that, "each kind of rhetoric has its appropriate style."<sup>39</sup>

Cicero concurs:

No single kind of oratory suits every cause or audience, a speaker, or occasion. For important criminal cases need one style of language and civil actions and unimportant cases another; and different styles are required by deliberative speeches, panegyrics, lawsuits, and lectures, and for consolation, protest, discussion, and historical narrative, respectively.<sup>40</sup>

Style must also be appropriate to the kind of proof. Aristotle integrates the three proofs -- ethos, logos, and pathos -- into his discussion of appropriate style, "Your language will be appropriate if it expresses emotion [pathos]

<sup>39</sup>Rhetoric, 1413b2.

<sup>40</sup>De Oratore, 3.55.210.

and character [ethos] and if it corresponds to your subject."<sup>41</sup>

At least one other definition of propriety is attributed to Theophrastus. According to Hendrickson, there is a marked difference between appropriateness as Aristotle defines the term and as the Stoics define it. To the Stoics, he attributes a conception of propriety that is, "... not an appropriateness looking to the character of the audience, the speaker, the occasion, etc., but merely of the work to the things."<sup>42</sup> Hendrickson implies that Theophrastus may have used the more restricted meaning of the Stoics. This conclusion is jeopardized, however, by the fact that Cicero, who copies Theophrastus so diligently, employs the broader definition.

The traditional term for an inappropriate

<sup>41</sup>Rhetoric, 1408a10.

<sup>42</sup>Hendrickson, "Origin and Meaning," p. 259.



style, frigidity, probably originated with Theophrastus. According to Demetrius, Theophrastus defines frigidity as the overshooting of the proper expression.<sup>43</sup>

Ornamentation or ornateness is the fourth of Theophrastus' virtues of style. Thonssen and Baird define ornateness as "a certain elevation or grandeur in discourse."<sup>44</sup> Theophrastus describes several of the aspects of this virtue: (1) quality of ornamentation, (2) methods of adding ornamentation to oratory, and (3) the types of amplification.

The first aspect examined is the two qualities of ornamentation -- sweetness and distinction. Kennedy finds support for this division in Cicero, Dionysius, and other of Theophrastus' followers.<sup>45</sup> D'Alton refers to a distinction between charm and

<sup>43</sup>Demetrius, On Style, 114.

<sup>44</sup>Thonssen and Baird, p. 416.

<sup>45</sup>Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion, pp. 276-277.

grandeur that seems to be identical. To maintain congruity with his position on the characters of style,<sup>46</sup> D'Alton dates the distinction between charm and grandeur later than Theophrastus and after the three characters came into vogue.

D'Alton valued the distinction because only charm was relevant to the middle style, while both were relevant to the grand style.<sup>47</sup>

The second distinction concerned with ornamentation is the methods of adding to a speech. Theophrastus lists three methods -- choice of words, their proper arrangement, and the use of figures. D'Alton explains that "the ancient theorists laid down in a general way that a selection of the best words was one of the first essentials for a writer who wished to attain distinction."<sup>48</sup> Kennedy

<sup>46</sup>D'Alton agrees with Hendrickson's theory of the place of the characters in Theophrastus system. See pp. 17-19 of this study.

<sup>47</sup>D'Alton, p. 85.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

credits Theophrastus with dividing words by the degree of their natural beauty:

He also divided words into those beautiful by nature and those paltry and mean and defined the beauty of a word as inherent in its sound or in its appearance, or in its value in our minds.<sup>49</sup>

Theophrastus' instruction in the use of figures was instrumental in increasing rhetorical interest in the method. As Kennedy observes:

The granting of a separate section to the figures is important. Heretofore they had been treated almost incidentally, but from now on they play an increasingly important role in the theory of style. Theophrastus is probably responsible for elevating the subject to a level equal to diction and thus encouraging the process of identification of figures which led to the almost interminable lists in later rhetorical handbooks.<sup>50</sup>

The final aspect of ornamentation is

<sup>49</sup>Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion, p. 277.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

amplification. Grube reports the six kinds of amplification that Theophrastus recognizes:

A passage in a document of uncertain date, the Epitome Laurentian, states that Theophrastus recognized six kinds of amplification, namely amplifying the circumstances or the consequences, comparisons with other cases generally, or with other persons, enlarging on the time or occasion and on the ambitions involved.<sup>51</sup>

Grube notes that the same list appeared in various places in the Rhetoric and Theophrastus' main contribution is again the organization of the material.

It is unfortunate that Theophrastus' On Style is lost. The known sections of the work do much to explain the evolution of stylistic theory between the Rhetoric and De Oratore. The unknown sections of On Style would undoubtedly answer many more of the now unanswered questions of classical stylistic theory.

<sup>51</sup>Grube, p. 177.

Chapter V

**DELIVERY**

Roberts credits Theophrastus with the development of the first genuine theory of delivery,<sup>52</sup> but Theophrastus' nonextant work On Delivery was also an extension of Aristotle's ideas about delivery. The extent of Theophrastus' originality can best be explained by examining Aristotle's references to delivery and then comparing Theophrastus' theory with them.

Aristotle classifies delivery (along with arguments and use of language) as one of the components of the "style of expression." In the Rhetoric he explains his position:

A third [question of style] would be the proper method of delivery; this is a thing which affects the success of a speech greatly; but hitherto the subject has been neglected. ... It is, essentially,

<sup>52</sup>in Aristotle, Rhetoric, translated by W. Rhys Roberts (New York, Random House, 1954), p. 165.

a matter of the right management of the voice to express the various emotions -- of speaking loudly, softly, or between the two; of high, low, or intermediate pitch; of the various rhythms that suit various subjects. These are the three things -- volume of sound, modulation of pitch, and rhythm -- that a speaker bears in mind.<sup>53</sup>

In apparent contradiction to his concern for delivery, he terms delivery a vulgar subject and not "an elevated subject of inquiry."<sup>54</sup> In expressing his distaste for delivery Aristotle puts it into the same category as emotions, that is, rhetoric would be perfect without them, but because the listeners are imperfect, emotion and concern for delivery must be studied. His dislike for delivery may explain his rather superficial treatment of the topic.

Aristotle developed the connection between emotion and delivery not only to express his

<sup>53</sup>Rhetoric, 1403b20.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 1404a1.

distaste for the subject, but also to demonstrate that there is a definite link between the two. Sonkowsky emphasizes that, "Aristotle fixed delivery as an aspect of rhetoric which is directly linked with the emotions."<sup>55</sup> This is not to say that delivery has no relevance to ethos and logos, but the key idea is that delivery is uniquely adapted to the expression of the feelings, that is, pathos. In the section of the Rhetoric concerned with the emotions, Aristotle provides the groundwork that Theophrastus utilizes to build his theory of delivery. As Sonkowsky observes, "Aristotle did not work out a theory of delivery in detail; he left this to Theophrastus."<sup>56</sup>

Theophrastus began the task of developing a theory of delivery by elevating the subject to the fourth formal duty of the orator, adding it to invention, style, and arrangement which was

<sup>55</sup>Robert Sonkowsky, "An Aspect of Delivery in Ancient Rhetorical Theory," Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, vol. 90 (1959), p. 266.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 267.



Aristotle's concept of oratorical duty. This upgrading of delivery was a logical extension of Aristotle's concern for the underemphasis on the topic in earlier rhetorical theory. Sonkowsky explains that Theophrastus believed:

The techniques of delivery are not merely something that is added in a superficial way after the process of literary composition has been completed, but something that is vitally involved in the very labors of composition anticipating the public presentation.<sup>57</sup>

The implications of this promotion of delivery to canon status are important because instead of delivery remaining the equal of the other three canons, many orators during the Hellenistic era subordinated the other three to delivery.

While Theophrastus gave delivery a higher place in rhetorical theory than Aristotle had granted it, he kept the threefold division of delivery -- volume, pitch and rhythm -- and even

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

added a fourth -- gesture. The extant references to Theophrastus fail to mention his development of volume and pitch. Grube notes that Theophrastus had a special interest in rhythm,<sup>58</sup> and Hendrickson's belief that rhythm was critical to the three styles has already been discussed.<sup>59</sup> The major contribution Theophrastus made to this division was the addition of gesture. Athanasius refers to the importance given gesture:

Theophrastus the philosopher says that delivery is the greatest factor an orator has for persuasion, referring delivery to first principles and the passions of the soul and the knowledge of those so that the movement of the body and the tone of the voice may be in accordance with the whole science of delivery.<sup>60</sup>

Cicero's treatment of delivery may or may not be patterned directly from Theophrastus' treatment.

<sup>58</sup>Grube, p. 174.

<sup>59</sup>See p. 19 of this study.

<sup>60</sup>Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion, p. 283.

We do know that Theophrastus grouped volume, rhythm, and tone under the heading voice. Whether or not Theophrastus listed three types of tone -- conversation, debate, and amplification -- as Cicero did is unknown.

Just as the concerns of delivery are an expansion of the Rhetoric, so is Theophrastus' treatment of the emotions, but here again the addition to Aristotle's work is vital; Theophrastus insists that education in psychology is necessary for the orator so that he may know about the emotions. In the previously quoted passage,<sup>61</sup> Athanasius draws a close connection between delivery and "the passions of the soul," and attributes the connection to Theophrastus. Referring to this passage, Kennedy argues:

The passage suggests that Theophrastus related the subject to the psychological perception which Plato demanded of rhetoric

<sup>61</sup>See p. 47 of this paper.

and which Aristotle tried to attain in his treatment of proof and of such parts of style as the metaphor.<sup>62</sup>

Grube notes that Theophrastus "insisted that [delivery] required a knowledge of psychology."<sup>63</sup> Sonkowsky perceives Theophrastus' real contribution as expansion of "... the technical material on delivery, the external expression of the emotions and character."<sup>64</sup> If such an intimate relationship exists between rhetoric and the emotions, it seems only logical that thorough knowledge of the emotions and study of psychology would be a necessity for the rhetor.

The additions of Theophrastus to Aristotle's basic theory of delivery are significant advancements. The importance of delivery is noted by Aristotle and put into theory by Theophrastus; gestures are

<sup>62</sup>Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion, p. 283.

<sup>63</sup>Grube, p. 175.

<sup>64</sup>Sonkowsky, p. 267.

obviously important to delivery, and the teaching of psychology essential if emotion is the key to delivery.

**Chapter VI**

**CONCLUSION**

The introduction of this paper noted two relationships that color present knowledge of Theophrastus' rhetorical theory -- the tendency of Theophrastus to extend Aristotle's rhetoric rather than to develop his own, and the tendency of Cicero to depend heavily on Theophrastus as a source in the Latin's rhetorical theory. Elaboration of these two themes provides a useful framework for review of this paper.

Theophrastus' close relationship with Aristotle began when both were students at the Lyceum. When Aristotle fled Athens after Alexander's death, leadership of the Lyceum passed to his leading pupil Theophrastus. Theophrastus not only began his theory from the base provided by Aristotle's writing, he also copied Aristotle's inductive methods. His writing demonstrates a broadness of interest similar to his teacher's.

On Style contained Theophrastus' views on the three characters of style, but because of its loss and because of ambiguities in later references to it, the middle style's importance to the theory is a subject of dispute. The plain and grand styles are adaptations of Aristotle's distinction between logos and pathos, the former concerned with the subject of the speech and the latter concerned with the emotions of the audience. One interpretation of the importance of the middle style follows logically from the belief that Theophrastus based his third style on the peripatetic mean presented in the Nicomachean Ethics. This theory interprets the third style as an ideal mean and, therefore, preferable to the plain and grand styles. A second interpretation has its logical base in the link between the Poetics and Rhetoric. This theory credits Theophrastus with merging the three styles of diction in the Poetics with the three types of oratory in the Rhetoric; and therefore, determining the preferable style on the basis of



the type of oratory employed. Acceptance of either theory recognizes Theophrastus' indebtedness to Aristotle.

The four virtues of style describe style's proper form. Considerable dispute exists concerning which of the virtues are based on referents in Aristotle's works. Sections of the Rhetoric mention clarity, appropriateness, and ornamentation. Another section on the Greek language can easily be interpreted as the fourth virtue -- purity. All participants in the dispute agree that Theophrastus' greatest contribution is an organization of the virtues into an easily understood rhetorical theory. The known writings of Theophrastus on the characteristics of the virtues indicate that regardless of the number of virtues actually based on Aristotle's works, Theophrastus developed descriptions of the virtues that adapted Aristotelian theory to the needs contemporary with the Hellenistic period.

On the subject of delivery, Theophrastus owes

more to Aristotle for motivation than he does for material. Aristotle charged that his predecessors had failed to develop the theory of delivery, a theory that he considered unfortunately necessary because of the imperfections of the human audience. Determined to correct this oversight, Theophrastus wrote On Delivery, the first comprehensive study of delivery in rhetoric. He followed Aristotle's synthesis of delivery and emotion; and in addition, suggested the necessity for studying psychology and added gestures to the three components of delivery recognized by Aristotle (volume, pitch, and rhythm). Perhaps most important he elevated delivery, making it the fourth formal duty of the orator. Delivery is the third area where Aristotle's influence permeates Theophrastus' rhetorical theory.

The debt that Cicero owes to Theophrastus is measured by the quantity of references to the latter in De Oratore. An objective evaluation of the extent of Cicero's rejection of parts of Theophrastus' theory is difficult because nearly all of present knowledge of the theory is from

De Oratore. It is, then, tautological that nearly all of Theophrastus' currently known theory has been copied in De Oratore. Another complicating factor is that because so much of the third book of Cicero's work contains references to Theophrastus, many theoretical concepts presented in the third book are attributed to Theophrastus by interpolation.

The study of the rhetorical theory of Theophrastus can supply significant insights into Greek rhetoric for the present age as it did for the Romans of Cicero's age.

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