

Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik, Bd. 7 (Pos-Rhet), hrsg.v. Gert Ueding (et al.), Tübingen: Niemeyer 2005, cols. 1768, 145.- Euro.

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Volume 7 of the “Historical Dictionary of Rhetoric” is the penultimate tome in this ambitious and successful project. According to the general editor, Gert Ueding, the last volume should be published this year; and two further issues – an updated supplement and a comprehensive index – should bring this project to final fruition in 2011. Most of the 132 contributors of this volume hail from German speaking countries; just half a dozen US scholars and a few other rhetoricians from other European countries and Australia provide a small international counterpoint.

As is to be expected, the majority of entries deal with specific figures from antiquity. But three major research articles in this volume are of particular interest: Rede (speech; parole), Redner, Rednerideal (orator; orateur; “the model speaker”), and, of course, Rhetorik.

REDE is subdivided into the standard two-part format: A. sketches a broad definition, and B contains a series of sub-articles first covering the history of the concept from antiquity to modern times. It then lists the specific tradition in various national cultures of the Western tradition: France, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, England, USA, Scandinavia, and the Slavic countries. But curiously enough, the Orient and Asia are conspicuously absent! The article with its nearly 100 columns (698 – 790) represents the equivalent of a substantial monograph. It is followed by a string of smaller articles derived from German compounds of the principal term like “Rededuell” (battle of words; duel oratoire).

REDNER, REDNERIDEAL runs to almost 200 columns (862-1061), or the equivalent of a very substantial monograph. The lion’s share is written by a major co-editor, Franz-Hubert Robling. Overlaps with the Rede-entry are inevitable. But Robling takes the ethos component in its social dimension and weaves a fact-filled rhetorical carpet from the homeric rhetor to the 20th century parliamentarian and demagogue. Conceptually oriented towards a history of mentalities, the reader encounters Plato’s and Aristotle’s idea of the standard bearer of Athenian democracy, from there right on to Quintilian’s *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, and eventually to the decline of the Roman empire with a reduction of the genre to the epideictic speaker. Along the way Jesus and Paul are situated as time-bound preachers before Robling presents the chain of historical changes that the *vir bonus* was undergoing on his way into modern times: the medieval preacher, the eloquent courtier/*homo politicus*, the bourgeois negotiator, the revolutionary, the parliamentarian, and finally, the demagogue. The last part of this entry presents once more the various national European cultures and their specific Rhetorical cultures with regard to the ideal speaker in changing times.

RHETORIK and its derivative entries are, according to the preface, going to take up 500 columns. The first 316 of this grand total constitute the final entry of the present volume. After a brief presentation of the term (A. 1423-1439), the B-section (history) is divided into five main chapters: I. Quellengeschichte (sources), II. Begriffsgeschichte (history of the concept), III. Systemgeschichte (history of systemic application), IV.

Rezeptionsgeschichte (history of reception), and V. Neuzeitliche Institutionsgeschichte) (institutionalized rhetoric in modern times).

A brief sketch provides representative examples of what interested readers will encounter:

A.II.1 of the theoretical section contains a polemical plea by the main editor, G. Ueding, to understand contemporary rhetoric as an open system that tries to reconcile the tradition with modern forms of pragmatic communication. His Tübingen School understands itself as the flag bearer and initiator of a lively discussion of how rhetoric has to be understood and used as a modern discursive model of persuading and convincing, which continues to serve as an intellectual tool to systematize modern academic disciplines.

In B.II.1, M. F. Meyer presents a beautifully concise history of the Greek and Roman classics. B.III (the systemic approach, cols. 1540-1620) inevitably overlaps somewhat with Section B. II. Especially useful is the systematic table of some 80 technical terms in German, Greek, and Latin (cols. 1543-1546); the basic paradigm changes follow again an historical model, illustrating how the classical tradition was christianized through exegesis of the scriptures and homiletics only to become secularized during the Renaissance. The two prominent figures of this “modern” new beginning against Aristotelian scholasticism are, of course, Ramus and Castiglione. B. IV (cols. 1620-1667), the history of reception, is something of a mixed blessing; it opens with a discussion of how rhetoric fared at the hands of philosophers in modern times, mostly in the German context. This is followed by a brief accounting how poetics, linguistics, and social psychology eventually entered the discipline. B. V, institutionalized rhetoric contains two remarkable sections. The role of rhetoric in French institutions in the modern era is a concise repertorium of higher education in that country. And the entry on the institutionalization in North America is a brief but fascinating overview of how the discipline, with the expansion of accessibility to universities by war veterans after WW II eventually evolved into a comprehensive concept of *speech communication*.