

January 26, 2016 - Notes from “Reassembling the Classical: Towards a Theory of Author-Audience”

Mini-case: “School of Life” video on Aristotle

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=csIW4W_DYX4]

Some histories of rhetoric may function as arguments for what *is* best rather than for what we *know* best (Royster 166, as qtd. in Lipson’s “Introduction” to *ANGR*, 3).

Some histories overlook the complexities of the texts that inform them.

Underlying Premise and Subsequent Representations of “Rhetoric”:

“Rhetoric” is a system intended to get people to agree with you who might not already agree

- relies on a worldview informed by individual’s ordinary/solitary experience
- rhetoric was invented (by Aristotle) as a system
- audience is an *Other* defined by disagreement
- success is based on audience perception, not on message (substance or truth)
- argued positions = held beliefs
- rhetoric is a tool of the shy underdog used only by those with good intentions
- audiences are masses who need these messages conveyed to them
- audiences are identified as specific classifications, and perhaps even homogenized
- audience has a power that is different from the rhetor’s power and it needs to be swayed
- rhetor and audience are separate (ideas, concepts, beings)
- “Just learn the system, and you know all you need to know about _____.”
- rhetoric privileges and/or thrives on difference and disagreement rather than working towards resolution of perspectives (remonstration rather than demonstration -- or reminding us of already shared perspectives)
- relationships/friendships are understood as strategic acquaintances
- any “text” is conducted individually, personally before it can be communicated to the masses (i.e., individual is the necessary filter at the start of any communication)

“Rhetoric” relies on no distinctions between real and ideal, between choice and action, between voluntary and compulsory, or between unintentional and willed; yet these are principal ideas underlying *Nicomachean Ethics*.

- all rhetoric is enthymematic
- character is tied to ethics or conscious choice, rather than to habit

Without discrediting Classical Greek and/or pan-Hellenic rhetorics, how many of the above premises about “rhetor” and “audience” may be unnecessary for/to “global” rhetorical developments? Could some of them be rethought through an examination of how other rhetorical traditions reassemble the Classical? Why or why not? If so, how?

Background on Classical Indian philosophy and rhetoric

- **texts:** Principal discourses/texts studied by Lloyd: Nyaya Sutras, because they were one of the more systematic debate manuals.
- Stroud studied Sankara's Advaita Vedanta, because they reached their height in the 8th century CE through Sankara's philosophy as a way of "making rational arguments and countering objections" (Stroud 241)
- **chronology:** Nyaya Sutras are difficult to date (composed between the 3rd century BCE and the 5th century CE, but widely available by 150 CE).
- by 2nd century BCE, "the intellectual climate in India was bristling with controversy and criticism" (Matilal 2)
- **key note about chronology:** both texts (Nyaya Sutras and Advaita Vedanta) reflect much earlier philosophies, but Lloyd and Stroud see them as reaching their height during what we would loosely call the Indian "middle ages," likely as a result of their interpellations and intermixings with other translated ancient philosophies
- **related school/philosophy:** "Vadavidya" = "correct ways of seeing"
- **language:** cf. the entry on "Indian Rhetoric (Sanskrit) in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*; in it, David Metzger argues that we need to understand Sanskrit as more than a kind of signification -- not just an alphabet of signs, but a catalog of meanings
- **qualities:** Nyaya Sutras are inherently dialogical; like systematic debate manuals.
- Their end goals included consensus, harmony, and self-abnegation, i.e., a "seeing together"
- Nyaya Sutra method is syllogistic, but its syllogisms begin with effects, rather than causes; doesn't rely on linear causality
- Advaita Vedanta ...

Lloyd and Stroud: towards a theory of "author-audience" in classical Indian philosophy

- these discourses have rhetorical function, not just dialogic function (i.e., they can -- historically -- inform our understanding of "rhetoric")
- author-audience emerges from a philosophical tradition that might be difficult to convey through cultural signification
- relies on explicit assumptions in the chain of reasoning
- relies on internal familiarity (local familiarities)
- validity becomes "cognizing a thing as possessing attributes it actually has"
- less (perhaps no) separation between "self" and "that which makes up the self"
- less pronounced boundary between hearer and speaker
- experiential argument becomes something that is previous and present

- experiential argument evokes and depends on the experience of an auditor to make a point that transcends language (i.e., arguing a point that is beyond language using linguistic means, Stroud 241)
- assumes that evidence is not objectively separated from the world
- success does not rely on appropriation of “you” as “I” (identification) but rather recognition of “superimpositions” that we force onto ourselves and others
- self = interdependent, shifting, relational (to others, to past and present experiences, to historical concepts of self, to imagined community)
- doesn’t rely on adding or taxonomizing qualities so as to better understand other but of removing layers (Stroud 254) - “self” isn’t just an empirical construct (bundle of qualities)
- involves defamiliarization (i.e., methods of seeing we may need to remove)
- may involve being an audience of self
- the goal is not self-expression, persuasion, or winning, but “seeing together”
- the goal is wrangling, not to end wrangling
- possibly more dialectical than Aristotelian rhetoric (according to Lloyd), which problematizes the task of doing comparative rhetorical analysis between European and Indian traditions

Notable Differences between Lloyd’s and Stroud’s Approaches

- **Lloyd** argues for an emergent rhetoric at the confluence of Nyaya Vada (logic) and Sadharanikaran (performance) that is enthymematic, but not Aristotelian; hence, he reassembles logic within the province of rhetoric to show that it is more of an enjoyed process in classical Indian philosophy than in than western logic.
- **Stroud** argues for Indian rhetoric as a tradition in itself, not just a language where words carry and embody (or instantiate) meaning when they are spoken; hence, he reassembles

Background on Medieval Arabic Translation Movement

- There is no clear single origin story of this movement, since the migration of Medieval texts and traditions is still wrapped up in debates about the origins of Islamic philosophy; but it is generally understood as a tradition characterized by *bala’gha* (rhetoric and eloquence) and *falsafa* (philosophy).
- End of movement is as difficult to trace through texts as the end of the Middle Ages, though it is often historically aligned with fall of Constantinople in 1453 CE.
- Reflected in the works of three major figures: Avicenna (Ibn Sina); Al-Farabi; and Averroes (Ibn Rushd).
 - **Avicenna’s** commentaries on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* were known about 50 years prior to *Metaphysics* being widely circulated.
 - **Al-Farabi** ranked “rhetoric” fourth of five arts, in terms of the levels of certainty on which they operated: (1) demonstration, (2) dialectic, (3) sophistry, (4) rhetoric, and (5) poetry.
 - **Averroes** wrote his own commentaries on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* to highlight the “investigative possibilities” of Aristotle’s text and to eventually suggest new

theories of *Ijma* (consensus of the learned) and “epistemic.” Mark Schaub calls Averroes the “father of epistemology” (“Rhetorical Studies in America ...”).

- There is an emphasis on developing theories for style, metaphor, and metonymy, and understanding them as logical tropes (al-Musawi 31).
- There is much reliance on authorship based on antecedent authority (mainly Quranic authority).
- Greatly influenced by Islamic Expansion (c. 700 CE) when Islamic rule was established throughout North Africa, Iberia, and parts of Italy
- Helped Greek texts to become accessed by the West.
- Medieval Arab movement in Baghdad between 8th and 10th centuries CE is subject of especially rich scholarship: <http://www.medievalists.net/>, <http://www.medievalists.net/tag/avicenna/>, <http://www.medievalists.net/tag/arabic/>, <http://www.medievalists.net/tag/baghdad>
- Andrew Holt (Florida State College in Jacksonville) surveys medieval historical accounts of Arabic rhetoric, and looks for traces of its resistance in contemporary tropes. (See <http://apholt.com/2014/11/16/obama-as-the-dog-of-rome-isis-and-crusading-rhetoric/>). Notes that in many of its historicizations, Arabic (Islamic) rhetoric is presented as a response to the Catholic Crusades.

Some Notable Differences between Medieval European and Medieval Arabic Translation Movements

- There was a significant encyclopedia movement that grew from European Medieval rhetoric, but it remains historically contentious as a vehicle for rhetoric to become subordinate to dialectic, because the encyclopedia provided a very detailed classification scheme of types of discourse.
- While European Medieval rhetoric focuses on developing three arts -- *ars dictaminis* (letter writing), *ars praedicandi* (sermon making), and *ars grammaticae* (writing rhythmic poetry or prose) -- Arabic Medieval translation rhetoric focuses on developing genres for scholarship annotation and, eventually, for historical criticism.
- Thus, in the Arabic Medieval translation movement, “rhetoric” becomes the domain of research (al-Musawi 31; Borrowman 110).

Baddar: any further challenges to our notion of author-audience, and moments in western rhetorical theory where we have come close to it?

- Examines an eroding boundary between audience and author during this movement, not merely a crossing over of roles.
- Audience is initiator of the communication (Baddar 60); rhetorical situation isn’t one where an author imagines, invokes or identifies with audience, but rather is based on sponsor’s social, political, or religious agenda (Baddar 61)
- Translator, reader(s), sponsor, other groups the sponsor wants to influence = complicates motives, roles, and outcomes (sponsor is primary audience? or conduit through which translations would circulate) (Baddar 60)
- Aim is also complicated

- Raises questions about the role of “foreign” influence(s)? - what gets appropriated? what gets retained?
- ***Moments When We Have Come Close to author-audience:***
 - in Mikhail Bakhtin’s “dialogism”
 - in Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca’s “New Rhetoric,” when rhetorical reasoning becomes audience-based, not just based in rational logic. **Audience adherence:** “The discursive techniques allowing us to induce or to increase the mind’s adherence to the theses presented for its assent.” For Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, interlocutors can’t promote an adherence of minds unless the audience are in agreement at the outset with respect to facts, presumptions, and values (Bizzell and Herzberg 349).

New nomenclature we could begin to claim or define?

- “ethos”? “credibility”? become **“creating and sharing knowing episodes”**
- analogy and example **turn logic experientially**
- unified truths = **everyone is in the right mindset to receive it**

Axioms we could begin to disrupt (or complicate)? Why/how?

“Where there is war, rhetoric has failed ...”

“Power is the most persuasive rhetoric ...”

“Good man speaking well ...”

“Rhetoric is the art of ruling the minds of men ...”

“Rhetoric = series of efforts to persuade relevant social actors that one’s manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power.”

“It’s only the intellectually lost who ever argue ...”

“Results, not rhetoric.”

“It’s only/just rhetoric.”

“Scientific language does not equal diplomatic rhetoric”

“One horse laugh is worth 10,000 syllogisms.”