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ZUR DYNAMIK POLITISCHER STRUKTUREN IM SPIEGEL EPIDEIKTISCHER RHETORIK

ABSTRACT

For the most part, epideictic speech fared rather badly in the normatively oriented rhetorical discourse of Roman antiquity. At times, it was dismissed from 'true' eloquence as non-controversial and thus non-political, at other times relegated to a serving function, often marooned as a marginal or decadent phenomenon. The undeniable show effect of the *genus demonstrativum* repeatedly brought the panegyrists into conceptual vicinity to the rather precarious condition of actors. Towards the end of the 1st century AD, by contrast, Quintilian defends with some vehemence the status of epideictic speech as part of the *negotia*. He refers to key socio-political and therefore distinctly oratorical events such as funerals, court laudations and canvassing speeches. In the Tacitean *Dialogus de oratoribus*, on the other hand, the third *genus* is largely omitted, save for the declamations. Still, one of the basic assumptions of the text, i.e. that changed relations of power had inevitably led to a draining of the 'true' rhetoric based on the eristic moment, is clearly not correct. A glance at the *Annales* and *Historiae* from the pen of the same author rather proves the opposite. Yet, there is no doubt that the parameters of political speech – of which, following Quintilian, we may also understand epideictics to be a part – had undergone a profound change. Already since Caesar's autocracy, the scenographic framework shifted in two respects: namely a) in the expansion of the spatial setting and b) in the focus on the monarch as the primary (direct or indirect) addressee. However, this does not result in a banalisation, but rather in a significantly greater complexity of the communication situation. In a sense, this may hold true for any form of speech under sole rule. At Rome, however, the structural peculiarity of the Julio-Claudian principate affected the rhetorical art in a very specific way. Until the high imperial period, panegyrics were often relocated (and in a way confined) to the newly emerging venues of court events and agonistics – and left to the professionals. When it came to epideictic speeches in rather traditional contexts, much more sophisticated strategies of legitimation had to be used, as can be seen from Pliny the Younger's Panegyricus.

SOURCES

Q 1. Rhet. Her. 3,15 (LCL): Locating Epideictics

Nec hoc genus causae eo quod raro accidit in vita neglegentius commendandum est; neque enim id quod potest accidere ut faciendum sit aliquando, non oportet velle quam ad commodatissime posse facere; et si separatim haec causa minus saepe tractatur, at in iudicialibus et in deliberativis causis saepe magnae partes versantur laudis aut vituperationis. Quare in hoc quoque causae genere non nihil industriae consumendum putemus.

Nor should this kind of cause be the less strongly recommended just because it presents itself only seldom in life. Indeed when a task may present itself, be it only occasionally, the ability to perform it as skilfully as possible must seem desirable. And if epideictic is only seldom employed by itself independently, still in judicial and deliberative causes extensive sections are often devoted to praise or censure. Therefore let us believe that this kind of cause also must claim some measure of our industry.

Q 2. Pol. 6,52,1–4. 6–8 (LCL): Parading One's Ancestors

‘Όταν γὰρ μεταλλάξη τις παρ’ αὐτοῖς τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ἀνδρῶν, συντελουμένης τῆς ἐκφορᾶς κομίζεται μετὰ τοῦ λοιποῦ κόσμου πρὸς τοῦς καλομένους ἐμβόλους εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν ποτὲ μὲν ἐσπῶς ἐναργῆς, σπανίως δὲ κατακεκλιμένος. περίξ δὲ παντὸς τοῦ δήμου σάντος, ἀναβάς ἐπὶ τοῦς ἐμβόλους, ἂν μὲν υἱὸς ἐν ἡλικίᾳ καταλείπεται καὶ τύχη παρῶν, οὗτος, εἰ δὲ μή, τῶν ἄλλων εἶ τις ἀπὸ γένους ὑπάρχει, λέγει περὶ τοῦ τετελευτηκότος τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπιτετευγμένας ἐν τῷ ζῆν πράξεις. δι’ ὧν συμβαίνει τοῦς πολλοὺς ἀναμνησκομένους καὶ λαμβάνοντας ὑπὸ τὴν ὄψιν τὰ γεγονότα, μὴ μόνον τοῦς κεκοινωνηκότας τῶν ἔργων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦς ἐκτός, ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον γίνεσθαι συμπαθεῖς ὥστε μὴ τῶν κηδεύοντων ἴδιον, ἀλλὰ κοινὸν τοῦ δήμου φαίνεσθαι τὸ σύμπωμα. [...] ταῦτας δὴ τὰς εἰκόνας ἐν τε ταῖς δημοτελέσι θυσίαις ἀνοίγοντες κοσμοῦσι φιλοτίμως, ἐπὶ τῶν οἰκείων μεταλλάξη τις ἐπιφανῆς, ἄγουσιν εἰς τὴν ἐκφορὰν, περιτιθέντες ὡς ὁμοιοτάτοις εἶναι δοκοῦσι κατὰ τε τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὴν ἄλλην περικοπὴν. οὗτοι δὲ προσαναλαμβάνουσιν ἐσθῆτας, ἐὰν μὲν ὑπάτος ἢ στρατηγὸς ἢ γεγονώς, περιπορφύρους, ἐὰν δὲ τιμητὴς, πορφυρᾶς, ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τεθριαμβευκῶς ἢ τι τοιοῦτον κατειργασμένος, διαχρύσους.

Whenever any illustrious man dies, he is carried at his funeral into the forum to the so-called rostra, sometimes conspicuous in an upright posture and more rarely reclined. Here with all the people standing round, a grown-up son, if he has left one who happens to be present, or if not some other relative mounts the rostra and discourses on the virtues and successful achievements of the dead during his lifetime. As a consequence the multitude and not only those who had a part in these achievements, but those also who had none, when the facts are recalled to their minds and brought before their eyes, are moved to such sympathy that the loss seems to be not confined to the

mourners, but a public one affecting the whole people. [...] On the occasion of public sacrifices they display these images, and decorate them with much care, and when any distinguished member of the family dies they take them to the funeral, putting them on men who seem to them to bear the closest resemblance to the original in stature and carriage. These representatives wear togas, with a purple border if the deceased was a consul or praetor, whole purple if he was a censor, and embroidered with gold if he had celebrated a triumph or achieved anything similar.

Q 3. Cic. Brut. 62 (LCL): *vitiata memoria*

Et hercules eae quidem exstant; ipsae enim familiae sua quasi ornamenta ac monumenta servabant et ad usum, si quis eiusdem generis occidisset, et ad memoriam laudum domesticarum et ad illustrandam nobilitatem suam. Quamquam his laudationibus historia rerum nostrarum est facta mendosior. Multa enim scripta sunt in eis quae facta non sunt, falsi triumphi, plures consulatus, genera etiam falsa et ad plebem transitiones, cum homines humiliores in alienum eiusdem nominis infunderentur genus; ut si ego me a M'. Tullio esse dicerem, qui patricius cum Servio Sulpicio consul anno x post exactos reges fuit.

Of these some are, to be sure, extant, which the families of the deceased have preserved as trophies of honour and for use on the death of a member of the same family, whether to recall the memory of past glories of their house, or to support their own claims to noble origins. Yet by these laudatory speeches our history has become quite distorted; for much is set down in them which never occurred, false triumphs, too large a number of consulships, false relationships and transitions of patricians to plebeian status, in that men of humbler birth professed that their blood blended with a noble family of the same name, though in fact quite alien to them; as if I, for example, should say that I was descended from Manius Tullius the patrician, who was consul with Servius Sulpicius ten years after the expulsion of the kings.

Q 4. Plin. nat. 7,139–140 (LCL): Praising One's Ancestors

Q. Metellus in ea oratione quam habuit supremis laudibus patris sui L. Metelli pontificis, bis consulis, dictatoris, magistri equitum, xviri agris dandis, qui primus elephantos ex primo Punico bello duxit in triumpho, scriptum reliquit decem maximas res optimasque in quibus quaerendis sapientes aetatem exigerent consummasse eum: voluisse enim primum bellatorem esse, optimum oratorem, fortissimum imperatorem, auspicio suo maximas res geri, maximo honore uti, summa sapientia esse, summum senatorem haberi, pecuniam magnam bono modo invenire, multos liberos relinquere et clarissimum in civitate esse; haec contigisse ei nec ulli alii post Romam conditam.

Quintus Metellus, in the panegyric that he delivered at the obsequies of his father Lucius Metellus the pontiff, who had been Consul twice, Dictator, Master of the Horse and Land-Commissioner, and who was the first person who led a procession of elephants in a triumph, having captured them in the first Punic War, has left it in writing that his father had achieved the ten greatest and highest objects in the pursuit of which wise men pass their lives: for he had made it his aim to be a first-class warrior, a supreme orator and a very brave commander, to have the direction of operations of the highest importance, to enjoy the greatest honour, to be supremely wise, to be deemed the most eminent member of the senate, to obtain great wealth in an honourable way, to leave many children, and to achieve supreme distinction in the state; and that these things had fallen to his father's lot, and to that of no one else since Rome's foundation.

Q 5. Quint. inst. 3,7,1–4 (LCL): In Defence of Epideictics

Ac potissimum incipiam ab ea quae constat laude ac vituperatione. Quod genus videtur Aristoteles atque eum secutus Theophrastus a parte negotiali, hoc est πραγματικῆ, removisse totamque ad solos auditores relegasse; et id eius nominis quod ab ostentatione ducitur proprium est. Sed mos Romanus etiam negotiis hoc munus inseruit. Nam et funebres laudationes pendent frequenter ex aliquo publico officio atque ex senatus consulto magistratibus saepe mandantur, et laudare testem vel contra pertinet ad momentum iudiciorum, et ipsis etiam reis dare laudatores licet, et editi in competitores, in L. Pisonem, in Clodium et Curionem libri vituperationem continent et tamen in senatu loco sunt habiti sententiae. Neque infitias eo quasdam esse ex hoc genere materias ad solam compositas ostentationem, ut laudes deorum virorumque quos priora tempora tulerunt. Quo solvitur quaestio supra tractata manifestumque est errare eos qui numquam oratorem dicturum nisi de re dubia putaverunt. An laudes Capitolini Iovis, perpetua sacri certaminis materia, vel dubiae sunt vel non oratorio genere tractantur?

I shall begin for preference with the Cause which consists of Praise and Blame. Aristotle and, following him, Theophrastus seem to have separated this class completely from the practical—that is the “pragmatic”—type, and made the audience the sole consideration in the whole affair; this indeed is in keeping with its name, which is derived from the notion of display. Roman custom, on the other hand, has

found a place for this function in practical business. Funeral laudations are frequently attached to some public office and are often entrusted to magistrates by order of the Senate; to praise or discredit a witness is important in court; it is a permitted practice to let defendants have people to praise their character; and finally, the published speeches against Cicero's fellow candidates, against Lucius Piso, and against Clodius and Curio, contain invective, and yet were spoken as formal voting statements in the Senate. I do not deny that some themes of this kind are composed solely for display, for example panegyrics of the gods and great men of past ages. This solves a problem raised above, and makes it clear that those who held that an orator would never speak except on matters which were in doubt were quite wrong. Must the praise of Jupiter Capitolinus, the invariable theme of the sacred contest, involve doubt, or else not be an oratorical subject at all?

Q 6. Cic. pro Marcello 31–32 (LCL): Maintaining Safety

Perfuncta res publica est hoc misero fatalique bello: vicit is, qui non fortuna inflammaret odium suum, sed bonitate leniret; neque omnis, quibus iratus esset, eosdem etiam exsilio aut morte dignos iudicaret; arma ab aliis posita, ab aliis erepta sunt: ingratus est iniustusque civis, qui armorum periculo liberatus animum tamen retinet armatum, ut etiam ille melior sit, qui in acie cecidit, qui in causa animam profudit; quae enim pertinacia quibusdam, eadem aliis constantia videri potest: sed iam omnis fracta dissensio est armis, extincta aequitate victoris: restat ut omnes unum velint, qui modo habent aliquid non solum sapientiae, sed etiam sanitatis. Nisi te, C. Caesar, salvo et in ista sententia, qua cum antea tum hodie vel maxime usus es, manente salvi esse non possumus.

The commonwealth went through to the bitter end with this wretched war wherewith fate had burdened it. The conqueror was not one to let success kindle, but rather to let his innate kindness mollify his hatred; not one to account all who had deserved his resentment deserving also of exile or of death. Some laid down their arms, others had them wrenched from their grasp. That citizen knows neither gratitude nor justice who, when released from the peril of arms, still keeps his soul armed; so that the better man is even he who has fallen upon the stricken field and poured out his life-blood for a Cause. For what appears to some as obstinacy may be strength of purpose in the eyes of others. Now, however, all dissension has been shattered by the arms, quenched by the impartiality of the victor; and it remains that all should be united in purpose who have but a modicum not of wisdom necessarily, but of sound judgement. Only through your safety, Gaius Caesar, and by your adherence to the policy on which you have hitherto, but above all to-day, acted, can there be any safety for ourselves.

Q 7. Cic. fam. 4,9,1–2 (LCL): Saying Things You Do Not Mean ...

Isdem igitur de rebus etiam atque etiam hortor quibus superioribus litteris hortatus sum, ut in ea re publica quaecumque est quam primum velis esse. multa videbis fortasse quae nolis, non plura tamen quam audis cottidie. [...] At tibi ipsi dicendum erit aliquid quod non sentias aut faciendum quod non probes. primum tempori cedere, id est necessitati parere, semper sapientis est habitum. deinde non habet, ut nunc quidem est, id viti res. dicere fortasse quae sentias non licet, tacere plane licet. omnia enim delata ad unum sunt. is utitur consilio ne suorum quidem, sed suo.

So once again, I urge you on the same points as in my previous letter, to choose without delay to live in whatever commonwealth we have. You will perhaps see much that you do not like, but no more than you hear every day. [...] Perhaps you are afraid of having yourself to say things you do not mean, or do things you disapprove. Well, in the first place, to yield to the pressures of the time, that is, to obey necessity, has always been considered a wise man's part. In the second, this particular evil, at present anyway, is not in the case. One is not free, it may be, to say what one thinks, but one is quite free to keep silence. All power has been handed over to one man; and he follows no counsel, not even that of his friends, except his own.

Q 8. Cic. Pro rege Deiotaro 4,9,1–2 (LCL): Speaking under the Eyes of a Caesar

Moveor etiam loci ipsius insolentia, quod tantam causam, quanta nulla umquam in disceptatione versata est, dico intra domesticos parietes, dico extra conventum et eam frequentiam, in qua oratorum studia niti solent: in tuis oculis, in tuo ore voltuque acquiesco, te unum intueor, ad te unum omnis mea spectat oratio: quae mihi ad spem obtinendae veritatis gravissima sunt, ad motum animi et ad omnem impetum dicendi contentionemque leviora: hanc enim, C. Caesar, causam si in foro dicerem eodem audiente et disceptante te, quantam mihi alacritatem populi Romani concursus adferret!

The unwonted scene of this trial, too, is not without its effect upon me: a case of graver import than any that have ever come under discussion is being pleaded by me within the walls of a private dwelling, pleaded in private session and aloof from the thronging audience

wherein the enthusiasm of the orator commonly finds its support; under your eyes and in your features I find my repose; you are all I have to look to; my every word has regard to none save you; the same circumstances which afford me the strongest hope of establishing the truth, are less adapted to move the emotions and to rouse the fire and fervour of eloquence. Were I pleading this case in the forum, Gaius Caesar, albeit with you to hear and you to weigh my words, with what enthusiasm would the assembled people of Rome inspire me!

Q 8. Tac. dial. 38,2 (LCL): Pacifying Eloquence

Primus haec tertio consulatu Cn. Pompeius adstrinxit, imposuitque veluti frenos eloquentiae, ita tamen ut omnia in foro, omnia legibus, omnia apud praetores gererentur: apud quos quanto maiora negotia olim exerceri solita sint, quod maius argumentum est quam quod causae centumvirales, quae nunc primum obtinent locum, adeo splendore aliorum iudiciorum obruebantur ut neque Ciceronis neque Caesaris neque Bruti neque Caelii neque Calvi, non denique ullius magni oratoris liber apud centumviros dictus legatur, exceptis orationibus Asinii quae pro heredibus Urbiniae inscribuntur, ab ipso tamen Pollione mediis divi Augusti temporibus habitae, postquam longa temporum quies et continuum populi otium et adsidua senatus tranquillitas et maxima principis disciplina ipsam quoque eloquentiam sicut omnia alia pacaverat.

It was Gnaeus Pompeius who, in his third consulship, first introduced limitations in regard to these matters. He may be said to have curbed eloquence with bit and bridle, without however cancelling the provision that everything should be done in court, according to law, and before a praetor. The best proof you can have of the greater importance of the cases dealt with by the praetors in former days is the fact that actions before the centumviral court, which are now considered to outrank all others, used to be so much overshadowed by the prestige of other tribunals that there is not a single speech, delivered before that court, that is read today, either by Cicero, or by Caesar, or by Brutus, or by Caelius, or by Calvus, or in fact by any orator of rank. The only exceptions are the speeches of Asinius Pollio entitled „For Urbinia’s Heirs“, and yet these are just the ones which he delivered well on in the middle of the reign of Augustus, when in consequence of the long period of peace, and the unbroken spell of inactivity on the part of the commons and of peaceableness on the part of the senate, by reason also of the working of the great imperial system, a hush had fallen upon eloquence, as indeed it had upon the world at large.

Q 9. Tac. dial. 40,1 (LCL): No Peaceable Art ...

Non de otiosa et quieta re loquimur et quae probitate et modestia gaudeat, sed est magna illa et notabilis eloquentia alumna licentiae, quam stulti libertatem vocabant, comes seditionum, effrenati populi incitamentum, sine obsequio, sine severitate, contumax, temeraria, adrogans, quae in bene constitutis civitatibus non oritur.

The art which is the subject of our discourse is not a quiet and peaceable art, or one that finds satisfaction in moral worth and good behaviour: no, really great and famous oratory is a foster-child of licence, which foolish men called liberty, an associate of sedition, a goad for the unbridled populace. It owes no allegiance to any. Devoid of discipline, it is insulting, off-hand, and overbearing. It is a plant that does not grow under a well-regulated constitution.

Q 10. Plin. paneg. 4,1–3 (LCL): Banning Private Expressions of Thanks

Sed parendum est senatus consulto quod ex utilitate publica placuit, ut consulis voce sub titulo gratiarum agendarum boni principes quae facerent recognoscerent, mali quae facere deberent. Id nunc eo magis sollemne ac necessarium est, quod parens noster privatas gratiarum actiones cohibet et comprimit, intercessurus etiam publicis, si permetteret sibi vetare quod senatus iuberet. Utrumque, Caesar Auguste, moderate, et quod alibi tibi gratias agi non sinis, et quod hic sinis. Non enim a te ipso tibi honor iste, sed [ab] agentibus habetur: cedis affectibus nostris, nec nobis munera tua praedicare sed audire tibi necesse est.

But now I must bow to the decree of the Senate which in the public interest has declared that under the form of a vote of thanks delivered by the voice of the consul, good rulers should recognize their own deeds and bad ones learn what theirs should be. That is the more necessary and solemn duty today because our Father has banned and forbidden private expressions of thanks and would intervene against public speeches also if he allowed himself to oppose the Senate’s will. Both these actions, Caesar Augustus—your refusal of thanks elsewhere and your acceptance here—are proof of your moderation, for you do honour thereby not to yourself but to those who would thank you. You yield to our feelings of affection; and no necessity constrains us to proclaim your good deeds, whereas you have bound yourself to listen to them.