

A NOTE ON RUFUS' TEXNH PHTOPIKH

Some years ago, Otmar Schissel attempted a rehabilitation of Rufus' Τέχνη ῥητορικὴ within an article published in this journal¹). Previous scholars had criticized the treatise for its arid brevity. In defense of the work, Schissel undertook to account for its shortness in terms of contemporary literary custom; specifically, he explained it as a sophistical display designed to establish a record achievement in brevity. In this connection, Schissel argued that since the work was ill-suited for any educational aim and its composition illustrated an extreme conciseness of thought as well as expression, the purpose of the book must have been to develop a system of rhetoric in the shortest possible space and thereby demonstrate mastery of βραχύτης καὶ συντομιά²).

Although this argument is attractive in several respects, there are two serious objections which may be raised against it. First, it produces an interpretation of Rufus' Τέχνη that is not coherent with what is otherwise known of Rufus. Philostratus, who furnishes the only extant account of this second century author, mentions neither any record achievement in brevity nor even a talent for such expression. Rather, on the subject of Rufus' skill, he reports only that Rufus was admired for his veiled argument, character portrayal, and extemporaneous speaking³). Given the concerns and usual practice of Philostratus in his Βίοι, it seems quite improbable that he would have disregarded such a remarkable demonstration of rhetorical prowess, had Rufus' composition been viewed as such in his own time⁴).

1) Otmar Schissel, Die rhetorische Kunstlehre des Rufus von Perinth, RhM 75 (1926) 369–92. The text of Rufus' Τέχνη ῥητορικὴ may be found in *Rhetores Graeci ex rec. L. Spengel, I 2 ed. C. Hammer (Leipzig 1894) 399–407* and *Rhetores Graeci ed. Chr. Walz, III (Stuttgart 1834) 446–60*.

2) Schissel (above, note 1) 369–70, 392. Schissel repeats this general claim in: *Ein Minukianzitat in der Redelehre des Rufus, PhilWoch 47 (1927) 829*.

3) Philostratus, Βίοι σοφιστῶν II 597–98. On the identification of Rufus of Perinth as the author of Τέχνη ῥητορικὴ, see Schissel (above, note 1) 370; cf. Karl Gerth, Rufus von Perinth, RE 1A (1914) 1207.

4) Philostratus suggests in his preface that he is most concerned with the virtues, vices, successes, and failures of his subjects (Βίοι 480); moreover, he is ever at great pains to set out the distinguishing features and notable performances of each sophist. That he would have considered a virtuoso display of brevity and

Second, Schissel's argument rejects the possibility that Rufus' Τέχνη had a didactic purpose without entertaining all educational functions which the work might have performed. In formulating his position on the educational status of the treatise, Schissel assumed that because the work was too short and too general to teach the subject of rhetoric, any pedagogical aim had to be ruled out⁵). As an inescapable consequence of this assumption, Schissel failed to consider that the treatise might have been intended to review and consolidate precepts already encountered in a program of rhetorical education.

Such an omission seems particularly problematic in the case of Rufus' Τέχνη for two reasons. One is that the intention to reinforce rhetorical knowledge is by no means uninstantiated among Imperial rhetorical manuals. In Julius Severianus' *Praecepta artis rhetoricae*, for instance, precisely this sort of objective is disclosed in the author's introductory remarks: *Ego non ullius famae cupidus, sed inmensi laboris molestiam considerans, certos tibi ad compendium gymnasii forensis tramites constitui, quos ad memoriam reparandam facili lectione percurreres. . . . Memento tamen non ante tibi haec esse compendia relegenda quam ingenium tuum multa ac Tulliana arte subegeris*⁶). Another reason is that the intention to reinforce rhetorical knowledge might easily have informed the composition of Rufus' Τέχνη. For, in three crucial respects, it is strikingly similar to Julius' *Praecepta* (a work avowedly composed with this intention): both of the treatises are very brief, both are arranged according to the parts of a forensic speech, and both rely heavily on a didactic method of composition involving division, definition, and example⁷).

conciseness worthy of mention in the Βίοι seems unquestionable, since in the case of Isaeus the Assyrian, he both refers to and amply illustrates the sophist's proficiency in τὸ βραχέως ἐξημενεύειν (Βίου I 514).

5) Schissel (above, note 1) 369–70.

6) *Praecepta* 1. The text of the *Praecepta* used here and in the following is from *Rhetores Latini Minores* ed. C. Halm (Leipzig 1863) 353–70. The date of the *Praecepta* is uncertain. Wilhelm Kroll, *Rhetorica III: Quintilian und Severianus*, *Philologus* 89 (1934) 335, and Thomas H. Bestul, *The Saturnalia of Macrobius and the Praecepta artis rhetoricae of Julius Severianus*, *CJ* 70, No. 3 (1975) 11–14, argue for a composition in middle to late fifth century; cf. W. Schäfer, *Quaestiones rhetoricae*, *Diss. Bonn* 1913, 10. However, Ludwig Radermacher, *Julius Severianus*, *RE* 10 (1919) 811, suggests that a date in the time of Fronto should not be ruled out. In any case, ascription of the treatise to the Imperial era seems unproblematic.

7) Julius handles his materials in twenty-four paragraphs, Rufus in forty-one. The unusual structure of the two works is discussed by Karl Barwick, *Die*

In the light of the foregoing objections, Schissel's explanation of Rufus' Τέχνη as a sophistical display seems hardly cogent. More convincing, I think, is the explanation Schissel dismisses without consideration, namely, that the main purpose of the treatise is to reinforce students' knowledge of rhetoric. Consistent with this explanation, the brevity, organization, and compositional method of the work may all be interpreted as transparent attempts to make Rufus' summary review of rhetorical precepts easy for students to memorize. At the same time, Philostratus' failure to mention a didactic treatise by Rufus need not be regarded with any puzzlement, since Philostratus ignores the educational works of other sophists⁸).

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Gliederung der rhetorischen TEXNH und die horazische Epistula ad Pisonem, *Hermes* 57 (1922) 11. On Rufus' method of composition, see Schissel (above, note 1) 371–72. A representative instance of Julius' composition may be found in his discussion of the conjectural *status*. He begins thus: *In coniecturalibus causis hinc argumenta sumuntur: a personis, causis, facultatibus, verisimilibus, signis. Signum causam aut antecedit aut in eadem est aut sequitur. Item proferuntur auditiones, suspiciones, spolia, quaestiones, indices, fama vel opiniones et multa similia, quae rerum varietas subministrat* (Praecepta 13). In what immediately follows, each topic is listed and exemplified with a quotation.

8) See, for example, Philostratus' treatments of Aristocles of Pergamum (Βίοι II 567–68) and Hermogenes (Βίοι II 577–78), both of whom produced technical manuals.