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Le destin de la rhétorique : entre grandeur et décadence

The Destiny of Rhetoric: Between Greatness and Decadence

Abstract: This study intends to carry out a radiography of the evolution of rhetoric from Antiquity to our time, emphasizing the moment of glory of this art, but also the periods when it completely fell into oblivion. From Plato's criticism of oratorical art (from *Phaidros* and *Gorgias*), to the captivating explanation of Tacitus (from *Dialogue on Orators*) or to the admirable praise which we discover at Isocrates (in *Nicocles* and *Panegyrics*), the Antiquity ruled on the virtues and the limits of rhetoric. The modern age did not show much kindness in its rather harsh contact with the art of elocution, imposing a problematic restriction which greatly limited the significance of rhetoric (at Du Marsais, in *Des Tropes*) and continuing with its removal from education (a fact greatly condemned in Chaignet in his manual of rhetoric). Finally, the world of today has been more open to critical caution and understanding, giving new value to the elements of classical rhetoric and strengthening them with the latest research on performative discursivity. A picture of the moments more or less fortunate in the evolution of rhetoric which can help the reader understand the avatars of an approach with a history of thousands of years which comes back more and more active in the public space of today.

Keywords: classical rhetoric, modern rhetoric, oratorical art