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Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric

Rhetorical theory is traditionally thought to have originated with the Greeks. Without attempting to deprive Corax and Tisias of their place of honor, I would like to claim for the ancient Egyptians their rightful place in the history of rhetoric. Study of rhetoric in the ancient Near East will necessarily deal for the most part with the principles and techniques exhibited by specific discourses rather than with theories of rhetoric. The rich literature of pharaonic Egypt, however, does offer us theories of rhetoric—that is, a conceptual rhetoric, albeit an unsystematic one, expressed both incidentally and explicitly in the context of advice about the efficacy of speech.

I. THE “PRINCIPLE OF FINE SPEECH” IN ANCIENT EGYPT

The main sources for the study of Egyptian rhetoric are the wisdom instructions of the Middle and New Kingdoms, most dating from about 2200 B.C. to about 1500 B.C. (there are some earlier and later texts). These books were used in the training of young men headed for positions as scribes and officials. The Egyptian wisdom books are gnomic instructions much like the biblical book of Prov-

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erbs (which was undoubtedly influenced by Egyptian models). The wisdom books offer precepts of ethics, etiquette, and interpersonal relations. The teachers promise divine favor and professional success to those who obey their teachings. To attain these benefits, their pupils must know the principles of both good behavior and good speech. We know of the existence of some 50–60 wisdom books, but of most of them only fragments remain. About ten wisdom books, however, have been discovered nearly intact, some of them in numerous copies on papyrus or potsherds (the latter used mainly for schoolboy writing exercises). The great consistency in the principles and even the specifics of the teachings of these books allows us to attempt a synthesis of works spanning several hundred years.

The following wisdom books are mentioned in the course of this article:¹

Kagemeni: The teaching of a vizier (name lost) to his son Kagemeni, mainly regarding matters of etiquette. Fragmentary. May be as old as the 24th century B.C. (Lichtheim, I, 59–61.)

Ptahhotep: The oldest of the major wisdom books. Set in the mouth of the vizier Ptahhotep who teaches his successor how to prosper as a high official: through moral behavior, etiquette, and good social relations. May be as early as the 24th century B.C., though I consider a 21st–20th century B.C. dating more likely. (Lichtheim, I, 61–80.)

Merikare: Advice by an old (or dead) king to his son Merikare. A sort of *Fuerstenspiegel*, offering counsels specifically relevant to a king as well as general moral and religious maxims. 22nd–21st century B.C. (Lichtheim, I, 97–109.)

Any: Instructions by a minor official Any to his son, also a scribe. Miscellaneous counsels on personal etiquette, proper behavior in the temple, choosing friends, behavior toward wife and mother, talking to one's superior, and more. Concludes with an extraordinary argument between father and son on a fundamental problem of educational philosophy: the limitations one's nature places on learning. 16th–14th century B.C. (Lichtheim, II, 135–146.)

¹All the texts mentioned in this article are available in the excellent translation of M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (3 vols., UC Press, 1977–80; see "Didactic Literature" in the table of contents). Other translations may be found in William Kelly Simpson, comp., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (Yale University, 1972). For further literature see Lichtheim's introductions to each text. The Egyptian texts are cited variously in this article: by line number (e.g., 1.1), or column and line number (e.g., I.1), or by paragraph number. These references can be easily located in the translation anthologies.

Amenemope (also spelled Amenope, Amenophis, Amenopet, *et al.*): a long and rich instruction of 30 precepts or "chapters." The advice stresses individual improvement as a way of producing an ideal man, the "Truly Silent Man," who is characterized by humility, quiet demeanor, generosity, honesty, and piety. The emphasis is on morality more than on practical virtues, but the teacher promises personal well-being and professional success to whomever takes his advice. Probably 13th–11th century B.C., though it may be somewhat later. Lichtheim, II, 146–163.)

No actual oratory is preserved from ancient Egypt. There is, however, literary oratory, that is, speeches incorporated in a fictional setting, and these give us examples of what the Egyptians considered fine speech. For example, there are "laments," in which a learned man describes and bewails social disorders and hails the coming of a future king (probably the king for whom the "lament" text was written) who will restore order to the land. The three major laments are:

"The Prophecies of Neferti," 20th century B.C. The introduction is of particular interest. The king puts out a call to find someone who has done a noble deed, "so that he may speak to me some fine words, choice phrases at the hearing of which my majesty may be entertained." A priest is found who does this by his complaints and prophecies. Rhetoric is a form of entertainment. (Lichtheim, I, 139–145.)

"The Complaints of Khakheperre-Sonb," early 19th century B.C. Khakheperre-Sonb begins by expressing his frustration that everything has already been said: "Had I unknown phrases, sayings that are strange. . . . Not transmitted sayings, spoken by the ancestors! . . . For what was said is repetition when what was said is said." (Lichtheim, I, 145–149.)

"The Admonitions of Ipuwer," dating uncertain; perhaps 16th–14th century B.C. (Lichtheim, II, 149–163.)

Another example of literary oratory is the "Eloquent Peasant," which I discuss below. A peasant complains at length about an injustice done to him. 20th–17th century. (Lichtheim, I, 169–184.)

Egyptian advice about eloquence is usually not limited specifically to public oratory. Much applies to private conversations as well. Usually no distinction is made between conversational skills and eloquence in public speaking. Some of the sayings, however, definitely indicate a public setting, for they speak of the effect that your speech and the speech of your opponents will have on other people, in particular on the magistrates. Sometimes specific mention of the court gives advice on speech an explicitly forensic setting.

The English word "rhetoric" has an equivalent in an Egyptian

phrase that means literally "the principle of fine speech," which Ptahhotep, the teacher in the earliest well-preserved wisdom text, lists this as one of the main virtues he will teach in his wisdom instruction (l. 48). The use of the singular "principle" (or "rule") here is significant. Ptahhotep sees himself as presenting not just a variety of counsels about good speech, but as offering instructions that *together* for "the principle of fine speech." Eloquence is a unity.

The Egyptians considered eloquence to be an innate faculty improvable by instruction. Eloquence, Ptahhotep says, is rarer than emeralds, yet it is to be found among maids at the mill stones. And further, "If you want to endure in the mouth of those who hear (you)² (i.e., to make a lasting reputation), then *listen*, and speak (only) after you have become a craftsman. If you speak to perfection, every project of yours will attain its goal (para. 43 = ll.613-617).³ Eloquence is a craft.

II. THE CANONS

Implicit in the wisdom teacher's advice on how to perfect the craft of fine speech are five canons of rhetoric. The teachers deduce these canons from a combination of religious principles and practical psychology. For the most part they do not state the basis of their deductions, yet the underlying reason is often discernible, as we shall see, in the ways they motivate their advice.

The first canon of Egyptian rhetoric is *silence*. Silence is both a moral posture and a rhetorical tactic. Silence is not to be confused with passivity or quietism. The frequently-urged virtue of silence is a deliberate strategy for success, one that will help you get your own way by improving your ethos and allowing your opponents to destroy their own. An ancient teacher says to Kagemeni, "Make your name go forth while you are silent, and you will be summoned (for promotion)" (II,1). In other words, a good reputation comes from silence and not (he goes on to stress) from boasting. Ptahhotep repeatedly emphasizes the efficacy of silence in eristic. When arguing with a superior, he says, bow your back and be silent; he will confound himself and be thought a fool (para. 2). When arguing with

²Or "judges." This word, literally "hearers," can either mean "judges" or "those who hear." This is a source of constant ambiguity in the texts.

³Numbered according to Z. Žába, *Les Maximes de Ptahhotep* (Prague, 1956).

an equal, show your virtue by your silence, and you will make a strong and positive reputation among the magistrates (para. 3). When arguing with an inferior, do not give in to the temptation to bully him. Be silent and he will confound himself. You will thereby defeat him by means of the disapproval of the magistrates (para. 4). Silence is thus a *response*. In his introduction, Amenemope advertises that his book will teach one "to know how to return an accusation⁴ to one who makes it." And indeed many of his sayings teach the proper responses in particular situations of conflict. Most frequently he urges silence as a response. He develops this virtue into an ideal, the *gr ma'at* (The Truly Silent Man), the man who succeeds by virtue of his unflinching inner repose and self-control (para. 4). This self-control frequently dictates silence. Amenemope says, "Do not get involved in a quarrel with a hot-mouthed man, nor assail him with words. Go slow before a foe, bend before an adversary, sleep before speaking" (para. 3). Further, "Do not shoot your mouth off (literally: empty your belly) to everyone, and thus destroy respect for you. Broadcast not your words to others, nor join with one who bares his heart" (para. 21). When opponents attack you, he advises, "Sit yourself in the arms of the god, and your silence will overthrow them (that is, your enemies)" (para. 21). Similarly: "A storm which breaks forth like fire in straw—so is the heated man when he's showing his true nature (literally: when he's in his hour). Restrain yourself before him, leave him alone (literally: abandon it to his face). The god will know how to answer him" (para. 3). Here then is how silence functions as an eristic technique: if you are silent, you are demonstrating your trust in divine justice rather than attempting to force the outcome. As you wait for events to proceed toward the equilibrium of justice, your opponent will fill with his heated words the vacuum your silence produces. He will thus expose his inner turmoil and confound himself, while you gain in reputation.

I do not find silence advised in classical rhetoric. Perhaps it is suitable only in a rhetoric based on the weighing of persons rather than the weighing of arguments. In any case it can indeed be an effective technique. It not only gives your adversary a chance to tie himself in knots, it helps to establish your own ethos, your "name," as a man who is in control of himself and confident in the inevitable vindication of his cause. It suggests to your audience that your case

⁴Thus Simpsons, p. 242. *Wshbt* is best translated "accusation" rather than "answer," because by the latter translation the object of "say" lacks an antecedent.

must be a strong one indeed to allow you such composure and certitude, as if you are letting your case stand on its merits. It is an eristic technique that hides itself.

But rhetoric cannot, of course, consist solely of silence. There is a time for speech, and one must discover when that is. So the second canon is knowing the *kairos* for speech. If you are sitting in the council of a superior, Ptahhotep says, "(Restrain your mouth) and concentrate your heart on excellence. Your silence is better than chatter. It is only when you have discovered your solution that you should speak. It is only a craftsman who can speak in council, for speech is the most difficult labor" (para. 24).⁵

The need to find the right time to speak can hardly be separated from the next canon—*restraint*. This means holding back your emotions, covering up your anger, and regulating carefully what comes forth from your mouth. "Conceal your heart, restrain your mouth. Then your counsel will be (heard) among the magistrates" (Ptahhotep, para. 44 = ll. 618f.). "Be deliberate when you speak, so as to say distinguished things. Then the magistrates who hear will say, 'How good is that which comes forth from his mouth'" (ibid., para. 44 = ll. 624–627). Any, a teacher of the New Kingdom, taught: "The belly of a man is wider than a royal granary, and it is full of retorts. Choose the good one and speak the good, while the bad remains shut in your belly" (Any, para. 37 = VII, 9f.). According to this image all sorts of emotions are contained in the heart, and words of all kinds are held in the belly just waiting to bubble up. The wise man will release only those appropriate to the situation.

Egyptian rhetoric shows a healthy respect, even a fear, for the power of words. "Speaking is more powerful than any fighting," Merikare says (l. 32). This power is a two-edged sword that can hurt the speaker even more than his opponents. Words lie within you, stored up in your belly, a potential enemy as well as a potential ally. The Egyptian rhetoricians were keenly aware of the self-destructive potential of speech. It was thought especially important to restrain your tongue when speaking with a superior (Amenemope, para. 9). The powerful man, for his part, succeeds through *gentleness* of speech, a quality I would subsume under the canon of restraint. "If you are mighty, you should gain respect through knowledge and through gentleness of speech" (Ptahhotep, para. 25). Amenemope

⁵Ll. 362–68. The obscure l. 364 is translated according to variant Ll.

describes the relation between emotion and speech with a nautical image: "Control yourself in your heart, steady your heart; do not navigate with your tongue" (para. 18). In other words, you must be in control of your tongue. Do not let your tongue operate on its own. Amenemope continues: "As for a man's tongue—it is a boat's rudder, but it is the Lord of All who is its pilot" (para. 18). That is to say, you must be in control of your tongue as you navigate your way through life. Yet ultimately it is God who decides what your tongue will do. Amenemope thus adds a deterministic note to his rhetorical theory. For all the importance given to man's control of his tongue, the teacher recognizes that one's ability to speak is often determined by uncontrollable, inexplicable forces. A certain tension between earnest advice on the one hand, and a recognition of the limitations on man's ability to follow that advice on the other, is characteristic of the wisdom instructions.

When the time comes for you to speak, you must both choose the right responses from your belly (Any, para. 3; see above) and speak them *fluently*. In a judicial confrontation, "When your witnesses make accusation do not vacillate in your answers" (Amenemope, para. 19). Again, the speaker must give an impression of security and stability. Ptahhotep advises, "Report your commission without faltering (literally: swallowing the heart) when giving advice in your master's council. If he (for his part) is fluent in his speech, it will not be hard for the envoy to report, nor will he be answered, 'Who is he to know it?' " (Ptahhotep, para. 15). Fluency of speech helps create an impression of competence and knowledge. The tale of the "Eloquent Peasant," which we will consider shortly, seeks to show this.

Most important, and most characteristically Egyptian, is the canon of *truthfulness*. Truthful speech is effective speech, both because it creates your ethos and because it is in and of itself persuasive. Ptahhotep says, "The wise man is known by his wisdom. Is the magistrate in his good quality? (Then) his heart matches his tongue and his lips are straight when he speaks" (para. 38 = ll. 526–28). Amenemope taught: "Do not go to court in the presence of a magistrate, and then pervert your speech. . . . Tell the truth before the magistrate, lest he gain power over your body (i.e., punish you)" (Amenemope, para. 19). Amenemope does not tell us just how the magistrate will know you are lying. He assumes that false words, like heated words, will turn against their speaker. After all, God hates lies: "Do not speak falsely to a man—(that is) the god's abomination. Do not sever your heart from your tongue, that all your plans may be

successful and you become important before the masses, while you are secure in the hand of the god. God hates the distortion of speech. His great abomination is the dissembler" (Amenemope, para 10).

The virtues of silence, good timing, restraint, fluency of expression and above all truthfulness combine to create one's *ethos*. *Ethos* is the major mode of persuasion in Egyptian rhetoric. *Ethos* is not an adjunct to proof, as it is in Aristotle, but is itself a form of proof. The didactic wisdom literature gives no thought to argumentation as such and shows no awareness of the possibility that argumentation could operate independently of *ethos*. *Ethos* stands on its own.

The *ethos* created by following the canons of Egyptian rhetoric is that of harmony with divine justice, *Ma'at*, such as comes only to one who speaks the truth, *Ma'at*. For the Truly Silent Man, truth is a natural and inevitable extension of character. There is a fundamental kinship between the Egyptian instructions and those of Quintilian in their emphasis on the orator rather than on the oratory. Egyptian rhetoric can be encapsulated in Quintilian's dictum that only a good man can speak well. This rule implies the converse: the quality of a man's speech displays his moral quality.

When we recognize the centrality of *ethos* in Egyptian rhetoric, we see that the ethical and social counsels that constitute most of the wisdom instructions are in fact rhetorical as well as moral training, so that the proem to Ptahhotep, which promises "to instruct the ignorant in the principle of excellent speech," and the proem to Amenemope, which promises to teach the reader how to formulate good answers, are indeed fair summaries of the contents of these books, even though only a minority of counsels deal explicitly with speech.

Little is said about *style*, although there is much evidence that the Egyptians delighted in fine speech and regarded it as a craft, as Ptahhotep calls it. As in mathematics, geography, lexicography, epistolography and so on, Egyptian instruction in style took the form of copying exemplars—such as the wisdom books themselves. One exemplar of fine style that is explicitly rhetorical is the "Eloquent Peasant," a story preserved in four copies from the Middle Kingdom, ca. 2040–1650 B.C.⁶ This text is not a wisdom instruction, but it does reflect some of the values of that genre (doing so in part by opposing them). The narrative frame tells how a peasant on a journey is

⁶Quotations from this text are according to Lichtheim's translation, II, pp. 169–84.

deprived of his goods by a greedy landowner. After ten days of complaining to this official, the peasant buttonholes the local high steward and demands justice. The high steward agrees to send a servant to record the peasant's case. After hearing the peasant's first petition, the high steward contacts Pharaoh and tells him, "My lord, I have found one among those peasants whose speech is truly beautiful." The king responds, "As truly as you wish to see me in health, you shall detain him here, without answering whatever he says. In order to keep him talking, be silent. Then have it brought to us in writing, that we may hear it" (ll. 77-80). The author shares Ptahhotep's belief that, as rare as eloquence is, it can be found among maidservants and peasants. The author also depicts a delight in rhetorical artistry for its own sake, for it is made clear that the high steward knows the justice of the peasant's complaint and has no reason to keep him talking other than for the king's aesthetic pleasure.

The model of rhetoric this work provides differs from the advice of the wisdom instructions. The most prominent characteristics of the peasant's style are repetitiveness, concatenations of extravagant metaphors, and constant word-play. The peasant does not display the virtues of restraint of anger, brevity of speech, avoidance of sharp answers to superiors, and gentle speech. He mixes hyperbolic praise of the high steward's importance—so hyperbolic that it seems he realizes that Pharaoh too is receiving his words and that he is indirectly talking to him—with vehement condemnations. "He who should give breath chokes him who is down" (l. 100). "Your arm is active, your heart greedy, mercy has passed you by. . . . You are like a messenger of the Crocodile, worse than the Lady of Pestilence" (l. 119f.). "You are a sheriff who steals, a mayor who grabs, a governor who should punish robbery but has become the model for one who commits it" (l. 192f.), and so on and so on. The peasant is beaten for his insolence, but his petition so pleases the king that he tells the high steward to see that justice is done, and it is. So much for the value of silence and self-control! So blatantly does this work contradict some of the main principles taught in the instructional literature that it seems to be a deliberate polemic against them. We can imagine the pleasure that reading these fierce expressions of outrage could give to both students and officials in a hierarchical society who had always been taught, and who had constantly to practice, the virtues of silence and self-control. In this story it is not the peasant's ethos or even the validity of his case that gets him his way, for his case is not

really at issue. He succeeds purely by virtue of verbal virtuosity. While the author does not assume a rhetoric that allows for *contradiction* of the truth, he does show an awareness that the truth of a case and the eloquence with which it is presented are distinct, if not entirely separable, factors.

III. RECAPITULATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

I have abstracted five canons of rhetoric implicit in the wisdom precepts: keeping *silent*, waiting for the *right moment* to speak, *restraining* passionate words, speaking *fluently* but with great deliberation, and above all, keeping your tongue at one with your heart so that you speak the *truth*. These five types of behavior create one's ethos. Furthermore, these canons are in fact inseparable from one another; they imply one another. Knowing the right moment for speech means waiting until then in silence; speaking fluently results from sincerity, the unity of tongue and heart. The need to restrain passionate words might seem to conflict with the requirement of honesty, but the teachers taught only that whatever you speak must be true, not that whatever is true must be spoken.

Ethos, not argument, is finally what will win you your way. Ethos is the ultimate rhetorical virtue. It shows you as a man of truth and self-control, two values closely bound in Egyptian thought. Self-control was especially important to the strictly ordered hierarchical society of Egypt, where the social order was considered divinely ordained and ideally static and where the individual's chief duty was to bring himself into harmony with that order, certainly not to change it. The word for universal harmony is the same as that for truth and justice: *Ma'at*. Thus beyond Egyptian rhetoric's goal of individual success lies a political purpose, the maintenance of social harmony. The virtues of restraint, stability and internal harmony that it cultivates in the individual will ideally be realized in the society as a whole.

The Egyptians would have rejected as vehemently as the early Plato a purely instrumental rhetoric whose main goal is individual advancement. They are unlikely to have conceived of an instrumental rhetoric of deceit, as did the later Plato in the *Republic*, for to them the *Ma'at*, truth, that one speaks, is of one piece with the *Ma'at* that is the principle of the divinely established social order.

The Egyptians generally taught by concrete examples rather than

by generalization and abstractions. Following their approach, perhaps I can summarize most clearly the rhetoric implicit in the wisdom teachings by means of an imaginative reconstruction of a forensic scene where you, an official who has studied the wisdom precepts, act according to what you have learned.

You have been accused of fraudulent appropriation of grain from the royal tax levies. Your accuser hopes to improve his own position in the bureaucratic pecking order by getting you out of the way. You come into court and stand before three magistrates. You are angry, your stomach churning. You feel the furious words down there about to bubble up, but you restrain them, locking them in "the casket of your belly." You wait in silence, hands folded, while your accuser spews out wrathful lies. The magistrates see his distorted face and hear his heated words, but in you they see only tranquillity, and your silence speaks on your behalf. Surely, they think, this defendant is confident, at one with himself; his harmony must reflect his inner truth. He is a Truly Silent Man. And surely only the friction of deceit could produce agitation such as the accuser exhibits. All this time your accuser is tying himself in knots; a man who cannot control his passions certainly cannot control his words. At a certain moment you realize that your opponent has reached a dead end and the time has come for you to come forward. You begin to speak, quietly but fluently, undoubtedly opening with a long and respectful salutation such as the Egyptians admired. You will not stammer, will not "swallow your heart," not so much because you have practiced oratory as because your tongue is at one with your heart, and honest speech is naturally fluent speech.

You will speak skillfully, an art you have learned not by precept or theory but by endless copying of fine literature—stories, songs, model letters, wisdom instructions, and more—during your student days. You will impress the magistrates with lofty metaphors and numerous word-plays, these intended not to dazzle the listener so much as to point out the truths connected by the similar sounds of their names. You may say:⁷

⁷The fictional setting of the peasant's speech is of course quite different from a forensic setting such as I am reconstructing here. I am quoting these passages to give an idea of Egyptian oratory, for the peasant's words are regarded as the height of eloquence. No actual forensic speeches are preserved from ancient Egypt. Some trial records remain, but they only summarize the testimony of the defendants and do not show what an eloquent defense might have been like.

When you go down to the sea of justice
 And sail on it with a fair wind,⁸
 No squall shall strip away your sail,
 Nor will your boat be idle.
 No accident will affect your mast,
 Your yards will not break.
 You will not founder when you touch land,
 No flood will carry you away.
 You will not taste the river's evils,
 You will not see a frightened face.
 Fish will come darting to you,
 Fatted fowl surround you.
 For you are father to the orphan,
 Husband to the widow,
 Brother to the rejected woman,
 Apron to the motherless.⁹

He who lessens falsehood fosters truth,
 He who fosters the good reduces (evil),
 As satiety's coming removes hunger,
 Clothing removes nakedness;
 As the sky is serene after a storm,
 Warming all who shiver;
 As fire cooks what is raw,
 As water quenches thirst.
 Now see for yourself:
 The arbitrator is a robber,
 The peacemaker makes grief,
 He who should soothe makes sore.
 But he who cheats diminishes justice!
 Rightly filled justice neither falls short nor brims over.¹⁰

Speak justice, do justice,
 For it is mighty;
 It is great, it endures,
 Its worth is tried,
 It leads one to reveredness.

Does the hand-balance tilt? Then it is its scales which carry things. The standard has no fault. Crime does not attain its goal; he who is helpful reaches land.¹¹

⁸A typical word-play: "justice" = *ma'at*, "fair wind" = *ma'w*. These speeches contain several others.

⁹Lichtheim, I, p. 172.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 178f.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 181.

You state your case, protesting your innocence of all wrongdoing. You are examined by the magistrates and evidence is brought. The magistrates consider the case, but it is *you* more than your arguments that sways them. They recognize the marks of truthfulness in your composure, self-restraint, timing, and fluency: you have established your ethos and *that*, supported by your well-crafted words, wins you your case. You will be “established in the mouth of the magistrates” as one who can be entrusted to preserve the *Ma’at* that flows from the gods to Pharaoh and from him to the farthest reaches of the royal bureaucracy, to maintain the stability and harmony of justice in the entire land.

We have seen that the Egyptians attained a fair degree of rhetorical consciousness some 1500 years before the golden age of Greek rhetoric. Profoundly aware of the power of speech, the Egyptians took pleasure in eloquence and sought ways to control and shape speech so as to use that power safely and effectively. This type of rhetorical consciousness should, however, be contrasted with the rhetorical consciousness that George Kennedy finds at the start of Greek rhetoric. This rhetorical consciousness was characterized by four signs: (1) a new rationalism of proofs and arguments; (2) a new interest in dividing speech into parts, each with a special function; (3) an interest in new prose styles; and (4) the rise of the new science of philology.¹² Of these characteristics, only the third, an interest in new prose styles, may have contributed to the rise of Egyptian rhetoric. A variety of prose styles—which are not always clearly distinguished from poetry—did indeed flourish in the periods from which we have rhetorical advice. But since the rhetorical advice does not deal with style as such, it is difficult to make a connection between rhetoric and developments in literary styles.

Egyptian rhetorical thought differs most sharply from the Greek in not being analytical and introspective. It does not examine exemplars of rhetoric in an attempt to isolate forms of argumentation, organization, or style, nor does it look within itself to find ways of generating new rules from existing principles. Lacking its own procedures for expansion and for internal critique, Egyptian rhetoric could not become an independent discipline. It had to remain a variety of rules scattered among general moral and practical counsels.

By classical standards, Egyptian rhetorical theory is clearly unsystematic and inchoate. We may leave the two Sicilians with the

¹²George Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 30–35.

traditional honor of being the first real rhetorical theoreticians. But we should recognize that Egyptian rhetorical theory is highly suited to its purposes, not trying so much to teach the techniques of a craft as to inculcate an attitude or moral posture which will make one's verbal craftsmanship effective. It does not teach how to formulate arguments because it is not argumentation but rather the ethical stance of the speakers that will maintain harmony in the social order, and that is the ultimate goal of Egyptian rhetoric.