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PROGYMNASMATA IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE HUMANISTIC SCHOOL FROM THE LATE 15th TO THE MID-18th CENTURY*

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Though the Greek noun *progymnasmata* denotes any elementary exercises, since late antiquity up to the 18th century it was used mostly with respect to a range of exercises in the composition of minor rhetorical forms and genres, ordered by the difficulty level, meant as a direct preparation for delivering declamations, which were followed by the complete speeches in all three classical genres (*deliberativum, demonstrativum, iudiciale*). *Progymnasmata* are also handbooks with theoretical and practical examples of such exercises. The most important ancient progymnasmatic text seems to be the handbook by Aphthonius of Antioch, dated as of the end of the 4th century, which due to its inclusion in the *Corpus Hermogenianum* at the turn of the 5th century has replaced the earlier treatises by Theon (1st cent. AD) and the *Progymnasmata* attributed to Hermogenes (3rd cent.) and became the canonical text for the Byzantine school. Later on, it has been included by the Greek émigrés in the rhetorical and Greek syllabus in the 15th century Italy, to become – in the 16th century – one of the major compendia of rhetorical composition in both Catholic and Protestant humanistic schools.

The topic of the dissertation is the progymnasmatic model of Aphthonius and its reception and transformations that took place in Europe since the end of the 15th century up to the mid-18th century. In the last 60 years this topic has been of interest of such authors as D.L. Clark, H. Hunger, G.A. Kennedy, M. Kraus and J.-Cl. Margolin, while in Poland particularly of Professors Helena Cichočka and

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Jakub Z. Lichański. However, current literature lacks a monographic treatment of rhetorical *progymnasmata* from their ancient origins up to the modern times.

The dissertation *Progymnasmata in the Theory and Practice of the Humanistic School from the Late 15th to the Mid-18th Century* fills in this gap and is dedicated to the characterization of the ancient progymnasmatic tradition, starting from the first traces of elementary exercises in the sophists and in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, followed in Roman times in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's and Quintilian's treatises, and finally in the Greek rhetorical theory of the imperial period (Theon, Hermogenes) and in the early Byzantine works by Nicolaus. However, most attention has been paid to the *Progymnasmata* by Aphthonius. I discuss the following fourteen exercises of the rhetorician of Antioch: fable (*mythos, fabula*), or, as defined by Aphthonius, "a fictive statement, imagining truth" (*Prog. I*); narrative (*diegema, narratio*), that is "an exposition of the happened or potentially happened event" (*Prog. II*); chreia (*chreia, chria, usus*), that is "a brief reminiscence referring to some person in a particular way" (*Prog. III*); sentence or maxim (*gnome, sententia*), that is "a summary declarative statement, recommending or condemning something" (*Prog. IV*); refutation (*anaskeue, destructio, refutatio*) "of some matter at hand" (*Prog. V*); and confirmation (*kataskeue, confirmatio*), that is "its justification" or "corroboration" (*Prog. VI*); commonplace (*koinos topos, locus communis*), that is "a statement that amplifies particular bad deeds" (*Prog. VII*); encomium or praise (*enkomion, encomium, laus*), that is "an expository of inherent excellences" (*Prog. VIII*); invective (*psogos, vituperatio*), that is "an expository of inherent evils" (*Prog. IX*); comparison (*synkrisis, comparatio*), "that make comparison by setting something side-by-side, bringing the greater together with what is compared to it" (*Prog. X*); *ethopoeia*, that is "an imitation of the character (*ethos*) of a proposed person" (*Prog. XI*); description (*ekphrasis, descriptio*), "a composition bringing the subject clearly before the eyes" (*Prog. XII*); thesis or argument (*thesis*), "a verbal examination of any subject under consideration" (*Prog. XIII*) and introduction of a law (*nomou eisphora, legislatio; Prog. XIV*). Each chapter of Aphthonius' handbook consists of a theoretical part and elaborated examples of particular exercises. And it was thanks to these examples, together with the clarity of exposition, that these *Progymnasmata* came to obtain a dominant position in the Byzantine education.

Starting from the 6th century the rhetorical education system in both the Eastern and Western part of the former Roman Empire became to be gradually differentiated. In Byzantium the *Corpus Hermogenianum* was formed, being the basic school text up to the fall of Constantinople in 1453; moreover, the comments to Aphthonius (John of Sardes, John Geometres, John Doxopates and anonymous scholia) and the *exempla* based on his theory (e.g. those of John Geometres, Constantine Akropolites, Nikephoros Basilakes, Nikephoros Chrysoberges, George of Cyprus or George Pachymeres) were written. On the other hand, in the Latin West, the teaching of the art of eloquence was subordinated to the

trivium dominated by grammar, while *ars rhetorica* gave way to *ars dictaminis*, which grew out of the theory of letter and placed a strong emphasis on written form. Therefore, the knowledge of the *progymnasmata* in the Latin Middle Ages has mainly come from a free translation of Hermogenes made by Priscian of Caesarea, probably at the beginning of the 6th century. Apart from the Aphthonius manuscripts which were present in partially Greek Calabria, Apulia and Sicily, his text appeared as late as the times of Leontius Pilatus and Manuel Chrysoloras.

The first form of the reception of ancient *progymnasmata* attested in printing was their translations into Latin. As early as 1507, a year before the publication of the Greek original text, the *editio princeps* of a translation by Joannes Maria Catanaeus was published in Bologna. Even earlier, in 1489, the *editio princeps* of a translation of Aphthonius' narrative was published by Angelo Poliziano (Politianus) in his *Miscellaneorum centuria prima*. In the seventies and eighties of the 15th century the translations of the whole work of the rhetorician of Antiochia were made by Rudolph Agricola and Antonius Bonfinius. Moreover, in the 16th century new translations were published: by the French humanist Gentianus Hervetus (ca. 1520), a contamination of translations by Agricola and Catanaeus made by the professor of rhetoric in Marburg, Reinhard Lorich (*ed. pr.* 1542), a translation by Natale Conti (between 1550 and 1560), and finally by the Spanish humanist Franciscus Scobarius (*ed. pr.* 1558) and the professor of universities in Tübingen and Leipzig, Joachim Cemerarius (*ed. pr.* 1567). The only translations made in the 17th century was by the professor of Latin and Greek in Leiden, Daniel Heinsius (1626) that clearly related to Scobarius' work, and a translation which in turn was based on Heinsius by the Swedish professor of Uppsala, Johannes Schefferus (*ed. pr.* 1670). Among the translations listed above the most remarkable are those which marked their presence in the humanistic system of rhetoric teaching in form of textbooks printed and used in various Renaissance and Baroque European centres. The comparison of the most important translations, i.e. the earliest ones by Agricola and Catanaeus, followed by Lorich's contamination which was published some 150 times up to 1718, and less popular translations by Scobarius and Camerarius show technical differences in the attitude to the Greek original of the particular humanists. In the most important translations of Aphthonius' handbook analysed in the dissertation some kind of development can be seen: from Bonfinius who depends largely on Priscian's terminology and Agricola and Catanaeus whose versions still contained some errors and omissions, through Scobarius, more rooted in the classical Roman terminology (mainly that of Cicero and Quintilian) though still showing some inconsistencies, up to the diligent and precise translation by Camerarius. A separate place here should be given to Lorich's contamination, where some parts of Aphthonius' work were transferred to the commentary (*Scholia*).

Another trend in the 16th century reception of *progymnasmata* was formed by handbooks – compilations of a translation or a paraphrase of the work of the rhetorician of Antiochia and the theory of Quintilian and Priscian. Here, the most

important text is *De primis apud rhetorem exercitationibus praeceptiones* by Petrus Mosellanus, published for the first time in 1523, simultaneously in three different places (Leipzig, Antwerp and Cologne). *Praeceptiones* are important not only due to their author, a renowned humanist called a “Lepiziger Melanchthon”, but also because they became one of the sources for the popular *Scholia* by Lorich. On the other hand, the important context for the work of Mosellanus itself is provided by the *Progymnasmata rhetorica* by the professor of eloquence Antonius Lullus of Majorca (*ed. pr.* ca. 1548). Besides, an interesting point of reference for strictly progymnasmatic texts is furnished by the following works: *De oratore libri septem* by Lullus (1558) and *Elementa rhetoricae* by Camerarius (*ed. pr.* 1541). All three treatises show changes in the sequence and number of Aphthonius’ exercises which anticipate trends present in the 17th and 18th century handbooks, particularly those by Jacob Masen and Johann Christoph Gottsched.

Humanistic comments on the Latin translations of Aphthonius played the key role in the reception of the Greek rhetorician’s *Progymnasmata*. They played a role similar to that of the Byzantine scholia, although their main sources (both as regards theory and examples) were not the writings of Aristotle or in particular Hermogenes, but most of all the works of Cicero, Quintilian, Vergil, Ovid and Erasmus as well as the other authors of the ancient Rome and early modern period. The most important publication of that type were the *Scholia* by Reinhard Lorich, attached by their author to his contamination of Agricola’s and Catanaeus’ translations. They first appeared in Marburg in 1542, and starting from the Frankfurt edition of 1546 they have been published in unchanged form until 1718. Other texts of particular importance are: the earliest humanistic commentary on Aphthonius made by Alardus Aemstelredamus and attached to the Cologne edition of Agricola’s works (including his translation of the *Progymnasmata*) of 1539 and the later publication *Methodica explicatio atque illustratio praeceptorum* of the Leipzig theologian and eloquence professor, Burchard Harbart (*ed. pr.* 1591). It was the Dutch humanist Alardus who first attempted to relate the *Progymnasmata* to the Roman and humanistic rhetorical theory and his work can be seen as one of the main sources for Lorich (who, however, limits the number of references to *De inventione dialectica* by Agricola, so frequent in the Dutch writer’s work); he also refers less frequently to John Chrysostom and George of Trabizond and more frequently to Quintilian and Priscian and expands largely the examples. On the other hand, Harbart introduces the pro-Lutheran and anti-Catholic topics, which influences Johann Micraelius in the following century.

The manuscript rhetorical treatises are another proof of the presence of *progymnasmata* in humanistic schools, e.g. Adam Burski, professor and repeated rector of the Zamość Academy, who refers in his *In Aphthonii Progymnasmata commentarius* among others to Byzantine sources, or the manuscript notes from Danzig lectures of Johann Mochinger: *Tractatus de progymnasmatibus oratoriis rudimentis* and *Progymnasmatum oratoriorum delineatio*. The ubiquity of preparatory exercises in rhetoric in the 16th and 17th centuries is also confirmed by

their traces in the curricula of Cracow Academy or famous St. Paul's School and in the works of such renowned authors as Montaigne, Shakespeare and Milton.

From the 1640s onwards, two trends became prominent in the reception of *progymnasmata*: on the one hand, the popularity of Lorich's contamination of Agricola's and Cataneus' translations supplemented by his *Scholia* which have been continuously published, and since 1655 significantly expanded with the additional *Auctarium continens variationem tractationis fabularum, et chreiarum*, and on the other the proliferation of textbooks largely modifying Aphthonius' model of preliminary exercises.

Moreover, in the initial period (the forties and fifties of the 17th century) a clear difference may be noticed between Aphthonius' reception by Jesuit and Lutheran education. Somewhat earlier are the treatises of Lutheran authors: *Exercitia Oratoria* by Valentin Thilo (*ed. pr.* 1645) and *Progymnasmata Aphthoniana* by the professor of Paedagogium in Stettin Johann Micraelius (*ed. pr.* 1656). Both keep fourteen exercises of Aphthonius unchanged with only slight modifications of their theory, but at the same time they introduce completely new examples. While Thilo bases the subject matter of his examples on the ideologically neutral ancient world, Micraelius, especially in chapters dedicated to the narrative and refutation, starts a bitter anti-Catholic dispute. Jesuit handbooks of the greatest interest are: *Palaestra Oratoria* by the German author Jacob Masen (*ed. pr.* 1659) and *Candidatus rhetoricae* (*ed. pr.* 1659) and *Novus candidatus rhetoricae* (*ed. pr.* 1667) by the French author François Antoine Pomey. The first author focuses in the third book of his comprehensive (over 1000 pages) treatise mainly on fables, narratives, descriptions, *loci communes*, *theseis* and lastly on *chreiai* and sentences. The latter on the other hand, describes by turn fable and narrative, *chreia*, *gnome*/sentence, and finally, jointly: *ethopoeia* and *thesis* as well as commonplace, *refutatio* and confirmation, encomium and invective. However, Pomey's greatest merit lies in combining preliminary exercises of Aphthonius with the elocution theory of Soarez taken from his *De arte poetica libri tres*, comprising period, figures of words and thought, and amplification. This combination resulted in more than 160 editions of the French Jesuit's handbook (together with the *Candidatus rhetoricae* version expanded in 1711 by Joseph de Jouvancy) until the end of the 18th century, to become one of the most renowned textbooks of the Baroque.

Other remarkable works are Christian Weise's treatises which develop the *chreia* theory: *Politischer Redner* (*ed. pr.* 1677), its Latin equivalent *Institutiones oratoriae ad praxin hodierni seculi accommodatae* (*ed. pr.* 1687) and the excerpt of the latter *Subsidium puerile de artificio & usu chreiarum* (*ed. pr.* 1689) as well as the last of the handbooks which directly refers to Aphthonius and Theon: *Vorübungen der Beredsamkeit* by Johann Christoph Gottsched (*ed. pr.* 1754). Finally, *progymnasmata* can be found in numerous manuscripts of rhetoricians and in the notes of the students of schools situated in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania (mainly in historical manuscripts from Jesuit and Piarist colleges).

The progymnasmatic texts of the Renaissance, Baroque and early Enlightenment periods prove that amongst ancient handbooks for preparatory exercises in rhetoric, *Progymnasmata* by Aphthonius were the most popular, with three basic trends in their reception:

- “translatory” – developing mainly since the 1480s until the 1560s, represented by massively reprinted translations by Rudolph Agricola, Joannes Maria Catanaeus, Franciscus Scobarius and Joachim Camerarius, as well as numerous less popular translations from Antonius Bonfinius to Johannes Schefferus;

- “commentary” – secondary to the “translatory” one, as referring usually to both the translation and Latinized terminology. It is represented mainly by the 16th-century works by Alardus Aemstelredamus, Reinhard Lorich and Burchard Harbart, which adapted the Greek preliminary exercises to the needs of a Latin school by combining them with the Roman rhetorical theory and new translations;

- „compilatory” – represented in the 16th century by the handbooks of Petrus Mosellanus, Antonius Lullus and Joachim Camerarius which combined the definitions and divisions of Aphthonius directly with theories of other ancient rhetoricians (mainly the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero, Quintilian and Priscian), while in the 17th century – by the works of Johann Micraelius, Jacob Masen and François Pomey. They compiled the work of Aphthonius (in the contaminated translation of Agricola and Catanaeus) and Lorich’s *Scholia* with the 16th century treatises on poetics and rhetoric by Melanchthon, Scaliger, and particularly Soarez.

A review of the most important humanistic translations of Aphthonius’ *Progymnasmata*, commentaries on this work and handbooks referring to its preliminary exercises leads also to the conclusion that the most important role has been played by those distinguished by:

- relatively greatest simplicity and greatest possible degree of latinisation of Greek terminology, which is particularly evident in earlier translations, including the most popular contamination of Agricola’s and Catanaeus’ translations;

- fusion of progymnasmatic theory with the Roman and humanistic rhetoric;

- predominance of ancient and (to a lesser degree) biblical examples over the contemporary (religious and political) ones.

These features can be found above all in the handbook developed by Lorich and, in the 17th century, in the *Candidatus rhetoricae* by Pomey. No wonder that these books dominated the education of almost all of Europe, and their popularity is testified by, among others, a total of over 300 editions. They have also influenced the Renaissance and Baroque literature to the degree not lesser than the treatises of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and, among modern authors, Melanchthon, Soarez and others.