In seventeenth-century France the truly significant period of development for rhetoric begins in 1635 with the founding of the Academy. It is often wrong to emphasize dates in anything as complex and fluid as literary and intellectual history, but it is clear that in this case the date marks the start of a long alliance between rhetoric and official French policy. For the next fifty years, approximately speaking, no one could doubt the connection between the Academy and its program, on the one hand, and, on the other, what the monarchy and its ministers planned for France. Richelieu was, of course, the first patron of the group. In 1642, Pierre Ségui er, chancelier de France and an intimate of the Cardinal, of Anne d'Autriche, and of Louis XIV, succeeded to the post. Thirty years later, at the death of Ségui er, Louis XIV declared himself the protector of the Academy and set aside a place in the Louvre for its séances. Colbert interested himself directly in its work: it is known that he tried to stimulate its members to greater zeal and speed in their tasks than they sometimes showed. To recall these names is enough to indicate the kind of support given to the institution and the degree of importance attached to its program.

From the outset, the work of the Academy—as one may
see from the *lettres patentes*, the first deliberations, the early discourses read at the meetings, and from other references—was linked in one way or another with the notion of éloquence. In the official documents, Louis XIII declared: “Qu’après avoir fait tant d’exploits mémorables nous n’avions plus qu’à ajouter les choses agréables aux nécessaires, et l’ornement à l’utilité; et qu’il [Richelieu] jugeait que nous ne pouvions mieux commencer que par le plus noble de tous les arts, qui est l’éloquence.”

The term reappeared as the members sought to define their task: “Dès la seconde assemblée, sur la question qui fut proposée de sa fonction [i.e., de l’Académie], M. Chapelain représenta qu’à son avis elle devait être de travailler à la pureté de notre langue; et de la rendre capable de la plus haute éloquence. . . .” In his projet, Chapelain repeated his view that the aim of the Academy was to make eloquence possible—this time it is “la dernière éloquence”—and went on to say that two ample treatises were needed, a rhetoric and a poetic. These would provide rules for writers in prose and in verse. But it would be impossible to compose them until a treatise on grammar was ready, since the grammar, as he conceived it, would furnish the body of the language, the necessary basis to which one might add the “ornaments of oratory and the figures of poetry.” Moreover, prior to all these tasks lay that of compiling a dictionary, a treasury of elements out of which the rest could be constructed. As is evident, the idea of a cumulative series is what gives the plan its force: each of the verbal disciplines furnishes, by the investigation of its characteristic problems, the bases of the following one. At one end of the sequence is a collection of words tested but as yet unused (theoretically speaking); at the other end is the kind of knowledge (that is, poetics) needed for the most elaborate kind of expression.

The efforts to realize this logical scheme met over the
years many obstacles: the irregular schedule of the séances; poor attendance; the unwieldiness of the group; the pull of activities other than those outlined in the program; the criticisms and ironies of those on the "outside." But finally, after an interval of approximately sixty years, the Dictionary appeared in 1694. The preface of that work recalled the original program, without making any promises as to when the series of treatises would be finished.

One might conclude, therefore, that the grammar, the rhetoric, and the poetics had not been and never would be realized: the grand undertaking had failed.

However, I believe it possible to say, without simply indulging in paradox, that the whole plan had been effectively carried out. The official grammar, rhetoric, and poetics, in so far as they were write-able at all, had been composed through a curious combination of logic and favorable circumstances. Obviously the realization of the tasks could not wait until 1694 or thereafter. By that time basic moral and artistic attitudes had undergone a change. Leading critics were moving toward what was to become the Encyclopedists' conception of art works as products of the imagination. The terms of the discussion were arising out of psychological rather than technical considerations. Moreover, Louis XIV's regime, no longer a stable background against which literature might emerge as a splendid ornament, provided more and more subjects for critical analysis and for satire.

But to return to my main point: the intellectual task of realizing treatises on language and its literary uses had been done, not by the Academy as a group, but by individuals who were members of it or who worked obviously from the starting points that Chapelain had originally outlined. In other words, there was in the middle decades of the century a widely-held view, more an attitude than a theory, that had been made explicit by the Academy. As I have suggested, it is
the conviction that literature is work with words according to distinct methods that lend themselves to explicit and even systematic treatment. To those who wished to pursue the matter further, this constituted a way of asking the questions; and writers like Vaugelas, Rapin, Boileau, and Bouhours worked out as best they could—as individuals—the consequences of this basic attitude.

Vaugelas' Remarques sur la langue française of 1647 falls on the borderline between grammar and rhetoric. One will not find in it, of course, anything like a systematic presentation of the topics associated with grammar, although many of the materials for such a treatment are definitely present, and Vaugelas himself believes that he has given answers to the outstanding questions of word forms and syntax. The strong emphasis on usage, which he describes in the Preface as "the King, the tyrant, the arbiter, the master of languages," indicates clearly the grammatical aspect or tendency of his work. He thinks of himself, not as a legislator, but as a witness, one who wishes to describe, in his well-known phrase, "... la façon de parler de la plus saine partie de la cour, conformément à la façon d'écrire de la plus saine partie des auteurs de ce temps." I do not mean to imply, of course, that his description is purely objective or purely factual. The quotation shows his normative bias; and where the facts fail him, he falls back on reason, that is, where usage is doubtful, he argues by analogy from it in order to arrive at a preferred word or form.

The real centers of interest for him, however, take him over the boundaries of grammar into rhetoric. The two technical notions in the light of which he works are pureté and netteté of language. These two qualities are the bases of elo-
quence, he tells Ségui er in the dedicatory epistle, and he restates the point many times before the Remarques are concluded. In other words, he is looking beyond grammar to the ultimate use of language; or, to put it in another way, in writing his grammar, he looks for guidance toward rhetoric, a discipline higher on the scale of verbal arts. As a matter of fact, it is obvious that Quintilian, the teacher of eloquence, is at the origin of Vaugelas’ distinction.

Un langage pur, est ce que Quintilien appelle *emendata oratio* et un langage net, ce qu’il appelle *dilucida oratio*. Ce sont deux choses si différentes, qu’il y a une infinité de gens, qui écrivent nettement, c’est-à-dire clairement et intelligiblement en toutes sortes de matières, s’expliquant si bien qu’à la simple lecture on conçoit leur intention, et néanmoins il n’y a rien de si impur que leur langage. [Remarques, pp. 577–78.]

Again, in his long article on *équivoques*, Vaugelas refers specifically to Quintilian’s chapter “De perspicuitate” in Book VIII of the *Institutio oratoria*. And for another clear sign of the degree to which the rhetorical vocabulary dominates the thinking of Vaugelas, note the diction of the following lines from the Preface, where he lists subjects an author might have treated in connection with the French language. The leading ideas appear in the traditional, cumulative order that runs from correctness through elegance to rhythm.

Après cela il eût encore fait voir qu’il n’y a jamais eu de langue où l’on écrit plus purement et plus nettement qu’en la nôtre, qui soit plus ennemie des équivoques et de toute sorte d’obscurité, plus grave et plus douce tout ensemble, plus propre pour toute sorte de styles, plus chaste en ses locutions, plus judicieuse en ses figures, qui aime plus l’élégance et l’ornement, mais qui craigne plus l’affection. Enfin il eût fait voir qu’il n’y en a point qui observe plus le nombre et la cadence dans ses périodes, que la nôtre, en quoi consiste la véritable marque de la perfection des langues. [Préface, Remarques, p. 3, § xv.]
A similar passage occurs at the end of the Remarques, in the very last paragraph, in fact:

A la pureté, et à la netteté du style, il y a encore d'autres parties à ajouter, la propreté des mots et des phrases, l'élegance, la douceur, la majesté, la force, et ce qui résulte de tout cela, l'air et la grâce, qu'on appelle le je ne sais quoi, où le nombre, la brièveté et la naïveté de l'expression, ont encore beaucoup de part. [Remarques, p. 593.]

The tying of purity and clarity of language on to the order of stylistic qualities traditionally followed by the rhetoricians is already unmistakable, but Vaugelas goes on to make the connection explicit. It is not for him, he says, to treat these other subjects: they exceed his powers; they require no less than a "Quintilien français." At the end of the Preface, just after the lines I have quoted above, he returns to the need for such a master. In fact, Vaugelas has a candidate in mind.

He allows himself a short nominating speech, tactfully omitting, however, the name of the nominee: "La gloire en est réservée toute entière à une personne qui médite depuis quelque temps notre rhétorique, et à qui rien ne manque pour exécuter un si grand dessein. . . . " Vaugelas' period flows on. His candidate is a product of Athens and Rome, as well as of Paris; his eloquence bears the mark of the best minds of those three famous cities; he is one of the great ornaments of the bar and of the Academy, one whose tongue and whose pen are equally eloquent. . . . "C'est celui qui doit être ce Quintilien français, que j'ai souhaité à la fin de mes Remarques" (Préface, Remarques, p. 3, §XV).

In summary, then, one may say that the Remarques of Vaugelas stem directly from the conception of literary disciplines which the Academy had expressed in its early plans. Although his work does, indeed, fall mainly in the domain of grammar, he defines or understands grammar as the basis
of rhetorical elaboration. Occasionally he touches on subjects usually associated with rhetoric. Still, he feels that the big questions there, especially those dealing with the beauties of elocution, will have to be treated by another hand. And, as we have seen, he knows someone "qui médite depuis quelque temps notre rhétorique."

Pellisson and d'Olivet furnish in their history the key to the identity of the man Vaugelas had in mind. He was Olivier Patru, an avocat au Parlement, who was received into the Academy in 1640. A lawyer who had once had great success at the bar, he became, as time passed, more and more preoccupied with language and letters. He is supposed to have helped Vaugelas with his Remarques. He was an important collaborator, along with Rapin and Bouhours, on the Dictionnaire of Richelet. According to Bouhours, whose opinion is reported by Pellisson and d'Olivet, he was "... l'homme du Royaume qui savait le mieux notre langue." And he knew it not simply as a grammarian, but as an orator, we are told. The passage at the end of Vaugelas' Preface, from which I have quoted above, is recalled:

Une si rare louange s'adresse à M. Patru; et c'est lui qui devait être ce Quintilien français, que Vaugelas souhaite à la fin de ses remarques.

On le regardait effectivement comme un autre Quintilien, comme un oracle infaillible en matière de goût et de critique. Tous ceux qui sont aujourd'hui nos maîtres par leurs écrits se firent honneur d'être ses disciples. [Histoire, II, 177.]

The reputation of infallibility is somewhat shaken for us by two bits of advice that Patru gave. He is the "maître de notre éloquence" to whom La Fontaine refers in the preface to his fables, and this master, on hearing of La Fontaine's plan of doing his fables in verse, warned the poet against
the idea, because he believed that the genre required something like the brevity and dryness of Aesop’s prose. On another occasion, he advised Boileau that the art of poetry could not be elaborated in a poetic form: it was not a “matière susceptible d’ornement” (Histoire, p. 178).

Indeed, where his own work was concerned, Patru seems to have been a victim of this critical and negative temperament. Nothing ever came of his plan to produce the French rhetoric. At his death, a projet informe was found, but that was all. “Il n’était pas homme d’un grand travail,” say Pellisson and d’Olivet, and they add: “D’ailleurs le soin excessif qu’il apportait à la correction de ses ouvrages, lui donnait le temps de vieillir sur une période. Le mal est que ses affaires domestiques en souffrirent, et qu’à la fin il fut durement vexé par ses créanciers.”

If Patru had lived up to the expectations of Vaugelas and had composed a rhetoric that was authentically French, he would no doubt have had even more influence than he seems to have had, anyway. He embodied the aspiration of the Academy toward regular eloquence. He worked to revive and continue the ancient rhetorical tradition—too piously, one may say, and yet not without tact or independence. No one knows precisely what his doctrine was or might have been. However, we find some indication of it in a letter to the “Révérend Père *** de la compagnie de Jésus” that is published in his Oeuvres.

In this letter he takes up an important subject: the very possibility of éloquence in the seventeenth century. It had been argued that neither the materials nor the occasions for oratory such as that of Demosthenes or Cicero existed any longer. Patru replies that a certain degree of moral and intellectual development, that is, a particular state of moeurs and of esprits, must be present for it: this is presupposed by all the rest, since it results in efforts to cultivate and per-
fect language. That said, he takes up the terms of the argument. He claims that the subjects and opportunities for the three ancient types of oratory—judicial, deliberative, and demonstrative—do still exist. He even emphasizes the possibility of deliberative oratory, although he is obliged to admit that the political regime under which he lives differs widely from that of the ancient republics in which deliberative oratory had flourished. Furthermore, we need to recognize, he says, that we have in France possibilities that Cicero and Demosthenes did not have: the subjects and techniques of l'éloquence de la chaire. Then, with what seems to be at least a partial return to his original point—the importance of moral and intellectual culture—he writes: “Enfin je conclus de tout cela que si nous n'avions point d'éloquents, ce n'est ni faute de matière, ni faute d'occasion, mais faute ou d'esprit ou de travail.”

According to Pellisson and d'Olivet, the model he set for himself was Cicero, and they allow him all the virtues of his model except “force et véhémence.” His gentleness of character precluded these qualities, they say in his defense, adding an amiable non sequitur to the effect that one must consider the many vices of which he had to purge French eloquence. And so, if the age did not have a Quintilian in the form of a treatise, it did have one in the flesh, and just missed having a Cicero, too.

There were a number of other and more tangible attempts to solve the problem of rhetoric as a discipline to be constituted. The subsequent history of eloquence in the seventeenth century provides, in fact, an interesting example of the way in which an intellectual question or need comes to be widely felt and then acted upon. The logic of the underlying literary theory posed the problem with unmistakable
clarity. But, to be effective, logic had to have help from accidents of birth, training, and circumstance: it was necessary to wait for the appearance of an individual able to bring about a solution in the form of a treatise. That was the natural response to make to the challenge, it seemed, in an age that tended to believe strongly in the value of formally conceived arts and sciences.

Eventually two treatises did appear, one in 1659 and the other in 1671, both claiming to fill the need that had been indicated. What was called for was so obvious that they even had identical titles: *La Rhétorique française*. The first was written by René Bary, conseiller et historiographe du Roi, the second by the Sieur Le Gras, avocat au Parlement.

Each of these works is placed explicitly in the continuing stream of concern for eloquence. The fulsome introduction to the treatise of Bary, signed by Le Grand, sieur des Hermières, another royal counselor and member of the bar, mentions the “promise” of the Academy and the hopes centering on Patru:

> Je ne crois pas, Monsieur, offenser votre modestie, si je dis que c'est à vous seul, à qui notre siècle doit entièrement l'élégance du discours et la beauté de l'éloquence. . . . Il y a longtemps que la célèbre Académie, la gloire du Royaume, et la maîtresse de l'éloquence, nous avait fait la promesse d'une Rhétorique si souhaitée. Mais enfin, Monsieur, votre libéralité l'en a pleinement acquittée: et nous attendrons avec moins d'impatience que l'éloquent Patru joigne sa magnificence à votre libéralité, et, qu'il y ajoute l'excès de ses trésors à l'abondance de vos richesses.

Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, he goes on to say, was the first to achieve uniformity of style in the French language and to discover its possibilities for periodic rhythms, but he credits Bary as being the first to formulate the rules with certainty.

> “C'est pourquoi les plus vains et les plus envieux sont contraints d'avouer que votre Rhétorique doit régner dans l'empire des belles-lettres” (Bary, p. xxxi).
In his turn, Le Gras refers twelve years later to previous efforts to compose a French rhetoric and to the end of Vaugelas’ Preface. The author of the Remarques, as capable as anyone of doing the job, he says, had left it for someone else who had been meditating on it for a long time and who had all the needed qualifications. “Mais cette rhétorique prétendue étant demeurée sans éclore depuis vingt-quatre ans qu’elle a été promise; cela nous doit faire croire que la mort de l’auteur, ou quelque autre accident nous a dérobé cet avantage.”

He obviously intends to challenge the “reign” of Bary’s treatise “in the empire of belles-lettres.” He knows his predecessor’s work, to judge from the slighting remarks he makes about a rhetoric “. . . qui a paru au jour depuis quelques années,” and from a passage that he quotes disapprovingly from Le Grand’s extravagant introduction. But he evidently has decided to dismiss all previous work as unfruitful and as too general.

When we turn to the examination of these two arts, we see some, but not much, originality in the treatments of the subject. The authors do attempt to write specifically French rhetorics. They know that they must describe the circumstances in which eloquence may occur in France in the seventeenth century, circumstances necessarily different from those to which the classical theories were adjusted. Whenever they think of their subject matter in relatively narrow terms, that is, when they think of it primarily as oratory, they tend to substitute for the ancient division (deliberative, judicial and demonstrative or epideictic oratory) the distinction of eloquence into that of the chaire and that of the barreau. They emphasize the novelty of Christian eloquence, although they see in Augustine, if not in their pagan masters, Cicero, Quintilian, and Aristotle, a patron and source of instruction. The differences in the geniuses of the languages are given
special and usually short treatments: French has resources not available to Greek and Latin, and vice versa. In the main, these comments are grammatical rather than rhetorical.

On the whole, the two treatises are best thought of as redoings of Quintilian, with help from his predecessors and followers. That of Le Gras is more comprehensive in this way. His work is only an abrégé, he says, although it contains the main precepts of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Hermogenes, Augustine, Scaliger, Erasmus, Vossius, “et plusieurs autres.” (In the seventeenth century, plusieurs usually equals beaucoup.) Principally, though, he follows Quintilian, who, in the opinion of all those who know, was the “most excellent” master or teacher of rhetoric in Rome. But in the cases of both Bary and Le Gras, it is clear that they are translating, paraphrasing, and popularizing a doctrine already in existence, already having its classic exposition. In so doing, they obviously make a real contribution to the vitality of the dominant view of literature and the way in which it is composed. And yet one must say more, I think, than that they repeat effectively, along with inevitable variation and some originality, what they find in their models. Their sense of the tradition they represent has to be grasped apart from the details of their treatises. What counts for more is their way of conceiving the doctrine as a whole and its relations to other disciplines. Bary’s prefacer makes very broad claims:

Véritablement, l’art de bien dire, et la souveraine éloquence dont je parle, est la plus importante pièce de la Politique; puisque c’est elle qui enseigne à persuader les esprits et à fléchir les volontés dans les cabinets des Princes, dans les compagnies souveraines, dans les temples et dans les armées.¹⁷

Le Grand does not limit the place and power of rhetoric to the practical decisions of politics. Taking up the Ciceronian ideal of a wedding of wisdom and artistic expression, he finds
a place in philosophy for his discipline, not merely as a method of exposition, but also as a method leading to the solution of problems. Perhaps the most interesting assertion, for the student of seventeenth-century literature, is the one that locates rhetoric between dialectic and poetry. It may use the reasoning techniques of the former while avoiding its abstractness and technicality; and it may use rhythm or nombre without precise counting of syllables. It is easy, within this framework, to move rhetoric toward either of the extremes. Having first provided himself with a classical precedent, Le Grand turns first toward poetry and then toward logic.

Nous pouvons encore parler plus nettement, et nous pouvons dire avec le Stoïque Posidonius que la poésie est une oraison nombrée, qui n'est différente de la rhétorique que par la proportion de certaines mesures, et que par l'excès de quelques licences; que ces mesures et ces excès ne donnent point d'atteintes ni de changements à la substance de la chose; et que la rhétorique peut subsister non seulement dans le nombre des fictions poétiques et figurées, mais aussi dans la méthode des syllogismes épidictiques ou contentieux. [Bary, pp. vii–viii.]

Here is surely an interesting variation from our original set of terms—dictionary, grammar, rhetoric, poetic—where precise relationships were not expressed. There was a sequence, foreseen in the program, as I have noted, since each of the later treatises would depend on the earlier one or ones. But here we learn first of rhetoric as a tool in politics and in philosophy, where it is widely applicable, and then as a productive art of discourse which takes its place between dialectic (or logic) and poetry. The mean term differs from the extremes only in degree. This is especially true where poetry is involved: "... concluons hardiment que la poétique n'est autre chose, que la partie la plus contrainte et la plus observée de l'art oratoire" (Bary, p. viii). It is reasonable, therefore, to say with Cicero that Homer was a great orator, with Her-
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mogenes that he was an excellent rhetorician, and with Demetrius that he was the teacher of eloquence.

Le Grand qualifies this abstract view of poetics as a part of rhetoric. As things happened in history, he believes, the natural movement was from poetic eloquence, with its original burden of laws, moral principles, religious mysteries, and secrets of nature, to the looser discipline of eloquence itself. By the discovery of the principles of rhetoric, the human mind managed to disengage speech from the rules of poetry. He applies this myth to the history of French language and literature: in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries he sees the flowering of poetry as leading to the perfecting of prose, as opening the way to such things as elegance and ornament. (The treatise of Bary could then appear as the climax of this evolution in French thought and expression!)

Le Gras is hardly less bold in his claims for rhetoric. In his dedication, which is addressed to Colbert, he says concerning the worth of his subject:

C'est, Monseigneur, le plus important de tous les arts, la plus relevée de toutes les sciences humaines, qui enseigne à faire servir les autres sciences au commerce de la vie civile, au bien et au salut des hommes; les détourner de leurs mauvaises entreprises; les consoler dans leurs afflictions; les soutenir dans leurs défaillances; et les relever de leur abattement et de leur chute. Elle montre comment il faut défendre leurs biens, leur vie et leur honneur. Enfin cet art contient les règles nécessaires pour défendre la vérité, et la faire triompher du mensonge. C'est ce qui lui a fait donner le titre glorieux de Reine des Sciences.18

A little later he adds that this queen of the sciences is also the most stately and magnificent ornament of any empire.

He tells, in his preface, of two enthusiasms that motivate him. He admired Quintilian as the teacher of rhetoric and
he admired Colbert for his efforts to equal the achievements, or more exactly the ornaments, of the Greek and Roman "empires." Since the greatest of the ornaments is eloquence, he felt himself obliged to treat of that art, and to do so according to the example of the Latin master.

In spite of these claims, one senses a defensive tone here and there in the Preface. Many people misunderstand the position of his science, he says; they put rhetoric after the other disciplines instead of before and above them. This inadequate conception causes young men to be prejudiced against it, to scorn "cet art excellent de la parole." He tries, therefore, to explain why the ancients held it in high favor and why he wants to help it regain its prestige.

All this indicates, I think, that by 1670 we are reaching a critical point in taste and in theorizing about eloquence. Le Gras has composed a treatise based on a model that has lost some of the magic it had twenty years before. As we shall see, Rapin is already putting together at this same time a treatment of eloquence that is not only more independent in spirit than that of Le Gras but also more flexible and accessible than that of Quintilian. And so Le Gras finds himself presenting his work to a generation that is somewhat indifferent to the claims and technicalities of rhetoric. But he remains convinced of its educative value. He sees it as inseparable from moral virtue—the theme is the ancient one of the vir bonus dicendi peritus, fully developed by Quintilian—and he concludes: "En un mot, il n'y a point d'ouvrage dans toute l'Antiquité plus capable d'éclairer l'esprit, de former le jugement, ni de rendre un homme habile et capable des plus grandes choses que les institutions oratoires de Quintilien" (Préface, La Rhétorique française, p. xxi).

Although these epistles and prefaces belong to genres which
encourage an inflationary attitude toward the subject at hand, they are nevertheless revealing. In them one gets a feeling for the connotations and associations that the art of rhetoric had at the time when they were composed and, also, a sense of individuality in point of view, whereas, once the technical parts of the works begin, the sequence of topics follows that of Quintilian and Cicero. But I should like in any case to review briefly the method and central notions of Le Gras; I choose him because he is more orderly and thoroughgoing than Bary.

He starts with an elaborate definition of rhetoric as it is seen from five different angles: according to the etymology of the word (this takes him back to ἐνόο, ὑγιειν and ὑγιομετέω); according to the essence of the doctrine (for him expressed as "l'art de bien dire"); according to the effects of the art (it aims to change or dominate minds through the power of speech); according to its parts (it directs the processes of invention, arrangement, expression, retention, and delivery); and according to the divisions of the speech itself (it gives rules for conciliating the audience in the exordium, for instructing it in the narration and in the proofs, and for exciting suitable emotions in the peroration). And he reverts to the requirement I have already mentioned, that the orator must be an homme de bien, "... parce que la rhétorique donnant des règles pour traiter un sujet des deux côtés, il faut nécessairement que celui qui possède cet art, soit homme de bien, pour ne s'en servir qu'à faire triompher la vérité et la justice" (La Rhétorique française, pp. 2–3).

The method falls into four parts for Le Gras (since he puts into a single section both memorization and delivery). Under the heading of invention, we meet again the inevitable distinction of the three genres—demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial—which include all possible subjects of discourse. Le Gras, himself a lawyer, analyzes the last type in detail,
treating of the *lieux*, the kinds of questions, the problem of the passions and how to arouse them. For disposition or arrangement, he goes back to the consecrated terms used in his definition and writes a section on exordium, narration, and so forth.

Then comes elocution. Le Gras repeats and develops two things that he had already said in a passage of the preface, a passage that obviously echoes Vaugelas and Quintilian, namely, that elocution or expression is the most important and the most difficult part of rhetoric, and that the fundamental qualities one must seek are *pureté* and *netteté* in language.¹⁹ The first of these refers, of course, to the *sine qua non* of grammatical correctness. *Clarté* or *netteté* concerns the applications of words to things; it depends on the propriety of language; and here Le Gras enters on a long sevenfold discussion of how one determines when words are *propres* or not.

After these basic virtues or qualities, the writer must look to ornamentation, which is taken to be the most important part of rhetoric. Since ornamentation is what holds the attention of the listeners and produces admiration in their minds, one cannot call eloquent any discourse that lacks it, no matter how pure the diction may be or how clear the expression. An ornament or figure is any uncommon form of expression; applied to a single word, it is a *trope* (as metaphor or onomatopoeia); to more than one word, it becomes either a *figure de mots* (as antithesis or anaphora) or a *figure de pensée* (such as interrogation or doubt). Le Gras insists on the need to integrate ornamentation into the fabric of the discourse. One does not use it for its own sake. It gives to variety style; it makes the subject matter vivid; it affects the emotions of the listener or reader; it serves to render the emotions of the speaker and hence to promote conviction; it provides, in some cases, useful transitions; and finally, it makes possible the *genre sublime*. 
When he moves on to the subject of "composition," Le Gras tries to do something new in French. He understands by this term the final fitting together of the speech, especially as regards details in the sequence of ideas, words, and sounds. This gives him his occasion to treat the qualities of discourse that are subject to the judgment of the ear. Before him, he claims, no one had discussed composition in this sense. But he will attempt it, since Cicero had asserted that the beauty of an oratorical piece consists not only in the exactness of the words and in the magnificence of the ornaments, but also in the final disposition of the words and in their metrical characteristics. Here Le Gras borrows a distinction from Quintilian —ordo, junctura, and numerus; which he renders as ordre, liaison, and nombre. Ordre has to do typically with gradation or climax or prerogative in a sequence of ideas. In a developing expression, for example, he recommends that we normally mention day before night and man before woman! Under liaison, the typical concern is to remove clashes of vowels or other harsh combinations of sounds, so as to leave with the listener an impression of smoothness and fullness. Finally nombre, a quality depending again on the judgment of the ear, refers to the introduction of measure into discourse. It must not, however, resemble in a strict way the measure of French verse: in prose, verses are a great vice. Le Gras calls this effect rime, after the Greek ῶνθος, he says. He points out the ambiguity of the term and the possibility of confusion with the end rhymes of French verse. This metrical discussion leads to a short section on periods, since the rhetorical period is composed of members having some resemblance to verses.

The chapter heading "De la bienséance ou manière de parler juste" signals a new and important turn in the exposition. Le Gras recalls the opinion of Cicero that this is one of
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the most important and difficult parts of rhetoric. “En effet, la bienséance est ce qui donne plus de grâce et de force à l’oraison: tellement que le même Cicéron dit que celui qui la sait ménager dans le discours, mérite avec justice le titre glorieux d’orateur” (La Rhétorique française, p. 239). The phrase parler juste indicates the turn the argument is taking. Up to this point, the treatise has given the principles of speaking well, of parler bien. The new phrase adds to the idea of an intrinsic excellence in thought and expression still another quality, the suitability of the speech to factors outside of itself, to the audience and to the circumstances in which it will be said or read. “La bienséance a quelque rapport au devoirs de la civilité, au compliment et à la politesse: tellement que ceux qui n’ont pu s’en servir, sont rustiques et sauvages” (La Rhétorique française, p. 239). I shall not go here into the various divisions of bienséance, as it applies to subject matters, ends, manners, person, times, and places, but I should like to quote from a page where Le Gras contrasts and relates utilité and bienséance:

Avant de pouvoir achever ce traité, il est nécessaire de remarquer en cet endroit que celui qui veut parler juste, doit prendre garde que ce qu’il dit soit non seulement utile à son sujet, mais aussi bienséant: que ces deux parties sont souvent unies, parce que ce qui est bienséant est pareillement utile: qu’il arrive néanmoins quelquefois que ces parties sont opposées, et qu’alors la bienséance doit prévaloir, et obliger à se taire, dont on apporte l’exemple de Socrate, qui aimait mieux souffrir la mort par une condamnation injuste, que de se servir de l’oraison que Lysias avait dressée pour sa défense. . . . (La Rhétorique française, pp. 243-44.)

What the subject demands and what the occasion demands may come into conflict. When they do, Le Gras is ready to decide the issue in favor of the latter.

He ends his treatment of elocution with the traditional
distinction of the style bas, the style médiocre, and the style sublime. In a series of analogies or parallels, he first refers the styles to the three aims of speech: to instruct, to please, and to move. He then assigns to each a typical subject matter: relatively unimportant topics like material things or money, matters that are "médiocres"—Le Gras obviously has some difficulty with this mean term; he repeats it without examples—and finally matters of life and death, of state and religion. He attempts a differentiation of effects: the hearer follows the discourse ("se laisse aller au discours") in the first two types or he is moved to tears or other signs of strong feeling in the sublime genre. Le Gras thinks that the styles should be mingled for variety and relief; in fact any speech, as he conceives it, tends to go through the three styles in succession, instructing, pleasing, and moving by turns. It should be said in his favor, after this confused and inadequate formulation of a complex matter, that Le Gras recognizes the possibility of changes and variations in this order and adds a qualification to the effect that one very rarely finds an orator equally good in all three styles.

I have described first the method of Le Gras, although it came after that of Bary, because the values and weaknesses of the earlier work stand out by comparison. Bary's treatise is less complete and less orderly; one can understand the feeling of Le Gras that the French rhetoric had not yet been written as he surveyed what his predecessors—and in particular, Bary—had done. For example, Bary treats only of invention, disposition, and expression, whereas Le Gras, with more pious regard for his sources, restores memorization and delivery, thus keeping to the traditional five parts. A study of the analyses proposed by Bary shows that they are drawn from the same models—mainly Cicero and Quintilian—as those of Le Gras but they are sketchier. The aims (persuader, émouvoir, plaire), the types of oratory, the parts of the
harangue, the treatment under elocution of words, phrases, figures, periods—all the usual furniture is there, but the effect as a whole seems less tidy. Bary does manage an occasional touch of humor, which gives some relief from the steady and solemn enthusiasm shown by Le Gras for his subject. Bary has a feeling for the possibilities of irony in long enumerations. The orator must be, he says, inventive, learned, judicious, intelligible, diligent, virtuous, observant, and careful of his pronunciation. In commenting on the second of these qualities, he builds up a period that is not without malice:

Si la rhétorique est vague et indéterminée; si tout ce qui peut tomber sous la connaissance, peut servir de matière à l'oraison, si l'on ne dispose des auditeurs, que par la multiplicité des raisons et des expériences, des exemples et des autorités; si l'on ne triomphe des esprits, que par la connaissance des inclinations et des intérêts, des moeurs et des mouvements: il ne sera pas difficile de faire voir que l'orateur doit entendre la logique et la métaphysique, la physique et la morale, la politique et la jurisprudence, et que celui qui est dépourvu de ces disciplines doit incomparablement plus exercer ses oreilles que sa langue. [Bary, p. 94.]

If we look back at this point to the original problem—to create a rhetoric for the French language—and try to say what the status of the question was after Bary and with Le Gras, we must conclude that an adequate solution had not been found. Neither theorist had shaken off enough of the weight of tradition. The old conception of the scientia bene dicendi persisted, with most of its roots in political and legal situations still visible. Both of them adopted with slight change the original plan of the discipline, its chain of actions or processes, starting with invention and ending with delivery. There is a tendency in both to abridge the last two, memoria and actio. They are working to cut the art loose from its oratorical context so that it may become a more generalized science of ex-
pression. This shortening of rhetoric, especially noticeable in Bary, seems more significant than his and Le Gras’ efforts to locate the genius and secrets of the French language insofar as they are relevant to persuasive discourse. Although they claim to be doing something new, what they discuss under these topics is usually a reprise in a more systematic framework of things Vaugelas had said in his Remarques. The real novelty lies in the effort, sometimes conscious, sometimes not, to get away from formal oratory to an art that is less confined and specific, one that extends without pedantry to the whole field of belles-lettres and not merely to the set speech. The realization of this effort is the achievement of Rapin. And it may thus be said that the French rhetoric of which the Academy projects spoke did not come into being until Rapin really rethought the problems involved in taking language as a basic element in every one of the main artistic and intellectual genres.


2. Ibid., p. 35 (italics Pellisson’s).

3. Ibid., p. 132.

4. It will be recalled that even in the case of the dictionary project the Academy had no monopoly: two important dictionaries, those of Richelet and Furetière, appeared in 1680 and 1690, respectively.

5. The assumption being that anyone who tries to write has the prior sine qua non of natural gift.


7. He was, in fact, the original holder of the thirty-second fauteuil; and it is known that he was one of the members who took special responsibility in the work on the dictionary.

8. See the Oeuvres diverses de Mr Patru, de l'Académie française (3rd ed.; Paris, 1714). In the "Éloge" one reads: "M. de Vaugelas tira de lui de très grands secours pour son excellent livre de Remarques, et cet illustre grammairien à qui notre langue est si obligée, confessait devoir à M. Patru les principaux secrets de son art."

10. The discourse he gave when he was received into the Academy so impressed the members that they decided to make such a speech part of the ritual of admission to their company thereafter.

11. See Volume I, page 8, of the "Grands Écrivains de la France" edition of the works of La Fontaine.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 180. Incidentally, on one occasion, when Patru needed money, Boileau bought his library with the condition that Patru would continue to have the use of it.


14. I have used for Bary the revised edition of 1673, published in Paris; for Le Gras, the first edition, also published in Paris. The latter's subtitle reads: "... les préceptes de l'ancienne et vraie éloquence: accommodés à l'usage des conversations et de la société civile, du barreau et de la chaire."

15. Pp. [xxx-xxxi].

16. P. [ix]. Le Gras appears not to have known that it was to Patru that Vaugelas referred in his Preface.

17. P. [iv] of the "Discours préliminaire."


19. "... Ces deux parties qui donnent aujourd'hui tant de peine aux bons et aux mauvais écrivains..."—Préface, p. i.

20. See *De institutione oratoria* IX. iv. 22.