Book Review Essays

A Jesuit Who Accomplished So Much but Became Now So Little-Known: Joseph de Jouvancy

Cristiano Casalini and Claude Pavur, S.J., eds.

Joseph de Jouvancy, S.J., The Way to Learn and the Way to Teach (Chestnut Hill, MA, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2020). Pp. 270. Hb, \$39.95.

Francis Goyet and Delphine Denis, eds.

Joseph de Jouvancy, S.J., L'Élève de rhétorique (Paris: Classiques de Garnier, 2020). Pp. 692. Pb, €32.00.

How could someone who accomplished so much become now so little-known? Textbooks about textbooks barely mention Jouvancy's major works in education. His literary *oeuvre* also remains unknown. It includes an edition of Ovid! The two works under review here will certainly partially redress the situation.

After decades of teaching at the collèges in Compiègne, Caen, La Flèche, and Louis-le-Grand in Paris, Jouvancy was summoned to Rome in 1699 to complete an unfinished history of the Society of Jesus. The works under review here were completed in Rome.

A "diminution of zeal" in the study of the humanities not only troubled Jouvancy, but Louis Genevray, his superior in the French province, concurred. Their answer was to up-date and complete earlier works of Jesuit humanist pedagogy and rhetoric. Not new contents or methods, but specificities in the selections from antique works that, along with theology, constituted the heart of the curriculum. The order in which works would be read would only be partly determined by difficulty; a hierarchy of *savoir* and of moral, civic, and religious themes that ranges from less mature to more mature, had to be rethought and reviewed. While readers were certainly encouraged to read

entire works, a teacher who lacked experience could quickly discern the grid of works for the different years of the curriculum.

There is a first-things-first approach to learning correct grammatical French; syntax, and the styles appropriate for various genres remained the first priority. The “native tongue” might not be French, but the important point was precision of thought and writing in the vernacular. The *De studio linguae vernaculae* (62) consists of twenty-four topics. The French must be up to date, that is, without old-fashioned or vulgar words.

When writing, it is helpful to sketch the material in the vernacular first, before writing it in Latin (77). There is nothing harder in the world than writing correctly (65), and one should not be surprised if he is asked to translate a passage from Cicero into one’s native tongue, and then translate it back into Latin (25).

While moral instruction is in the antique expurgated texts, Jouvancy categorically lends support by examples and commonplaces. He is fond of the latter and relies on his memory. He occasionally does not cite his source. There are other lightnesses of touch that carry out his purpose to engage with students and teachers, rather than make some unique contribution to scholarly knowledge.

When writing, the emphasis should always be directed toward individuals, not social groups. He does not explain why, nor does he remark that he himself is writing for a group. Having listed students’ possible mistakes, he points out that they can be dangerous if the student trusts his own strengths and fails to beg for God’s light: *si Divinam exorare lucem negligat* (161). It is, however, the humanities that are in decline, not faith. There sometimes is a sense of fear about not keeping up in the world.

If Jouvancy shared this malaise, he does not mention major cultural shifts across the seventeenth century, shifts that were weakening the foundation of the neo-Latin culture that he was seeking to strengthen. Was there an affirmative answer to the question of the “perfection” of vernacular culture, first in Italy, then in France and Spain, and finally in the German empire? Could true eloquence be achieved in these new, classicized vernaculars? Yes, certainly for Italian, French, and Spanish. German would come along almost a century later.

By 1660, most of the canonical antique works that Jouvancy recommended be read in Latin, could now be read in more-than-adequate translations. The *Ad usum Delfini* project had something of a swan-song effect—with the philology and contextualization possibly creating a condescending outlook for the reader who simply likes to read the great antique texts.

In just the last decades of the century, and in the first decade before *Unigenitus*, the Port-Royalist grammar and logic disquieted by the argument over the differences between thought and language.

More grave for the future of the students who did not wish to devote their lives to the church, preparatory training for the law and the royal administration shifted from emphasizing Roman law to emphasizing French customary law, and ultimately natural law in the courts. Of the two pillars of emphasis in the humanities (Latin and rhetoric) the latter remained important for writing, pleading, and counseling. But to be admitted to the bar, all the would-be lawyer had to do was memorize some tags in Latin. Awareness of various peoples and places had also increased. It now extended well beyond the Mediterranean and the European peninsula of Asia. Jouvancy's reference to native languages testifies to inclusiveness and, yes, dilution of the antique Graeco-Roman world that produced the humanities. After 1648, diplomats across Europe increasingly used French as their official language, although they still often had secretaries who could read and write Latin.

Jouvancy's presence is stronger in *The Way to Learn and the Way to Teach*, than it is in *L'Élève de rhétorique*. The latter work was perhaps more to be consulted than read through. The translator into English of *The Way to Learn and the Way to Teach* does not have recognition on the title page, but he may be mentioned on the back cover. (He may be Claude Pavur, S.J.)

Most welcome is the recent critical edition of Jouvancy's *L'Élève de rhétorique*, in a carefully reviewed Latin and French translation. Only feelings of joy and love for a text could inspire such an accomplishment by seventeen scholars. Thanks to the 186 pages of notes in eight-point type, it will be through the research on Jouvancy's work that the intellectual history of rhetoric will be built upon the inspiring works of Marc Fumaroli, and one of the editors of this volume, Francis Goyet.

The title page and preface of Jouvancy announce that his is a work that is "augmented, corrected, and polished." Though the Jesuit Cipriano Soares was not the first to make a synthesis of the arts of rhetoric by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, his synthesis was immensely successful. Subsequent authors of Jesuit texts sometimes considered authors to have little intrinsic merit. Instead, with the almost endless editions that created a "new" version of a work, the framework of concepts changed little. The justification remained the claim to include teaching and greater clarity. Jouvancy's text is based on François Pomey's work, first published in Lyon in 1667. As with Soares, Jouvancy makes a general attribution to Pomey and then borrows and deletes to create his much larger work, finished in Rome in 1710.

In this new edition, the principal editor, Francis Goyet, recovers all the changes and generally leaves it to the next generation of scholars to discern

the reasons for the changes. This is by no means a criticism. After the recent editions and translations, Jouvancy awaits a generation of intellectual historians. Close readings would enable them to learn exactly what “to polish” means in neo-Latinity. Similarly, the changes made by Goyet and his collaborators to Ferté’s translation might elucidate more specifically his assumptions about translation and might perhaps generate a list of translation “mistakes” resulting from earlier translations and from the limitations and possibilities of the French language in 1892. It is interesting to reflect on the continuities of what all these editors-translators have accomplished. Goyet and his collaborators are in that continuity, at the intersection between translation and the history of language.

While the frame of concepts does not change all that much across the editions, the 1-2-3 phrases to clarify and exemplify do. All become more lengthy. The commonplaces, the anecdotes—in short, the *exempla*—are all presented in ways that encourage the reader to share Jouvancy’s pleasure in selecting them. From a twelve-line story with no attribution (it recounts the fate of a Belgium alcoholic), Jouvancy produces a more “elegant” version in thirty-six lines, and another that is oratorical and sixty-five lines long. The second and the third stories are almost the same length in Latin. *Brevitas* receives short shrift, receiving only a brief definition and example, yet it belonged to the rhetorical vocabulary, notably in the critique of Tacitus’s style.

To find Jouvancy’s presence in the revisions and editions, a specialist in the history of *rhetorique* is required. This reviewer has not been trained to evaluate the general effects that result from Jouvancy’s borrowings and his deletions from Pomey. In Jouvancy’s synopses, however, the selected passages that make up the seventy-one pages from Cicero’s orations offer a virtuoso performance: he makes the mistakes the mistakes in persuasion emphatic and clear. Cicero sought to resolve the most important issues facing the Romans of his day in the agrarian law, the Philippics, and the Catiline conspiracy. This is Roman history; it is centered almost entirely on the beliefs (ambitions) and the political-military strength of individuals. So far, this reviewer has found that it is also Cicero who, in the fullness of the art, never makes an error.

The summaries of books assigned in classes—they sometimes are called “trots” or “cribs”—are scorned by teachers who want students to read an entire work. Jouvancy carefully points out the rhetorical features of each speech and does not comment on the over-arching image he is creating of the orator. Would students remember the rhetorical features of the intense, passionate, even vehement efforts to persuade (*sic*) hearers-readers about Rome’s fate? This is what the humanities were (are) all about. Rhetoric was the art that

incarnates virtue, faith, and political *savoir-faire*—which explains why teachers always want their student to read the entire book.

There are Plutarch-like parallels that gain their exemplary strength in Philippic XII, where, in the peroration, there is not only a recognition that Cicero's persuasive strength has enraged Mark Anthony to the point that he will order the orator to be killed and beheaded. Cicero dies because he is a defender of the republic, a martyr. The significance of martyrdom, in the overall Jesuit *paedia* comes to mind: perhaps that is what Jouvancy wished. A classical-republican *exemplum* in a book about rhetoric that was published in Rome for the use of students and teachers all over the world? The edition was made primarily for the *collège* of Louis-le-Grand. The hortatory royalism of the 1660s had dissipated; the war over the Spanish succession seemed endless, as had the previous winter in France. In his mind, Jouvancy was perhaps already turning to his next assignment and was reflecting that, in the world of high politics, the role to be played by the Society of Jesus would need his full attention.

The principal editors of this splendid work convey in vicarious ways the scholarly joy that is the sole motivation behind such a monumental work. In France, beginning with Marc Fumaroli's *L'Âge de l'éloquence* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), and moving on to Francis Goyet's *Le Sublime du lieu commun* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1996), light has not merely been cast on the art of rhetoric, but a deeper and more just understanding of early modern ways of thinking, writing, and governing has also been recovered. Commonplaces are less scorned but teaching communications has deepened below the obvious. Old wine in new bottles.

Orest Ranum

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