Angelika Kemper

THE TREATISES ATTENDENTES NONNULLI IN EBERSBERG

Hypotheses on Ars Memorativa in Scientific and Scholastic Contexts
(Bavarian State Library Munich: Clm 5964, Clm 6017)

Abstract

The contribution deals with the application-specific function of two mnemonic treatises that originate from the early Benedictine monastery of Ebersberg (Bavaria). As an exponent of the Melk Reform, this monastery developed in the 15th century into a place eminently conducive to education, coming into contact with the university milieu and showing reformist influences. These are even recognizable in extant ars memorativa tracts. On the basis of two manuscripts from Ebersberg that contain the Attendentes nonnulli, that is to say one of the most influential mnemonic traditions in the 15th century, possible fields of application of the art of memory will be hypothetically delineated.

The flourishing genre of ars memorativa treatises in the late Middle Ages produced many, sometimes slightly differentiated texts and a correspondingly large number of manuscripts. So the treatises can certainly be assumed to have circulated in longer and shorter versions in many places. However, the immediate application of the mnemonic instructions often remains unclear. In many cases, it is possible to infer their local function only from the manuscripts themselves and their transmission history. Nevertheless, the manuscripts may illuminate the contemporaneous contexts of use and, of course, the contents themselves reflect the actual interests and intentions of their scribes and compilers.

The following observations focus on a group of ars memorativa writings dating from the 15th century. They include a series of transcripts, which can be defined as a group of mnemonic sources because of their remarkable similarity and the indication of a common place of origin. The treatises generally allude to an (alleged) Parisian tradition, without a more detailed specification. Mentioning a Parisian origin of the art of memory, incidentally, was not unusual in contemporaneous mnemonic treatises in Central and Eastern
Europe. My selection of texts therefore, for reasons of clarity, is limited to German-speaking areas. Since the term ‘secundum Parisienses’ is not always found explicitly in all manuscripts considered, the beginning of the text, which is regularly “Attendentes nonnulli”, will be used as a collective term for this group of treatises.

Contrary to what the added title suggests, there is no solid evidence of a connection with any Parisian teaching institution or a local teacher, since no comparable textual testimony has yet been identified in Paris. The consulted manuscripts actually come from monasteries in Ebersberg (Munich, Clm 5964, Clm 6017), Augsburg (Clm 4393), Passau (Clm 16226) and Erfurt (Berlin, STPK theol.lat.qu 223), so especially from Bavaria but also from Thuringia. The provenance of one of the manuscripts cannot be exactly identified (Clm 24539) but the mention of Erfurt and Magdeburg within the text also indicates a Thuringian or Low German origin. The manuscripts were in the possession of various communities. Above all they were kept in Benedictine monasteries (Ebersberg monastery, St. Ulrich Augsburg), in an Augustinian monastery (St. Nicholas Passau) and also in a Carthusian Monastery (Charterhouse on Salvator mountain, Erfurt). The treatises are today in the manuscript collections of the Bavarian State Library Munich and the Berlin State Library; the corpus of Munich material will primarily be considered below.

It should be noted here that the Attendentes nonnulli treatises were certainly received in the German-speaking area in particular.

---


3 Cf. Clm 24539, f. 87r: “Erfurt Meidburg<e>n<s>is”.