A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric

Fourth Edition

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De Oratore

BOOK I

My youth was spent during the civil war; my consulship was an exhausting struggle to save our country; afterward my energies were directed against the political factions intent on overturning the republic. You have asked that I write on the subject of what eloquent men have thought about oratory. Despite my urgent duties I will do as you request.

(10) Few men have attained preeminence in oratory. In other academic disciplines—philosophy, mathematics, poetry, literature—those who are considered great have comprehended the entirety of their subject matter. The art of oratory, concerned as it is with the obvious practices and customs of men, is somehow more difficult than those branches of learning concerned with less obvious subjects. Yet no discipline yields greater rewards or has done more for civilization than oratory.

Oratory demands knowledge of many subjects, mastery of style, understanding of men's emotions, a charming, cultured wit, a memory filled with history, comprehension of civil law. In addition, oratory demands an understanding of delivery and a commanding memory. Since oratory demands so much we can understand why its ranks number so few.

When Philippus was consul and the tribuneship of Drusus was under assault, Lucius Crassus retired to his villa at Tusculum. (25) Quintus Mucius and Marcus Antonius accompanied him. Gaius Cotta and Publius Sulpicius, candidates for the tribunate, also were in the party. After spending the first day in melancholy discussion about politics, Scaevola suggested that the conversations continue under a plane tree as Socrates did in the *Phaedrus*.

(30) Crassus opened the discussion by saying, "Oratory has flourished only in free, peaceful, and tranquil nations. How incredible it is that few men, using the abilities given to most men, have the power to interest, motivate, and persuade their fellow men. No other art could have unified humanity, maintained civilization, or established civic laws and duties. The perfect orator, therefore, maintains not only his own dignity, he maintains the State as well."

(35) Scaevola politely challenged, "I doubt that orators established social communities, and I seriously question whether an orator can converse about all of humanity. Instead of eloquence, wise counsel probably established communities. (40) Tiberius Gracchus won for us our constitution with only a word. His sons, gifted in eloquence, nearly destroyed the State. Are not religion and law more relevant? Moreover, your claim that an orator is supreme in dialectic conversation is groundless. You should be content to say that an orator is able to make his case seem more credible and his policies more astute."

(45) Crassus replied, "Your views are those of the Greek philosophers. I disagree with them as I disagree with Plato who sponsored the notion. (50) The unique trait of good speakers is their embellishment, distinct, and arranged presentation; in other words, their style, yet style without substance is ludicrous. An orator must know how to rouse or quell men's emotions. Words alone are insufficient. (55) He needs a profound understanding of human nature, the province of philosophy.

"A statesman is expected to know political theory; the orator must go further and give spirit to these theories. The perfect orator, again, is one who can speak copiously and with variety on all subjects.

(60) "If an orator's client belongs to the military, the orator must know the facts of military science; if he speaks on governmental policy, he must know political science; if he must rouse emotions, he requires the teachings of natural philosophy.

(65) "The orator must know the facts of his case. If he doesn't then he must learn them from a subject specialist, and then, I maintain, the orator will present this material better than the specialist could.

"Training in the liberal arts is as necessary to the orator as knowledge of color is a prerequisite for a painter."

Scaevola smiled and said, "Crassus, you have apparently overturned my argument. If it were conceivable that any man could possess the abilities demanded by your definition, I would certainly admire him.

(75) "And if any man approached such an ideal it would seem to be you. But you have not yet mastered the wide scope of learning that you require in an orator; consequently, I suspect your standards are idealistic."

Crassus replied, "I have not been describing myself. If, as you say, you admire what limited abilities I possess, imagine how great that orator would be who possessed both my skill and the cognate learning that I believe necessary."

(80) Antonius interjected, "You have argued well, Crassus, but the knowledge of subject matter that you require is impossible to attain in the hectic life we advocates lead.

"I recall a visit to Athens during which many learned men discussed the proper function of an orator. Mnesarchus, a Stoic, held that orators were only glib practitioners, and he believed a man possessing the single virtue of eloquence possessed all virtue.

(85) "Charmadas of the Academy argued that no man could be a skilled speaker unless he studied the precepts of philosophy.

"Later I published a pamphlet in which I defined an orator as a man who can express his ideas clearly to an ordinary audience. I reserved eloquence to one who spoke in an admirable style, capable of amplifying any subject, and knowledgeable of whatever he chose as his topic.

(95) "I confess that my legal practice prevents me from achieving eloquence, but I think Crassus has, in fact, succeeded in this quest."

Sulpicius said, "Cotta and I wanted you and Crassus to discuss this very subject as part of our education about the nature of oratory, but you have avoided the subject in the past."

Crassus then said, "As you wish. I think there is no art of oratory in the strict sense. No precise knowledge of oratory is possible because our language and subject matter are constantly changing.

(110) "However, rules have been abstracted from the practice of oratory and this collection of precepts can be considered an art. In the course of my career, however, I have made several observations about oratory that I will share with you.

"Natural talents must be present in anyone who wishes to be an orator. Art provides an agreeable finish to a speech, but unless a native capacity is present, no amount of instruction and practice will make an appreciable difference. Those with some degree of natural capacity have been recognized in past years as popular orators."

Antonius noted, "Your remarks, Crassus, on the necessity of natural ability are well taken. A quick mind, a fluent tongue, and a restrained bearing are needed in no other

profession except oratory. Indeed, nearly all characteristics praised in a man when found singly must be combined in the orator."

(130) Crassus added, "Any blemish or error in an orator is immediately apparent. We demand total perfection in any person whom we designate as eloquent.

"Both of you possess natural ability and each of you gives every promise of becoming an eloquent orator. What remains is the acquisition of judgment and discerning taste, but no art can teach these virtues. Enthusiasm and a determined motivation must also be present. But you wanted to know about my procedure in preparing myself for a career in oratory.

"From my school course in rhetoric I learned that it is proper for an orator to speak in such a way that audiences become convinced.

(140) "I was taught that every case involves either a general or a specific question and that the stasis doctrine must be applied to each question. In addition to these prescriptions, I learned commonplaces for judicial, epideictic, and deliberative speeches. I was taught that an orator must locate and evaluate his proofs, garnish them in stylistic language, commit them to memory, and deliver them effectively. I was told to divide my oration into parts, each part serving a separate yet necessary function. My diction was supposed to be correct, clear, elegant, and appropriately graceful. Many rules for delivery and memory were given as well.

"Such training in rhetoric, in my opinion, was useful. Eloquence does not result from applying these rules, but the art of eloquence does. Knowledge of the rules is the first step towards oratory, practice is the second.

(150) "It is necessary to exercise and test your forensic skills before you enter the law courts. In your private exercises you should prepare carefully and frequently write out and revise your practice speeches. Writing out your speeches is invaluable training for precision in oral discourse. I discovered that my declamations on subjects treated by Latin authors were ineffectual.

"They had already used the best expressions; consequently, I recommend translating Greek speeches and declaiming on them.

"To perfect our delivery we must study the habits of actors. To perfect our memory we can use the mnemonic tricks taught in the schools."

(160) Cotta asked, "Would you, Scaevola, ask Crassus to amplify his discussion?" Crassus, yielding to the unanimous entreaties, continued, "Can you consider a man, ignorant of common law, an orator? Far too many cases are carried on by advocates who are apparently unacquainted with our laws.

(170) "Any man who pretends to give legal protection to his clients and at the same time is ignorant of the law is a scandal to our profession.

"I will presume on your good will to hear me out on the available sources for the study of law. In fact, the whole of common law is set down in only a few books. Anyone studying history or political science will discover that these subjects are closely related to legal theory. Philosophy itself is based on the common law in that both the philosopher and the lawyer discuss obligations, rewards, sanctions, control of the emotions, ownership, and so on. Few books are as useful as the one that contains the Twelve Tables.

(200) "I think an orator must know public law in order to speak effectively in the Senate and assemblies, as well as in the courtroom. Any man who assumes the duties of protecting the innocent and prosecuting the guilty must have more learning than is given in the schools of rhetoric."

Mucius and Sulpicius, after expressing their gratitude, encouraged Crassus to return to his discussion of oratory, but he declined and suggested that Antonius present his theories on the subject.

Antonius replied, "I usually try to avoid speaking after Crassus, but in this instance I request that you expect no lofty diction, since I never attended a school of rhetoric. What I can pass on to you are my observations gained in my actual practice of oratory.

(210) "If we were discussing the nature of military science or politics or philosophy, I would undoubtedly posit a definition of the subject and preview the areas of development which I intended to follow. Accordingly, I will define an orator as one who uses pleasing language and convincing arguments in forensic and deliberative situations. I would also desire that he be instructed in voice, delivery, and a certain charm.

"Crassus seemed to claim political theory as part of the true province for his orator. I disagree. Men like Marcus Scaurus, a politician of the first rank, attained preeminence through their competent grasp of political science, not oratory. In fact, no amount of rhetorical training will ensure that an individual possesses the requisite knowledge or skill to institute national policy.

"You argue, Crassus, that only by studying and knowing natural philosophy can an orator incite or allay the audience's emotions. (220) I suggest that such a goal is impractical and unnecessary. Impractical because we are too busy in the courts to afford this luxury. Unnecessary, because an orator can observe in everyday affairs what is praiseworthy or blamable.

"Your concern for common law is understandable when we consider your respect for Scaevola and your long study of the subject. If you equate lawyers and orators, I approve. But you maintain that many learned men are not orators and, as a result, you defame the legal profession. Sometimes an advocate does not know the proper formulae because the laws are frequently vague or contradictory. In these instances an orator is more successful than a pedantic lawyer.

"Furthermore, many laws are irrevocable and unassailable. With these an orator need not be concerned. You yourself have often won your cases with charming pleasantries instead of carefully wrought legal subtleties. I think you have oversimplified the relative ease with which legal theory can be learned since you also admit that law is not yet considered an art. Moreover, I doubt that pleasure accompanies legal studies.

(250) "Nor do I think an orator needs detailed and painstaking study in the mechanics of delivery. A speaker simply does not have time to do vocal drills for exercise. Although vocal control and correct gesticulation are necessary skills for any orator, proficiency in these skills is a long-term process.

"If the need arises to know more about history or culture I can again consult specialists in these disciplines. The practice sessions involving assignments, drills, written compositions, and criticism that you recommend are probably suitable, but they are time-consuming.

(260) "I define an orator, therefore, as a man who can speak in such a way that he persuades his listeners. To accomplish this end he must immerse himself in public affairs and practice his art continuously."

Crassus replied, "I suspect you have contradicted my statements in the manner of the philosophers for the sake of contradiction itself. I was discussing the role of an orator in society; you restricted the orator to a legal milieu. Let us continue this debate another day."

BOOK II

(10) Your reluctance to become an orator still puzzles me, but I am grateful that you want me to help you understand the practice of oratory. To do this let me continue my account of the discussion.

On the second day Quintus Catulus and Gauis Julius Caesar arrived at the villa. They reported that Scaevola had informed them of the discussion on oratory, and both asked to stay for the day.

Crassus responded, "You are welcome, but I am afraid I should not have spoken about oratory yesterday, since I do not have the necessary education for such a subject. You are fortunate, though, because Antonius will have more to say about oratory."

Caesar said, "If you do not wish to speak on the subject, I will not urge you to do so. I certainly do not want to be tactless."

Crassus replied, "I think the Greeks demonstrate a gross lack of tact when they plunge into a discussion on any subject regardless of their knowledge on the topic, but that is precisely what I did yesterday."

(20) Catulus urged Crassus to make an exception in view of the pleasant physical circumstances and the long holiday.

Crassus answered, "I think the Greeks would prefer physical exercise to dialectic pursuits. In any event a holiday should be spent in relaxation, not in intellectual discussions. It is quite natural to spend leisure time in idleness. Moreover, I am reluctant to talk about oratory in the presence of so many distinguished orators. Do stay with us today and hear Antonius."

Antonius exclaimed, "By all means listen to a man discuss a topic which he never learned!"

(30) After the laughter subsided, he continued, "Oratory depends more on ability and less on art. The orator deals, for the most part, with opinions, not with known data. I do maintain, however, that nothing more outstanding exists than a complete orator. No music, no poem, no drama is more delightful or gives more pleasure than a brilliant oration. An orator must be dignified when giving counsel, passionate when treating virtue and vice, forceful in prosecution, powerful in defense. He makes history immortal by his diction, his embellishments, his proofs, and even by his organization."

(40) Crassus added, "You have certainly changed your conception of an orator since our conversation yesterday."

Antonius answered, "My purpose yesterday was to refute you. Now, however, I wish to explicate my own views. It seems that the next question to pose is what the function of an orator should be. In my opinion oratory is properly restricted to panegyrics. No knowledge of rules and formalized precepts is necessary to praise a person.

"I do not wish to claim that the proper scope of rhetoric is every conceivable subject. Just because a person must sometimes give testimony in a trial is no reason to draw up lists of rules on presenting evidence.

(50) "The same is true for delivering official messages, which have no rightful place in rhetorical classifications yet require eloquent diction.

(65) "Frequently orators must encourage, console, advise, and warn their listeners. Rhetoric offers no rules for these functions. Furthermore, although many claim

argumentation on general questions as a legitimate province of oratory, no precepts are taught for such topics as the good, the useful, duty, loyalty, and so on. The orator must learn to speak skillfully on subjects involving society, politics, psychology, and morals, but when he can change men's minds, he has mastered the core of this subject."

(75) Catulus interjected, "I would like to know how this great power of oratory can be acquired. Certainly no Greek rhetorician can teach this type of eloquence." Antonius replied, "I have encountered many teachers of rhetoric, and I find their theories foolish."

(85) "My ideal orator, therefore, must have some learning and physical ability. If he is morally sound and receptive to constructive criticism I will teach him what practice has taught me in the same way that I helped Sulpicius by suggesting that he study under Crassus. My first principle of rhetoric, therefore, is imitation of an excellent model. Only the best qualities of the model, not the irrelevant characteristics, should be chosen for emulation.

"My second rhetorical principle is that an orator should have thorough and exhaustive preparation for each legal case he undertakes.

(105) "When I have full knowledge of all the circumstances, I know instinctively whether to argue from disputed facts, the nature of the action, or from definition.

"After I have classified the case I search for ways to prove my assertions, to convince my listeners that my client and I are trustworthy, and to arouse their emotions. In order to establish my allegations I can use evidence and reasoning. The rhetoricians provide abundant commonplaces for managing evidence, and little talent is required to deploy them effectively.

(120) "Reasoning, however, is part of the orator's art, but the greater part is skillful delivery. Instead of giving you a detailed account of how the orator should invent, embellish, and deliver his oration, I prefer to yield to Crassus, since of all the Greek and Roman orators he is without doubt the best."

Crassus responded, "It is not fitting that I should elaborate on your concept of the orator. In fact, I have witnessed your soaring eloquence on many occasions, and I would prefer that you tell us more about your methods of speaking."

(130) Antonius continued, "Three principles comprise my method, namely, to conciliate, to teach, and to excite my listeners.

"Each specific case relates to one of several types of cases. To assume, as the rhetoricians do, that each case is unique is to become lost in the complexity of individual cases. Just as a law encompasses many specific actions, and one studies laws, not each court case, to learn the subject, so too with the orator.

(145) "He must know how to manage general questions and how to relate specific cases to them. Whoever wishes to be eloquent will know these general types of arguments.

"In order to invent arguments, intelligence, art, and diligence are required. Diligence enables us to locate and study every facet of the case, of our client, and of our opponent."

Catulus replied, "I know that Aristotle prescribed topics for both dialectic and rhetoric."

Antonius continued, "Although I have always maintained that the best orator conceals his art and resists any Greek philosophy, I do admit that sometimes we can profit from their teaching.

(155) "Romans have seldom trusted philosophers, and if an orator displays his philosophic learning, his credibility and influence are diminished.

"If I should ever encounter a student with an aptitude for oratory, I would encourage him to study with the Academic philosophers. There he would learn that proofs are either extrinsic or intrinsic—extrinsic if they are derived from external authorities, intrinsic if they are fashioned by the orator.

(165) "Intrinsic topics are definition, division, etymology, conjugates, genus and species, similarity and dissimilarity, contraries, consequences, antecedents, contradictories, causes, effects, and comparative size."

My brief sketch of these topics will be sufficient for the talented orator who will apply his abilities to the task at hand. Once the material is located it must be structured in various ways to avoid monotony. Sometimes you should make explicit conclusions, sometimes let them be implicit, sometimes argue from analogy. In every proof, however, care should be taken to relate it to some emotion, since most decisions are made on the basis of an emotion. In a similar way the orator must carefully analyze the initial attitudes and sentiments of the jury. If they are favorably disposed, I proceed with my arguments. If they are open-minded my task is more difficult, since the verdict rests on the power of my presentation.

Antonius continued, "Let me add several principles that I have found useful. Not every case calls for intense emotional outpourings. Sometimes you must appear to be defending good men, sometimes you should show how a future benefit will occur if you are given a favorable verdict. Hatred, fear, and jealousy must be excited with great caution, since they are difficult to repress.

(210) "Pity can be evoked by relating the action to some part of the jury's own experience.

"In both the mild and the emotional types of speaking the introduction and conclusion should be paced and leisurely delivered. Emotions are slow to awaken, and to open with your full force would jar your listeners. You must overthrow the proofs of your opponent and evoke emotions opposite to those aroused by your adversary. Humor and wit are often effective, but these are products of natural talent. Since you, Caesar, excel in the use of wit, perhaps you will explain its nature to us."

Caesar answered, "As you suggest, wit is, in my opinion, a native ability and talent which cannot be taught by any system of rules. There are two kinds of wit: irony, which flows throughout the entire speech, and raillery, which is intermittently located in the oration.

(220) "At best I can only recite many examples of wit in legal cases, but no art can teach a person how to cultivate a sense of humor. No witticism should detract from a person's dignity, but you have asked for my concept of what is laughable, and I shall mention its nature, source, propriety, restrictions, and its types.

"I must confess ignorance about the nature of humor, but there are certain philosophers who claim to know its essence. Humor draws upon the incongruous for its object.

(240) "Wit can take the form of impersonation or anecdote. Laughter will result when some aspect of a person's character is displayed as ludicrous. We should not resort to puns every time the opportunity arises, because they are the stock-in-trade of professional comedians. Restraint, therefore, differentiates the witty orator from the jester.

"Witticisms can be drawn, as I said, from facts or from words. The subjects of humor are, generally speaking, the same as those subjects that can be treated seriously.

(250) "Puns, when used with restraint, produce laughter because they usually contain equivocal words.

"Humor that is derived from the nature of the subject matter tends to produce greater pleasure than that gained from word play. Also, humorous stories drawing on the absurd or what is confusing or suggestive or unexpected should be used by the orator. A delightful form of humor occurs when we are able to seize on the words of our opponent and use them as a retort.

(290) "To summarize my statements on the laughable, let me repeat that humor derives from unfilled anticipations, ridicule, restrained imitation of another's faults, and by juxtaposing materials that are at variance with each other. For example, a stern, severe person can usually evoke more humor that a gay individual because the contrast is greater."

Antonius resumed, "Your account of humor was indeed entertaining and you have explained the point quite well. After I have thoroughly studied all the relevant data in a given case, located and evaluated by arguments in terms of the desired emotional response I wish to achieve, I customarily divide the good and bad points. I amplify and embellish the strong aspects of the case and minimize the others. At all times I concentrate on what will best convince my listeners. When I encounter a vexing argument I tend to bypass it, and I try not to advance my case; rather, I bend every effort to avoid damaging it."

(295) Caesar asked, "Why do you value this principle of avoiding whatever could damage your case?"

Antonius responded, "Remember that I am not discussing an ideal orator. I am describing my own meager achievements. In a lawsuit, however, the sheer number of variables make my principle necessary. Sometimes witnesses should not be cross-examined if they are angry or if they have great influence with the jury. Sometimes a client is unpopular, or you unwittingly attack a reputable person. Far too many cases are lost because advocates fail to avoid whatever can damage their position.

"The arrangement of a speech can arise from the nature of the case or from the instinct of the speaker. The overall structure of a speech is easily learned, but the placement of proofs within the speech requires great skill. I tend to discard weak proofs as a matter of policy.

(320) "Every introduction should contain a statement of the case or some part of it. Moreover, you can profitably adduce statements suitable for the introduction from your clients, your opponents, from the legal charge, or from members of the court.

"Because each audience is most receptive at the beginning of a speech, the statements made at that time probably carry more probative weight than later proofs. A suggestion of what will follow may help involve the jury with our position.

"The narrative should be brief, and by this I mean the absence of superfluities, not length. Let the narrative be as clear as your painstaking ability permits.

(330) "The statement of the case with relevant proofs follows the narrative. Care must be exercised not only to establish your position, but also to refute your opponent's proofs. Little need be said about the conclusion of a speech except that it should be designed to sway the audience.

"Dignity is essential in deliberative speeches. To argue mere expediency seldom meets with success in our country. Whether you argue from moral worth or from expediency, you must consider the possible and the impossible. Above all else, the deliberative orator must know how the state operates.

(340) "Panegyric oratory, in my opinion, is a lesser form of oratory. Still, since we must praise individuals at various times, I will discuss the subject. You can find much to say about a person by considering how he managed his natural endowments of family connections, health, wealth, and so on. Look also to a person's use or abuse of virtue for panegyric materials. We tend to praise most those deeds that were done without profit or reward as well as those that involve great effort and personal danger. We also esteem those who have suffered setbacks without losing their dignity. In short, if the orator knows all the virtues, he can quickly compose a panegyric.

(350) "Founding the art of memory is credited to Simonides of Ceos, who reconstructed the seating arrangement of those who had been crushed to death while attending a banquet. Orderly arrangement, therefore, associated with familiar visual images, can assist an orator in retaining his material and proofs. In my opinion, a strong memory is a gift of nature and not something gained from rule books.

"Now I see that the hour is late, and I fear that I have bored you with my narration. You shall hear about style from Crassus."

BOOK III

I appreciate your concern for my safety, and your requests that I relinquish my career are probably wise. But part of my consolation will be the continuance of the discussion which took place at Crassus' home. According to Cotta who reported the conversation to me, everyone rested until mid-afternoon. After exchanging some initial pleasantries Crassus began.

(20) "Because of your friendship I dare not refuse to discuss my theories on the embellishment of oratory. Every speech consists of substantive matter and words. Each depends on the other in much the same way that nothing in the universe is self-sufficient. No matter the subject or goal of any oration, it must consist of matter and form, and although neither can be separated except in the abstract, I will give my views on style, the form which language should take.

"Each of our senses can yield pleasurable sensations that are agreeable in differing degrees. In the arts, too, the diversity within each genre of art gives rise to various intensities of praise or blame. In oratory, however, different styles abound. There are probably as many styles of speaking as there are practicing orators.

"With such diversity, how, then, can there be rules for style? Some students are allowed to develop their distinctive styles in various schools of rhetoric, but it is a rare and gifted instructor who can bring this about. In any event I shall discuss the style of that orator whom I most approve.

"The best speaking style is one which is correct, clear, ornate, and appropriate. Little need be said on the value and necessity of speaking proper and pure Latin, nor do I need to dwell on the virtue of being understood. But let us agree to leave the matter of correct Latinity to the schools, to reading, and to learned conversation.

"Clarity is achieved by speaking correct Latin, by avoiding ambiguity, by grammatical precision, and by uncluttered sentence structure. In fact, these subjects of correctness

and clarity are such simple matters that no orator is ever praised for them. He is held accountable, however, for their absence.

(55) "The perfect orator must have learned everything that pertains to the life of man because this is his province. Eloquence, the greatest of all virtues, gives expression to the substantive matter with which an orator deals.

"Socrates, himself a master rhetorician, separated philosophy and rhetoric, and, as an unfortunate consequence, we must now learn to think with the guidance of the philosophers and to speak with the rhetoricians. Numerous schools were developed by Socrates' pupils: for example, Aristotle founded the Peripatetic School; Plato, the Academy; Antisthenes, the Cynic and Stoic Schools; Aristippus, the Epicurean branch of philosophy.

"In my opinion the perfect orator will have little use for the Epicurean teachings. And, although the Stoics equate eloquence with virtue, their logic is self-defeating, and their sparse, nerveless style of speaking is not suitable for our orator. There remains the philosophy of the New Academy. Carneades and his followers tend to avoid stating any opinion but prefer to dispute the assertations made by others.

(70) "I think it is a mistake for an orator to study only the Asiatic rules and regulations of speaking since this restricts him to a narrow scope of operation. Much more preferable is the Attic concept that true eloquence depends on a wide knowledge of philosophy, psychology, sociology, and politics. I suggest, therefore, that our orator study well the teachings of both the old and new Academies.

"Those who declaim against rhetoric do not realize that eloquence, properly understood, encompasses nearly all knowledge, especially knowledge of human behavior. Since philosophy is, in the last analysis, based on experience, even a second-rate orator drawing on the same human experience can defeat a philosopher in a debate.

(80) "An orator, therefore, must have a wide educational background drawn either from philosophy or from experience, and the energetic enthusiasm needed to convey this message."

Catulus said, "Never before have I understood the necessary relationship between philosophy and rhetoric. How did you find time to learn philosophy?"

Crassus replied, "In the first place you should understand that we are discussing the ideal and supreme sort of orator. Even though you think such a designation fits me, I assure you I have not attained preeminence of that kind. However, your question is well taken. I have not had sufficient time to read and study philosophy as I should have done. Nonetheless, I believe that an intelligent person who has had considerable experience in the courts and the Senate probably requires less time to learn philosophy than those who make a career in the pursuit of wisdom.

(90) "Two characteristics of style remain, namely, ornateness and appropriateness. These traits should be understood to mean the style is pleasing, interesting, filled with substance.

"Ornateness is best defined as that element in a speech that is restrained, pleasing, learned, wonderful, polished, and sensitive. Embellishment should not be spread evenly throughout the speech; rather it should be clustered at various points. No one knows what things are most or least pleasing to the senses, but objects that provoke extreme sensory responses tend to become unpleasant.

(100) "Disgust and revulsion are located quite close to great pleasure.

"Any subject capable of discussion, whether general or specific questions, has as its goal either acquiring knowledge or performing an action. To acquire knowledge we may use conjecture, definition, and implication. By using conjecture we seek to determine the essence of something. Definition explains the power possessed by something, and implication is a method for exploring consequences. Conjecture involves four questions: What exists? What is its origin? What is its cause? What can change?

"Definition involves the questions: What is something generally believed to be? What is its essential property? What are its parts? What is its defining characteristic?

"Those subjects that have as their object the performance of an action deal with obligations or with inciting and quelling emotions.

(120) "Embellished speeches always move the consideration of the subject from specific questions to the more general issue. Accomplishing this task cannot be achieved by studying the school books on rhetoric; instead, the orator must have wide learning and command of much factual information. Therefore, I think the orator not only can but must seize as his rightful province the discussion of general questions and the methodology that assists such discussions."

Catulus added, "I agree that the orator should be allowed to address himself to abstract discussions, especially since the early Greek sophists, Hippias, Prodicus, Protagoras, Gorgias, claimed all areas of discourse for their own.

(130) "Why do the Greeks no longer advance the discipline of oratory?"

Crassus replied, "Each of the arts has undergone an unfortunate specialization and fragmentation. Many years ago the Greek statesmen—Thales, Pisastratus, Pericles, and others—were distinguished by their wisdom, their cultural background, and their eloquence. They had an educational system that encompassed all the learning necessary for the career of a statesman. Isocrates, focusing his instruction on the nobility of style, graduated many excellent orators and politicians. His success caused Aristotle to revise the style of his philosophical writings.

"In short, I do not care whether we use the label philosopher or orator so long as the individual in question presents substantive matter in an eloquent manner. Each discipline is necessary for the success of the other."

Crassus continued, "You all know about ornateness, but I will discuss the subject for you. An orator's words are either the usual designations of things or unusual significations, or new expressions. Words may derive their force and impact because they are antiquated, newly invented, or metaphorical. Of these divisions I have learned that audiences derive more pleasure from metaphorical expressions than any other. I suspect listeners enjoy the discovery of new relationships between commonly used terms. Consequently, the relationship between words expressed in a metaphor should have some resemblance to each other and not be too extreme. Some metaphors should be softened, and, if there is any suspicion that the metaphor will prove obscure, wisdom would dictate not using the expression.

"A natural standard for the period is the number of words that a person can produce with one breath. An artistic standard, however, differs in the cadences chosen for eliciting maximum pleasure. Some authorities recommend the iambus or trochee, but these are stultifying if used excessively."

(185) Aristotle considers the paean more suitable.

"Rhythm results from subdividing a continuous flow of words. Each part of the period must be manipulated in such a way that clauses that follow each other are equal or longer in quantity than those that precede.

(195) "Most of an oration's power comes from its style. Instinctively, it seems, men can discriminate and evaluate whatever is applied to their senses. Few men understand the nature of a balanced, rhythmic speech, but nearly all men can detect a blemish.

(205) "Our orator will find great value in amplifying his statements, since audiences perceive this technique as an effort to clarify confusing matters. Moreover, there are dozens of figures of thought that can be deployed throughout the oration, for example, exaggeration, impersonation, and so on. Figures of language will be second nature to our orator, and his artistry in the use of climax or alliteration or inversion or any such figures will add great power to his presentation.

(213) "I claim that delivery is the supreme factor in successful oratory. The best of the Greek orators know that without a suitable delivery eloquence was impossible to attain. The emotions that an orator wishes to evoke from his audience dare not be artificial. Nature has assigned special looks and tones to each emotion, and any artifice is quickly discovered. And of all gesticulation, our eyes are the most crucial.

(225) "Any orator who wishes to be eloquent must learn to control his gaze. Variety in tone and intensity can add heightened distinction to the oration. Each voice is unique and must be manipulated in such a way that the highest and lowest notes are avoided, but the entire register of tones ought to be used effectively.

"Now the hour is again late, and I have finished my assigned task."

In 46 BCE Cicero published an introduction to a volume of translations entitled *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* (*On the Ideal Classification of Orators*). In the nine years that intervened between the *De Oratore* and the *De Optimo*, Cicero's political fortunes had become increasingly bleak. Caesar had conquered Britain and Gaul; civil rioting in Rome became commonplace in the absence of restraining authorities; Pompey and Caesar used both their political henchmen and their armies as they dueled for supreme command of Rome and the empire.[18] A look back at an older masterpiece may have given Cicero some relief from the increasingly tense political situation.

The *De Optimo* is brief. Cicero presents Demosthenes as the greatest orator of all time, able to speak eloquently in all three styles, and an Attic orator worthy of emulation. Historically, Demosthenes and Aeschines had met in legal combat on the legality of Athens' awarding Demosthenes a crown.[19] Cicero recognized that the forensic speeches that occurred in the course of the trial were masterpieces of eloquence, and translated them. The *De Optimo* was the preface to these translations. No record of the translations themselves remains.

De Optimo Genere Oratorum

The ideal orator should instruct, delight, and move his audience. His diction should be pure and flawless, his words decorous and appropriate. (5) His language should be adapted to the three ends of oratory. He will arrange his ideas in the best way, and he will know the principles of memory and delivery. In short, the perfect orator is supreme in managing the five canons of oratory.