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CICERO  
ON THE ORATOR  
BOOKS I-II



*Translated by*  
E. W. SUTTON  
H. RACKHAM

CICERO

DE ORATORE

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WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

E. W. SUTTON

COMPLETED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

H. RACKHAM



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## PREFACE

THOUGH his name does not appear on the title-page, any merit discoverable in the translation of *De Oratore*, Book I is largely due to my friend Mr. Charles Stuttaford, sometime of Amersham Hall School. Originally entrusted with the execution of both these volumes, he had done much preliminary work on the text and translation of Book I, when reasons of health compelled him to relinquish his task. I most gratefully acknowledge my heavy indebtedness to his labours.

E. W. S.

25th February 1939

THE late Mr. E. W. Sutton left at his death only the ms. and proof of his translation of *De Oratore*, Book I, and three-quarters of Book II, at various stages of correction. I have completed the volume.

An index will be found in Volume Two, which contains *De Oratore*, Book III, *De Fato*, *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, and *De Partitione Oratoria*.

H. R.

January 1942

# INTRODUCTION

## DATE AND PURPOSE OF THE WORK

THE circumstances in which Cicero wrote his essay *On the Orator* and the object that he had in view can be inferred from the following three passages in his letters :

*Ad Atticum* iv. 13. 2 (November 55 B.C.). De libris oratoriis factum est a me diligenter : diu multumque in manibus fuerunt.

*Ad Fam.* i. 9. 23 (September 54 B.C.). Scripsi etiam—nam ab orationibus diiungo me referoque ad mansuetiores Musas, quae me nunc maxime sicut iam a prima adulescentia delectarunt—scripsi igitur Aristotelio more, quemadmodum quidem volui, tres libros in disputatione ac dialogo de oratore, quos arbitror Lentulo tuo non fore inutiles ; abhorrent enim a communibus praeceptis atque omnium antiquorum, et Aristoteliam et Isocratiam, rationem oratoriam complectuntur.

*Ad Atticum* xiii. 19. 4 (45 B.C.). Sunt etiam de oratore nostri tres (libri), mihi vehementer probati. In eis quoque eae personae sunt ut mihi tacendum fuerit, Crassus enim loquitur, Antonius, Catulus senex, C. Iulius frater Catuli, Cotta, Sulpicius. Puero me hic sermo inducitur, ut nullae esse possent partes meae. Quae autem his temporibus [i.e. 45 B.C.] scripsi Aristotelium morem habent, in quo sermo ita inducitur ceterorum ut penes ipsum sit principatus.

We thus learn that Cicero finished the book in the early winter of 55 B.C., when he had been working on

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it for some time ; and we infer that he published it soon afterwards, since in the following September he promises to send a copy to his friend Lentulus for the use of his son. He remarks to Lentulus that he has now almost entirely given up composing speeches, and has returned to his youthful love, the humane letters.

He had indeed for some time lived entirely withdrawn from public life, where even previously he had lost all power of influencing the course of affairs. In 63 B.C. the oligarchical party had been glad to make use of his legal and oratorical talents in the suppression of the conspiracy of Catiline ; but they were not willing to make any sacrifices in order to repay him for his services, and in 58 B.C. they allowed Clodius to procure his banishment in punishment for the alleged illegality of his procedure in the Catilinarian affair. A year later Pompeius, finding Clodius more dangerous, again required Cicero's assistance, and procured his recall from exile. He was warmly welcomed back by the public, but he was no longer of any political importance, although he still appeared in the law-courts, where he delivered some considerable speeches. In 55 B.C. however, when the *imperium* of the triumvirs was prolonged for five years, he withdrew from the courts as well as from the senate, and devoted his leisure to study, the first fruits being the present treatise.

Of its merits he himself took a high view ; the tone in which he writes of it to Atticus (in the third extract above) is very different from the apologetic way in which ten years later he spoke about his philosophical works : these he referred to as ἀπόγραφα, mere transcripts from Greek originals, that cost him

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little labour. The present work is indeed worthy of the greatest of Roman orators, who regards oratory as of supreme practical importance in the guidance of affairs, and who resolves, while his mind is still vigorous and powerful, to devote his enforced leisure to placing on record the fruits of his experience, for the instruction of future statesmen.

The treatise is composed in the form of a conversation, though its method is very different from that of the dialogues of Plato. In those the conversational form is employed to convey the feeling of corporate research into complicated abstract questions, progressing towards the truth but not attaining it with sufficient certainty and completeness to justify its being expounded dogmatically ; the positive results, so far as any can be elicited, are merely tentative. In Cicero's dialogues on the contrary the facts in respect to the matter under consideration are regarded as already ascertained ; doctrines are expounded as dogmatic truths, the dialogue form being adopted as a vivid method of exhibiting the many-sided nature of the subject and the departments into which a systematic treatment of it falls. If differing opinions about it are introduced, the parts of them that are valid are accepted and put together in a single system.

In the second of the passages quoted above Cicero describes the work as written 'in the Aristotelian manner.' Its manner is extremely unlike that of the works of Aristotle that have come down to us, which are rigidly scientific expositions, in places hardly more than outlines and enumerations of arguments, and which have been conjectured to be the Master's actual notes for his lectures. We know

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however that Aristotle also wrote dialogues, in which he published his doctrines in a more popular form, but all of them have now been lost.<sup>a</sup> It is this group of Aristotle's works the method of which, *disputatio et dialogus*, Cicero claims to have adopted in the present treatise, as a vehicle by which to convey the oratorical system of Aristotle himself and that of Isocrates. Some difficulty has been felt to be raised by the third passage quoted, which is ten years later in date ; in it Cicero contrasts *De Oratore* with his later philosophical dialogues, on the ground that in the former he is not himself one of the party, the scene being laid in the time of his boyhood, whereas in the latter he follows the Aristotelian plan of assigning the principal part in the discussion to himself (a feature in Aristotle's dialogues of which we have no other evidence, but which we must accept on Cicero's authority). But in point of fact there is no discrepancy. The comparison with Aristotle in the latter passage relates to the assignment of the parts : that in the former refers to the dialogue form. Also it must be noticed that in the former passage Cicero claims to have adopted the Aristotelian method ' at all events as far as I thought fit ' : this qualification may well hint at the difference from Aristotle consisting in the author's taking no part in the dialogue himself.

### SCENE AND DATE OF THE DIALOGUE

Details are given by the author in the introductory passages at the beginning of each of the

<sup>a</sup> The recently recovered *Athenian Constitution* does not fall exactly into either class ; it is not a dialogue, but a straightforward exposition in a fully finished form.



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three Books; they will be found in the outline below, pp. xv, xix, xxi.

### PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE

L. Licinius Crassus was born in 140 B.C., and was therefore forty-nine years old at the date when the discussion is supposed to take place, September 91 B.C. He died only a few days after that date. He was a leading figure among the moderate and judicious optimates, though it is true that he gave his name to an unwise law checking the movement to strengthen Rome by extending the citizenship to the Latins. He passed through the *cursus honorum*, becoming consul in 95 B.C. He was the most illustrious Roman orator before Cicero, and when Cicero was a boy he acted as his tutor in rhetoric. In the present dialogue he is the mouthpiece of Cicero's own opinions.

M. Antonius, the grandfather of the triumvir, was Crassus's senior by three years.<sup>a</sup> As praetor 103 B.C. he put down piracy in Cilicia and was awarded a triumph. Six years later he was a vigorous censor. Four years after the supposed date of the dialogue he fell a victim to Marius, whose minions murdered him when at supper at a friend's house.

In colloquy with these two great orators Cicero introduces two of the most distinguished of their younger followers.

P. Sulpicius Rufus was now thirty-three years old. He was one of the chief hopes of the optimate party, being a moderate conservative and following Drusus in his movement for limited reform. Later however he swung over to Marius and the extremists, and when (ten years after the date of the dialogue) Sulla

<sup>a</sup> Cic. *Brutus* 161 *triennio*.

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made himself master of Rome, he with Marius was proscribed, and soon after murdered.

C. Aurelius Cotta, a young man of less vigorous character, of the same age as Sulpicius, attached himself in a similar manner to Antonius. He also belonged to the party of conservative reform, but unlike Sulpicius he remained a moderate and never joined the extreme reformers. Sulla therefore allowed him to return from exile in 82 B.C. and resume his career. He rose to be consul in 75 B.C., and died the next year, after achieving some minor military successes as proconsul in Gaul.

These four characters take part in the whole of the dialogue. Q. Mucius Q. F. Scaevola the Augur figures in Book I only. He was nearly or quite seventy years old at the time, having been consul 117 B.C. He was a learned lawyer, and an adherent of the Stoic philosophy, being a member of the Hellenizing 'Scipionic circle.' In extreme old age he refused to figure as an adherent of Sulla. Cicero tells Atticus (*ad Att.* iv. 16. 3) that he thought it suitable to his character and interests to introduce him at the beginning of the discussion, but due to his years to spare him the τεχνολογία of the later part. He is represented as displaying great legal knowledge and experience of the world; he somewhat disparages the value of rhetoric, and questions the need of a wide literary and philosophic education for an orator.

Books II and III introduce two others, Q. Lutatius Catulus and his half-brother C. Julius Caesar Strabo Vopiscus. Catulus first appears in history as colleague of Marius in the consulship, 102 B.C. In the next year as proconsul he failed to check the Cim-  
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brians from invading Gallia Transpadana, but with Marius defeated them at Vercellae: according to Plutarch the greater part of the credit was due to Catulus. They celebrated a triumph together. Fourteen years later on Marius's return to Rome he made Catulus one of his victims: 'moriatur' was his instruction. Catulus was an officer and gentleman of spotless integrity; he also had considerable literary gifts.

Vopiscus early won a position at the bar, and was aedile in the year after the date of the dialogue. He too fell a victim to Marius.

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

Book I (§§ 1-23) Introduction: (§§ 1-5) Cicero substitutes this essay for his earlier writings on rhetoric, in order to satisfy his brother Quintus's desire for a discussion of the functions of the orator, and to justify his own view that the orator requires a wide liberal education. (§§ 6-15) Great orators are rare, not owing to dearth of ability, but because of the difficulty of the art, and in spite of its attractions. (§§ 16-23) It calls for wide knowledge, command of language, psychological insight, wit and humour, a good delivery and a good memory—even if we only aim at the eloquence requisite for public life, and consider it not theoretically but in the light of practical experience.

(§§ 24-29) Scene of the dialogue. The treatise gives an account of a discussion held in September 91 B.C. at the Tusculan villa of Antonius, between him and Crassus, a minor share being taken by Scaevola, Sulpicius and Cotta. The discussion was as follows:

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(§§ 30-95) Oratory, its nature and range.

(§§ 30-34) Crassus praises oratory as of primary importance to society and the state: the orator's position is eminent, gratifying and powerful for good; he excels in the very gift wherein man is superior to animals, 'discourse of reason.'

(§§ 35-44) Scaevola objects that Crassus overrates the political influence of orators and exaggerates the range of their powers: they are often incapable of dealing with questions of law, philosophy and science. Their proper sphere is the law-courts and political debates.

(§§ 45-57) Crassus replies that this is indeed the Greek view, but it puts the function of oratory too low. Yet even if thus limited to politics it calls for wide knowledge, and on the other hand men of science and philosophers borrow style from oratory, although style is not as essential for them as a command of matter is essential for the orator, especially in order to control the emotions of the audience. (§§ 58-68) Eloquence does not itself bestow political knowledge, but the orator must be well versed in political and also moral science. (§§ 69-73) In power of expression and range of subject he compares with the poet; and his style will reveal whether he has had a wide education.

(§§ 74-79) Scaevola repeats that such a range of knowledge is beyond the reach of most orators. Crassus disclaims it himself, but maintains it as the ideal.

(§§ 80-95) Antonius thinks that so much knowledge is unattainable in a practical career, and also likely to form a style too abstract to be useful. He reports a debate at Athens between a Stoic, Menedemus, xvi

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who disparaged rhetoric altogether, and an Academic, Charmadas, who held that it should be based on philosophy, giving examples; Charmadas denied any science of rhetoric, saying that oratory depends merely on natural aptitude and practice, and has to go to philosophy for matter. Antonius says that he has never heard real eloquence, though it may be a possibility.

(§§ 96-112) Crassus is urged to expound his views more fully, and with reluctance consents to do so. (§§ 102-109) He asks, is there an art <sup>a</sup> of rhetoric? This is a question rather for a Greek. But when pressed he says that there is none, in the strict sense, although if one reduces the results of observation and experience to a system one may produce a sort of art. He is urged to give the results of his own experience.

(§§ 113-262) The requirements of the orator.

(§§ 113-128) Natural gifts are essential for high success, although the ideal is hard to attain. Antonius agrees: orators are more exposed to criticism than even actors. (§§ 129-136) Crassus concurs, as every defect is noticed at once. He praises the natural gifts of Sulpicius and the zeal of Cotta; they only need training, so he will describe his own method.

(§§ 137-147) He began by taking the school course in rhetoric, treating (1) the purpose of oratory, (2) the classification of subjects, (3) the determination of the point at issue, (4) the three kinds of oratory, forensic, deliberative and panegyric; (5) its five divisions, invention, arrangement, style, memory

<sup>a</sup> It must be remembered that *ars* means a systematic treatment of a subject and conveys the sense that we attach rather to the word 'science.' Cf. Book II, § 30.

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and delivery ; (6) the division of a speech into the proper parts ; (7) rules of diction. Such a system though useful has not in fact been the guide of the ablest orators. Practice is all-important ; it includes (§§ 148-159) speaking on cases taken from real life, occasionally impromptu ; writing compositions, for training both in style and in matter ; making paraphrases of poetry, especially Greek poetry, and prose, from memory ; training voice and gesture ; *memoria technica* ; speaking in public ; critical reading of literature ; debating *pro* and *contra* ; study of history, law and politics ; collecting notes. Wide knowledge is essential. The true orator possesses dignity and force (160-204).

(§§ 205-209) Sulpicius asks for further detail, and Antonius consents to give his own views. (§§ 209-218) He challenges Crassus's definition : an orator must be able to speak agreeably and convincingly on public questions, but does not require wide general culture : that is a matter belonging to some other art. (§§ 219-233) In order to work on the emotions he needs shrewdness, experience and knowledge of the world, but not philosophy—some effective lines of pleading might be disapproved of by philosophers. (§§ 234-239) Wide knowledge of law is also unnecessary : it is eloquence that wins cases, and on hard points of law even the experts disagree. (§§ 240-250) Nor is law an easy or attractive study. A general acquaintance with its principles is all that a busy man can or need attain ; details should be got up for the occasion. (§§ 251-262) Similarly voice-control, history, antiquities must be studied to some extent, but not so far as to encroach on the time needed for practice in speaking—practice is the important thing.

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(§§ 263-265) Crassus hints that Antonius has only been displaying his skill in refutation, and requests him to set out his own view of the matter in the next day's debate.

Book II (§§ 1-11) Introduction: Crassus and Antonius were not unlearned, as is usually supposed; such eloquence as theirs must have been based on wide study. The dialogue following will constitute a treatise on rhetoric based on more practical experience than that possessed by previous authors.

(§§ 12-27) The second day's debate. Catulus and Caesar arrive, and after some conversation about the employment of leisure, Antonius begins to state his own case. (§§ 28-38) He says that oratory cannot be made into a science, but some rules for speakers can be derived from observation and experience; oratory covers all good speaking and all subjects. (§§ 39-73) He proceeds to consider the proper sphere of rhetoric. Demonstration needs no special rules; nor does history—he gives a survey of the chief Greek historians. The rhetoricians formulate no rules for writing history, nor for the other forms of literature that require eloquence. The same is true of the discussion of abstract subjects, for which no rules of style are needed. Any student who has mastered the more difficult problems will need no directions as to the easier ones. Forensic oratory is really the most difficult kind of oratory.

(§§ 74-89) Catulus tells a story illustrating the uselessness of theory without practical experience. Antonius criticizes some superfluous or misleading rules of rhetoric. The first requisite is natural endowment, as the instance of Sulpicius shows. (§§ 90-98) There must be constant practice, largely in writing,

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a good model being chosen to copy—the Greek schools of oratory are enumerated. But men of originality can dispense with a model. (§§ 99-113) To master first of all the facts of the case will at once make clear the point at issue, which will be either one of fact or of nature or of definition. (§§ 114-151) The facts are established by evidence or by argument. The handling of these methods needs practice. Antonius offers to treat of the invention of arguments, but on request consents to deal with the method of stating them. The case should be considered under some general proposition (*locus*) ; it is a mistake to labour the distinction between general propositions and particular instances, since the vast majority of cases can all be brought under a few general heads. The sources of arguments for dealing with these should be familiar by nature, theory and particularly study.

(§§ 152-161) Catulus says that this agrees largely with Aristotle. He develops the Roman attitude to philosophy. Antonius holds that the Stoic system is of no use to the orator, but he praises the acuteness of Aristotle and the dialectic of Carneades.

(§§ 162-177) The doctrine of 'topics'—but for this purpose attention and natural acumen, together with care for variety, will nearly suffice. (§§ 178-184) It is important to win the favour of the audience ; modes of doing this. (§§ 185-216) It is also important to inspire them with suitable emotions ; these the speaker must himself feel—instances from Antonius's own career. But in some cases to excite emotion is a mistake ; and when done it must be done in the proper manner, and without exaggeration or hurry, and interspersed with conciliatory passages. Argu-



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ments must be met by argument, and appeals to emotion by exciting the opposite emotion.

(§§ 217-234) Caesar discusses wit. It is of two kinds ; it cannot be taught ; its effectiveness illustrated from speeches of Crassus ; rules for its criticism. (§§ 235-247) The laughable—its nature ; its origin the unseemly, treated in a neat style ; where applicable and where not ; (a) wit of form and (b) wit of matter—illustrations of the latter. (§§ 248-263) (a) Seven kinds of verbal wit, defined and illustrated. (§§ 264-290) (b) Nine kinds of wit of thought, subdivided and illustrated. (§§ 291-332) Antonius resumes from § 216, and discusses his own and his opponent's case. Arrangement : put your strongest argument at the beginning or at the end. Rules for the various parts of a speech. (§§ 333-340) Speeches of advice derive effect from the character of the speaker and his political experience ; errors to avoid. (§§ 341-349) Panegyric, Greek masters of ; praise should be given to the subject's character as displayed in his attitude towards circumstances ; compare him with illustrious examples.

(§§ 350-367) Antonius sketches a *memoria technica*, originating from observations made by Simonides.

The debate is adjourned to the afternoon.

Book III (§§ 1-10) Death of Crassus soon after he had delivered an important speech. Fate of the other characters in this dialogue.

(§§ 17-24) The discussion resumed : Crassus begins his exposition of style. Style is not really separable from matter. (§§ 25-37) Our senses differ, but each gives pleasure ; and the same is the case with works of art. Similarly various styles of oratory are all admirable.