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Eloquence as Handmaiden of Wisdom

Hellenistic Philosoph(ies) in Cicero's *Partitiones Oratoriae*

Introduction

Cicero's multifaceted relationship with Greece can be investigated from many perspectives, a manifoldness to which the variety of topics addressed in this volume testifies. Cicero was the greatest interpreter of an era that marked one of the strongest turning points in the cultural relationship between Rome and Greece. This historical period was recently described by Caroline Bishop as “the second major wave of cultural Hellenization in Rome”.¹ Indeed, after the first ‘wave’ of the third and second centuries, the increasing importation of book collections and Greek intellectuals resulting from Sulla's and Lucullus' campaigns against Mithridates² contributed significantly to a new Hellenisation. The unprecedented access to Greek authors and Greek books, in particular, had a considerable impact on Rome's cultural life as well as on the personal history of Cicero, whose first contacts with Greece can be traced back to his association with some of these Greek scholars.³

From Cicero's account of his own education, scattered throughout his writings and masterly summed up in *Brut.* 304–316, we learn about a richness of sources and a variety of subjects that eventually proved crucial for the development of the synthesis he evolved between philosophy and eloquence. We know, for instance, that Cicero listened to the Stoic Diodotus when he was a child (Cic. *Acad.* 2.115; *Tusc.* 5.113) and that in the same years he was introduced to the Epicurean school by Phaedrus (Cic. *Fam.* 13.1.2). Later, when Philo of Larissa, the head of the Academy in Athens, fled to Rome (88 BCE), the young Cicero devoted himself to studying under this philosopher (Cic. *Brut.* 306),⁴ and in the same period he also met Molon (Cic. *Brut.* 307; 312), under whom he would later study in Rhodes.⁵

1 Bishop 2019, 10. On this period of cultural turmoil, see also Wisse 2002a, 334–341.

2 Cf. Cic. *Att.* 4.10.1, where Cicero briefly describes a visit to Sulla's library in Cuma, and Cic. *Fin.* 3.7, in which Lucullus' library provides the occasion and the perfect setting for the dialogue.

3 On Cicero's education, cf. Clarke 1968; Corbeill 2002a; Treggiari 2015, 241–245.

4 Other mentions of Philo's teaching can be found in Cic. *Fam.* 13.1.2; *Nat. D.* 1.6; *Acad.* 1.13; *Tusc.* 2.9; Plut. *Cic.* 3.1.

5 Corbeill 2002a, 27.

Cicero's attachment to teachers of Greek origin did not end with the conclusion of his education in Rome. On the contrary, such engagement continued into adulthood. First, during his study tour to Athens, Asia Minor, and Rhodes, where he encountered many more Greek intellectuals, such as Antiochus of Ascalon, Demetrius the Syrian, Apollonius Molon, and Posidonius of Apamea. Later, during his mature years, he loved to surround himself with the company of Greek intellectuals, such as the poet Archias, for whom he also composed a brilliant speech, and some freedmen like Tyrannio⁶ and Dionysius,⁷ both of whom were originally hired as teachers to his nephew Quintus and his son Marcus.

This early fascination with Greek culture endured, and Cicero's philhellenism remained a distinctive trait of his personality throughout his life. From a literary point of view, it was reflected by the choice – in some ways an obliged one – of Greek literary models. One of those models was, of course, Plato, who was the inspiration behind the ambitious project of the political dialogues of the fifties (*De oratore*, *De re publica*, *De legibus*). But others were also important, such as Aristotle, Isocrates, Demosthenes – to name but a few –, the latter of whom was intentionally chosen by Cicero as the programmatic model for his own oratory (Cic. *Att.* 2.1.3) and as the highest term of comparison to strive for.⁸ Beyond rhetoric and oratory, however, the field in which Cicero was most aware of the need to import the Greek cultural heritage into Rome was undoubtedly philosophy,⁹ a discipline to which he devoted himself intensely, especially in the last years of his life. The huge philosophical production of these years bears witness not so much to Cicero's originality of thought as to his desire to play the role of mediator and 'Latin-

⁶ See, e.g., Cic. *QFr.* 2.4.2 (56 BCE), where Quintus is said to be excellently educated (*eruditur egregie*) by Tyrannio, who lived at Cicero's house (*apud me*). Tyrannio was also responsible for the organisation of Cicero's library in Antium (cf. Cic. *Att.* 4.4a and 4.8.2).

⁷ Dionysius, who helped Tyrannio with the arrangement of Cicero's library in Antium (Cic. *Att.* 4.8), later remained with Cicero (Cic. *Att.* 4.11.2; 4.13.1) and became Marcus' teacher. The first reference to the freedman as being Marcus' teacher dates from 54 BCE and is found in Cic. *Att.* 4.15.10, a particularly interesting piece of evidence, in which Cicero urges his friend to send Dionysius in order to instruct not only Marcus but also himself (*et eum roges et hortere, ut quam primum veniat, ut possit Ciceronem meum atque etiam me ipsum erudire*; "and beg and urge him to come as soon as possible and undertake the instruction of my son and of myself too"; transl. Winstedt 1962). On young Marcus' education, see Treggiari 2015, 245–250. For his study trip to Greece, see also Lu in this volume.

⁸ On Cicero's Demosthenic self-fashioning, see Bishop 2016, who focuses especially on *Brutus* and *Orator*.

⁹ See on this Tsouni 2019, 24–35.

iser' (including linguistically)¹⁰ of Greek philosophy. In his cultural project, in fact, philosophy merges indissolubly with eloquence in order to shape the public figure Cicero held most dear: not the rhetorician, not the mere philosopher, but the politician, understood as the ideal orator (*perfectus orator*).

Taking as a starting point the semantic and cultural Latinisation of a Greek literary image found in *Partitiones oratoriae*, this study aims at investigating the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy in this work, one of Cicero's last writings on rhetoric.¹¹ The work, a handbook conceived as a dialogue between Cicero himself and his son Marcus, contains an intriguing and as yet not investigated representation of dialectics and oratory as 'handmaidens and companions of wisdom' (Cic. *Part. or.* 78). This personified image, surprisingly overlooked by *Partitiones oratoriae*'s few commentators, eventually deserves to be examined more in depth. The explicit representation of the ancillary relationship between eloquence and philosophy as well as the potential metaliterary value of such an image could in fact turn out to be crucial in order better to frame the complex relationship between these two disciplines, in a work where philosophy (and Greece) appears to be more present and rooted than it might seem at first sight.

Dialectics and Oratory as Handmaidens and Companions of Wisdom

About halfway through *Partitiones oratoriae*, after concluding the explanation of the unlimited questions (Cic. *Part. or.* 62–68), Cicero moves on to the limited ones and structures his account according to Aristotle's three kinds of speech. Rather unexpectedly,¹² the first to be addressed is the encomiastic kind, here named *genus laudativum* (laudatory genre; Cic. *Part. or.* 70–82).¹³

10 Cicero's awareness of his role as a 'Latiniser' of Greek philosophical knowledge and his attempt to make Latin a 'philosophical language' comparable to Greek are appreciable for example in Cic. *De or.* 3.95; *Nat. D.* 1.8; *Fin.* 1.10; 3.3–5; *Tusc.* 2.35. See on this Powell 1995, esp. 283–297; Lévy 2022 (with more bibliography).

11 Following Bornecque 1924, xi–xiv, and Romano 1964, I hold that *Partitiones oratoriae* was composed in the final phase of Cicero's life, between 46 and 45 BCE. I refer to Gilleland 1961 for a good overview of dating proposals. See also Gaines 2002, 447–450.

12 In Cicero's other rhetorical treatises, the encomiastic kind of speech usually follows the two others (deliberative and judicial). See, e.g., Cic. *De or.* 2.43; 3.41.

13 The *genus deliberativum* (deliberative genre) is addressed in Cic. *Part. or.* 83–97, while the *genus iudiciale* (judicial genre) occupies Cic. *Part. or.* 98–138.

Cicero gives the explanation a strong ethical overtone. Perhaps thinking of his son, the recipient of the work, he enriches the treatment of the *genus laudativum* with a catalogue of virtues and vices loaded with strong moral implications, thus bringing *Partitiones oratoriae* closer to the later *De officiis*, the ‘spiritual testament’ through which Cicero entrusted his political and philosophical legacy to Marcus, and to all the Roman youth. The ethical dimension of the encomiastic section is already appreciable in the way the author introduces the topic, stating that the “principles of awarding praise and blame [...] have a value not only for good oratory but also for right conduct”,¹⁴ thereby giving a precept that Marcus later confirms having understood when he claims to have received “instructions not merely as to how to praise another but also as to how to endeavour to be able to be deservedly praised myself”.¹⁵

Despite the manual-like nature of the work, the ethical tone of this section is not overshadowed by the technicalities of the *genus laudativum*. Rather, it takes central stage and results in what could be described as a proper ethical digression, in which virtues and vices are discussed (Cic. *Part. or.* 76–81). The final result is a highly articulated system of virtues, for which it is not easy to identify a single source and which Alberto Grilli has convincingly traced back to Stoicism, arguing in particular for Panaetius.¹⁶ Following the Aristotelian subdivision between *dianoetic* and *ethical* virtues, later theorised also by Panaetius in a form much more similar to that found in *Partitiones oratoriae*,¹⁷ Cicero divides virtues into matters of knowledge and action (Cic. *Part. or.* 76). In the former class, he places prudence (*prudentia*), shrewdness (*calliditas*), and wisdom (*sapientia*). In the latter, he places temperance (*temperantia*), fortitude (*fortitudo*), patience (*patientia*), greatness of mind (*magnitudo animi*), liberality (*liberalitas*), loftiness of mind (*altitudo animi*), and justice (*iustitia*), flanked with religion towards the gods (*erga deos religio*), piety towards parents (*erga parentes pietas*), goodness (*bonitas*), faith (*fides*), mercy (*lenitas*), and friendship (*amicitia*), in other words a list of vir-

14 Cic. *Part. or.* 70: *Ac laudandi vituperandique rationes, quae non ad bene dicendum solum, sed etiam ad honeste vivendum valent, exponam breviter* (“I will give a brief account of the principles of awarding praise and blame, which have a value not only for good oratory but also for right conduct”; unless otherwise indicated, all translations from *Partitiones oratoriae* are by Rackham 1942).

15 Cic. *Part. or.* 83: *Accepi ista didicique breviter non solum quem ad modum laudarem alterum, sed etiam quem ad modum eniterer, ut possem iure ipse laudari* (“You have given me brief instructions not merely as to how to praise another but also as to how to endeavour to be able to be deservedly praised myself”).

16 Grilli 1992.

17 Cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1.13 (especially 1103a), and Diog. Laert. 7.92: Παναίτιος μὲν οὖν δύο φησὶν ἀρετὰς, θεωρητικὴν καὶ πρακτικὴν (“Panaetius, however, divides virtue into two kinds, theoretical and practical”; transl. Hicks 1925).

tues strikingly similar to the one laid out by the ‘Antiochean’ Piso in the fifth Book of *De finibus*, with which *Partitiones oratoriae* seems to share the conception of *iustitia* as the highest expression of social οἰκείωσις (appropriation).¹⁸

To this elaborate system Cicero adds a series of subordinate virtues, or, according to Stoic terminology, ὑποτεταγμένα ἀρεταί,¹⁹ among which dialectics and oratory also feature (Cic. *Part. or.* 78–79). The passage runs as follows:

Sunt autem aliae quasi ministrae comitesque sapientiae; quarum altera, quae sint in disputando vera atque falsa quibusque positis quid sequatur distinguit et iudicat, quae virtus omnis in ratione scientiaque disputandi sita est, altera autem oratoria. Nihil est enim aliud eloquentia nisi copiose loquens sapientia; quae ex eodem hausta genere, quo illa quae in disputando, est uberior atque latior et ad motus animorum vulgique sensus accommodatio.

But there are others which are so to speak the handmaidens and companions of wisdom; of these one is displayed in debate, distinguishing truth from falsehood and judging the logical consequence of given premisses – this virtue resides entirely in the method and science of debating; while the sphere of the other is oratory. For eloquence is nothing else but wisdom delivering copious utterance; and this, while derived from the same class as the virtue above that operates in debate, is more abundant and wider and more closely adapted to the emotions and to the feelings of the common herd. (transl. Rackham 1942)

In keeping with the main topic of the treatise, the *doctrina dicendi* (theory of speaking), Cicero principally focuses on two subordinate virtues related to the broader field of rhetoric, that is dialectics, here indicated by a long periphrasis, and oratory.²⁰ The former, described as the virtue that *omnis in ratione scientiaque disputandi sita est* (“resides entirely in the method and science of debating”), is entrusted with the tasks of distinguishing the true from the false and of judging the

¹⁸ Cic. *Fin.* 5.65: *Quae animi affectio [...] iustitia dicitur, cui sunt adiunctae pietas, bonitas, liberalitas, benignitas, comitas, quaeque sunt generis eiusdem* (“This sentiment [...] is termed justice; connected with it are dutiful affection, kindness, liberality, good-will, courtesy and the other graces of the same kind”; all translations from *De finibus* are by Rackham 1967). Despite the generic nature of the philosophical material, which can be traced back to both Stoic and Neo-Academic doctrines, the parallelism with Cic. *Part. or.* 78 is quite strong. The emphasis on the social value of justice, highlighted in Cic. *Part. or.* 78 by the expression *in communione*, is consistent with Antiochus’ conception of *societas* (alliance) and *caritas generis humani* (affection between man and man; Cic. *Fin.* 5.65) derived from the – typically Antiochean – synthesis between Peripatetic and Stoic doctrines. On Cic. *Fin.* 5.65, see Schofield 2012, 176–182; Tsouni 2019, 156–166.

¹⁹ For the distinction between ‘primary virtues’ (πρῶται ἀρεταί) and ‘secondary virtues’ (ὑποτεταγμένα ἀρεταί) see, e.g., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (SVF) 3.264; 265.

²⁰ That eloquence was regarded as a virtue by the Stoics is made clear for example by Cic. *De or.* 1.83, where it is said that Mnesarchus considered eloquence one type of virtue (*una quaedam virtus*; see also Cic. *De or.* 3.55; 65, where a certain subordination to *sapientia* emerges).

logical consequences of given premises.²¹ Of the second, by contrast, what is accentuated is the abundant, rich, and pathetic character, according to a representation consistent with the Stoic didactic gesture traditionally attributed to Zeno, who likened dialectics to a clenched fist and rhetoric to an open hand.²² Such a distinction was well known to Cicero, who reiterates it at the end of the dialogue when he divides the rhetorical exercise into subtle disputation and copious oratory (*subtiliter disputandi et copiose dicendi artis*), attributing close analysis (*anguste disserere*) to the so-called dialecticians and broad exposition (*late expromere*) to the orator.²³

If we return to the passage quoted above, however, we note that to this rather traditional description Cicero adds a significant personifying impulse, which invests dialectics and oratory with what Sarah Culpepper Stroup has classified as “middling personification”.²⁴ Dialectics and oratory are indeed defined as the handmaidens and companions of wisdom; a little further on, eloquence itself becomes *copiose loquens sapientia* (“wisdom delivering copious utterance”) – with an expression resembling the metaphor of Cic. *Orat.* 70 –, while at the end of the paragraph modesty is proclaimed guardian of all virtues (*custos vero virtutum omnium, dedecus fugiens laudemque maxime consequens, verecundia est*; “but the guardian of all the virtues, which shuns disgrace and attains praise in the greatest degree, is modesty”).

The peculiar personification, which, as it happens, is not found in any other rhetorical work by Cicero, inevitably captures the reader’s attention and links this passage to the allegory – more philosophical than rhetorical – of the *comitatus virtutum* (companionship of virtues), a likely Latinisation of the Greek and Stoic

21 The same characterisation of dialectics can be found in Cic. *De or.* 2.157; *Acad.* 1.5; *Fin.* 2.17; *Tusc.* 5.72.

22 Zeno’s own explanation of this analogy is not preserved, and we only have testimonies from later authorities. Evidence is collected in *SVF* 1.75.

23 Cic. *Part. or.* 139: *et eadem vel anguste disserere, ut dialectici qui appellantur, vel, ut oratorem decet, late expromere, illius exercitationis et subtiliter disputandi et copiose dicendi artis est* (“and treating the same topics either with close analysis, as do those who are termed dialecticians, or with broad exposition, as befits an orator, all come under the exercises mentioned and are part of the science of subtle disputation and copious oratory”).

24 According to Stroup 2003, 121–122, a “middling personification” is “the detailed and literalizing endowment of an abstract concept with [...] variously human characteristics (e.g., heredity and appearance, thought and sensation, intention and action)”. Despite the fact that this definition refers to the personification of Eloquence in *Brutus*, it could easily be applied to our personification of dialectics and oratory, too: indeed, in the present case as well, abstract concepts are transformed into increasingly human, and identifiably feminine, characters.

chorus virtutum (ἄρετῶν χορός; chorus of virtues).²⁵ Cicero, an admirer of Greek-style personified abstractions and a keen user of figurative language, especially in his literary and philosophical writings,²⁶ was the first Latin author to use the image of the *chorus virtutum* and to propose a Latin resemanticisation of it by resorting to the semantic calque of the *comitatus*.²⁷ Aware of the importance of creating a Latin literary imagery, Cicero appropriated the typically Greek image of the *chorus* and imported it into his cultural and imaginative system by making use of an intrinsically Roman word. The term *comes* indeed not only recalls the entourage that traditionally accompanied aristocrats, provincial governors, and exiles,²⁸ but also gives the image a deeper meaning based on the ideas of companionship and consolation, both absent from the original *chorus* which, by resorting to an image typical of the visual arts, was semantically limited to the artistic field, when *comitatus*, on the contrary, enriches the metaphor by adding to it a philosophical and social element not found in the Greek word.

Moreover, alongside the concept of companionship, the image of Cic. *Part. or.* 78 is enriched by a further semantic nuance, related to the idea of subordination and rendered through the word *ministra* (handmaiden), whose figurative meaning, conveying the idea of subordination, appears in several other passages in Cicero. We find it for instance in Cic. *Fin.* 2.37, where virtues are polemically defined as *satellites* (subordinates) and *ministrae* (handmaidens) of pleasure, and

25 The image of the *chorus virtutum* seems to be shaped on models already present in ancient, and especially Greek, imagery. We could think, for instance, of the Charites allegorised by the Stoic Chrysippus to stress reciprocity in the exchange of benefits (Sen. *Ben.* 1.3.2–4.6), or of the Muses, often portrayed through images evoking gracefulness and interdependence. The Stoic origin of the image is also suggested by the ἄρετῶν χορός later attested in Arius Didymus and Philo of Alexandria (see Ar. Did. *ap. Stob. Flor.* 2.714; Philo *De spec. leg.* 1.269; 2.259; 4.134). On the Stoic origin of the *chorus virtutum*, see DegliInnocenti Pierini 2016, esp. 133–137.

26 See on this Fantham 1972, who devotes two chapters (5 and 6) of her study on figurative language in Republican Rome to the imagery of Cicero's oratory and literary dialogues.

27 We find the image of the *chorus virtutum* in Cic. *Tusc.* 5.13–14 and *Off.* 3.116. Its Latinisation, the *comitatus*, is found in Cic. *Fin.* 2.111; *Tusc.* 5.80; *Parad.* 16. Something similar, though not identical, can be seen in Cic. *Fin.* 2.12, where a *concilium virtutum* (company of virtues) is mentioned, and in Cic. *Tusc.* 5.68, where the verb *comitor* (accompany, to go with) refers to the term virtue. Finally, the personifying word *comes* (companion) appears in reference to virtues in Cic. *Tusc.* 2.32 and in a fragment from the *Hortensius* (frg. 104 Grilli). After Cicero, the image of the *comitatus virtutum* is attested in Sen. *Helv.* 9.2; *Ep.* 67.10; 90.3 (see on this DegliInnocenti Pierini 2016, esp. 125–126 and 133–135).

28 On these kinds of 'ambulatory performances', see O'Sullivan 2011, esp. 59–64. For the accompaniment into exile, see also Kelly 2006, 133–137. Examples of the aristocrats' *comitatus* can be found in Cic. *Cael.* 49; *Clu.* 192 (a particularly interesting use, as the word here refers to a woman); *Mil.* 28; 55; *Fam.* 6.19.1. For provincial governors, see Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.27; 2.3.30.

again in *Fin.* 2.69, where Cicero, in a similar attack against hedonists, takes up an image that the Stoic Cleanthes used to employ in his lectures, describing virtues as handmaidens (*ancillulae*) intent on no other task than of serving *Voluptas* (*quae* [...] *nullum suum officium ducerent, nisi ut Voluptati ministrarent*; “who should make it their sole duty to minister to Pleasure”), here personified as a queen.²⁹ The word *ministra*, moreover, is not exclusive to figurative representations of *Voluptas* or to philosophical discussions concerning the relationship between pleasure and virtues. On the contrary, it is also found in rhetorical and oratorical contexts more similar to our passage from *Partitiones oratoriae*. This is the case in *Cic. Leg. Man.* 36, where Cicero argues the need, in order to make a perfect commander, for a man not only to possess military virtue but also to be skilled in other illustrious arts (*artes eximiae*) portrayed as handmaidens and companions of virtue (*administrae comitesque virtutis*), and in *De or.* 1.75, where *artes* are said to be *comites ac ministratrices oratoris* (“companions and handmaidens of the orator”).

In both these passages, Cicero’s objective does not seem to be hierarchisation.³⁰ Rather, as we shall see, he toys with the Greek image of handmaidens by adding the typically Roman idea of companionship, which, in the case of *Partitiones oratoriae*, is used (once more) to convey the ideal of synthesis between rhetoric and philosophy. Indeed, although the recurrence of the image within the Ciceronian corpus might suggest that in *Part. or.* 78 Cicero was using an image he had already developed, probably drawing on pre-existing Greek literary models, it seems to me that in the case of *Partitiones oratoriae*, and in particular of this ethical digression, we should consider the hypothesis that by mixing the ideas of companionship and subordination Cicero had in mind a precise representation of dialectics and oratory, in which he achieved the perfect balance between figurative tradition and philosophical conception. Indeed, as Alberto Grilli observed, the definition of dialectics and oratory as *ministrae* fits well with the already mentioned Stoic concept of ὑποτεταγμένα ἀρεταί, of which *ministrae* could be an ingenious

29 See also *Cic. Off.* 1.150, where Cicero speaks of some arts that are *ministrae* of pleasures (*minimeque artes eae probandae, quae ministrae sunt voluptatum*; “least respectable of all are those trades which are handmaids of pleasures”; transl. Miller 1975 with adaptations).

30 This is also confirmed by passages in which *comes* and *ministra* appear to be the two canonical components of an almost idiomatic and stereotypical expression. Such is the case in *Cic. Flac.* 5: *Socii consiliorum, ministri comitesque vexantur; quid auctores, quid duces, quid principes sibi expectent?* (“Those who shared his counsels, his assistants and comrades, are being attacked; what may the authors, the leaders, the chief men, expect?”; transl. Lord 1964), and *Fin.* 2.113: *tu autem etiam membra ipsa sensusque considera, qui tibi, ut reliquae corporis partes, non comites solum virtutum, sed ministri etiam videbuntur* (“but I would also have you consider our actual members, and our organs of sensation, which like the other parts of the body you for your part will esteem not as the comrades merely but actually as the servants of the virtues”).

and fortunate Latin translation.³¹ At the same time, however, since for the Stoics these two disciplines, meant as subdivisions of logic, were autonomous parts of philosophy and not just subordinate virtues, it is also possible that multiple influences acted upon this Ciceronian personification. On the one hand, there are the Stoics, for whom dialectics and rhetoric, defined as ‘arts’ and different kinds of ‘science’,³² were constituent parts of a single sapiential system to which they could be subordinate in view of their precise functions and different technical tasks. On the other hand, there are other possible Greek and philosophical models in which similar personifications occur. We could think, for instance, of Plato’s τέχνην συνέριθαι (assistant) and συμπεριαγωγοί (assistant in converting others)³³ or of the allegory of the liberal arts (τὰ ἐγκύκλια παιδεύματα) portrayed as handmaidens of Penelope, herself a personification of philosophy.³⁴ Whatever the source from which Cicero drew the image of an ancillary virtue, the word *ministra* shows once again Cicero’s role as Latiniser. Indeed, in creating this original image, Cicero does not merely add to the personification the all-Latin idea of companionship but finds in *ministra* the perfect word to express a Greek, philosophical and abstract concept, attributing to dialectics and oratory the specific role of ‘performers of a service’ in favour of philosophy.

Adopting the broader perspective of Ciceronian thought in general, we could therefore be led to think that through this intriguing personification Cicero was testing a new way of portraying the complex relationship between wisdom, i.e. philosophy, and eloquence. He would thus be situating *Partitiones oratoriae* within the broader debate on the relationship between the two disciplines and investing the work with a theoretical reflection on which much remains to be investigated. It is known, in fact, that Cicero, placing himself at the pinnacle of the long-standing quarrel between rhetoricians and philosophers,³⁵ developed a highly personal po-

31 Grilli 1992, 269.

32 Dialectics was the ἐπιστήμη [...] τοῦ ὀρθῶς διαλέγεσθαι περὶ τῶν ἐν ἐρωτήσῃ καὶ ἀποκρίσει λόγων (“science [...] of correctly discussing subjects by question and answer”), while rhetoric was the ἐπιστήμη [...] τοῦ εὖ λέγειν περὶ τῶν ἐν διεξόδῳ λόγων (“science [...] of speaking well on matters set forth by plain narrative”); see SVF 2.48, transl. Hicks 1925. See also SVF 3.267. Almost the same definition is found in Cic. *De or.* 1.83, where Cicero states that Mnesarchus thought that eloquence *ex bene dicendi scientia constaret* (“was the science of speaking well”).

33 Pl. *Resp.* 7533d. For the first adjective, see also Pl. *Leg.* 10.889d.

34 The allegory is attested in Bion of Borysthenes (Plut. *De lib. educ.* 7D), Aristippus (Diog. Laert. 2.79–80), and Aristo of Chios (Stob. *Flor.* 4.140; Diog. Laert. 2.80). On philosophy’s personification as Penelope, see Helleman 1995, 286–293.

35 The quarrel is central in Cicero’s *De oratore*, in which it provides the context to the author’s claim that the orator needs philosophical knowledge. Crucial passages are Cic. *De or.* 1.82–93, where Charmadas is said to have taken a prominent part in the controversy, and *De or.* 3.56–73,

sition within this debate, identifying the solution to the conundrum as residing in a synthesis between the two disciplines. After having argued for a clear separation of spheres in *De inventione* (1.8; 33; 77; 86), though in the uncertain context of an oscillating position that already hinted at the emergence of an encyclopaedic ideal of culture (1.1),³⁶ Cicero came, in his maturity, to a somewhat ‘inclusive’ position. This is especially true for *De oratore*, where the possibility for the orator to know and expound philosophical topics (1.56–57) is stated together with the need for him to know philosophy and ethics (1.67–69). It is in the same *De oratore*, moreover, that the subordination of eloquence to philosophy becomes evident (1.60), and that Cicero even goes so far as to claim that the two disciplines have but one common origin (3.69).³⁷ The original position matured by Cicero in the fifties was then constantly maintained throughout later works, up until the rhetorical production of the forties, where the importance of turning to philosophy for the knowledge of the theoretical principles of rhetoric often arises, giving the impression that eloquence was always slightly subordinated to philosophy, though in the awareness that only their association could lead to the *perfectus orator*.

Coming back to Cic. *Part. or.* 78 and reading it in this perspective, therefore, we see that it finds a perfect place in the Ciceronian debate on the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy and is even more perfectly framed in the rhetorical-philosophical design of *Partitiones oratoriae*. As emerges more and more clearly, Cicero did not want to confine this handbook to rhetorical technicalities, aiming instead at providing the future orator – Marcus in the literary fiction of the dialogue, the readers of the treatise in reality – with all the tools necessary to become *perfectus*. It is Cicero himself who reveals such an intention in the final part of the dialogue, when he states that without knowledge of the *artes* (i.e. dialectics and oratory) of which he has just summarised the key aspects (Cic. *Part. or.* 139), it would be impossible for the orator to have faculty (*facultas*) and flow (*copia*) about good and bad, right and wrong, about utility and inutility, virtue and

where Crassus presents his claim for a synthesis of oratory and philosophy as a claim for the restoration of the original ‘unity’ of the two, which existed before Socrates (cf. Wisse 2002b, 390).

³⁶ Although *De inventione* did not yet envisage a complete synthesis of eloquence and philosophy, it is indisputably in this youthful treatise that Cicero posits his original idea of a combination of the two. Quite different is the position held by Gaines 2002, who thinks that the combination of wisdom and philosophy advocated in *Inu. rhet.* 1.1 does not yet imply a recommendation for serious study of philosophy (see Gaines 2002, 446 n. 5).

³⁷ The whole of Book Three, dominated by the figure of Crassus, is pervaded by the idea that the orator must escape the narrowness of the rules to acquire philosophical knowledge. Wisse 2002b, 383, speaks of “a number of successive ‘waves’ in which the theme is developed” culminating in “Crassus’ statement that the orator who possesses full philosophical knowledge surpasses everyone else (3.143)”.

vice.³⁸ That is to say, about a whole series of declaredly philosophical themes and topics whose mention at the very end of the work underlines once again the complementarity of rhetoric and philosophy.³⁹

Rhetoric and Philosophy in Cicero's *Partitiones Oratoriae*

The close connection between rhetoric and philosophy in *Partitiones oratoriae* has already been pointed out by Robert N. Gaines, who argued that Cicero “constructed *Partitiones oratoriae* to represent philosophical inquiry into the nature of rhetoric”.⁴⁰ In fact, if we consider the work as a whole, leaving aside the reductive label of rhetorical catechism to which some scholars have confined it,⁴¹ we note that *Partitiones oratoriae* cannot be interpreted as a ‘simple’ handbook of rhetoric written in Greek style, of the type of *De inventione* or *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Instead, the literary identity of this work is much more complex, complicated both by its form, which is that of a dialogue between father and son,⁴² and by its message, which is at the same time rhetorical and ethical. Though the main intent of the work is undoubtedly to teach rhetoric, here rhetorical teaching is enriched by significant ethical and philosophical stakes, possibly resulting from the dedication to Marcus and from Cicero’s reflection on the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. In this perspective, therefore, returning to the image of eloquence as the handmaiden of wisdom, we might now attempt a new reading of such a personification, that will enable us to comprehend in what sense rhetoric is for Cicero a *ministra* to wisdom and why rhetorical teaching is represented as the privileged vehicle of a message which concerns not only the rules of eloquence but also philosophy.

38 Cic. *Part. or.* 140: *De bonis vero rebus et malis, aequis iniquis, utilibus inutilibus, honestis turpibus quam potest habere orator sine illis maximarum rerum artibus facultatem aut copiam?* (“Moreover, what readiness of style or supply of matter can a speaker possess on the subject of good and bad, right and wrong, utility and inutility, virtue and vice, without knowing these sciences of primary importance?”).

39 Similar catalogues of philosophical topics that can be addressed only by the combined front of philosophy and rhetoric can be found in Cic. *De or.* 3.107 and *Orat.* 118.

40 Gaines 2002, 446–447.

41 On the interpretation of *Partitiones oratoriae* as a rhetorical catechism, see for instance Wisse 1989, 172, and Narducci 2005, 127–128. See also Arweiler 2003, 23–24, who convincingly argues the unsuitability of this definition.

42 On the literary genre of the work, see Oliva 2022.

That *Partitiones oratoriae* cannot be traced back to a single rhetorical theory or philosophical doctrine has already been noted, and any attempt to find a single source to which to attribute it is bound to be frustrated.⁴³ Despite the explicit debt of gratitude to the Academy placed at the end of the work,⁴⁴ it is impossible to identify a single philosophical or rhetorical authority in the wake of which Cicero might have composed the whole treatise, which rather seems to arise from his personal reworking of themes and topics elaborated throughout his life. Moreover, what we have seen so far already seems to point to a certain philosophical syncretism or to an Academic derivation in the broadest sense.

If we look first at the general structure of the treatise, we can note that *Partitiones oratoriae*'s first peculiarity lies in the organisation of the subject matter. The treatise, in fact, presents a tripartite structure (Cic. *Part. or.* 3) according to which the theory of speaking is broken down into the power of the speaker (*vis oratoris*), the speech (*oratio*), and the question (*quaestio*):

MARCUS. *Quot in partes tribuenda est omnis doctrina dicendi?*

CICERO. *Tris.*

MARCUS. *Cedo quas?*

CICERO. *Primum in ipsam vim oratoris, deinde in orationem, tum in quaestionem.*

MARCUS. Into how many parts ought the theory of rhetoric as a whole to be divided?

CICERO. Three.

MARCUS. Pray tell me what they are.

CICERO. First, the speaker's personal resources, second the speech, and third the question. (transl. Rackham 1942)

This unusual subdivision, already presented in Cic. *Part. or.* 3 and then maintained throughout the handbook,⁴⁵ is "not employed or fully realised in any other ancient discussion on rhetoric".⁴⁶ It produces what Gaines has defined a 'conjunctive' treatise: a treatise built on an unintegrated combination of more traditional rhetorical treatise forms organised according to speech parts (quantitative treatises), speech kinds (generic treatises), and speaker activities (functional treatises).⁴⁷ Such a

⁴³ For a comprehensive overview of the hypotheses put forward over the years, see Grilli 1992, 255.

⁴⁴ The passage is quoted and analysed below, p. 87.

⁴⁵ After the first four 'proemial' paragraphs, Cicero deals with the power of the speaker in §§ 5–26, with the speech in §§ 27–60, and with the *quaestio* in §§ 61–138.

⁴⁶ See Gaines 2002, 460. The novelty of this tripartition is noted also by Merchant 1890, 13, and Wisse 1989, 172.

⁴⁷ This classification of treatise forms is elaborated by Gaines 1989, who explicitly addresses *Partitiones oratoriae* at pp. 336–339. See also Gaines 2002, 460 n. 24.

structure, which in itself raises a number of questions about the sources of the work, leads to considerable repetition of theoretical material.⁴⁸ Furthermore, while we do not necessarily concur with Jakob Wisse's solution, which identifies this system as an unmistakable feature of Academic rhetoric and thus as evidence for Cicero's statement in *Cic. Part. or.* 139,⁴⁹ there is no doubt that this structure represents a novelty opening up the possibility that it could be traced back to the Academy. Beyond the Academy, however, there are other philosophical schools on which *Partitiones oratoriae* relies. Among those schools are the Peripatos and, as we have already noted, the Stoa.

The point where the influence of Aristotelian rhetoric on our treatise is most evident is undoubtedly the division of the three kinds of speech (*Cic. Part. or.* 10; 69), although, compared with Aristotle, Cicero gives the encomiastic and deliberative genres an unusually extensive treatment.⁵⁰ Further traces of this Aristotelian influence can be found in the division of the speech into four parts instead of six (*Cic. Part. or.* 4); in the characterisation of invention as the production of conviction and the arousal of emotions among the audience (*Cic. Part. or.* 5);⁵¹ and in the division of delivery into variations in voice, gesture, and visage (*Cic. Part. or.* 25). All these elements testify to the presence of Aristotelian doctrines, without however implying Cicero's first-hand consultation of the *Rhetoric* and suggesting, rather, that Aristotle's theories were by then an integral part of the theoretical knowledge of rhetoric.⁵²

That Cicero was not relying on any specific source but rather on his own excellent theoretical knowledge of rhetoric and philosophy is confirmed by the presence of two other philosophical schools besides the Peripatos. The first is the Stoa, whose traces can be seen in the aforementioned ethical digression (*Cic. Part. or.* 76–81) as well as in the passage in which the five qualities of speech are delineated (*Cic. Part. or.* 19–22),⁵³ and the second is the Academy, both Old and

48 The parts of the speech, for instance, are addressed under each of the three macro-sections. Another topic which gives rise to numerous repetitions is that of the *status rationales* discussed in *Cic. Part. or.* 34–43; 62–66; 101–107; 110–131.

49 Wisse 1989, 172–173.

50 This difference has already been highlighted by Kennedy 1963, 329. Compare also Romano 1964, who thinks that behind the extensive treatment of the encomiastic genre may lie chronological evidence in favour of 46 BCE as the most likely date of composition of the work.

51 See, e.g., Arist. *Rh.* 1.2.1356a.

52 Cicero's knowledge of Peripatetic writings on rhetoric is a vexed issue. A good overview of the question can be found in Fortenbaugh 1989 and 2005.

53 Renouncing the Theophrastean system of the four virtues of eloquence followed in *Cic. De or.* 3.37–55 and *Orat.* 79, Cicero here structures his explanation of the qualities of speech (*lumina orationis*) according to the categories of lucidity (*dilucidum*), brevity (*breve*), acceptability (*proba-*

New. It is to the dogmatic and Antiochean branch of the Academy that we can attribute the lexicon of Cic. *Part. or.* 5 regarding the definition of the *argumentum* (argument),⁵⁴ the tripartition of the *bona malae* (goods and evils) into external, physical, and mental (Cic. *Part. or.* 38; 74),⁵⁵ and the classification of the goods into *bona per se* and *propter se expetenda* (“goods desirable for themselves and for their own sakes”; Cic. *Part. or.* 86–87).⁵⁶ As for the sceptical and Philonian branch, it is responsible for a substantial part of the rhetorical material, most evident in the lengthy exposition of the unlimited questions (Cic. *Part. or.* 62–68), which were introduced in rhetorical theory by Hermagoras of Temnos and later became a subject of teaching for Philo of Larissa as well (Cic. *De or.* 3.110).⁵⁷

As things stand, in the light of the variety of doctrines on which *Partitiones oratoriae* seems to rely, we might begin to discern the metaliterary meaning behind the term *ministra* as well as to make sense of the related idea of eloquence performing a service in favour of philosophy. Indeed, in *Partitiones oratoriae*, the definition of rhetoric as a ‘handmaiden of wisdom’ is not a matter of stylistic affectation; rhetoric, on the contrary, is genuinely presented as being at the service of a major project of synthesis, for the exposition of rhetorical rules becomes the perfect opportunity to enrich such rules by mixing them with teachings drawn from the most important Hellenistic philosophies. For this reason, the Ciceronian idea of synthesis between the two disciplines, along with the continuous interactions between them, forbids the conclusion that the representation of eloquence as a handmaiden could be due to its ontological inferiority. Rather, it is likely that the handmaiden image accounts for eloquence’s arising from philosophy, while at the same time making eloquence a fertile ground for the exposition and mixture of different philosophical doctrines.

bile), brilliance (*inlustre*), and charm (*suave*), following a scheme of plausible Stoic origin (see on this Michel 1982, 129–130).

54 Cic. *Part. or.* 5: *MARCUS. Quid est argumentum? CICERO. Probabile inventum ad faciendam fidem* (“MARCUS. What is an argument? CICERO. A plausible device to obtain belief”). In regard to this definition, see Lévy 2011, 260, who identifies in the adjective “plausible” (*probabile*) and in the expression “to obtain belief” (*ad faciendam fidem*) the concepts of εὐλογον and πείθεσθαι, both characteristic of the New Academy.

55 This tripartition is Platonic (Pl. *Grg.* 477c) and Peripatetic (Cic. *Fin.* 3.43; *Tusc.* 5.85) in origin. We find it widely articulated in the fifth Book of *De finibus*, where the description of the supreme good as fruition of goods is explained through reference to physical properties (546–47), mental properties (548–64), and external properties (565–67).

56 See on this Grilli 1992, 271–277.

57 The passage is analysed by Reinhardt 2000, 537–538, as a piece of evidence for Philo’s teaching of both limited and unlimited questions. See also Brittain 2001, 296–297.

Eloquence Springing from Philosophy

It is thus at this point, in the concluding section of the present study, that it is worth quoting in full the line in which Cicero bids farewell to his son with the following intriguing statement, from which *Quellenforschung* studies of *Partitiones oratoriae* usually begin (Cic. *Part. or.* 139):

Expositae tibi omnes sunt oratoriae partitiones, quae quidem e media illa nostra Academia effloruerunt, neque sine ea aut inveniri aut intellegi aut tractari possunt.

You have been presented with all the partitions of oratory, which certainly sprang from the heart of our Academy. And without it those partitions could not be discovered, understood or treated. (transl. by the author)

All the partitions of oratory just discussed with Marcus have sprouted *e media illa nostra Academia*. But what does Cicero mean by *e media Academia*? Referring to the Academy, the adjective *medius* could, in fact, have two different meanings. According to the doxographic classification of the phases of the Academy,⁵⁸ it could refer to the so-called Middle Academy of the sceptic Arcesilaus. At the same time, however, it could indicate Cicero's general debt to the Academy, showing his gratitude towards a school that formed him in both eloquence and philosophy. Several clues point in this direction. First, we have no direct or indirect evidence of any technical rhetorical teaching dispensed by Arcesilaus or his successor Carneades. Both certainly played a significant role in the development of dialectics, but they had no didactical pretensions in the field of rhetoric, pursuing instead philosophical (sceptical) ends, such as the demonstration of the unattainability of truth.⁵⁹ Second, there are no known passages in which Cicero uses *medius* as a periodising adjective referring to the history of the Academy. Indeed, as made evident by Marcello Gigante,⁶⁰ Cicero tends to use a binary periodisation dividing the Academy into Old and New.⁶¹ Finally, we have other passages in the Ciceronian

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 1.220.

⁵⁹ On the Academy's lack of interest in teaching rhetoric, see, e.g., Quint. *Inst.* 3.1.15, where it is said that after Theophrastus it was mainly the Stoics and Peripatetics who dealt with rhetoric. As for the practice of arguing both sides of a question, Cicero acknowledges its Aristotelian origin (Cic. *Orat.* 46), but correctly associates it also with the Academy of Arcesilaus and Carneades (Cic. *De or.* 2.161; 3.80; *Tusc.* 2.9). Of particular interest are the considerations found in Cic. *Fin.* 5.10, where Cicero stresses the substantial difference between the two schools, with the sceptical Academy aiming at the suspension of judgment and the Peripatos at the defence of a thesis or the attainment of knowledge. See on this Tsouni 2019, 54–55.

⁶⁰ Gigante 1980.

⁶¹ It is the case, e.g., in Cic. *Leg.* 1.38–39; *De or.* 3.67; *Fin.* 5.7; *Acad.* 1.46; *Off.* 3.20.

corpus in which the reference to the Academy does indeed appear to corroborate the thesis of generic debt and binary periodisation. I am referring to the first proem of the *Orator* and to the well-known dedicatory epistle of the *Academica Posteriora* to Varro:

Ego autem et me saepe nova videri dicere intellego, cum pervetera dicam sed inaudita plerisque, et fateor me oratorem, si modo sim aut etiam quicumque sim, non ex rhetorum officinis sed ex Academiae spatiis exstitisse; illa enim sunt curricula multiplicium variorumque sermonum, in quibus Platonis primum sunt impressa vestigia. Sed et huius et aliorum philosophorum disputationibus et exagitatus maxime orator est et adiutus; omnis enim ubertas et quasi silva dicendi ducta ab illis est nec satis tamen instructa ad forensis causas, quas, ut illi ipsi dicere solebant, agrestioribus Musis reliquerunt. (Cic. *Orat.* 12)

However, I am aware that I often seem to be making original remarks when what I am saying is very old but generally unknown; and I confess that whatever ability I possess as an orator comes, not from the workshops of the rhetoricians, but from the spacious grounds of the Academy. There indeed is the field for manifold and varied debate, which was first trodden by the feet of Plato. By his discussions and those of other philosophers the orator has been severely criticised but has also received assistance – for all richness of style, and what may be called the raw material of oratory is derived from them – but he has not received from the philosophers sufficient training for pleading in the courts of law. They left this to the ruder Muses, as they were wont to say themselves. (transl. Hubbell 1971)

Etsi munus flagitare, quamvis quis ostenderit, ne populus quidem solet nisi concitatus, tamen ego expectatione promissi tui moveor; ut admoneam te, non ut flagitem; misi autem ad te quatuor admonitores non nimis verecundos; nosti enim profecto os huius adolescentioris Academiae. Ex ea igitur media excitatos misi, qui metuo ne te forte flagitent; ego autem mandavi, ut rogarent (Cic. *Fam.* 9.8.1)

Although to demand a gift, whatever hopes of it have been held out by anybody, is not usual even with the people, unless they are wildly excited, none the less the eager expectation of what you promised moves me to address you a reminder, certainly not a demand. But I have despatched to you a quartette of ‘reminders’, not overburdened with modesty; for of course you know the effrontery of this somewhat juvenile Academy. It was from the midst of that Academy that I routed them out and sent them; and now I am afraid they may perhaps make a demand of you, whereas my instructions were merely to make a request. (transl. Williams 1965)

Although both of these parallel passages have already been noted and studied by some scholars,⁶² it is worth quoting them here in order to underline further common patterns with our Cic. *Part. or.* 139. Indeed, beyond the reference to the Academy, there are some interesting correspondences in which it seems to me that figurative language, already extensively investigated with regard to the personification of dialectics and oratory, plays a central role. In the passage

⁶² See Lévy 1980, 263, and Lévy 2011, 250–252; Gaines 2002, 459 n. 21.

from the *Orator*; for instance, Cicero does not merely claim to have been trained as an orator in the spacious grounds of the Academy. He goes further, arguing that eloquence, which here comes to be described as *ubertas* and *quasi silva dicendi*,⁶³ is born from philosophical disputations, according to a conception of eloquence as springing from philosophy that was particularly dear to Cicero, who had already expressed it in Cic. *De or.* 1.20 (*etenim ex rerum cognitione efflorescat et redundet oportet oratio*; “for it is from knowledge that oratory should flourish and flow”) through the same verb *effloresco* of Cic. *Part. or.* 139. In Cic. *Fam.* 9.8.1, on the other hand, we find the same use of the adjective *medius* as in Cic. *Part. or.* 139, but here explicitly referring to the sceptical Academy, identified by an expression (*adulescentior Academia*) that confirms Cicero’s preference for the binary periodisation and weakens, at the same time, the possibility that *medius* could have a meaning other than ‘from the heart of ...’. Moreover, in this passage too, the figurative language which is attached to the word *munus* and to the concept of reciprocity helps to bring *Partitiones oratoriae*’s conclusion closer to the epistle.⁶⁴ Granted that the association between the literary work and the idea of textual *munus* qua performance of a service and exchange of benefit was a literary *topos* (indeed a Ciceronian one),⁶⁵ the fact that both *Partitiones oratoriae*’s final line and the dedicatory epistle to Varro refer to the *munus* brings the two passages closer together on a semantic level as well. This makes it even more reasonable to think that in both cases *media Academia* metaphorically refers to the fulcrum of

63 The term *silva* is used metaphorically in various contexts to indicate ‘matter’, ‘mass of material’, ‘raw material’, hence the plural usage as a title for collections of occasional poems. In addition to Cic. *Orat.* 12, see, e.g., Cic. *Inu. rhet.* 1.34; *De or.* 3.93; Suet. *Gram. et rhet.* 24; Quint. *Inst.* 10.3.17. In this regard, Horace’s use of *silva* in *Sat.* 1.10.34–35 is also worth noting; here *silva* might designate the *corpus* of books already composed by Greek writers to which the poet was adding his own (Cucchiarelli 2007, 200). In this perspective, it is probably not by chance that the exegete Porphyryon, commenting on Hor. *Epist.* 1.4.4, notes *silvas libros φιλοσοφουμένων significat* (“by *silvas* [Horace] means books on philosophical subjects”), suggesting once more the connection between *silva* and literary material. On the metaphorical use of *silva*, cf. Hinds 1998, 12–13.

64 The word *munus* appears twice in *Partitiones oratoriae* – the first time in Cic. *Part. or.* 132, where it has the meaning of ‘task, or performance of a service’, and the second time in the concluding line of the work, in *Part. or.* 140, where its meaning is that of ‘gift’.

65 The analogy between text and *munus* is a well-established literary *topos*, and we find it in a number of writings by Cicero (e.g. Cic. *Parad.* 1; *Brut.* 16; *Sen.* 2). In the present case, however, it is particularly worth noting that the concept of *munus* connects *Partitiones oratoriae* to the only other treatise dedicated to Marcus, the *De officiis*, in the conclusion of which Cicero entrusts to Marcus what he has just finished writing as a *munus* born from the rethinking of the concept of *officium* after the full realisation of the death of the republic (Cic. *Off.* 3.121). On the literary *topos* of the *munus*, see Lemoine 1991, esp. 353–355; Stroup 2010, 66–100 (with particular regard to Cicero at 88–97); Stroup 2013, esp. 113–116.

the school. To these two well-known parallel passages, I would like to add a third one, which – as far as I know – has never been associated with the conclusion of *Partitiones oratoriae*, but might reinforce the idea that the Academy is the source of both philosophy and eloquence in Cicero (Cic. *Fat.* 3):

Quibus actis, Quid ergo? inquit ille, quoniam oratorias exercitationes non tu quidem, ut spero, reliquisti, sed certe philosophiam illis anteposuisti, possumne aliquid audire? Tu vero, inquam, vel audire vel dicere; nec enim, id quod recte existimas, oratoria illa studia deserui, quibus etiam te incendi, quamquam flagrantissimum acceperam, nec ea, quae nunc tracto, minuunt, sed augent potius illam facultatem. Nam cum hoc genere philosophiae, quod nos sequimur, magnam habet orator societatem; subtilitatem enim ab Academia mutuatur et ei vicissim reddit ubertatem orationis et ornamenta dicendi.

These dealt with, Hirtius remarked, “What now? I hope you have not actually abandoned your oratorical exercises, though you have undoubtedly placed philosophy in front of them; well then, is it possible for me to hear something?” “Well,” I said, “you can either hear something or say something yourself; for you are right in supposing that I have not abandoned my old interest in oratory, – indeed I have kindled it in you also, although you came to me an ardent devotee already; and moreover my oratorical powers are not diminished by the subjects that I now have in hand, but rather increased. For there is a close alliance between the orator and the philosophical system of which I am a follower; since the orator borrows subtlety from the Academy and repays the loan by giving to it a copious and flowing style and rhetorical ornament. (transl. Rackham 1942)

Responding to his pupil Hirtius, who worries that the master had abandoned rhetorical exercises in favour of philosophy, Cicero assures him that he has not left his interest in oratory, and indeed argues that philosophy actually increases oratorical powers. Accordingly, the good orator must be familiar with the school of philosophy of which Cicero professes to be a follower: the Academy, from which the orator derives the ability of *subtiliter disputandi* (subtle disputation) while giving it in return *ubertas orationis* (copious and flowing style) and *ornamenta dicendi* (rhetorical ornament).

As Carlos Lévy has rightly pointed out,⁶⁶ however, even if we understand *e media illa nostra Academia* as meaning ‘from the heart of our Academy’, two possible interpretations of the passage remain. On the one hand, we can think that in Cic. *Part. or.* 139, as in Cic. *Orat.* 12, Cicero is giving credit to the Academy for providing him with a general philosophical education which, through Academic tools such as the *divisio* (diaporesis) and the practice of arguing both sides of a question, represented the best possible training for him as an orator. On the other hand, it is also possible that Cicero’s statement conceals a reference to a proper technical teaching dispensed by the Academy, one based on rhetorical rules and principles.

⁶⁶ Lévy 2011, 252–253.

In this case *Partitiones oratoriae* would not be a mere handbook of rhetoric *inspired* by the Academy, but an authentically *Academic* rhetorical handbook. This is a very suggestive hypothesis, which is not however confirmed by the sources on the relationship between the Academy and rhetoric. As previously noted, in fact, the Academy (probably in the wake of the positions held by Plato) remained hostile and essentially alien to the technical teaching of rhetoric until the late second/early first century BCE, when Philo of Larissa opened the school to rhetoric, perhaps influenced by Charmadas, who had already shown a certain interest in rhetoric without reaching Philo's technicality.⁶⁷

According to Cicero's account in *Tusc.* 2.9, Philo had established the practice of teaching rhetoric and philosophy alternately,⁶⁸ and from the already mentioned *Cic. De or.* 3.110 we know that his rhetorical teaching must surely have contained both limited and unlimited questions. To these two elements, according to Tobias Reinhardt's reconstruction of Philonian rhetoric,⁶⁹ we should add the dialectical method of the *disputatio* (disputation) and the readaptation of the Hermagorean doctrine of the *status* to the Aristotelian theory of the *loci* (places), two points that also recur in *Partitiones oratoriae*. Limited questions are addressed in *Cic. Part. or.* 68–138, while unlimited questions are given an unusually large space (comparable only to their treatment in the third Book of *De oratore* and in the *Topica*)⁷⁰ in *Cic. Part. or.* 62–68. The dialectical method, which permeates the treatise already in the question-and-answer form, finds space for example in *Cic. Part. or.* 78–79 and *Part. or.* 139, while the connection between the *status* of the unlimited questions and the *loci* of the invention is found in *Cic. Part. or.* 68.

From the perspective of rhetoric, therefore, there are good grounds for tracing *Partitiones oratoriae*'s rhetorical teaching, or at least part of it, back to Philo of Larissa. At the same time, however, the marked theoretical syncretism we have put forward so far cautions against trying to identify a single source or name be-

67 On the role of Charmadas as a possible mediator between Plato's anti-technicism and Philo's rhetorical teaching, see Brittain 2001, 319–328, who argues that for Charmadas rhetoric was a (non-technical) faculty of persuasion, attained by experience, and for the perfection of which philosophical training was a necessary condition.

68 *Cic. Tusc.* 2.9: *Nostra autem memoria Philo, quem nos frequenter audivimus, instituit alio tempore rhetorum praecepta tradere, alio philosophorum: ad quam nos consuetudinem a familiaribus nostris adducti in Tusculano, quod datum est temporis nobis, in eo consumpsimus* ("Philo, however, as we remember, for we often heard him lecture, made a practice of teaching the rules of the rhetoricians at one time, and those of the philosophers at another. I was induced by our friends to follow this practice, and in my house at Tusculum I thus employed the time at our disposal"; transl. King 1971).

69 Reinhardt 2000, esp. 546–547.

70 See *Cic. De or.* 3.111–118 and *Top.* 81–90.

hind the words *e media illa nostra Academia*. Even if we accept the hypothesis according to which Cicero remained affiliated to sceptical thought throughout his life,⁷¹ or the hybrid approach that sees in him a generic ‘Platonist’, as much Philonian as Antiochian,⁷² the only perspective in which it seems reasonable to accept a sceptical derivation of *Partitiones oratoriae* is the one proposed by Anthony A. Long, who observes that “his [sc. Cicero’s] Philonian scepticism is entirely compatible with choosing theories that, on examination, he finds the most plausible or probable. This dual allegiance to Philo and, with qualification, to Antiochus, is a highly intelligent interpretation of the Academic tradition. It allows Cicero to draw heavily on Plato and Stoicism, in advocating positions he strongly supports, while preserving an exploratory rather than dogmatic style, and reserving the right to criticise Stoics and even Plato on occasion”.⁷³

By mentioning the Academy at the end of the work, therefore, Cicero “allows himself free access to a wide range of intellectual resources”⁷⁴ and philosophical doctrines that allow him to combine the contributions of the ancient Academy, the Peripatos, the Stoa, the sceptical Academy of Philo and the dogmatic Academy of Antiochus in a single treatise. Moreover, in the same reference to the Academy it is likely that Cicero attributes to Philo some of the rhetorical theories that have just been exposed, acknowledging his master’s scepticism as an opportunity to combine different doctrines. It is therefore to Philo’s ‘mitigated’ version of the original Academic scepticism, and to his epistemology, that we could perhaps attribute *Partitiones oratoriae*’s philosophical and theoretical syncretism.⁷⁵

Conclusion

In spite of the label of ‘minor work’ that has often been attached to *Partitiones oratoriae*, the work – as I hope has emerged from this paper – is not a hasty and catechetical compendium of rhetoric, but rather the successful product of Cicero’s deep knowledge of rhetoric and philosophy, here bestowed upon his son and the Roman youth. In *Partitiones oratoriae*, which due to its form as a lesson provides

71 The sceptical continuity has been argued by Görler 1995 and more recently by Reinhardt 2000. On the other hand, the idea that Cicero changed his philosophical affiliation from Philo to Antiochus and then again to Philo, already advanced by Hirzel 1895, 511 n. 2, is supported by Glucker 1988 and Steinmetz 1989.

72 This is the opinion of Long 1995a.

73 Long 2003, 199.

74 Gaines 2002, 459 n. 21.

75 On Philo’s mitigated version of scepticism, see Brittain 2001.

the perfect pedagogical context for delivering enduring and relevant teachings, Cicero had the chance, once more, to develop his reflections about philosophy and rhetoric, reflections already cautiously sketched out in *De inventione* and then fully delineated in *De oratore*. Thus, taking as our starting point the personification of dialectics and oratory, clear evidence of Cicero's full development of a literary Latin language intended as a vehicle for abstract thought, we analysed in which sense eloquence was for him the handmaiden and companion of wisdom. It was wisdom's companion in the sense of an ever-so-slightly subordinate attendant, since without *sapientia* the art of speaking had no reason to exist. It would have been sterile, empty, morally useless, and only by being accompanied by philosophical wisdom could it expect to become the privileged tool of the perfect orator. It was wisdom's handmaiden, on the other hand, because it was always slightly subordinate, although – I would say – not so much because of any ontological inferiority on the part of eloquence, but rather because it was only by performing a service for wisdom that eloquence could find its *raison d'être*, overcoming the arid 'sophistic' technicality that Plato had already warned against. The presence of this highly illustrative image in the middle of *Partitiones oratoriae* acquires, therefore, the metaliterary significance we have seen.⁷⁶ Conceived as a 'dialogical handbook' addressed to Cicero's son, *Partitiones oratoriae* is only apparently, in fact, a textbook of rhetoric. Although eloquence understood as *doctrina dicendi* (theory of speaking) is certainly present, it is not the only protagonist on the scene here: the stage is shared, and next to *Eloquentia* stands *Philosophia*, its companion and *domina*. The synthesis of these two entities thus gives rise to a philosophical-rhetorical work, a possible canvas for the future *De officiis* as well as unprecedented ground of iteration and contamination for the author's whole philosophical knowledge. Cicero was an Academic, he always remained one, and would probably never have defined himself otherwise. Precisely for this reason, therefore, it is not surprising to find a reference to the Academy at the end of the work, although this reference, if read in the perspective of the Ciceronian synthesis between philosophy and rhetoric, should prevent us from searching for a single source, school, or philosopher. Certainly, Philo's thetical rhetoric is present and at times prominent, but Antiochus, the Peripatos, and the Stoa are equally present, so that it would perhaps be more legitimate to think of a syncretism 'philosophically authorised' by Philonian scepticism, or, more simply, a syncretism derived from Cicero's reworking of his own philosophical culture, the origin of which he clearly acknowledges to be Academic. In this sense, *Partitiones oratoriae*, taking up the form of a lesson of rhetoric given to Marcus, becomes the perfect

⁷⁶ Cf. *supra* pp. 77–83.

opportunity for Cicero to realise through a literary work the ideal synthesis between rhetoric and philosophy he had theorised in *De oratore*. Here, such a synthesis is achieved through the exposition of various Greek philosophical doctrines and their combination into a treatise that is only apparently a textbook of rhetoric.