Vilnius University Press

Contents lists available at Vilnius University Press

Literatūra
2025, vol. 67(3), pp. 42–54

ISSN 0258-0802 eISSN 1648-1143
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15388/Litera.2025.67.3.3

In utroque profecerimus: How does Philosophical *Sermo* Become Eloquent?*

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Abstract. In his rhetorical treatises, Cicero establishes a clear distinction between *sermo* and *oratio* (*Or*. 12–13, 63–64; *De Or*. II. 159). The former, among other meanings, refers to a philosophical discourse, whereas the latter refers to rhetorical speech. He treats *sermo* as a poorer sort of oration on the grounds of lacking a rhetorical value. According to Cicero, philosophical *modus dicendi*, on the one hand, lacks the power of contention and strife, which is necessary for court and forum disputes, and, on the other hand, is not suitable for public speaking. Instead, it is rather welcome in close circles, friendly gatherings, and dinner parties. However, in the preface to the First Book of *De Officiis*, Cicero asserts that his own philosophical works (sc. *sermones*) are worth reading no less than his orations, because both types of writing can help to enrich Latin. Even more strikingly, he adds that he succeeded in developing to perfection both genres (*Off*. I. 3). This claim stands in contrast with his earlier philosophical treatises in which Cicero stood on the defensive against his critics and felt it necessary to explain his motives in writing philosophy in Latin. So, the question is: How and when did this shift occur from defending and viewing *sermo* as an inferior form of discourse to evaluating and recommending it to readers? In this paper, I briefly examine the meanings and different usage of the terms *sermo* and *oratio* in Cicero's treatises, secondly, I undertake to show a certain development or change in Cicero's approach to his philosophical writings, and, finally, I shall give some insights into the question raised above.
Keywords: Cicero, *Orator*, *De officiis*, philosophical speech, *sermo, oratio*, oration.

In utroque profecerimus: kaip filosofinė kalba tampa iškalbinga?

Santrauka. Ciceronas savo retorikos traktatuose daro aiškią skirtį tarp *sermo* ir *oratio* (*Or*. 12–13, 63–64; *De Or*. II. 159). Pirmasis terminas, be kitų reikšmių, specifiškai vartojamas filosofinio diskurso prasme, o antrasis reiškia viešą oratoriaus kalbą. Ciceronas *sermo* laiko retoriškai neišpildyta, todėl menkesne kalbėsenos rūšimi. Teigiama, kad filosofinis kalbėjimo būdas (*modus dicendi*) stokoja jėgos ir įtampos, būtinos teismų bei forumo iškalbai; be to, jis netinkamas viešajam kalbėjimui, nes labiau pritaikytas siauram klausytojų ratui, draugų pokalbiams, ypač puotose.

* The research has been made as part of the project *Cicero and Changing Values During Political Crises* (2024–2027), supported by the Research Council of Lithuania. Part of the material of this paper was first presented at The Twenty-Fifth Biennial Conference of the International Society for the History of Rhetoric (ISHR) – *The Idea of Humanity in the History of Rhetoric*, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, 25–27 July 2025. My thanks to the audiences on this occasion for helpful questions and comments, and to my first readers Aistė Čelkytė, Vilius Bartninkas and Nijolė Juchnevičienė, as well as anonymous reviewers, for their valuable advice.

Received: 03/09/2025. **Accepted:** 10/11/2025.

Vis dėlto traktate *Apie pareigas* (*De officiis*) Cicerono požiūris pasikeičia. Pirmosios knygos įžangoje autorius tvirtina, kad jo filosofinius veikalus, t. y. *sermones*, verta skaityti ne mažiau negu jo kalbas (*orationes*), nes abi veikalų rūšys padės jaunuomenei praturtinti savo lotynų kalbą ir ją ugdyti. Dar daugiau – Ciceronas teigia pasiekęs abiejų žanrų aukštumų, o to nėra pavykę nė vienam graikų ar romėnų autoriui (*Off*. I. 3). Šis teiginys ryškiai kontrastuoja su ankstesnių Cicerono filosofinių traktatų įžangomis, kuriose jis tarsi užima gynybinę poziciją prieš galimus kritikus (kažkokius *eruditi*), jausdamas būtinybę pasiteisinti, kodėl ėmėsi rašyti filosofiją lotyniškai. Kaip ir kada iš gynybinės pozicijos pereinama nuo *sermo*, anksčiau laikytos menkesne kalbėsenos rūšimi, prie jos įvertinimo ir net rekomendavimo skaitytojams? Šiame straipsnyje pirmiausia trumpai aptariami terminai *sermo* ir *oratio* bei jų ekvivalentų vartojimas Cicerono traktatuose, parodoma abiejų kalbėsenos rūšių priešprieša. Antra, atskleidžiamas požiūrio į filosofinį diskursą pokytis veikale *Apie pareigas*. Galiausiai, pateikiama įžvalgų iškeltais klausimais.
Reikšminiai žodžiai: Ciceronas, *Orator*, *De officiis*, filosofinis dialogas, *sermo*, *oratio*, oratoriaus kalba.

It has long been recognized that Cicero can rightly be considered the creator of dialogue in Latin literature. Although he was not the originator of this genre, he adapted the form of dialogue to his works of rhetoric and philosophy, following in the tradition of Plato and Aristotle. Cicero gave the genre a Roman character, and it was in his hands that Latin dialogue reached its literary peak.[1] As noted by Philip Levine, "the literary dialogue provided Cicero with the necessary instrument to propagate Greek thought among his fellow-citizens, and, though this was itself a Greek creation, it became in his hands a highly effective means to Romanize foreign material sufficiently to satisfy domestic standards of propriety that obtained in the case of intellectual pursuits" (Levine, 1958, p. 146). This is obvious to us when viewed from the perspective of time. However, for Cicero himself and his contemporaries, philosophy in Latin was not a common and self-evident thing. On the other hand, no matter what he wrote, Cicero never ceased to be an orator. In his letters, he repeatedly mentions that scholarship and literary activity were merely a refuge for him during difficult periods of his life. Moreover, it was an alternative activity that allowed him to serve his country and his compatriots when political circumstances prevented him from performing his direct state and social duties, i.e., to act as an orator.[2] There is no doubt that his rhetorical abilities and skills influenced and correlated with his style in other genres.[3] The aim of this article is to discuss Cicero's approach to his treatises as a specific type of discourse in comparison with oratorical speech. I argue that the ideas expressed in his work *On Duties* reveal a certain development of the author towards self-awareness as a philosopher.

Cicero uses different terms to describe these two types of speech: mainly, *sermo* and *oratio*. Therefore, the first step is to discuss their usage and meaning. A review of all the uses of *sermo* in Cicero's rhetorical treatises reveals some of the most important meanings of the word. *A priori* we must admit that these meanings are not always completely clear, nor is there always a clearly discernible boundary between the one meaning and

[1] On the literary characteristics of Cicero's dialogues, see Hirzel, 1895, vol. I, pp. 457–552; Becker, 1938; Jones, 1939, pp. 307–325; Ruch, 1948, pp. 61–63; Levine, 1958, pp. 146–151; Süss, 1971, pp. 155–178.

[2] See *Fam*. VII. 33. 2; *Or*. 148; especially *Off*. II. 2–4.

[3] About interaction between Cicero's rhetoric and dialectic, see Woolf, 2023.

the other. Most often the word means 1) everyday, ordinary speech, the mother tongue;[4] 2) clean correct speech;[5] or 3) colloquial style.[6] Sometimes, the two latter meanings are used interchangeably, e.g., *Brut*. 132, where, in the same paragraph, we find the same word both in the sense of language (*Latini sermonis integritas*) and in the sense of style (*Xenophonteo genere sermonis*). Sometimes, *sermo* is contrasted with written language: *in omni consuetudine vel sermonis vel scripti* (*De or*. II. 111).

More specifically, *sermo* means 'conversation', 'discussion', as a synonym of *disputatio*. The author of the *Rhetoric to Herennius*, when discussing the *pronuntiatio* part, more specifically, the flexibility of the voice (*mollitudo vocis*), distinguishes between *sermo* and *contentio* as the opposite kinds of speech, which differ primarily in the voice tense:[7] the tone of the first is relaxed, and it is closest to daily speech, while the tone of the latter (sc. *contentio*), as the term itself suggests, is characterized by greater voice tension and energy, and is suited to both proof and refutation.[8] In other words, this type of language is appropriate for court practice. As we shall see below, Cicero sometimes uses *contentio* as a synonym for rhetorical speech (*oratio*) as well.

Finally, in the most technical sense (which interests us most in this case), *sermo* becomes a term for both an oral discussion on a literary, philosophical, political, or other topic and a literary work cast in the form of such a discussion, a dialogue:[9] *Plato nec solum in iis sermonibus qui* διάλογοι *dicuntur* (*Or*. 151).[10] We will briefly note that when Horace calls his satires *Sermones*, he is emphasising two aspects of his works: the colloquial style and the dialogical relationship with the reader, which is characteristic of the diatribe genre, which made some influence on other genres.

It should be noted that Cicero sometimes uses *sermo* and *oratio* synonymously, e.g., he says in *Brut*. 120 *nam ut Stoicorum astrictior est oratio*, where we would rather expect *sermo*. However, more often than not, in his rhetorical treatises, Cicero makes a clear distinction between *sermo* and *oratio* as colloquial and rhetorically embellished speech or, more specifically, as a kind of philosophical discourse *vs*. a public speech of an orator.[11] In the *Orator*, Cicero speaks about the separation of philosophy and rhetoric in the fifth century BC in Athens:

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[4] E.g., *in sermonis nostri consuetudine*, *De or*. II. 57; *non solum... Latini sermonis, sed etiam Graeci*, *De or*. II. 28; *in Latino sermone*, *De or*. III. 42; *consuetudo sermonis cotidiani ac domestici*, *De or*. III. 48; *in sermone matris*, *Brut*. 211; *Sisenna autem quasi emendator sermonis usitati*, *Brut*. 259, etc.

[5] E.g., *sermo purus erit et Latinus*, *Or*. 79; *in huius oratione sermo Latinus erat*, *Brut*. 233, etc.

[6] E.g., *illi [sc. philosophi] tenui quodam exsanguique sermone disputant*, *De or*. II. 17; *genus sermonis*, *De or.* II. 159; *ipso genere sermonis*, *De or.* II. 219; *puri dilucidique sermonis*, *De or*. III. 38, etc.

[7] Cf. Cic. *Or*. 109.

[8] *sermo est oratio remissa et finitima cotidianae locutioni. Contentio est oratio acris et ad confirmandum et ad confutandum adcommodata* (*Rhet Her*. III. 23).

[9] *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s. v. 'sermo'.

[10] See also: *variosque sermones immortalitati scriptis suis Plato tradidit*, *De or*. III. 60; *in Socratico sermone De or*. III. 62; *ex variis Platonis libris sermonibusque Socraticis*, *De or*. III. 67; *a Socrate neque sermo ille Platonis verus est*, *De or*. III. 129; *in hoc sermone nostro* (i.e., in the dialogue which is held in *Brutus*), *Brut*. 231, 232.

[11] Cf. *Brut.* 120–121; *De or*. II. 159; III. 182.

> *illa enim sunt curricula multiplicium variorumque sermonum in quibus Platonis primum sunt impressa vestigia. sed et huius et aliorum philosophorum disputationibus et exagitatus maxume orator est et adiutus – omnis enim ubertas et quasi silva dicendi ducta ab illis est – nec satis tamen instructus ad forensis causas quas, ut illi ipsi dicere solebant, agrestioribus Musis reliquerunt. sic eloquentia haec forensis spreta a philosophis et repudiata multis quidem illa adiumentis magnisque caruit, sed tamen ornata verbis atque sententiis iactationem habuit in populo nec paucorum iudicium reprehensionemque pertimuit: ita et doctis eloquentia popularis et disertis elegans doctrina defuit* (*Or.* 12–13).
>
> "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 criticized 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. Consequently the eloquence of the courts, scorned and rejected by the philosophers, lost much valuable assistance; nevertheless with a veneer of verbiage and maxims it vaunted itself before the populace, and did not fear the unfavourable criticism of the few. As a result the learned lacked an eloquence which appealed to the people, and the fluent speakers lacked the refinement of sound learning" (transl. by H. M. Hubbell).

He mentions the manifold and varied conversations (*sermones*) in which "Plato's footprints can first be traced" (transl. by R. O. Kaster). *Sermo* and *disputatio* are used synonymously here. Plato and other philosophers fiercely criticised the eloquence of orators in their discussions (*disputationibus*) and left it to the ruder Muses (*agrestioribus Musis reliquerunt*). As a result, the eloquence of the court (*eloquentia* (= *oratio*) *haec forensis*), despised and rejected by philosophers, lost much of its valuable reinforcement, but, embellished with words and phrases, it earned the praise of the people and was not afraid of the judgment and reproach of the minority. Thus, according to Cicero, educated men began to lack the eloquence accessible to the people, and skilled speakers began to lack a select education.

This opposition between *oratio* and *sermo* is even more clearly revealed in the *Orator* 63–64:

> *philosophi quidam ornate locuti sunt … tamen horum* ***oratio*** *(= sermo) neque nervos neque aculeos oratorios ac forenses habet. loquuntur cum doctis, quorum sedare animos malunt quam incitare, si de rebus placatis ac minime turbulentis docendi causa non capiundi loquuntur, ut in eo ipso quod delectationem aliquam dicendo aucupentur plus nonnullis quam necesse sit facere videantur. Ergo ab hoc genere non difficile est hanc* ***eloquentiam*** *de qua nunc agitur secernere. mollis est enim* ***oratio*** *(= sermo) philosophorum et umbratilis nec sententiis nec verbis instructa popularibus nec vincta numeris sed soluta liberius; nihil iratum habet nihil invidum nihil atrox nihil miserabile nihil astutum; casta verecunda, virgo incorrupta quodam modo. itaque* ***sermo*** *potius quam* ***oratio*** *dicitur. Quanquam enim omnis locutio oratio est, tamen unius oratoris locutio hoc proprio signata nomine est* (*Or*. 63–64).
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> "Certain philosophers, to be sure, had an ornate style <...> yet their style lacks the vigour and sting necessary for oratorical efforts in public life. They converse with scholars, whose

> minds they prefer to soothe rather than arouse; they converse in this way about unexciting and non-controversial subjects, for the purpose of instructing rather than captivating; and some think they exceed due bounds in aiming to give some little pleasure by their style. It is therefore easy to distinguish the eloquence which we are treating in this work from the style of the philosophers. The latter is gentle and academic; it has no equipment of words or phrases that catch the popular fancy; it is not arranged in rhythmical periods, but is loose in structure; there is no anger in it, no hatred, no ferocity, no pathos, no shrewdness; it might be called a chaste, pure and modest virgin. Consequently it is called conversation rather than oratory. While all speaking is oratory, yet it is the speech of the orator alone which is marked by this special name" (transl. by H. M. Hubbell).

Here Cicero speaks of *oratio philosophorum* instead of *sermo philosophorum*, as opposed to true eloquence (*eloquentiam*), but, in the end, he explains the fundamental difference between *sermo* and *oratio*. Although some philosophers, Cicero asserts, speak ornately (*ornate locuti sunt*) and their speech is pleasing (*delectationem aucupentur*), it is fundamentally different from that of an orator. In the passage quoted above, we can identify three factors that determine the specificity of the philosophical speech which make it different from rhetorical oration. These are the content, the audience, and the objectives. Namely, philosophers speak about peaceful matters (*de rebus placatis ac minime turbulentis*), to a narrow circle of learned listeners (*loquuntur cum doctis*), and do not aim to captivate them, but rather to instruct (*docendi causa non capiundi*). Their speech, therefore, firstly, lacks the fierceness or combativeness (*neque nervos neque aculeos... habet*) necessary for public speaking, secondly, it is not equipped with "words and phrases that catch the popular fancy" (transl. by H. M. Hubbell), and thirdly, it seeks to calm the minds of the hearers rather than to arouse them (*sedare animos malunt quam incitare*). That is why there is no anger in it, no jealousy, no compassion or any other emotion (*nihil iratum habet nihil invidum nihil atrox nihil miserabile nihil astutum*). In other words, it does not fulfil the third function of oratorical speech, *movere*, which is particularly emphasised in Cicero's theory of rhetoric.[12] Cicero attributes the same lack of combativeness to Isocrates' epideictic eloquence, which he compares to gladiators practising with wooden swords at school (*Opt. gen*. 17).[13]

The distinctiveness of the *sermo philosophorum* is expressed also by metaphorical epithets that are belittling and even scornful. First of all, it is *nec vincta numeris sed soluta liberius*, i.e., it is not arranged in rhythmical periods, and it lacks rhetorical rhythm, which is the main focus of the treatise *Orator* (168–236), and which is Cicero's essential requirement for good style. Secondly, it is as chaste, pure and modest as a virgin (*casta verecunda, virgo incorrupta*), and, finally, it is *mollis et umbratilis*, i.e., it is carried out in the shade, reclusive. The metaphor of a shadow is used by Cicero in various contents, denoted by negative connotation. The school of philosophers, secluded in the shade, is contrasted with the sun and noise of the open Forum (Cic. *Brut*. 37; *Leg*. III. 14; Quint. I.

[12] Cf. *De or.* II. 115, *Opt. gen.* 3, *Or*. 69, 97, 236.

[13] *Non enim in acie versatur nec ferro, sed quasi rudibus eius eludit oratio*. (*Opt. gen*. 17) – "For his oratory does not take part in the battle nor use steel, but plays with a wooden sword, as I may say" (transl. by H. M. Hubbell).

2. 18). By using the same metaphor, Cicero urges that eloquence should be brought out of the safe environment of the home and into the realities of life: the oratory must be carried out of the shadowy (*umbratili*) environment of domestic education into the very midst of the rallying point, the dust, the noise, the camp, and the swirl of the courtly struggles, it must stand in the presence of the people, it must try the strength of its faculties, and that enclosed preparation must be brought out into the light of real life (*De or*. I. 157). Moreover, the metaphor of the shadow implies not only the avoidance of active life, but also a kind of effeminacy, a feminine avoidance of the sun's rays.[14]

The final sentence of the quotation we are examining brings us back to the opposition and explanation of the terms *sermo* vs. *oratio*: *omnis locutio oratio est, tamen unius oratoris locutio hoc proprio signata nomine est.* – "While all speaking is oratory, yet it is the speech of the orator alone which is marked by this special name" (transl. by H. M. Hubbell).

However, it seems that, in the *De officiis*, the distinction between *sermo* vs. *oratio* is, as it were, softened, and the former gains more confidence and a more positive attitude. Twice in this treatise does Cicero speak about a two-fold discourse (*vis orationis duplex*; *duplex ratio orationis*): conversation (*sermo*), and oratory (*contentio*).[15] He repeats some of the ideas expressed in the description of *eloquentia* and *sermo* in *Or*. 63–64, and adds something new. Both kinds differ in function and application, because oratory is to be employed in court, in popular assemblies and in the senate, whereas conversation is naturally fitting for social gatherings, informal discussions, gatherings with friends, especially at dinners.[16] The rules of *contentio* are laid down by the rhetoricians, but in principle they also apply to conversation.[17] According to Michele Kennerly (2010, p. 136), "by dividing speech into the two categories of *contentio* and *sermo* in the *De Officiis*, instead of *oratio* and *sermo*, as he did in the *De oratore*, Cicero imparts to the speech of public striving an unflattering, aggressive aspect"[18] and, one could add, presents philosophical discourse in a much more attractive light. *Contentio*, no doubt, has more strength and more power to achieve fame, but *sermo* is characterised by courtesy and affability (*comitas affabilitasque*), and goes far more towards winning the affections. Here we should notice some change in treatment: although *sermones*, as we have seen earlier in the *Orator* 63, are intended for *docendi causa non capiundi*, their specific style, according to Cicero, is capable of winning men's hearts over.[19]

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[14] Cf. Plat. *Phaedr*. 239c.

[15] *Off*. I. 132: *magna vis orationis est eaque duplex, altera contentionis, altera sermonis; Off.* II. 48: *duplex ratio sit orationis, quarum in altera sermo sit, in altera contentione*.

[16] *Off*. I. 132: *contentio disceptationibus tribuatur iudiciorum, contionum, senatus, sermo in circulis, disputationibus, congressionibus familiarium versetur, sequatur etiam convivia*.

Off. II. 48: *Sed cum duplex ratio sit orationis, quarum in altera sermo sit, in altera contentio, non est id quidem dubium, quin contentio orationis maiorem vim habeat ad gloriam (ea est enim, quam eloquentiam dicimus); sed tamen difficile dictu est, quantopere conciliet animos comitas affabilitasque sermonis*.

[17] *Off*. I. 132: *Contentionis praecepta rhetorum sunt, nulla sermonis, … quamquam quoniam verborum sententiarumque praecepta sunt, eadem ad sermonem pertinebunt*.

[18] On the other hand, we have the same opposition in the *De Oratore* as well: *alia sermonis, alia contentionis verba*, *De or*. III. 177. Dyck (1990, pp. 309–310) examines possible influence of Panaetius for such division as well as links to ἀγωνίζεσθαι ir διαλέγεσθαι in Plat. *Tht*. 167e ff.

[19] *Off*. I. 3: *non est id quidem dubium, quin contentio orationis maiorem vim habeat ad gloriam (ea est enim, quam eloquentiam dicimus)*; II. 48: *sed tamen difficile dictu est, quantopere conciliet animos comitas affabilitasque sermonis.*

In the preface to the First Book of the *De officiis*, Cicero urges his son to read not only his orations but also books on philosophy.[20] For, while the former are characterised by the greater power of eloquence and a more vigorous style (*vis maior dicendi*), the calm and restrained style of speech must also be cultivated. Although the young Cicero who studies in Athens under the most eminent teachers is abundantly endowed with philosophical teachings, it is his father's philosophical writings in Latin that will help him (and, of course, all Roman youths) to enrich Latin (*orationem Latinam pleniorem*, I. 2). Let us notice that the temperate style of philosophical discourse is characterised as the middle style of oratory in *Orator* 91–96, where Cicero claims to be able to handle all three levels of style himself (100–105), which is one of Cicero's most important requirements for the ideal orator. It follows that, by reading his father's philosophical works, the young Marcus, and all other readers, will develop the language skills necessary for a true orator.

Cicero also claims that nobody until now has successfully laboured in both kinds of style (forensic speech and philosophic discussion), but he himself succeeded in developing to perfection both genres (*nos... in utroque profecerimus*, I. 3). And when he says that his philosophical works now are nearly equal to his speeches (*qui iam illis fere se aequarunt*, *ibid*.), this probably refers primarily to their quantity, but, at the same time, it can mean equality in quality.[21] This claim stands in contrast with his earlier philosophical treatises (*Fin*. I. 1–7, III. 3–5, *Acad*. I. 9–12, *N.D*. I. 7–8) in which Cicero stood on the defensive against his critics.[22] Although all of these treatises were written at around the same time (46–45 BC), the tone of their introductions differs. So, the question is, how and why did this transition occur from a rather critical view of *sermo* as an inferior type of discourse to its appreciation and rather strong suggestion to his readers?

Michele Kennerly in her paper "Sermo and Stoic Sociality in Cicero's *De officiis*" attributes this shift of weight to the *sermo* mostly to the content of the treatise itself: "Cicero publicizes the persuasive power of a conversational manner, a communicative style consonant with Stoicism's emphasis on human togetherness" (Kennerly, 2010, p. 119). And elsewhere: "by attending to *sermo* in a Stoic text, Cicero attempts to boost his son's and other young Roman readers' enthusiasm for philosophy" (Kennerly, 2010, p. 124). This is a rather convincing argument, showing, so to say, Cicero's adaptation to the rhetorical situation: once he is writing a philosophical work, it is not inappropriate to praise the way and the style of speech he has chosen. However, this does not explain

[20] *Off*. I.: *te hortor, mi Cicero, ut* ***non solum orationes meas, sed hos etiam de philosophia libros, qui iam illis fere se aequarunt****, studiose legas, –* ***vis enim maior in illis dicendi****, – sed hoc quoque* ***colendum est aequabile et temperatum orationis genus****. Et id quidem nemini video Graecorum adhuc contigisse, ut idem utroque in genere laboraret sequereturque et illud forensi dicendi et hoc quietum disputandi genus, nisi forte Demetrius Phalereus in hoc numero haberi potest, disputator subtilis, orator parum vehemens, dulcis tamen, ut Theophrasti discipulum possis agnoscere.* ***Nos autem quantum in utroque profecerimus****, aliorum sit iudicium, utrumque certe secuti sumus*.

[21] Most translators and commentators interpret the phrase *iam fere se aequarunt* in terms of bulk and numbers (e.g., "now number almost as many", transl. by P. G. Walsh, 2000) and provide various figures for how many speeches and volumes of philosophical works Cicero had published at that time. Yet I agree with those who see a certain ambiguity here. As Benjamin P. Newton notes, "Latin is ambiguous and can mean equal in number or quality" (Cicero, 2016, p. 22, note 6). See also Gunermann's *comm. ad loc*. In: Cicero, 2019, p. 333.

[22] I explored this question in more detail in another paper; see Kučinskienė, 2012.

the disappearance of the defensive position and the desire to justify oneself, which was present in the prefaces to the earlier treatises. This is all the more so because *De officiis* is not even a *sermo* in the strict sense: the work is not written in the form of a dialogue but, according to A. E. Douglas (2002, p. 198), a 'quasi-epistolary monologue'.[23] In this respect, the parallel can be drawn with the *Orator*, which was also written as a letter to Marcus Brutus, and with a similar purpose, in a way, i.e., to teach eloquence. Just as Brutus, after reading the work addressed to him, should break away from the Atticism and devote himself to true eloquence (although we know that this did not happen), so too, after reading the *De officiis*, the young Marcus Cicero should not only learn philosophy, which is something that he already does not lack from his time in Athens, but, more importantly, he should also develop his Latin philosophical prose. But again, we are well aware that, in both cases, the addressee is merely symbolic, and that both works are intended for a much wider audience.

One more aspect could be added to previous interpretation – specifically, that of the political circumstances of the *De officiis*. As we know, the *De officiis* is Cicero's last treatise, written after the Ides of March. It will be followed only by the final chord of his literary work, the *Philippics* against Marcus Antonius. The political aspects of the *De officiis* have been examined in detail by Anthony Arthur Long (1995). His excellent study reveals the novelty of Cicero's political thinking, his contribution to political theory, and his reconsideration of traditional values such as fame, friendship and private property in the face of the collapse of the Republic. However, he does not relate it in any way to the linguistic expression of the work. Kennerly briefly suggests that the political circumstances of the writing of the *De officiis* may have influenced his changed view: "That Cicero wrote his *rhetorica* while the Republic was slipping, and *De officiis* when it was in a fallen state, might account for his altering his position on *sermo*'s public relevance" (Kennerly, 2010, p. 123). However, she does not elaborate on this idea. My reflections, on the contrary, lead not to a distinction between Cicero's rhetorical works, written between 46–44 BC, and the *De officiis*, but to a certain commonality based on the similar circumstances in which all these works emerged.

John Dugan in his brilliant study on the *Ciceronian Self-Fashioning* states: "In the *Orator* Cicero outlines his recent works of rhetorical theory <…> and anticipates his

[23] Although the treatise is written in the form of a letter to his son, it still falls into the category of *sermo* as a type of discourse. The genre of letters is dialogical in nature and, like oratorical speech and diatribe, can be considered a phenomenon on the borderline between dialogue and monologue (Kučinskienė, 2009, p. 30). It is no coincidence that ancient theorists, such as Demetrius, in his *On Style*, closely linked the style of the dialogue to the style of the letter, while stressing its proximity to spoken language (Demetr. *Eloc*. 223–229). Cicero calls a letter a conversation between absent friends (*amicorum conloquia absentium*, *Phil. II*. 7) and says that the language of a letter is close to everyday language (*epistulas vero cottidianis verbis texere solemus*, *Fam*. IX. 21. 1). Quintilian asserts that conversation and letters are characterised by unrestricted speech that is not bound by the rules of syntax (*oratio […] soluta alia, qualis in sermone et epistulis,* Quint. IX. 4. 19). It is also worth adding that, even in the chosen form, Cicero remains faithful to his favourite rhetorical figure *prolepsis*, which James M. May (1990, pp. 177–180) called 'monologistic dialogue' (for more details, see Kučinskienė, 2008, pp. 66–73). This is particularly characteristic of the third book, in which entire passages are developed in the form of dialogue (*Off*. III. 29, 76, 79, 51–55, 58–60, 90–95, especially the Regulus' episode at 100–110).

later philosophical works <…>. The linkage of these two projects, one rhetorical and the other philosophical, marks a trajectory within Cicero's writings of this period towards ever greater intellectual abstraction and away from the world of direct political involvement" (Dugan, 2005, p. 254). In this respect, the part of the treatise the *Orator* devoted to prose rhythm (168–236) is particularly important, because it marks "a distinctively aesthetic turn in Cicero's treatment of oratory, away from oratory as a political instrument or as product of historical development, and towards its status as an autonomous work of art" (Dugan, 2005, p. 256). In the face of Caesar's dictatorship, having realised that an orator's speech loses its former meaning and that his survival as an orator depends on the written word, Cicero, through the study of rhythm, transfers the sound of speech into the written text. The written text thus replaces the live performance of speech, embodying its 'breath' and force, and acquires an independent existence. "A skilled pen allows a written speech to enjoy an autonomous, animate existence that transcends its textual form" (Dugan, 2005, p. 287).

Could we extend this interpretation to the *De officiis* as well? My idea is that, perhaps, because of the notion that oratory as a weapon and stimulus of political life has become meaningless with the change in the political order, Cicero invites his readers to turn to the *sermo* and tries to give it a new status in the lives of his citizens by bringing it out of the closed circle of friends and into the public arena. I return once again to Kennerly (2010, p. 123): "Cicero not only parlays Stoic philosophical content into oratorical tone, he also tries to convince readers of the worth of adopting that tone to one's rhetorical repertoire and adapting it to fit oratorical occasions". In other words, the *sermo*, which used to be seen as a means of private conversation between friends, now takes on a public purpose as, for example, *domus*, which should properly convey and reflect the host's status and views. It is no coincidence that the discussion of the *sermo* is inserted in the *decorum* section, next to the description of the house. Both the house and the table conversation must conform to the *decorum*; both are no longer merely a private matter, as they become the object of public evaluation.

Finally, I would like to draw more attention to a certain growth and maturity of Cicero's self-awareness as a writer of philosophy.

When Cicero decided to introduce philosophy to Latin literature, he found a nearly uncultivated field. There were some who had written philosophical works in Latin before. Although *optimi viri*, they were not *eruditi* enough and could not express their thoughts in a sufficiently refined (*polite*) way, and attract the reader by some sort of charm (*delectatione aliqua adlicere lectorem*, *Tusc*. I. 6). One class of men, who wish to be called philosophers,[24] are Epicureans. Cicero, who liked to present himself as the founder of Latin philosophy, blames them for the narrowness of their writings and rejects them because they lack ornaments of diction (*polite eloqui non possit*). Although their style is characterised by cleanliness and clarity – two *virtutes dicendi* that seem to be sufficient for philosophy –

[24] *qui se philosophos appellari volunt, quorum dicuntur esse Latini sane multi libri*, *Tusc*. II. 7

it lacks *copia* and *ornatus*. The other branch, the Stoics, were even worse,[25] since they lacked even the *virtutes* of the aforementioned Epicureans. Their style is described in the *De oratore* III. 66 as "bald, unfamiliar, jarring on the ear of the public, devoid of clarity, fullness and spirit, while at the same time of a character that makes it quite impossible to employ it in public speaking" (transl. by H. Rackham).[26]

At the same time, Cicero had to overcome a rather strong opposition of certain educated fellow countrymen (Terentius Varro probably among them)[27] and to defend his position as a philosopher. We find his arguments expounded most significantly in the prefaces to his philosophical writings (*Fin*. I. 1–7, *Acad*. I. 4–10, *N.D.* I. 7–8).[28] The author finds it necessary to explain his motives for writing philosophy in Latin (instead of, for instance, history, which would be much more characteristic of the Latin tradition), and defends his right and principles as a translator. In the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, he states that: "Philosophy has lain neglected to this day, and Latin literature has thrown no light upon it: it must be illuminated and exalted by us" (transl. by A. J. King).[29] One can smile at A. D. Leeman's figurative comment: "Philosophy is the Sleeping Beauty, to be awakened by Prince Cicero and the magic of his word" (Leeman, 1963, p. 200), but I would like to draw one's attention here to the expression with gerundives *inlustranda et excitanda nobis*, which sounds like some plan or obligation with a patriotic *pathos* peculiar to Cicero, because he is going to prove everybody that the Romans can do everything no worse, and even better than the Greeks.[30]

In the *De officiis*, Cicero formulates his purpose of writing not as a demand or intention to spread among his fellow citizens the Greek thought, but as a firm conviction that he has achieved in this field what no one else has.[31] This claim can be understood, to my mind, both in terms of the content and its linguistic expression. According to Nathan Gilbert, Cicero shows much greater maturity and originality as a philosopher in the *De officiis*: "We see Cicero refining arguments and tactics developed over years of skirmishing with Epicurean rivals, and we see evidence of a bold engagement with Stoic sources" (Gilbert, 2023, p. 115). Perhaps this explains the choice of a different form for the work – a letter

[25] Cicero's view of Stoic rhetoric is as a rule markedly unfavourable (see, e.g., *Fin*. 4.7; *Parad. Stoic.* 2; *Brut.* 119–20), mainly because he regards it as bound by the dry contorted style; see Gilbert, 2023, p. 16. See also Atherton, 1988.

[26] *orationis etiam genus... inusitatum, abhorrens ab auribus vulgi, obscurum, inane, ieiunum, ac tamen eius modi, quo uti ad vulgus nullo modo possit*, *De or*. III. 66.

[27] It is Varro who, in the *Academica*, explains why the Romans interested in serious philosophy should turn to the Greek originals instead of the Latin sources, "so that they may draw from the fountain-heads rather than seek out mere rivulets" (transl. by H. Rackham; *ut ex fontibus potius hauriant quam rivulos consectentur*, *Acad*. I. 8). On the other hand, Varro himself undertook to write the *Liber de philosophia*, and, according to Thomas Tarver (1997, p. 143), he did so under the influence of Cicero's late philosophical works.

[28] Although Douglas (2002, p. 197) suggests that we should not take at face value everything that Cicero says in the prefaces, still they are the main source for this question.

[29] *Philosophia iacuit usque ad hanc aetatem nec ullum habuit lumen litterarum Latinarum; quae inlustranda et excitanda nobis...* (*Tusc*. I. 5)

[30] *Non quia philosophia Graecis et litteris et doctoribus percipi non posset, sed meum semper iudicium fuit omnia nostros aut invenisse per se sapientius quam Graecos aut accepta ab illis fecisse meliora, quae quidem digna statuissent, in quibus elaborarent*. (*Tusc*. I. 1)

[31] We refer here once more to *Off*. I. 3: *nos... in utroque profecerimus.*

instead of dialogue.[32] The letter form allows Cicero to speak with his own voice, rather than through the mouths of the characters in the dialogue, and to expound his philosophical teachings independently, even by filling up the gaps in the Greek sources.[33]

This provision fits perfectly with the author's understanding that he has perfected philosophical language to such an extent that its readers will be able to enrich their native language. In my view, the crucial point here is Cicero's awareness that it is his rhetorical perfection that makes him a good writer of philosophy. And he did this not so much by his knowledge of philosophy (in which, he admits, with some false modesty, to be inferior to many), but by his rhetorical skills. For he can speak *apte*, *distincte*, *ornate*, what is proper to an orator (*quod est oratoris proprium*):

> *Nam philosophandi scientiam concedens multis, quod est oratoris proprium, apte, distincte, ornate dicere, quoniam in eo studio aetatem consumpsi, si id mihi assumo, videor id meo iure quodam modo vindicare* (*Off.* I. 2).
>
> "For in knowledge of philosophy, I yield to many; but in the peculiar domain of the orator, in speaking fittingly, lucidly, and distinctly, since I have consumed a lifetime in that pursuit, if I appropriate this honour for myself, I merely seem to claim it by my own right" (transl. by B. P. Newton).

Cicero's ambition to write philosophy *copiose ornateque* was based on Greek philosophy with its *suavitas* and *copia*. His examples are Plato, who combined *gravitas* with *suavitas*, and Aristotle. Just as Aristotle, who began to teach young men rhetoric, without abandoning philosophy, and instead combining wisdom with eloquence, so does Cicero – as he does not intend to abandon the great art of eloquence, but rather wishes to transfer it to a wider field. Because only that philosophy is perfect which can speak lengthily and eloquently (*copiose ornateque*, *Tusc*. I. 7) about the greatest questions.[34]

In the last of the most important *rhetorica*, the *Orator*, Cicero argues that the disputes (*disputationes*) of Plato and other philosophers are the source of all the fecundity (*ubertas*) and, so to speak, the raw material (*quasi silva*) of oratory (*Or*. 12). He also presents various branches of philosophy (logic, natural philosophy, and ethics) as providing great abundance (*magnam copiam*) for a speech (*nam nec latius atque copiosius de magnis variisque rebus sine philosophia potest quisquam dicere* (*Or*. 14). The abundance of words

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[32] This is something almost unique in his *philosophica,* with *De fato* being the exception.

[33] First and foremost, I refer to the third book of the *De officiis*, in which Cicero states to have reported what Panaetius has passed over in his *Peri tou kathekontos* (*Off*. III. 7–9). Especially *Off*. III. 34, where Cicero claims writing "fighting his own battle" (*Marte nostro*).

[34] *Sed ut Aristoteles, vir summo ingenio, scientia, copia, cum motus esset Isocratis rhetoris gloria, dicere docere etiam coepit adolescentes et prudentiam cum eloquentia iungere, sic nobis placet nec pristinum dicendi studium deponere et in hac maiore et uberiore arte versari. Hanc enim perfectam philosophiam semper iudicavi, quae de maximis quaestionibus copiose posset ornateque dicere*... (*Tusc*. I. 7)

"But just as Aristotle, a man of supreme genius, knowledge and fertility of speech, under the stimulus of the fame of the rhetorician Isocrates, began like him to teach the young to speak and combine wisdom with eloquence, similarly it is my design not to lay aside my early devotion to the art of expression, but to employ it in this grander and more fruitful art: for it has ever been my conviction that philosophy in its finished form enjoys the power of treating the greatest problems with adequate fulness and in an attractive style" (transl. by A. J. King).

(*copia verborum*), the most criticised characteristic of Asiatic eloquence (cf. *Or*. 25: Asiatic eloquence is called 'plump and unctuous' – *opīmum quoddam et tanquam adipale*), now takes on a completely different meaning in Cicero's treatment, as it is transferred from the external expression to the plane of the content: "*copia* becomes an aspect of content, and one with the moral and intellectual gravity that philosophy can lend to it" (Dugan 2005, p. 283). 'More copious' (*copiosius*) is used synonymously with 'richer' (*uberius*), and this refers not only to the ornateness of language but also to the richness of thought that philosophical education brings. Therefore, *copiosus*, *gravis*, *ornatus* are all used together in the description of the high style (*Or*. 97).

In the *De officiis*, the last philosophical treatise, Cicero does the opposite: philosophical discourse (*sermo*) becomes *copiosus*, *gravis*, *ornatus* in the hands of a good orator. This is why Cicero recommends that his son should read his philosophical works to enrich his speech. Cicero seems to realise that he has elevated philosophical prose to heights that no one else had been able to reach. It is as if he had succeeded in combining *sermo* with *oratio*. In his awareness of his own maturity and perfection, Cicero seems to be reaffirming the link between philosophy and rhetoric which he had proclaimed in rhetorical theory since the *De oratore*, and which he put into practice in his own writings.

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