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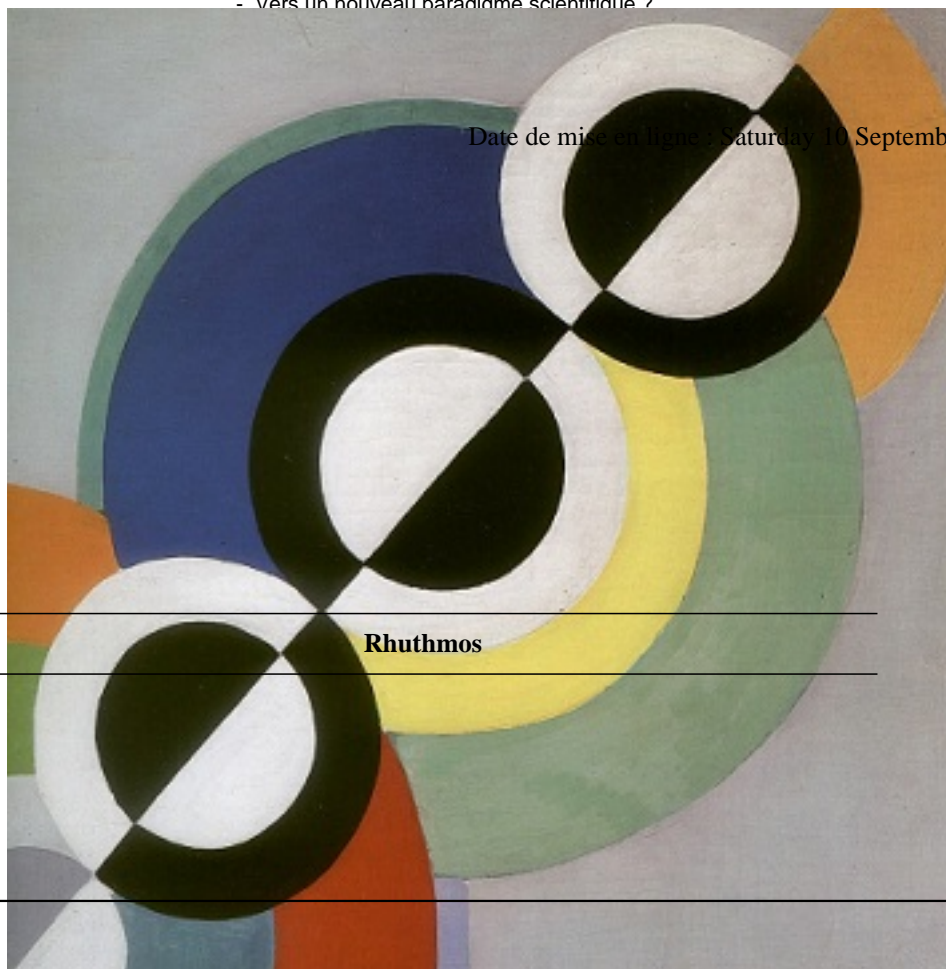https://rhuthmos.eu/spip.php?article1963

Aristotelian Rhythm in Rome (1st century BC - 1st century AD) - part 2

- Recherches

- Vers un nouveau paradigme scientifique ?

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Rhuthmos

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Rhythm as Ornament of Speech - Cicero's *De oratore* (1st c. BC)

As one may know, in *De oratore*, Cicero exposes through the character of Crassus a full-fledged theory of rhetoric. The latter starts his speech by emphasizing that there is no science *(nullam artem)*, that is no speculatively elaborated knowledge of oratory (1.23.107) and that this theory in modern sense is no *theoria* in Latin or Greek sense. It is much closer to the practical knowledge gathered through experience by a craftsman. Therefore he will expose only his usual personal method to compose or better yet, to craft speeches (1.24.111). We must notice this starting point because it will constantly support Cicero's view on rhythm, even if he introduces in his reasoning a certain number of theoretical considerations borrowed from Aristotle and Plato. Speech composition, he repeats, is easy, it is not properly a science, an elaborated knowledge; it is enough to follow one's own experience.

> As for choosing *[verborum eligendorum]* and arranging *[et conlocandorum]* words, and forming them [into proper periods] *[et concludendorum - lit. enclosing them]*, the [science] *[ratio]* is easy, or, I may say, the mere practice *[exercitatio]* without any [science] at all *[vel sine ratione]*. (*De oratore*, 3.24.93, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

There are three kinds of speech, Crassus says: first, those in law-courts (forensic), those in public assemblies (deliberative), and those that praise or blame someone (panegyric or satire). There are also specific common places *(loci)* to be used in trials, whose aim is justice (1.30.120); others in assemblies, whose aim is to give opinions; others in laudatory speeches, whose aim is to celebrate the cited person (1.31.141).

Whatever the occasion and aim of his speech, all energy and ability of the orator must apply to five steps: find the arguments *(inventio)*; dispose them in logical order, by importance and opportunity *(dispositio)*; ornate the speech with various devices *(elocutio)*; retain them in memory *(memoria)*; expose the speech with art of grace, dignity, gesture, modulation of voice and face *(actio)* (1.31.142).

Inventio, *dispositio* of arguments and *memoria* are not likely to be rhythmic. *Actio*, although it designates gesture, modulations of voice and features, is not envisaged either as rhythmizable matter. Unless I am mistaken, none of these four concepts are ever referred to by the term *numerus*. Instead, *elocutio - ornamentation of speech* gives Crassus the opportunity to address numerous rhythmic issues in each of its aspects: *correctness of language*, *clarity*, *distinction* and *appropriateness*.

Correctness is meant grammatically but also in terms of pronunciation, which he explicitly differentiates from

delivery. The first requisite of successful eloquence is, besides speaking in correct Latin, to ensure pure and clear diction.

Some of Cicero's observations concerning diction witness an interest in what we may call the physics of language, which is quite noticeable, rhythmologically speaking. Two thousand years before Proust, Cicero observes that pronunciation patterns differs between genders and that women, he says, "more easily preserve the ancient language unaltered," so that their observation allows to literally hear voices from the past as Plautus' the playwright (c. 254 - 184 BC) or Naevius' the epic poet and dramatist (c. 270 - c. 201 BC).

> Indeed when I listen to my wife's mother, Laelia, (for women more easily preserve the ancient language unaltered, because, not having experience of the conversation of a multitude of people, they always retain what they originally learned,) I hear her with such attention that I imagine myself listening to Plautus or Naevius; she has a tone of voice so unaffected and simple, that it seems to carry in it nothing of ostentation or imitation; from whence I judge that her father and forefathers spoke in like manner; not with a rough tone, as he whom I mentioned, nor with one broad, or rustic, or too open, but with one that was close and equable and smooth. (*De oratore*, 3.12.45, trans. J.S. Watson)

Most of his remarks are yet of prescriptive nature. The pronunciation must "come under proper regulation."

> The tongue, and the breath, and the tone of the voice [must] come under proper regulation *[lingua et spiritus et vocis sonus est ipse moderandus]*. I would not have letters sounded with too much affectation, or uttered imperfectly through negligence; I would not have the words dropped out without expression or spirit; I would not have them puffed and, as it were, panted forth, with a difficulty of breathing; for I do not as yet speak of those things relating to the voice which belong to oratorical delivery, but merely of that which seems to me to concern pronunciation. (*De oratore*, 3.11.40-41, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

And this "regulation" must translate into speech the cultural norms of the Roman aristocratic group: one must not sound "too delicate and effeminate" or "extravagantly harsh and grating"; nor too "rustic and rough"; nor too provincial. The best pronunciation is that of the people of Rome.

> For there are certain faults which everyone is desirous to avoid, as a too delicate and effeminate tone of voice, or one that is extravagantly harsh and grating. There is also a fault which some industriously strive to attain; a rustic and rough pronunciation is agreeable to some, that their language, if it has that tone, may seem to partake more of antiquity [...] But your harmony and sweetness delight me; I do not refer to the harmony of your words, which is a principal point, but one which method introduces, learning teaches, practice in reading and speaking confirms; but I mean the mere sweetness of pronunciation, which, as among the Greeks it was peculiar to the Athenians, so in the Latin tongue is chiefly remarkable in this city. [...] Our citizens [those of the city of Rome] pay less attention to letters than the people of Latium, yet among all the people that you know in the city, who have the least tincture of literature, there is not one who would not have a manifest advantage over Quintus Valerius of Sora, the most learned of all the Latins, in softness of voice, in conformation of the mouth, and in the general tone of pronunciation. (*De oratore*, 3.11.41-42, trans. J.S. Watson)

Then Crassus commends *clarity* of expression. The orator must develop a simple style by using only common words and simple syntax, and avoiding "all incoherency of thought, reversion of the order of time, all confusion of persons, all irregularity of arrangement whatever."

> Nor let us dwell long upon that other point, so as to discuss by what means we may succeed in making what we say understood; an object which we shall doubtless effect by speaking good Latin, adopting words in common use, and such as aptly express what we wish to communicate or explain, without any ambiguous word or phrase, not making our sentences too long, not making such observations as are drawn from other subjects, for the sake of comparison, too prolix; avoiding all incoherency of thought, reversion of the order of time, all confusion of persons, all irregularity of arrangement whatever. (*De oratore*, 3.13.48-49, trans. J.S. Watson)

Here begins a section in the dialogue that seems to be drifting away from the subject that was supposed to be examined. Naturally this digression is important to Cicero because it addresses a difficult point which is, as a matter of fact, also of some interest to us, even if it does not mention rhythm directly.

For the time being, Crassus expressed clear disapproval of rhetorical excess as much in pronunciation as in ornamentation. Lack of natural and affectation are to be avoided at all costs by the orator. But, as expected, Crassus does not condemn ornamentation *per se* either. He makes it clear when he claims, a little further down, that there should be no separation between "thinking wisely and speaking gracefully." Philosophy is not opposed to rhetoric nor poetry. This divide was introduced by Socrates and Plato, quite paradoxically, he notices, since Socrates "left us nothing in writing" and Plato wrote only Dialogues. In contrast, Crassus underlines the inseparability of thinking and speaking. Each of those activities' perfection depends utterly on that of the other. Their division is "certainly absurd, useless, and reprehensible."

> [Socrates] separated in his discussions the ability of thinking wisely, and speaking gracefully, though they are naturally united; Socrates, I say, whose great genius and varied conversation Plato has in his Dialogues consigned to immortality, he himself having left us nothing in writing. Hence arose that divorce as it were of the tongue from the heart, a division certainly absurd, useless, and reprehensible, that one class of persona should teach us to think, and another to speak, rightly. (*De oratore*, 3.16.60-61, trans. J.S. Watson)

We see that Cicero sides on this matter with Aristotle against Plato. He does not indulge in an abstract and damaging view separating language and thought. However, whereas the latter was careful to develop as far as possible a non-dualistic conception of language one remembers the enlargement of rhythm in *Rhetoric* from the mere meters to the whole speech, and the comparison, in *Poetics*, between "rhythm and tune" and spices transforming speech into a tasty meal Cicero-Crassus finally comes back to a more traditional view.

On the one hand, he compares speech with a fruit to be savored. Complexion *(color)* and substance *(sucus* - lit. *juice)* must be "apparent in its whole body." But on the other hand, rhetoric ornaments are presented as floral decorations, which makes them clearly independent from the body on which they are spreaded. The rhetoric means used to give complexion and substance to the speech, the "flowers of words and thoughts," must be, according to him, carefully "arranged" *(disposita)* "at intervals [...] as in the arrangements of ornaments" *(quasi in ornatu)*, which evokes those that are displayed at triumphs, games and festivals. Speech is thus considered as divisible into an organic whole and independent ornamental units that can be placed in as many different positions as the orator

wishes.

> A speech, then, is to be made becoming in its kind, with a sort of complexion and substance of its own *[quasi colore quodam suco suo - lit.its own juice]*; for that it be weighty, agreeable, savouring of erudition and liberal knowledge, worthy of admiration, polished, having feeling and passion in it, as far as is required, are qualities not confined to particular members *[non est singulorum articulorum]*, but are apparent in the whole body *[in toto spectantur haec corpore]*; but that it be, as it were, strewed with [flowers of words and thoughts] *[quasi verborum sententiarumque floribus]*, is a property which ought not to be equally diffused throughout the whole speech *[fusum aequabiliter per omnem orationem]*, but at such intervals *[distinctum]*, that, as in the arrangement of ornaments *[quasi in ornatu disposita]*, there may be certain remarkable and luminous objects disposed here and there. (*De oratore*, 3.25.96, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

The reason for this regression compared to Aristotle appears in the argument that is given to support the rule of clarity. Any excess in perception, be it caused by "fanciful modulation and notes" *(flexiones et falsae voculae)* or "strictness *(certae* - fixed*)* in music," "color or shade in painting," "sweetness or bitterness in cooking," provokes displeasure. Since "the senses, when affected with too much pleasure, are satiated," any rhetorical means used to provoke a determined perception must not only be properly distributed within the speech but used with moderation. In other words, Cicero borrows Aristotle's concern for experience and practicality but not for theory of language and poetics. His analysis is limited to perception/reception and does not pay any attention to production/subjectivation purposely I do not say subjectivization.

> Loathing still borders upon the most exquisite delights; and therefore we should the less wonder at this effect in language, in which we may form a judgment, either from the poets or the orators, that a style elegant, ornate, embellished, and sparkling, without intermission, without restraint, without variety, whether it be prose or poetry, though painted with the brightest colours, cannot possibly give lasting pleasure. And we the sooner take offence at the false locks and paint of the orator or poet, for this cause, that the senses, when affected with too much pleasure, are satiated, not from reason, but constitutionally. (*De oratore*, 3.25.100, trans. J.S. Watson)

Then comes another long section where Crassus insists this time on the inseparability of ethics and rhetoric. His case is consistent with his previous argument against the separation between science and rhetoric: one cannot behave correctly without correctly speaking and vice versa. Organization of the flow of language is related with that of the conduct. Therefore one must be instructed in both disciplines as Alexander by Aristotle (3.35.141).

> Now, if any one desires either to call that philosopher, who instructs us fully in things and words, an orator, he may do so without opposition from me; or if he prefer to call that orator, of whom I speak as having wisdom united with eloquence, a philosopher, I shall make no objection. (*De oratore*, 3.35.142, trans. J.S. Watson)

Yet more substantial arguments supporting his view are lacking he will elaborate further the matter in the *Orator* and he concludes with a rhetorical *trait d'esprit* which falls short of a convincing answer to the problem that has been raised. In case he had to choose one of the two, Crassus tells his friends, he would prefer "ineloquent good sense to

loquacious folly" (3.35.142).

After having been reproached by his comrades for having drifted too far "under the tide of his genius" and forgotten the point he was supposed to present, Crassus comes back to his subject: composition of speech.

In order to present *distinction*, the third point which supports a good *elocutio*, he starts using the Platonic, Aristotelian and Aristoxenian method of construction of an object from its most minute elements.

> All speech, then, is formed of words, which we must first consider singly, then in composition; [for there is one kind of speech ornament] *[nam est quidam ornatus orationis]* which lies in single words, another which is produced by words joined and compounded. (*De oratore*, 3.37.149, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

He then borrows Aristotle's theory of metaphor (see chapt. 3). The words can be used in three ways: as single units referring to things (proper sense); or as units related with other units and bearing a metaphorical meaning (transferred sense); or "such as we invent and make ourselves" (neologism).

> We shall therefore either use such words as are the proper and fixed names as it were of things *[quae propria sunt et certa quasi vocabula rerum]*, and apparently almost born at the same time with the things themselves; or such as are metaphorical, and placed as it were in a situation foreign to them *[quae transferuntur et quasi alieno in loco conlocantur]*; or such as we invent and make ourselves. (*De oratore*, 3.37.149, trans. J.S. Watson)

Let us notice that the choice to use mere referring words must be made "by the judgment of the ear," i.e. on purely empirical ground. It suffices to follow one's "mere habit of speaking well" and to choose those which "have in them some fullness and force of sound."

> In regard then to words taken in their own proper sense *[in propriis verbis]*, it is a merit in the orator to avoid mean and obsolete ones, and to use such as are choice and ornamental; such as have in them some fullness and force of sound. But in this kind of proper words, selection is necessary, which must be decided in some measure by the judgment of the ear. (*De oratore*, 3.37.150, trans. J.S. Watson)

But the use of words in their proper sense is only the "groundwork," the "foundation of the whole." The orator has to "raise" his speech upon this common use, as a superstructure in which "he is to display his art," that is by using metaphors and figures of speech.

Yet this is the groundwork, as it were and foundation of the whole *[verum tamen hoc quasi solum quoddam atque fundamentum est]*, namely, the use and command of proper words. But the superstructure which the orator himself is to raise upon this *[Sed quid ipse aedificet orator]*, and in which he is to [add] his art *[et in quo adiungat artem]*, appears to be a matter for us to examine and illustrate. (*De oratore*, 3.37.151-152, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

Since ornamentation is viewed as deviation from the communicational norm of language, the orator can use either unusual, or new or metaphorical words. But unusual words are generally out of fashion, while new words invented by the speaker cannot be too numerous. Therefore, the metaphorical use is best suited for oratory (3.38). It is defined by Cicero as a refinement opposed to sheer necessity, and metaphorically and quite dualistically compared to a beautifying "dress" put on the natural body of language.

> The third mode, that of using words in a metaphorical sense, is widely prevalent, a mode of which necessity was the parent, compelled by the sterility and narrowness of language; but afterwards delight and pleasure made it frequent; for as a dress was first adopted for the sake of keeping off the cold, but in process of time began to be made an ornament of the body, and an emblem of dignity, so the metaphorical use of words was originally invented on account of their paucity, but became common from the delight which it afforded. (*De oratore*, 3.38.155, trans. J.S. Watson)

The last point concerning *elocutio* is the *appropriateness* of speech. Each occasion and audience needs to be addressed differently and to chose what sort of speech should be used is "affair of judgment."

> Since, then, all the points which relate to all the ornamental parts of oratory are, if not illustrated, at least pointed out, let us now consider what is meant by propriety, that is, what is most becoming, in oratory. It is, however, clear that no single kind of style can be adapted to every cause, or every audience, or every person, or every occasion. [...] It is the part of art and nature to be able to do what is becoming on every occasion; [but] to know what is becoming, and when, is an affair of judgment. (*De oratore*, 3.55.210-211, trans. J.S. Watson)

If we look at Cicero's contribution to rhythmology in his analysis of *elocutio*, we see that it is quite meager and most of the time supported by strong dualistic assumptions. He makes for instance helpful observations concerning pronunciation, expression and thought, expression and behavior, or choice of words, but each time these observations are set into a larger dualistic frame that limits their scope: dividing social and cultural norms, speech as mere support of independent ornamental pieces, ornamentation as deviation from the communicational norms.

The section of the *De oratore* (3.39-3.42) devoted to the concept of metaphor has particularly attracted the criticisms of modern thinkers. Many of the contemporary theories of metaphor and tropes underline the link between this passage and Aristotle's logocentrism and dualism. Moreover, some consider it utterly inconsistent since Cicero feels compelled to use a metaphor to define the concept of metaphor, showing by the same token the impossibility to do so on a substantialistic basis, since there is no proper meaning *quod erat demonstrandum*.

While I partly agree with those critics, I do not think though that we should limit ourselves to deconstructing the various forms of dualism that support Cicero's reflection on figures and thus only reversing the longstanding Western admiration into a sheer rejection. I do not think either that we should take Aristotle's works as unitary and one-sided. This kind of non-dialectical or non-hermeneutical critique misses a part in Cicero's as in Aristotle's contribution to our understanding of language which has long been underestimated and that obviously counted for him.

Indeed, when at the end of his speech, Crassus summarizes his arguments, he underlines the fact that there are two necessary aspects to be considered by the orator for "a striking and admirable effect": he must embellish his speech with well-chosen metaphors and makes sure that it would be continuous and composed of harmoniously balanced rhythms. Ornamentation is one thing, rhythm another one.

 You should not imagine there is anything else to be done by the orator, at least anything else to produce a striking and admirable effect, than to observe these three rules with regard to single words *[in singulis verbis]*; to use frequently metaphorical ones, sometimes new ones, and rarely very old ones. But with regard to continuous [speech] *[in perpetua oratione]*, when we have acquired that smoothness of junction *[cum coniunctionis levitatem]* and harmony of [rhythms] *[et numerorum rationem]* which I have explained, our whole [speech] *[omnis oratio]* is to be distinguished and frequently interspersed with brilliant lights, as it were, of thoughts and of words *[sententiarum atque verborum]*. (*De oratore*, 3.52.201, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

Rhythm as Organization of Meaning - Cicero's *De oratore* (1st century BC)

As a matter of fact, in Book 3, after the section dedicated to the units of meaning, the "words," Crassus examines their "arrangement" *(continuatio verborum)*, which he divides into two parts: collocation and measure/form. Rhythm becomes therefore organization of the whole meaning process.

> The [arrangement] of words *[continuatio verborum]* follows next, which principally requires attention to two things; first, collocation *[conlocationem]*, and, next, a certain [measure] *[modum]* and form *[formamque]*. (*De oratore*, 3.43.171, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

By "collocation" *(conlocatio)* he means "to compose and arrange the words" in order to make them follow one after the other without either gap or cacophonous junctions between the sounds that are at their commencements or extremities. Such "collocation," he says, may give "compactness and coherence" to the speech, and "a smooth and equal flow," in other words a perfect *rhuthmys*, in the pre-Platonic sense. He does not use the term yet but the idea is already emerging.

> To collocation *[conlocationis]* it belongs to compose and arrange the words *[componere et struere verba - struo, to place together, heap up, pile, arrange]* in such a way that their junction may not be rough *[ut neve asper eorum concursus]* or gaping *[neve hiulcus]*, but compact, as it were, and smooth. [...] Such [a collocation] *[haec conlocatio]* may give a compactness *[vinctam - vincio, to bind, to fetter, tie, fasten, but also to surround]* and coherence *[quae cohaerentem]* to the language, and a smooth *[quae levem]* and equal flow *[quae aequabiliter fluentem]*; this you will attain if you join the extremities of the antecedent words to the commencements of those that follow in such a manner that there be no rough clashing in the consonants, nor wide hiatus in the vowels. (*De oratore*, 3.43.171-172, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

Indeed, a few lines below, when he turns to "measure and form of the words" then to "measure of sentences," the concept of "rhythm" pops up. His comment is here clearly alluding to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, 3.8.6. (see chap. 3) and to the role given by the latter to rhythm in oratory and more generally in language.

> Next to diligent attention to this particular, follows [measure and form of the words] *[modus etiam et forma verborum]*; a point, I fear, that may seem puerile to our friend Catulus here. [The ancients, however, imagined a prose *[soluta oratione]* almost like poetry *[versus]*; that is, they thought that we ought to adopt a sort of rhythm *[numeros adhibendos]*]; for they wished that there should be short phrases in speeches, to allow us to recover, and not loss our breath; and that they should be distinguished, not by the marks of transcribers, but according to the [measure] of the words and sentences *[verborum et sententiarum modo]*. (*De oratore*, 3.44.173, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

Crassus-Cicero then specifies what he means by "oratory rhythm." The orator must find a non-metrical way to give his speech "rhythmic cadence, roundness, and finish, like verse." This specific effect is produced by "tying the thoughts with words in such a manner as to enclose them in a rhythm" which, by giving them "form and measure" but also "ease and freedom by a variety in the flow," hinders their wandering without control while not imposing upon them any strict law. In other words, the orator must overcome through his rhythm the conflict that opposes language and thought.

> On this head it is remarkable, that if a verse *[versus]* is formed by the [conjunction] of words *[coniunctione verborum]* in [speech] *[in oratione]*, it is a fault; and yet we wish such composition *[coniunctionem]* to have [rhythmic] cadence *[numerose cadere]*, roundness *[et quadrare]*, and finish *[et perfici volumus]*, like verse *[sicuti versum]*; nor is there any single quality, out of many, that more distinguishes a true orator from an unskilful and ignorant speaker [...] [the latter speaks according to his breath and not with art, on the contrary, the orator ties his thoughts with words *[id, quod dicit, spiritu, non arte determinat, orator autem sic inligat sententiam verbis]* in such a manner as to enclose them in a rhythm] *[ut eam numero complectatur]*, at once [tied fast] *[et astricto]*, yet free from restraint *[et soluto]*; for, after restricting it to [form and measure] *[forma et modis]*, he gives it an ease and freedom by a variety in the flow, so that the words are neither bound by strict laws, as those of verse, nor yet have such a degree of liberty as to wander without control. (*De oratore*, 3.44.175-176, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

We see that Cicero does not use Aristoxenus' method any longer to compose rhythm out of primary time-lengths. He does indeed allude to elementary units, the words, and proposes to construct the rhythm from their arrangement *(continuatio verborum)*, i.e. their collocation *(conlocatio)* and measure *(modus).* But he actually pays more attention to the whole than to its parts. His method is much closer to that of Aristotle who, in his *Rhetoric*, as we remember, wanted to account for the effect of speech on an audience by a holistic and pragmatic view, which considered in a top-down fashion, first the whole speech, then the periods, then the clauses. We also remember that Aristotle thought that what made an oratory rhythm successful was its "measure." In order to be followed easily a speech should avoid to make the hearer stumble by amenably organizing the delivery of meaning.

There is a point, though, on which Cicero seems to share Aristoxenus' opinion, which naturally is not contradictory with Aristotle's: his hylomorphic conception. He considers speech as a matter, a "wax," that can be shaped skillfully. But this comparison is maybe more of a craftsman than a philosopher. He does not say if rhythm should be considered as a formal and final cause of the speech development. He only notices that "speech" *(oratio)* is a material shared by all uses: "verses" and "poetic rhythms," "prose" and "prose measures." By doing so, he gives *discourse* primacy upon *language* what the French language calls *la langue*.

> There is nothing so pliant, nothing so flexible, nothing which will so easily follow whithersoever you incline to lead it, as [speech] *[oratio]*; out of which verses are composed; out of which all the variety of [poetic] [rhythms] *[numeri]*; out of which also prose of various [measures] *[modis]* and of many different kinds; for there is not one set of words for common discourse, and another for oratorical debate; nor are they taken from one class for daily conversation, and from another for the stage and for display; but, when we have made our selection from those that lie before us, we form and fashion them at our pleasure like the softest wax *[sicut mollissimam ceram ad nostrum arbitrium formamus et fingimus]*. (*De oratore*, 3.44-45.176-177, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

It is no wonder, then, that Cicero finally again alludes beyond the qualities of single words, compositions of words, rhythms and forms of speech to, "as it were, the complexion *(quasi color)* of speech." This remark concerning the ultimate linguistic level of complexity is actually a bit puzzling because Cicero refers to it only through metaphors: speech is compared to a body that could be either full and round, meager and strong, or participating of both. But, apart from the fact that it is difficult to say what those qualities really denote, they obviously refer to the whole speech, which is once again considered from a holistic perspective.

> I have now shown, as far as I could, what I deemed most conducive to the [embellishment of speech] *[ad ornatum orationis]*; for I have spoken of the merits of single words *[de singulorum verborum]*; I have spoken of them in composition *[de coniunctione eorum]*; I have spoken of [the rhythm and form] *[de numero atque forma]*. But if you wish me to speak also of the [appearance] *[habitum]* and, as it were, complexion *[quasi colorem aliquem]* of [speech] *[orationis]*, there is one sort which has a fulness *[plena]*, but is [round] *[sed tamen teres]*; one which is [meager] *[tenuis]*, but not without nerve and vigour; and one which, participating of both these kinds, is commended for a certain middle quality. In each of these three forms there ought to be a peculiar complexion of beauty *[venustatis]*, not produced by the daubing of paint, but diffused throughout by the blood. (*De oratore*, 3.52.199, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

This attention paid to the holistic nature of rhythm sheds a new light on Cicero's dualism. This aspect of his thought has been under scrutiny and critique by some deconstructionists of the late 20th century. But his perspective is actually not stable. As we saw, he defends many times dualistic views. Nevertheless he has also many intuitions that goes in the opposite direction.

In Book 3, Crassus starts his presentation of *elocutio* by rejecting any dualistic conception of speech. Subject matter cannot be separated from words in any way. This certainly goes against certain views on rhetoric that have unfortunately become very common and have survived to the present day. He explains this first by saying, as "the great Ancients," that the universe is a whole bound together by a single, "natural power." It forms one giant being where all things are related to all others.

> Indeed, [the great Ancients] *[veteres illu maius]*, embracing something of superior magnificence in their ideas, appear to me to have seen further into the nature of things than the visual faculties of our minds can penetrate; as they said that all these things, above and below, formed one [whole] *[qui omnia haec, quae supra et subter, unum esse]*, and were linked together in strict union by one and the same power, and one principle of universal harmony in nature *[et una vi atque [una] consensione naturae constricta]*; for there is no order of things which can either of itself, if forcibly separated from the rest, preserve a permanent existence, or without which the rest can maintain their power and eternal duration. (*De oratore*, 3.5.20, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

Then he paraphrases Plato's encompassing conception of reason. If the universe is an unbreakable whole animated by one single power, knowledge must be considered too as "linked together in one bond of union." In the end, human reason must reach back to the "wonderful agreement and harmony" that characterizes the world.

But, if this reasoning appears to be too comprehensive to be embraced by human sense and understanding, yet that saying of Plato is true, and certainly not unknown to you, Catulus, "that all the learning of these liberal and polite departments of knowledge is linked together in one bond of union for when the power of that reason, by which the causes and events of things are known, is once thoroughly discerned, a certain wonderful agreement and harmony, as it were, in all the sciences is discovered." (*De oratore*, 3.6.21, trans. J.S. Watson)

However, besides this quite expected idealistic Platonic string of arguments, Crassus develops two other points in support to his claim, which are clearly reminiscent of Aristotle's proto-humanism and proto-empiricism. He first metaphorically compares speech to human being, i.e. the whole constituted by words and thoughts with that constituted by body and soul. Language and humanity are not only implicitly defined one by the other, they are both endowed with the same unitary nature.

 But since we are overwhelmed by opinions, not only those of the vulgar, but those also of men imperfectly instructed, who treat of those things more easily when divided and torn asunder which they have not capacity to comprehend in a general view, and who sever the language from the thoughts *[sic a sententiis verba seiungunt]* like the body from the soul *[tamquam ab animo corpus]*, neither of which separations can be made without destruction, I will not undertake in this discourse more than that which is imposed upon me. (*De oratore*, 3.6.24, trans. J.S. Watson)

His second argument is the closest to oratory practice itself. Subject matter cannot be separated from language, he notices, because removing the content from words or vice versa would first hamper the right arrangement of the words in the sentence and then impede the matter to receive the necessary light from the words. Separation would thus result in lack of rhythm as well as obscurity. From this, we may induce that, in Cicero's opinion, meaning and rhythm are closely related.

 In the partition, however, of this [discussion] *[disputatione]* between us, Antonius, when he assumed to himself the part of speaking upon those matters which form the subject of the orator's speech *[quae dici ab oratore oporteret]*, and left to me to explain how they should be embellished *[quem ad modum illa ornari oporteret]*, divided things which are in their nature incapable of separation *[ea divisit, quae seiuncta esse non possunt]*; for as every speech *[cum omnis oratio]* consists of the matter and the [words] *[ex re atque verbis constet]*, the [words] can have no place *[neque verba sedem habere possunt]* if you take away the matter *[si rem subtraxeris]*, nor the matter receive any [light] *[neque res lumen (habere possunt)]* if you take away the [words] *[si verba removeris]*. (*De oratore*, 3.5.19, same idea 3.6.24, trans. J.S. Watson, my mod.)

In other words, Book 3, where we find most of the discussion on ornamentation and rhythm, contains many dualistic assumptions but it also shows many contrary intuitions, and begins with two very strong philosophical statements which, despite the overall Platonic framework, associate on the one hand anthropology and theory of language, and on the other rhythmic and semantic. It also ends up with a long section dedicated to the arrangement of words *(continuatio verborum)* that also contains non-dualistic views. Rhythm is then considered as organization of the whole meaning process. It is worth noting in this respect that even if the link between these concepts is not fully elaborated, Cicero clearly sees, in these instances, as Aristotle in his *Poetics*, that rhythm pertains to a larger frame than the mere succession of time-lengths.