

AUTHORITY'S PROJECTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP ORATOR – PUBLIC

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ABSTRACT. The relationship between the orator as an individual sender of messages and the public as a collective receiver of those messages delivered through a discourse, built-up in a persuasive manner, is per se a dynamic and complex connection, having a biunivocal structure. It goes without saying that the rostrum, from a formal point of view, represents de jure – during the whole oratoric exercise – a barrier; the orator/speaker is, by his/her nature and profession, much more prepared in advance on intellectual, psychological and informative levels, even more sophisticated than the listeners. Therefore, such a perception becomes dominant from the very beginning among all participants, despite of the fact that usually it is not expressed as such. Of course, the orator is fully aware of his/her obvious and significant advantages, compared to the posture of the public. The mission of the orator is not an easy one: to drastically reduce, through personal efforts, the spiritual gap and to establish, as much as possible, a psychological equilibrium with the public. Thus, the preliminary barriers could and should become bridges of understanding and mutual confidence. The only tools at the disposal of an orator are the words of the language, associated to an adequate behavior.

The removal of psychological barriers belongs to the relevant oratoric strategies, since the ancient times to the modern history of rhetoric. A series of examples can indicate, in our opinion, the truth that a genuine orator is able to anticipate the „spiritual distance” to the

audience of a discourse, to reduce such a distance de facto, with a view to create a mutually beneficial and constructive climate during the process of delivering the speech.

In the discourse entitled “*On the situation in Chersones*” (7), Demosthenes, the great Hellenic orator, presents *ab initio* his direct relationship with the public, which seems to be rather inconvenient and unpleasant for the orator himself. For instance, he declares that the speakers in front of the Athenians should avoid any words based on hostility as well as on a desire to delight the people present in Agora or in various halls. Anyhow, whether certain orators, due to some reasons, are stimulated to speak in terms of enmity, „...you, Athenians, giving-up all these, should vote and accomplish only what you do believe to be useful for the *polis* (society as a whole – our note).” By this statement, the public is requested to assess the positions of orators, to select those pertinent ideas from the perspective of their positive role for the society. Therefore, the public receives, during the presentation of the discourse, an encouraging task instead of the passive posture of listener of the speech done by Demosthenes. Due to such an invitation addressed to the audience, the orator is able to establish a framework of common confidence, quite useful for a correct assimilation, by the public, of all the messages, teachings and assertions incorporated in the discourse devoted to some serious and urgent issues for the life of Athenians.

In the Latin spiritual zone, Cicero was also often concerned of similar oratorical tasks, namely to try to reduce, to a meaningful extent, the psychological gaps speaker/public. In the discourse „*Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino*” (8) – just for giving a relevant example from his outstanding rhetorical work – Cicero was able to mobilize affectively and effectively the public through some unexpected and amazing sentences, expressed in the *exordium*: the great orator anticipates the so-called „astonishment of the judges” because, while so many orators and remarkable men prefer to keep silence, he decided to speak; but, Cicero considers that there are not any reasons for such behavior, because „neither by age, nor by talent, nor by authority” he cannot be compared with those orators who decided to remain aside and not to intervene into the debates. One should say that, taking into account those three criteria, only the age is relevant (Cicero was at that particular moment an young person); on the other hand, the talent and the authority are deeply present within the coherent personality of the famous Latin orator; moreover, an

exceptional talent was the main and solid source of his authority and constant prestige. As a matter of fact, the above – mentioned „self-evaluation” in terms of modesty represented an useful way for attracting from the very beginning the public, increasing the state of receptivity among the listeners (*captatio benevolentiae*). Of course, Cicero was fully aware of such intellectual qualities, but he preferred to strategically underestimate them and to show to everybody, as the only proof, his speech delivered in the climate of that tribunal of the ancient Rome.

Coming over times to the modern era, we would further introduce some examples regarding the oratorical behavior of the Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu. In his discourse „*Politics and peace*” (10), delivered at the International Society for Philology, Sciences and Arts in London, Titulescu utilized a similar procedure to that of Cicero (in the previous example), where the modesty – may we suppose *a posteriori* – had relevant effects on the level of the behavior and receptivity of the academic public, who otherwise was deeply aware about the personality of the great orator and statesman. Titulescu makes a „confession”: looking on the list of „outstanding personalities” who spoke earlier in the same event, he realized the fact that cannot pretend to have the same performances; therefore, he was obliged to draw the conclusion that his designation in capacity of a speaker in front of that prestigious forum is „just a reflection of your kindness”. In another event on parliamentary level – House of Commons, London, June 1937 (10) – the same outstanding orator/diplomat prefers „to declare” certain things which actually contradict the truth known as such by the respective audience: namely, Titulescu said that he will address the speech in English “without knowing English” (it is to be stressed that he had an excellent command of the „*language of Shakespeare*”, recognized by foreign diplomats, parliamentarians, experts and university teachers from many countries of the world, including the visited Anglo/Saxon zones. While speaking in English, Titulescu requests „the allowance/indulgence” of the participants in the House of Commons-specifically a tolerant attitude which is not based on „the Christian spirit of mercy”, but on „the nature of British people”. In such a way very original by its expression and generous by intentional connotations, Titulescu had the opportunity to point out in front of the distinguished audience an idea directly related to the moral profile of that nation; thus, the orator could

be sure that he succeeded to reduce the psychological gap separating him from the English public.

In a series of essays (written, for instance, by Ion Frunzetti), the authors present a comparative analysis of the activities done by two well known university professors—Alexandru Busuioceanu and George Oprescu. As we will try to explain in the following remarks, each of them had an incontestable authority, but due to substantially different reasons, regarding their relationships with the students. On the one hand, professor Busuioceanu had in his amphitheatre a reduced number of young people, coming there not by obligations, but just because of pure interest and passion for the theories of arts; the teacher never had in mind to see, one by one, who is present and to register as such his/her participation to lectures. On the other hand, professor Oprescu was mainly known for his strict behaviour—*inter alia*, compulsory presence of the students, reflected in the catalogue with scrupulousness; inexorable examinations; perfect discipline and attention of all students, without any exception. The amphitheatres „Onciul” and „Pârvan” of the Bucharest University had always a heterogeneous public coming from several faculties – Philology, Geography, History, etc. Some of them were just physically present like, for instance, young officers or students of Polytechnical Institute, in a *sui-generis* capacity of „*chevaliers servants*” for the beautiful girls, as the professor used to often say with an irritable shade, accusing those young ladies for making a regrettable confusion between a cinema hall and an University’s amphitheatre.

After this series of examples selected from both classic and modern oratory, we could put forward certain remarks concerning *the relation of authority* between the two members (generically speaking) of any rhetorical exercise/process. The above mentioned relation is built-up, in our opinion, on two basic levels:

a) *formal level* (usually, of administrative, bureaucratic, legal nature): in the light of his status *de jure* an orator should have authority in front of a given public; at the same time, that public should have responsibility to listen, in a civilized manner, the speaker; it is obvious that each factor of the oratorical relation accepts and mutually tries to respect those positions.

b) *psychological level* (of affective, sentimental nature): an orator is able to gradually create, through personal efforts, his authority vis-à-vis a public, whom he could know in advance or who is completely new

or rather mysterious; the audience will become – as a general fact – interested and impressed by the speeches delivered, listening carefully to them in a voluntary or spontaneous manner, without any obligation or coercion.

In our book „*Introducere în retorică*” (1) we emphasized the complexity of the relationship orator-public, which considers, besides these two factors as such, the framework, the created climate able to assure an adequate, coherent and comprehensive transfer of all messages from the speaker to the collective receiver. As a matter of fact, this framework has to be stimulated by a *sui-generis* cooperation between all participants to the oratorical process, but it is obvious that the main role belongs to the orator. In this respect, *captatio benevolentiae* represents a basic parameter, that concerns the person at the *rostrum* from the very beginning until the end of his/her public presentation.

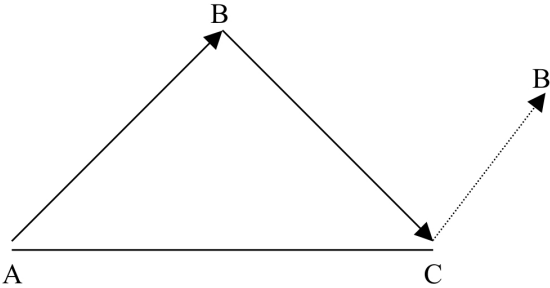
We introduce at this stage the following syntagma just for illustrating the continuity of those necessary endeavours, done by orators, in general: „*vectors of attention*”.

The structure of a discourse, starting with *the exordium* (protocolar, explanatory, *ex_abrupto* etc.) and further containing subsequent parts developed in a logical line, has a first stage, characterized by an increasing attention and intellectual mobilization of the public. It has to be stressed the fact that in this initial part, the listeners are purely interested, relaxed, not tired, pleasantly surprised by the obvious wish of the orator to be listened and carefully followed in his/her speech. Otherwise, this is indeed the stage when the speaker builds-up in a gradual manner a collective perception, which would register sometime a culminating, highest point in terms of receptivity, attention and, of course, patience.

Nevertheless, a genuine and experienced orator will be fully aware of the truth that such a state of behavior/attitude on the level of the audience cannot resist too much; sooner or later, it will be followed by a descendant trajectory: less attention; tiredness; a reduced degree of interest; monotony – all these phenomena doubled by uproar, agitation, verbal reactions from the hall etc. The orator has to take into consideration all those evolutions with calm and discretion, creating the impression that nothing happened and everything is under permanent control. At that particular moment, the speaker has an important, but difficult task: namely to act for re-establishing, as soon as possible, a

normal state of collective attention of the public and, if possible, to get again a high point of interest, as it was the case in the first part of his speech.

Symbolizing by A – the moment of exordium; B – the optimal/highest moment of the rhetorical act and by C – the most reduced state of attention, the following outline could be envisaged:



Therefore, a new moment B₁ could and should be created, which will try to replace, more or less, the optimal point B, preserving a normal state of attention until the end of the speech.

It goes without saying that every orator would like to be carefully listened by the people present in a hall or in a public square during the entire speech with the same degree of intellectual mobilization and „tacit cooperation” with the given speaker. But, for getting this purpose, the orator himself has to act, not to wait a mechanical improvement of the atmosphere. His/her abilities should envisage two basic directions:

- a) to keep, as long as possible, the optimal moment;
- b) to diminish and discourage the trajectory B → C, avoiding, as much as possible, the appearance of the point C.

What are, in principle as well as in practice, the oratorical means and ways in this respect? First of all, a speaker could address some direct appeals or reproaches to the public, like: „Silence, please!”. „Please, be careful!”; „Who is not interested in my speech could/should leave the hall!” (in several cases, such sentences are pronounced not by the orator, but by the host/ the organizer of the respective event, who is also present in *the presidium* or close to the speaker, in front of the public.

On the other hand, it should be underlined that the science and art of oratory offer a series of more sophisticated and effective modalities which can be applied by the speakers, at the right moments occurred during the oratorical exercises. A few examples in this direction are eloquent.

Firstly, the orator considers as useful the introduction of certain anecdotic facts. Present at the Oxford University/New College on 4 June 1937, Nicolae Titulescu promises *ab initio* to make a summary „of the life since the war (the first world war-our note) until now”. (10). This summary was suddenly marked, in a more relaxed note, by an incident which took place at Spa; when Titulescu, at that time being Minister of Finances, and the Prime Minister of Greece, Venizelos, wanted to enter in the conference hall, the soldier responsible for security asked them firmly and shortly: „Do you have identity cards for journalists?” Of course, it was a shocking and unexpected question, put by an ordinary person to some very high dignitaries, well known, for sure, by everybody in the hall. Titulescu did not hesitate to comment this moment as follows: „The League of Nations did not yet launched over the whole world the wave of democracy”. We could imagine what was the effect on the public-teachers and students – of such nice story, aimed to relax the climate and to prepare the audience for new and more serious assessments and suggestions for reflection.

The same Romanian orator-diplomat used to incorporate in his discourses a series of rhetorical figures; see, in this respect, our books „*Diplomația cuvintelor. Nicolae Titulescu – vocația unui orator*” (2); „*Focul sacru al Genevei*” (3) and the study „*Les figures rhétoriques – critères pour une typologie*” (4).

Thus, a speech becomes not only interesting, but also attractive for the audience. For instance, the metaphor „*the sacred fire of Geneva*”, introduced in the opening statement at the XII Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations (Geneva, 7 September 1931) (8), had the semantic capacity to illustrate the important role of that international/multilateral forum, having a clear identity, dominated by dynamism, seriousness, vision; the word „*fire*” is able to indicate all these parameters and its meaning is highly increased, due to the fact that is amended by the adjective „*sacred*”. In the light of legendary values, the orator has the opportunity to request the diplomats, the politicians, the governmental representatives to take care and to preserve this „*sacred fire*”, which means to permanently defend, against any threat, the existence and the mission of the League of Nations, like the *Sacerdos Vestalis* – those young women – priests in Latin mythology, who had the duty for 30 years at least to watch and keep the fire in the Temple of Vesta.

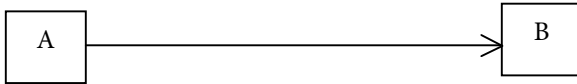
Another modality devoted to the creation of a climate of concentration and attention on the level of the public is related to the utilization of certain quotations, mainly famous ones, selected from: reference documents of legal nature, teachings and doctrines in ancient or modern times (presented, in some cases, in their original language – Greek, Latin, French, English, German etc.), aphorisms and proverbs belonging to the universal culture.

In the present context, just a few examples could be offered for a better understanding of the role of quotations in the oratorical exercises. Taking the floor at the Romanian Academy about the emancipation of peasants, Mihail Kogălniceanu introduced a series of quotations from *the Manifesto* (political programme of the 1848 Revolution held in Bucharest) (8). In his opening speech at the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia (1 December 1918), Dr. Ștefan C. Pop quoted twice what he called „the golden words” of the American President Woodrow Wilson (9). In a meeting in Bucharest with a group of journalists from Latin America, Nicolae Titulescu decided to quote the great hero of that continent, Simon Bolivar „spiritual brother of George Washington and precursor of the brilliant Woodrow Wilson” (11).

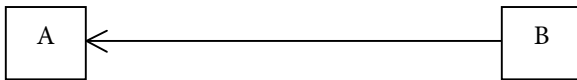
Quotations during a discourse may assure a certain *transfer of authority* from the respective personality to the speaker in a *hic et nunc* (here and now) context; at least for a while, the public would be under the influence („the ideatic pressure”) of the given quotations which become part and parcel of the speech put forward in front of the listeners by an orator. But, the latter should be rather prudent and careful, in order for avoiding a possible mistake „punished” by the science of logic – namely *argumentum ad hominem*; quotation is, of course, useful, strengthening the argumentation embodied in a discourse, but it can not fully replace the own efforts for supporting an idea, an assumption, a theoretical option, a request or an urge addressed to the audience by the speaker. The genuine orators are deeply aware of this possible „trap”; therefore, they try to avoid, as much as possible, the excessive use of quotations (that could become counter – productive); in several situations, the speakers prefer to formulate a *paraphrase* of the quotation as a sign of their „independence” and „authority” in relation with the authors of the respective assertions, already imposed as such in the mind of the educated people having a solid intellectual background. It has to be added to these considerations the following aspect: there are

situations when the orators, engaged into various polemics, draw the collective attention of the public with some relevant quotations of their opponents' views; this theoretical practice often occurs during scientific/academic debates and disputes.

The authority of an orator requires, to a certain extent, as we have earlier mentioned, a state of attention on the level of the public, but such a state should be stimulated by various means. Otherwise, this authority remains a mere wish, without implementation into practice. An important tool in this respect is, in our view, *the hypothetical dialogue* (the term belongs to the author of this study). As it is usually emphasized, the relationship between the orator and the public is structured on an univocal direction. Having A = orator and B = public, the following representation is generally accepted:



During a discourse, the speaker is able to reverse on a temporary basis this orientation, putting the emphasis on the public, who is thus engaged in the oratorical exercise:



From time to time, the orator gives up his/her monologue style, by addressing directly the listeners, asking them certain questions, even formulating on their behalf possible answers. Quite often, we meet in the Ancient (Greek, Latin) oratory, as well as in the modern discourses such semantic constructions like: „... you ask me...”; „... you will say...”; „but I will answer you...”;... you could contradict me by saying that...” etc. Therefore, this kind of attitude of the public is *per se* an invention/a rhetorical creation of the orator *during* the speech, which does not replace various possible reactions of the audience *after* the respective conference, statement (questions, comments, other verbal reactions, critical remarks). Due to the hypothetical dialogue, a speech becomes more dynamic and attractive and its usefulness is particularly proved in those moments when the collective attention could be diminished. It is indeed the mission of the orator to build-up this dialogue *sui-generis*

within reasonable limits, so that it would not become a counter-productive modality; as a matter of fact, the monologue should remain the basis of the presentation in front of a public, permitting a systematical and logical argumentation, a clear reflection of the ideas, a coherent interpretation of the facts.

Time-factor has a significant position in the development of the relationship between the orator and the public and it can deeply influence – in a positive or a negative sense – the oratorical performances, including the authority of the speakers in the eyes of listeners. An experienced orator is able, generally speaking, to observe the time limits, despite of the fact that, in some cases, he/she could meet an audience that is more indulgent or/and more interested than it was supposed *a priori*. The great halls of conferences, in Parliaments, international fora or the university amphitheatres have, as a general rule wall-clocks indicating the exact time, like a discrete warning for the speaker, first of all, but also for those people present in front of him. It is just a matter of routine to periodically look on the clock, having in mind the pertinent significance of the ancient adage: “*Fugit irreparable tempus*”.

Every orator could consider one of the two following options: a) to conceive the speech to be delivered in the strict limits of time, mutually accepted at the beginning of the rhetoric exercise; b) to overcome those limits, without any preliminary notice, just on the basis of a sovereign *ad-hoc* decision. The first option could become – as it was demonstrated in the longue history of oratory – a source of authority and prestige for the orator, because the public will understand that it is treated with respect and politeness. The second option may generate, however, certain difficulties and discomforts for the speaker, even when the orations are comprehensive and interesting; the audience seems that is underestimated and, as a result, it will immediately change its affective relationship with the speaker, becoming indifferent and passive. Of course, one should say that the ideal situation is that in which the people sincerely regret that the speech came to an end!

There should be imagined another scenario, which happens sometime in the rhetorical process: the orator speaks less than the reserved time (of course, it is not the case of university lectures, for instance, having strict period in terms of hours or minutes). This amazing situation could be pleasant and beneficial, especially whether the public will be invited to react/comment on the speech; people

present there could have the impression that the orator „sacrificed” a part of the allotted time in favor of the listeners and of a dialogue with them. Let us to exclude the fact that a shorter speech has as explanation a crisis of inspiration with obvious negative effects upon the given audience.

A *distributive attention* has to be taken into consideration by the speaker, in the following two major directions: a) attention towards his/her own performance – logical, coherent development of ideas; clear, non-ambiguous sentences; avoidance of repetitions which are not useful; incorporation of persuasive examples; avoidance of a language incompatible with the level of the event and the profile of the public (a sophisticated, complicate terminology, without relevant definitions or explanatory remarks could block the transfer of messages and the understanding as a whole); observance of the time – limits, agreed upon with the organizers of the event or required by administrative regulations; b) attention provided towards the collective receiver of the speech delivered by the orator – adequate knowledge about the evolution of the degree of readiness and receptivity of the of the public; its gradual involvement in the zone of the speaker’s own ideas (through spiritual remarks, imaginary dialogues, *ad-hoc* divagations, courtesy references or appeals, invitations to individual thinking etc.); dynamic correction/rectification of some pronounced sentences; surpassing of certain boring moments.

The high level performance of an orator is not, in any case, a “mirror – exercise”, individual *stricto sensu*; he/she has to overcome a lot of “traps” on the level of public audience and only after this, the speaker’s success could be confirmed. Based on such behavior, the orator would be able to build – up an authority having an unconditional force and evidence, as well as incontestable spreading among people of various beliefs and backgrounds.



Both directions in which the attention of the orator is mobilized are, by definition, interrelated and simultaneous: either the underestimation of the preoccupation for the logical coherence and the clarity of the speeches or the underestimation of the public could become counter – productive despite the intentions and the endeavors

of the orator. We will not commit the error of establishing a hierarchy between the above – mentioned directions a) and b), but, on the other hand, we just accept that while the orator's attention of type a) is prepared *a priori* (in the framework of pre – discourse intellectual steps), the attention of type b) is rather spontaneous, based on the realities on the spot, that cannot be fully anticipated.

The approach to the audience as a permanent attitude of the speaker has not to be excessive, ostentatious in terms of language or of gestures. An orator who will use courtesy expressions, more than needed, does not remain credible in front of the listeners; in a similar situation will be placed, against his/her wishes, a speaker having an artificial and exaggerated behavior, marked by numerous physical expressions of kindness (mimicry, gesticulation). The excess of politeness will disturb the listeners of a sermon with the same intensity like the absence of politeness. This is why the relationship between the orator and the audience should be preserved in a note of normality, simplicity and truthfulness, parameters that are able to secure a mutual cooperation and effective performance of the rhetorical act. As a matter of fact, this balanced and natural attitude cannot be learned just from handbooks of oratory, but first of all from the direct, live and dynamic experience.

The negative cooperation might be also taken into consideration when a discourse is presented for the public. It is very well known that this kind of cooperation, based on an elementary understanding between the sides involved, occurs quite often in cases of military confrontations; there exist precise rules, accepted by everybody, with regard to certain humanitarian measures, e.g. the immediate transportation of the killed and wounded persons from the battle – fields, upon the acceptance of the adversary/enemy. This type of negative and compulsory cooperation could be applied to the zone of oratorical acts, as follows:

- i) Sometime, it is possible that a specific speech not to be agreeable for the public as a whole or for some segments of it.
- ii) In such cases, a civilized, decent public attending the respective events will not at all react in a negative manner, vociferating, hooting or leaving the halls; the listeners will continue to listen with patience the speeches, in the name of an elementary respect for the orators actually engaged in their verbal exercises.

iii) At the end, the public should applaud as a mere gesture of protocolar courtesy.

iv) In other situations, it seems that the orator decides “to disarm” after a set of difficult, inconvenient questions or comments coming from the public; the latter will be aware of the critical moments which have occurred and it will prefer therefore to renounce to the dispute, by stopping any unpleasant intervention or by continuing with certain constructive questions and more general, protocolar statements.

So far, we have envisaged a series of attitudes of “*negative cooperation*” on the level of the audience/listeners having what could be called a “collective identity”. At the same time, one might imagine similar attitudes from the part of the orator as follows (giving just a few aspects of the matter):

i) The speaker will see, at a particular moment, that despite his/her efforts to be attractive (intellectually) and charming (through personal *Charisma*), the audience does not receive such posture and the normal state of care and devotion is obviously raveled out.

ii) Therefore, the orator will decide to abandon for a while *the exposé*, introducing some expressions with a view to wander temporary from the announced subject of the speech.

iii) According to the concrete situation in intellectual and psychological terms, the orator could finalize the sermon before the time – limits reserved *ab initio* (of course, the speaker will take these unexpected developments in a natural way, without any reproaches or allusions formulated towards the given public).

It goes without saying that the negative cooperation is much more intricate, in comparison with the rhetorical normality, when the two factors of the relationship accepted an “unwritten agreement” to respect each other, to understand difficulties, when they occur and to try to make *ad-hoc* compromises. Such a constructive and flexible behavior will be beneficial for all those persons (speakers, listeners) involved in the oratorical process.

By the end of our study, we would like to stress some conclusions regarding the projection of speaker's authority in the relationship orator – public. This matter, which probably sounds rather modern, is originated in the ancient theory and art of oratory, in the writings and activities of Demosthenes, Cicero, Quintilian. This outstanding *rhetorical culture* represents a perennial source of inspiration and meditation, due to the

numerous teachings and models provided for future generations; the author of this study treated in a coherent and comprehensive way the above – mentioned issue in various scientific articles, *inter alia*: “*Ideatic Specificity of the Discourse. Demosthenes’ Philippics*” (5); “*Audience and argumentation – from Hellenic orators to Perelman*” (6). The modern times generated new parameters of the oratorical process, mainly in the area of technical facilities at the disposal of orators: for instance, microphones and loudspeakers are able to amplify the voice, the video means can spread the images on big screens accessible to a lot of people, present in a great hall of conferences or at a huge, open square. One should recognize that all these technological modalities can contribute to the projection (in a broad sense) of the orator’s authority to the collective mind of the public. But, besides any facilities which will continue to develop in the future, some fundamental truths remain in their pure and bright light, as in the ancient times: the authority of orators is not merely “a gift” offered to the public or a mechanical feature of personality imposed to the public; more thoroughly, the authority is, above all, a parameter, built – up by the orators themselves, under *hic et nunc* circumstances, with the public’s cooperation. Moreover, this authority can be accumulated over times, generations by generations, laying down oratorical models for the future.

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