

The role of *captatio benevolentiae* in the interaction between the speaker and his audience in Antiquity and today

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ABSTRACT

The rhetorical category of *captatio benevolentiae*, essential to convince and persuade listeners, is one of the rhetor's most effective tools. Cicero saw it as one of the pillars upon which the entire edifice of the art of oratory should be based and, as such, it was extensively practised by Roman orators and medieval authors. In the *exordium* its purpose was to make hearers attentive, receptive and well-disposed. In connection with *auditorem benevolum parare*, two search formulae based on Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* are of particular importance: *ab nostra persona* and *ab iudicum/auditorum persona*. When included in the *exordium* of the speech, these techniques can help gain the good will of the listeners (the judge) as well as of the readers of literary texts; at the same time, they may incite the emotions and moral values of the public. Although the ancient rhetoricians paid considerable attention to this rhetorical category, it is often neglected and overlooked by contemporary speakers, or it is used in such an inadequate way that might deter the audience right at the beginning of the speech. In the rhetorical style the speaker should not step out of the crowd, rather he should fit into the audience and engage them in his speech. Even if the presented topic is not at all new, it is still of great use to be dealt with in theory as well as in practice, especially when preparing a public discourse, the aim of which is to persuade the listeners. The focus of this paper is thus to point out several theoretical sources of ancient rhetoric based on Cicero and Quintilian in relation to the figure of *captatio benevolentiae* and, consequently, to examine its use in the selected literary texts of Late Antique authors, particularly those of Saint Augustine of Hippo and Tyconius. Finally, the application of the alleged principles is demonstrated in a few examples of the *exordium* of chosen modern public speeches.

Keywords: ancient rhetoric, captatio benevolentiae, art of persuasion, efficient speech, inciting emotions, gaining good will of the audience

"A potent factor in success, then, is for the characters, principles, conduct and course of life, both of those who are to plead cases and of their clients, to be approved, and conversely those of their opponents condemned; and for the feelings of the tribunal to be won over, as far as possible, to goodwill towards the advocate

and the advocate's client as well. Now, feelings are won over by a man's merit, achievements or reputable life, qualifications easier to embellish, if only they are real, than to fabricate where non-existent. But attributes useful in an advocate are a mild tone, a countenance expressive of modesty, gentle language, and the faculty of seeming to be dealing reluctantly and under compulsion with something you are really anxious to prove." [1]

This opening quotation from Cicero's *De oratore* shows which role the *captatio benevolentiae* played in the *exordium* of an orator's speech and how important the interaction between the speaker and his audience was in Antiquity. This rhetorical technique, essential to convince and persuade listeners, is one of a rhetorician's most effective tools and Cicero saw it as one of the pillars upon which the entire edifice of the art of oratory was based. [2] It was extensively practiced by Roman orators and medieval authors. Although ancient rhetoricians paid considerable attention to the *captatio benevolentiae*, both in their theoretical writings as well as in the speeches, this category is often neglected and overlooked by our contemporary speakers; or, if used, it is used in such an inadequate fashion that only deters the audience from the beginning of the speech. Even if this topic is not at all new, the situation in the post-Communist countries, where freedom of speech was almost completely suppressed for several decades, shows us that, even today, it is still greatly beneficial to deal with it in theory as well as in practice.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to point out several theoretical sources of ancient rhetoric in relation to the *captatio benevolentiae* and, consequently, to examine its use in selected literary texts of Late Antique authors, especially those of Saint Augustine of Hippo and Tyconius. Finally, I would like to discuss some reasons for which the application of these principles might be profitable also in modern day public speaking.

The notion of *captatio benevolentiae* in ancient rhetoric

Captatio benevolentiae, equivalent to *petitio veniae*, is a rhetorical category aimed at capturing the good will of the audience at the beginning of a speech (*exordium*, *prooemium*) or appeal. However, the technical term is not found in the rhetorical handbooks of Latin Antiquity. [3] It was first used by Boethius (died 524 CE) in his commentary on Cicero's *Topica*. [4] Its purpose was to make the hearer attentive (*attentum parare*), receptive (*docilem*) and well-disposed (*benevolum*). [5] An *exordium* that focuses on *benevolum auditorem* is often designed to function as a *captatio benevolentiae* itself, securing the good will of the recipients and aiming at inciting their emotions and moral qualities. In speeches, it is frequently followed by a brief *narratio* and *propositio*. We might encounter this rhetorical technique already in Homeric epics and Quintilian reminds us that in the introductory lines of the *Iliad* Homer secures the good will of the audience by invoking the goddesses believed to preside over poets: [6]

"As regards the emotions, there can be no one so ill-educated as to deny that the poet was the master of all, tender and vehement alike. Again, in the few lines with which he introduces both of his epics, has he not, I will not say observed, but actually established the law which should govern the composition of the

exordium? For, by his invocation of the goddesses believed to preside over poetry he wins the good will of his audience, by his statement of the greatness of his themes he excites their attention and renders them receptive by the briefness of his summary." [7]

Benevolum parare is classified under the *genus anceps* since the personal goodwill of the judge can play an important role in a case which presents serious difficulties. In addition to that, it is also necessary for the *genus admirabile* and can be of use in the *genus honestum* which reflects the opinions and feelings of the public. [8] In the *exordium*, the orator should dedicate a particular attention to the *pathos* and to stylistic ornaments (*elocutio*) [9] but it is not always indispensable, and particularly in *genus honestum* its use is facultative: [10]

"Such are the rules for the *exordium*, where it is employed. It may however sometimes be dispensed with. For occasionally it is superfluous, if the judge has been sufficiently prepared for our speech without it or if the case is such as to render such preparation unnecessary. Aristotle indeed says that with good judges the *exordium* is entirely unnecessary. [11] Sometimes, however, it is impossible to employ it, even if we desire to do so; when, for instance, the judge is more occupied, or when time is short or superior authority forces us to embark upon the subject right away." [12]

Based on the precepts of ancient rhetoric, Lausberg (1998, 129–130, § 274–275) summarizes four search *formulae* [13] for *benevolum parare* [14] out of which especially the first and the third serve the purpose of this paper.

The **first search formula** is named *ab nostra persona* and refers both to the client as well as to the speaker. It consists in praising and presenting ourselves and our party as deserving of all human sympathy. [15] Here the aim of *exordium* is to incite the emotions of the audience.

- a. The speaker praises himself by showing his obligatory professional virtue as a *vir bonus* in its true light. [16]
- b. The speaker must avoid the suspicion of arrogance since, otherwise, he will lose the audience's sympathies. [17]
- c. The speaker must praise his party as upright and depict it as unjustly persecuted by stronger opponents. [18]

Moreover, in literature, the modest phrases aiming at winning the sympathy of readers belong here:

"The same points have to be observed with respect to those for whom we plead: for our tone will vary with the character of our client, according as he is distinguished, or of humble position, popular or the reverse, while we must also take into account the differences in their principles and their past life. As regards the orator himself, the qualities which will most commend him are courtesy, kindness, moderation and benevolence. But, on the

other hand, the opposite of these qualities will sometimes be becoming to a good man." [19]

And further in the text:

"The character of the speaker and of the person on whose behalf he speaks are, however, not the only points which it is important to take into account: the character of those before whom we have to speak calls for serious consideration. Their power and rank will make no small difference; we shall employ different methods according as we are speaking before the emperor, a magistrate, a senator, a private citizen, or merely a free man, while a different tone is demanded by trials in the public courts, and in cases submitted to arbitration." [20]

The **second search formula** called *ab adversariorum persona* is intended to attach blame to the opposing party and eliminate the sympathy the audience feels towards them:

„From the character of our adversaries, if we are able to bring them either into hatred, or into unpopularity, or into contempt, they will be brought into hatred, if any action of theirs can be adduced which has been lascivious, or arrogant, or cruel, or malignant. They will be made unpopular, if we can dilate upon their violent behaviour, their power, their riches, their numerous kinsmen, their wealth, and their arrogant and intolerable use of all these sources of influence; so that they may appear rather to trust to these circumstances than to the merits of their cause. They will be brought into contempt, if sloth, or negligence, or idleness, or indolent pursuits, or luxurious tranquility can be alleged against them." [21]

The focus of the **third search formula** called *ab iudicum (auditorum) persona* is to praise the audience, especially for their renowned discrimination, and, more generally, in the *delectatio* of the audience. In more detail, praise of the audience should be connected with the discussed issue [22] and must be intelligent and moderate. Then *delectatio* of the audience is achieved by a fine style which is, however, restrained in the *exordium*. [23]

The **fourth search formula**, *a causa*, consists in praising the position of one's own party and in reproaching the opponent's position.

In connection with the *captatio benevolentiae* it is, however, important to note that the ideas from the *exordium* can also be developed in the course of the whole speech, mostly when keeping contact with the audience (*attentum parare* and *benevolum parare*):

"On the other hand it is at times possible to give the force of an *exordium* to other portions of the speech. For instance, we may ask the judges in the course of our statement of the facts or of our arguments to give us their best attention and good will, a

proceeding which Prodicus recommended as a means of wakening them when they begin to nod." [24]

Benevolum parare in Late Antique literary texts

"Fishing for good will" of the audience was an important rhetorical technique which could be found not only in the *exordium* of ancient public speeches but also in the opening chapters of ancient literary texts. By means of *benevolum parare* the author tried to procure a lenient approach [25] towards his writing on the part of his readers. By showing his modest knowledge of the topic and his inadequacy to undertake such a huge enterprise, the author believed not only to gain the good will of his readers but also to raise their interest in the topic of his work. For example, this is clearly manifested at the beginning of the prologue of a Latin Masterpiece *Ab urbe condita* written by a famous Roman literary historian, Livy (Titus Livius). In the first paragraph of his prologue he states:

"Whether I am likely to accomplish anything worthy of the labour, if I record the achievements of the Roman people from the foundation of the city, I do not really know, nor if I knew would I dare to avouch it; perceiving as I do that the theme is not only old but hackneyed, through the constant succession of new historians, who believe either that in their facts they can produce more authentic information, or that in their style they will prove better than the rude attempts of the ancients. Yet, however this shall be, it will be a satisfaction to have done myself as much as lies in me to commemorate the deeds of the foremost people of the world; and if in so vast a company of writers my own reputation should be obscure, my consolation would be the fame and greatness of those whose renown will throw mine into the shade." [26]

It is obvious that these Latin writers were well trained in the rhetorical schools and in their writings, many a time, attempted to imitate the literary style of their rhetorical models, especially that of Cicero. On the other hand, Quintilian, whose rhetorical compendium *Institutio oratoria* had an undisputed value for the ancient practice of oratory, never rejoiced over so many literary devotees as Cicero did. Moreover, shortly after his death, he practically fell into oblivion for almost two centuries. However, Quintilian regained recognition during the fourth century mainly among grammarians like Diomedus, and he was quoted by such Christian authors as Hilary of Poitiers, Lactantius, Rufinus and Sidonius Apollinaris. In North Africa, Quintilian found an important follower in the person of a Donatist lay theologian Tyconius [27], author of the earliest known systematic attempt of scriptural hermeneutics inside Western Christian tradition. His contemporary Augustine of Hippo considered him to be a man of "sharp intellect and abundant eloquence." [28] Nevertheless, he disliked that schismatic fellow Christian from Africa even though he admired his work, especially his *Liber regularum* [29], which was quoted extensively in his famous manual on the Christian hermeneutics *De doctrina christiana*. In his article dedicated to Quintilian, Tyconius and Augustine, Kannengiesser (1994, 244) remarks: "A Donatist by family status and social conformity, he fought an endless battle in order to

reintegrate the schismatic African tradition into mainstream Christianity, with the only result that he was severely censured by his own bishop, Parmenian of Carthage, in 378, and ridiculed about fifty years later, by Augustine, in his *De doctrina christiana*." So, in the closing part of Book III of this treatise we read:

„There was a man called Tyconius, who wrote against the Donatists in a manner that it is quite impossible to refute, and whose unwillingness to part company with them completely reveals the utter absurdity of his attachments. He composed what he called a book of Rules, because in it he worked out seven rules by which the hidden meanings of the divine scriptures might be unlocked, as with keys." [30]

And a bit further Augustine continues:

"At least, he opened this very book with these words: 'I considered it necessary, before all the other ideas I have, to write a little book of rules, and to forge as it were keys and lamps for the hidden secrets of the law. For there are certain mystical rules which can gain admittance to the inner chambers of the whole law, and render visible the treasures of truth that are invisible to some people. If my account of these rules is accepted ungrudgingly, in the spirit in which I offer it, all closed doors will be opened and dark places lit up, so that anyone strolling through the vast forest of prophecy will be protected by these rules from error, being guided by them, so to say, along paths of light'. Here, if he had said, 'for there are certain mystical rules which can gain admittance to not a few of the inner chambers of the law', or even, 'which can gain admittance to the important inner chambers of the law', and not what he actually did say, 'the inner chambers of the whole law,' and if he had not said, 'all closed doors will be opened,' but 'many closed doors will be opened,' what he said would have been true, and he would not have raised false hopes in those who wish to read and know his extremely painstaking and useful work, by giving it a bigger boost than the actual matter calls for. The reason I thought this had to be said is that, on the one hand, this book ought to be read by serious students, because it is of the greatest help in understanding the scriptures; and, on the other, one should not hope to get from it what it cannot provide." [31]

If we take into consideration the rhetorical context of Tyconius' *Liber regularum* and Augustine's comment on it in *De doctrina christiana*, Kannengiesser's observation appears to be a bit shallow. In fact, from the quotation cited above, it does not result that Augustine is ridiculing Tyconius; rather he seems to be upset about the way Tyconius presented his own work in the prologue of his *Liber regularum*, where he states:

"But if the sense of these rules is accepted without ill will, as we impart it, whatever is closed will be opened and whatever is dark will be illumined; and anyone who walks the vast forest of prophecy guided by these rules, as by pathways of light, will be kept from straying into error." [32]

This brings us back to the theme of this article, i.e., to the discussion of the role *captatio benevolentiae* played in public speeches as well as in literary texts. Here it appears that Tyconius, despite the fact that he had been trained in ancient rhetoric, nevertheless made an error vis-à-vis his readers when pretending in the Prologue that his book on biblical hermeneutics had been written in an exhaustive manner and that the knowledge of his rules would have been sufficient for understanding all the obscurities of the Scriptures. From the perspective of *benevolum parare* this step seems to be counterproductive, since it might have raised negative feelings on the side of the readers who would probably have expected a more moderate tone. According to Quintilian's search *formulae*, the author was believed to blame and excuse himself for not having sufficient competence to write a better piece of work. This might have also been the case of Augustine who could feel irritated by the conceited manner by which Tyconius presented himself and his work. To support this argument, let us recall briefly the opening chapter of the first book of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* where the author apologizes for not feeling competent to write a work which seems to him "too great and arduous". There we read:

"There are two things which all treatment of the scriptures is aiming at: a way to discover what needs to be understood, and a way to put across to others what has been understood. [33] Let us first discuss the way of discovery, and after that the way of putting our discoveries across. A great and arduous work, and it is difficult to keep up, I am afraid it may be thought rash to have undertaken it. And so it certainly would have been, had I been relying solely on my own powers; but as it is, my hopes of carrying this work through rest in the one from whom, in my reflections, I have already received many ideas on this matter; and so there need be no fear that he will refrain from giving me the rest, when I begin spending on others what I have already been given." [34]

Consequently, it becomes clear that Augustine was not particularly constrained to recognize the value of the book of Tyconius who was a member of the schismatic church, he was rather troubled by the pretentious manner with which the Donatist theologian presented his *Liber regularum* at the very beginning of his work.

The application of *captatio benevolentiae* in modern public speaking

We might say, using the language of today, that the figure of *captatio benevolentiae* is closely linked with the Latin *decorum* [35], considered to be one of the four virtues of style as recorded by ancient rhetoricians. In fact, in Quintilian's view it was the most important one. [36] It presents an art for how to fit into the audience; and, in this context, one must decide carefully which style will suit most our topic and our listeners. In modern understanding of the personal

style we have rather a tendency to step out of the crowd; on the other hand, the concern of the rhetorical style should be more that we properly fit into our public and become one with them. Thanks to this approach we may gain the confidence of our public and make them part of the story developed in our speech.

This fact reminds us of another point which I am to discuss in this paper: the clash between the requirements imposed on the speaker by the claims of the ancient rhetoric, on the one hand; and, on the other, the way contemporary speakers present themselves. In fact, in our highly individualized society, where it is still believed that the success of the speakers is often based more on their self-confidence and ability to present in the best light their achievements, while often neglecting the importance of the interaction between the speaker and his audience, the discussion of the usefulness of the *captatio benevolentiae* comes into focus again. Modern speakers' assertive way of presenting their accomplishments sometimes almost amounts to arrogance. In our country (and probably in other countries as well), it frequently occurs that, due to such over-assertive behaviour, speakers can lose the good will of their audience right at the beginning of their performance.

In order to see how the *captatio benevolentiae* is being taken into account in the *exordium* of contemporary speeches, let us examine a short *exordium* of two political speeches delivered in the presence of a wider public. From these examples, we will attempt to discern whether the speaker managed to fit within the bounds of *captatio benevolentiae*, as required by the art of rhetoric today.

Example 1:

"Mr President, ladies and gentlemen. [...] In my endowment's activities, [...] I have been used to being a bit informal and provoking. I hope you will forgive me for being informal today, too. Actually, I have two pieces of news for you: one is bad and the other one is good. I can see here many career diplomats and professionals... Well, the good news is that I very much appreciate your professional approach towards the themes, agendas and towards the solutions. I will keep my fingers crossed for you in your continuation. On the other hand, the bad news is that – and I will speak from the standpoint of the National Parliament – we will probably have more and more conflicts..." (Paška 2013)

Example 2:

"Ladies and gentlemen, your excellences, thank you very much [...]. Dear friends, I would like to express my gratitude to you all for being here together because such a crowded room speaks more about the future than about the past. And thus this event is more about what is coming and will be, rather than about what used to be, and that is very important..." (Figel' 2015)

In relation to Quintilian's first and third search *formulae*, from the examples listed above, we might raise a few points useful for our discussion of the *captatio benevolentiae*. Let us look

more closely at the way both speakers make an attempt to gain the good will of their audience which, according to Cicero, might be achieved by "a mild tone, a countenance expressive of modesty and gentle language..." [37]

In the first example we hear: "I very much appreciate your professional approach..." and "I will keep my fingers crossed for you..." Obviously, this speaker is polite towards his audience but, at the same time, seems to be separating himself from them by using the second person plural "you". Moreover, he is (we believe, unconsciously) imposing a kind of judgment (even though positive) on them by claiming that he is crossing his fingers for them. It is as if he is on one bank of the river and his public on the other. He by no means becomes one with his public, which might have helped him create a positive ambience that could help him overcome the negative feelings of his audience connected with the following statement: "we will probably have more and more conflicts..." It is obvious that this is a reaction to what has been discussed before by other speaker(s); however, to use such phrases in the *exordium* usually does not incite positive and receptive feelings in the audience.

On the other hand, the other speaker uses in his *exordium* a very mild tone and is full of optimism when introducing his topic. In addition to that, while saying: "I would like to express my gratitude to you all for being here together...", the speaker does not step out of the crowd but pretends to be one with his audience. In other words, his expression means: "I am very grateful that we are all here together." He shows himself having the same objectives and visions of the future as they have. At the same time, in his introduction, he avoids all negative judgments of the (Communist) past which could arouse negative emotions in his audience.

So it becomes evident that certain techniques of obtaining the good will of the audience, derived from the ancient rhetorical theory, are undoubtedly of great use still today. It is even more true when we realize that, in our country, there has been a significant lack of rhetorical education and training in our mother tongue, not only during the Communist era but also for a much longer time before. Therefore, it is a challenge for us to find ways to reevaluate the accomplishments of ancient rhetoric and, consequently, to reintegrate them into the modern rhetorical theory and practice.

Notes

- [1] Cicero, *De oratore* II,43,182-183, p. 326–329: „Valet igitur multum ad vincendum probari mores et instituta et facta et vitam et eorum, qui agent causas, et eorum pro quibus, et item improbari adversariorum, animos que eorum apud quos agetur, conciliari quam maxime ad benevolentiam cum erga oratorem tum erga illum, pro quo dicit orator. Conciliantur autem animi dignitate hominis, rebus gestis, existimatione vitae; quae facilius ornari possunt, si modo sunt, quam fingi, si nulla sunt. Sed haec adiuvat in oratore lenitas vocis, vultus pudoris significatio, verborum comitas; si quid persequere acrius, ut invitus et coactus facere videare."
- [2] Cf. Cicero, *De oratore* II,43,115, p. 280–281.
- [3] The term as such is also absent from Lausberg's book (1998, § 263–288), which I refer to throughout this paper.
- [4] Boethius, *In Ciceronis Topica* I.
- [5] *Rhetorica ad Herennium* I,4, p. 4–5.
- [6] For more information on this topic see e.g. *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*, p. 89.

- [7] Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* X,1,48, p. 28–29: „Affectus quidem vel illos mites vel hos concitatos nemo erit tam indoctus, qui non in sua potestate hunc auctorem habuisse fateatur. Age vero, non utriusque operis sui ingressu in paucissimis versibus legem prohoemiorum non dico servavit, sed constituit? Nam et benevolum auditorem invocatione dearum, quas praesidere vatibus creditum est, et intentum proposita rerum magnitudine et docilem summa celeriter comprehensa facit.”
- [8] The *exordium* might be very brief or even omitted in *genus deliberativum* and also in *genus demonstrativum* where it may be used similarly as in *genus iudiciale*. Cf. Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* III,8,10, p. 484–485; Aristoteles, *Ars rhetorica* III,14, 1415b.
- [9] *Rhetorica ad Herennium* I,11, p. 11: „Exordienda causa servandum est, ut lenis sit sermo et usitata verborum consuetudo, ut non adparata videatur oratio esse.”
- [10] Cf. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* I,6, p. 6.
- [11] Cf. Aristoteles *Ars rhetorica* III,14, 1415b.
- [12] Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* IV,1,72, p. 45–46: „Haec de prooemio, quotiens erit eius usus. Non semper autem est; nam et supervacuum aliquando est, si sit praeparatus satis etiam sine hoc iudex aut si res praeparatione non egeat. Aristoteles quidem in totum id necessarium apud bonos iudices negat. Aliquando tamen uti nec si velimus eo licet, cum iudex occupatus, cum angusta sunt tempora, cum maior potestas ab ipsa re cogit incipere.”
- [13] *Benevolentia* is generally achieved either by praising or blaming the objects of the search *formulae* and is thus largely epideictic in character.
- [14] Cf. Aristoteles, *Ars rhetorica* III,14, 1415a; *Rhetorica ad Herennium* I,8; Cicero, *De inventione* I,16,22.
- [15] Cicero, *De inventione* I,16,22, p. 20: „Ab nostra, si de nostris factis et officiis sine arrogantia dicemus; si crimina inlata et aliquas minus honestas suspiciones iniectas diluamus; si, quae incommoda acciderint aut quae instent difficultates, proferemus; si prece et obsecratione humili ac supplici utemur.”; cf. Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* IV,1,7–15, p. 8–13.
- [16] Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* IV,1,7, p. 8–9: „Sic enim continget, ut non studium advocati videatur adferre, sed paene testis fidem. Quare in primis existimetur venisse ad agendum ductus officio vel cognationis vel amicitiae, maxime que, si fieri poterit, rei publicae aut alicuius certe non mediocris exempli. Quod sine dubio multo magis ipsis litigatoribus faciendum est, ut ad agendum magna atque honesta ratione aut etiam necessitate accessisse videantur.”
- [17] Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* IV,1,9, p. 10–11: „Inde illa veterum circa occultandam eloquentiam simulatio, multum ab hac nostrorum temporum iactatione diversa.”; IV,1,33, p. 22–23: „Fiducia ipsa solet opinione adrogantiae laborare.”
- [18] Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* IV,1,13, p. 12–13: „Ipsius autem litigatoris persona tractanda varie est: nam tum dignitas eius adlegatur, tum commendatur infirmitas.”
- [19] Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* XI,1,42, p. 178–179: „Eadem in iis, pro quibus agemus, observanda sunt: aliter enim pro alio saepe dicendum est, ut quisque honestus, humilis, invidiosus, favorabilis erit, adiecta propositorum quoque et ante actae vitae differentia. Iucundissima vero in oratore humanitas, facilitas, moderatio, benevolentia. Sed illa quoque diversa bonum virum decent: malos odisse, publica vice commoveri, ultum ire scelera et iniurias, et omnia, ut initio dixi, honesta.”
- [20] Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* XI,1,43, p. 178–179: „Nec tantum quis et pro quo, sed etiam apud quem dicas interest: facit enim et fortuna discrimen et potestas, nec eadem apud principem, magistratum, senatorem, privatum, tantum liberum ratio est, nec eodem sono publica iudicia et arbitratorum disceptationes aguntur.”
- [21] Cicero, *De inventione* I,16,22, p. 20: „Ab adversariorum autem, si eos aut in odium aut in invidiam aut in contempionem adducemus. In odium ducentur, si quod eorum spurce, superbe, crudeliter, malitiose factum proferetur; in invidiam, si vis eorum, potentia, divitiae, cognatio [pecuniae]

proferentur atque eorum usus arrogans et intolerabilis, ut his rebus magis videantur quam causae suae confidere; in contemptum adducentur, si eorum inertia, negligentia, ignavia, desidiosum studium et luxuriosum otium proferetur."

[22] Cf. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* I,8, p. 7: „iudicii expectatio."

[23] Cf. Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* IV,1,57-60, p. 36–39.

[24] Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* IV,1,73, p. 46–47: „Contra que est interim proemii vis etiam non exordio; nam iudices et in narratione nonnumquam et in argumentis ut attendant et ut faveant rogamus, quo Prodicus velut dormitantes eos excitari putabat, quale est."

[25] „Lenitas orationis", cf. Cicero, *De oratore* II,43,182, p. 326.

[26] Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, proem., vol. I, p. 2–3: „Facturus ne operae pretium sim, si a primordio urbis res populi Romani perscripserim, nec satis scio nec, si sciam, dicere ausim, quippe qui cum veterem tum vulgatam esse rem videam, dum novi semper scriptores aut in rebus certius aliquid allaturos se aut scribendi arte rudem vetustatem superaturos credunt. Utcumque erit, iuvabit tamen rerum gestarum memoriae principis terrarum populi pro virili parte et ipsum consuluisse; et si in tanta scriptorum turba mea fama in obscuro sit, nobilitate ac magnitudine eorum me, qui nomini officient meo, consoler."

[27] Tyconius flourished between 370 and 390 and his intellectual endeavors concentrated on the riches of the local Christianity in Carthage.

[28] Augustinus, *Contra epistolam Parmeniani* I,1, p. 19: „hominem quidem et acri ingenio praeditum et uberi eloquio."

[29] Tyconius, *The Book of Rules*; also Bright (1988). Note also the critical French edition *Le Livre des Règles*, SC 488.

[30] Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* III,30,42, CCL 32, p. 102: „Ticonius quidam, qui contra donatistas inuictissime scripsit, cum fuerit donatista, et illic invenitur absurdissimi cordis, ubi eos non omni ex parte relinquere voluit, fecit librum, quem Regularum vocavit, quia in eo quasdam septem regulas exsecutus est, quibus quasi clavibus divinarum scripturarum aperirentur occulta." English translation, p. 187.

[31] Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* III,30,43, CCL 32, p. 103: „Ita quippe exorsus est eundem librum ut diceret: ‘Necessarium duxi ante omnia, quae mihi videntur, libellum regularum scribere et secretorum legis veluti claves et luminaria fabricare. Sunt enim quaedam regulae mysticae, quae uniuersae legis recessus obtinent et veritatis thesauros aliquibus inuisibiles visibiles faciunt. Quarum si ratio regularum sine invidia, ut communicamus, accepta fuerit, clausa quaeque patefient et obscura dilucidabuntur, ut quis prophetiae immensam silvam perambulans his regulis quodammodo lucis tramitibus deductus ab errore defendatur.’ Hic si dixisset: sunt enim quaedam regulae mysticae, quae nonnullos legis recessus obtinent, aut certe: quae legis magnos recessus obtinent, non autem quod ait: uniuersae legis recessus, neque dixisset: clausa quaeque patefient, sed: clausa multa patefient, verum dixisset, nec tam elaborato atque utili operi suo plus quam res ipsa postulat dando, in spem falsam lectorem eius cognitorem que misisset. Quod ideo dicendum putavi, ut liber ipse et legatur ab studiosis, quia plurimum adiuuat ad scripturas intellegendas, et non de illo speretur tantum, quantum non habet." English translation, p. 188.

[32] Tyconius, *The Book of Rules*, proem., p. 2–3: „Quarum si ratio regularum sine invidia ut communicamus accepta fuerit, clausa quaeque patefient et obscura dilucidabuntur, ut quis prophetiae immensam silvam perambulans his regulis quodam modo lucis tramitibus deductus ab errore defendatur."

[33] Cf. Cicero, *De oratore* II,27,120, p. 284–285.

- [34] Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* I,1,1, CCL 32, p. 6: „Duae sunt res, quibus nititur omnis tractatio scripturarum, modus inveniendi, quae intellegenda sunt, et modus proferendi, quae intellecta sunt. De inveniendi prius, de proferendo postea disseremus. Magnum onus et arduum, et si ad sustinendum difficile, uereor, ne ad suscipiendum temerarium. Ita sane si de nobis ipsis praesumeremus; nunc uero cum in illo sit spes peragendi huius operis, a quo nobis in cogitatione multa de hac re iam tradita tenemus, non est metuendum, ne dare desinat cetera, cum ea, quae data sunt, coeperimus impendere." English translation, p. 106.
- [35] The virtue of *decorum* is closely linked with other three virtues of style, i.e. *latinitas*, *perspicuitas* and *ornatus*. These qualities of style refer to the purity of the speech and to its ornamentation. For more information see, for instance, Andoková (2015, 51–61).
- [36] Cf. Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* XI,1,1, p. 154–155.
- [37] See note 1 above.

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Il ruolo di *captatio benevolentiae* nell'interazione tra l'oratore ed il suo pubblico nell'Antichità e nei nostri giorni

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RIASSUNTO

Parole chiave: retorica antica, captatio benevolentiae, l'arte della persuasione, discorso efficace, emozioni stimolanti, ottenere la buona attenzione del pubblico

La tecnica *captatio benevolentiae*, essenziale per convincere e persuadere il pubblico costituisce uno fra gli strumenti più efficaci per i retori. Cicerone la considerava una delle colonne portanti dell'intero edificio dell'oratoria, per cui era molto praticata dai declamatori romani e dagli autori medievali. Nell'*exordium* lo scopo era di rendere gli ascoltatori attenti, recettivi e ben disposti. Accanto all' *auditem benevolum parere*, altre due formule particolarmente importanti che si basano sull'*Institutio oratoria* di Quintiliano sono: *ab nostra persona* e *ab iudicum/auditorum persona*. Quando sono incluse nell'*exordium* del discorso, queste tecniche consentono di ottenere una buona attenzione da parte degli ascoltatori e dei lettori di testi letterari. Allo stesso tempo possono indurre le emozioni ed i valori morali del pubblico. Nonostante gli antichi retori prestassero molta attenzione a questa tecnica, al giorno d'oggi è spesso trascurata dagli oratori contemporanei o utilizzata in modo inappropriato al punto da dissuadere il pubblico proprio all'inizio del discorso. Nell'uso retorico l'oratore non dovrebbe uscire dalla folla, ma piuttosto connettersi con la platea per coinvolgerla nel suo discorso. Anche se l'argomento trattato non è affatto nuovo, risulta essere di grande utilità qualora venga affrontato nella teoria e nella pratica, in particolar modo quando si prepara un discorso da tenere in pubblico, il cui scopo è quello di persuadere gli ascoltatori. Lo scopo di questo lavoro consiste nell'individuare diverse fonti teoriche della retorica antica basata sull'opera di Cicerone e Quintiliano, con riferimento alla figura di *captatio benevolentiae*, e quindi esaminarne l'uso nei testi di letteratura di antichi autori, in particolare di sant'Agostino d'Ippona e Tyconius. Infine,

l'applicazione dei presunti principi è dimostrata da un corpus costituito da vari esempi tratti *dall'exordium* di discorsi pubblici odierni.