

Rhetoric and Education: An approach to the Roman school

Retórica y Educación: una aproximación a la escuela romana

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Abstract:

The training of proficient, educated and professional people was essential in Graeco-Roman antiquity. Rhetoric was used to deliver a speech correctly, make political decisions, defend a position, or accuse a certain person and to persuade a judge. These characteristics were developed in the school of rhetoric. This article describes the characteristics of education in Rome, its role within society, who received education and how, the changes it underwent during the course of history and, above all, the role of rhetoric in the schools of Ancient Rome. The objective of the work is to identify the influence of Roman education on Western culture and to reclaim the importance of rhetoric for contemporary education. It will consider three historical stages in which Roman education underwent changes. We will start with the description of the school day, the

different types of teachers and the structure of education. Special emphasis is also placed on the role of rhetoric in education, the different declamatory exercises (controversies and suasories), the role of rhetoric in creating participative citizens and finally, the reasons for the decline of rhetoric. Among the conclusions, we will verify how some of the teaching methods and educational models inherited from the Greeks and cultivated by the Romans, still retain some of their main characteristics in today's society. For better and for worse, the virtues of education have been inherited, as have the problems, such as the matter of insufficient pay for teachers and limited access to higher education, difficulties which are yet to be resolved.

Keywords: history of education, schools of rhetoric, Roman argumentation.

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Resumen:

En la antigüedad grecolatina era fundamental la formación de personas capacitadas, cultas y profesionales que supieran expresar adecuadamente sus ideas por medio del discurso, cómo tomar decisiones políticas, cómo defender una postura o acusar a determinada persona y persuadir al juez de adherirse a su argumento y conclusiones. Estas características se desarrollaban en la escuela de retórica. Este artículo describe las características de la educación en Roma, su papel dentro de la sociedad, quiénes y cómo recibían la educación, qué cambios sufrió durante la historia y, sobre todo, cuál fue el papel de la retórica en las escuelas de la antigua Roma. El objetivo del trabajo es identificar la influencia de la educación romana en la cultura occidental y rescatar la importancia de la retórica para la educación contemporánea. Se contemplan tres etapas históricas en las que cambia la educación latina. Empezaremos con la descripción de la jornada escolar, los distintos tipos de profesores y la estructura de la educa-

ción. Se hace, además, especial énfasis en el papel de la retórica en la educación, los diferentes ejercicios declamatorios (controversias y suasorias), su función como creadora de ciudadanos participativos y, finalmente, los motivos de la decadencia de la retórica.

Entre las conclusiones comprobamos cómo los métodos de enseñanza y modelos educativos heredados de los griegos y cultivados por los romanos aún conservan algunas de sus principales características en la sociedad actual. Para bien o para mal, se heredan tanto las virtudes como los problemas de la educación, tal es el caso del interés por desarrollar la capacidad argumentativa del lenguaje o entre las dificultades que aún quedan por resolver, la escasa retribución a los profesores y el acceso restringido a los niveles de educación superior.

Descriptor: historia de la educación, escuelas de retórica, argumentación latina.

1. Introduction

Education began as a special service whereby only people of a higher social status received a formal education. Today's education represents a fundamental institution for most societies, acting as a driving force for well-being and social mobility.

The origins and foundation of modern-day Western society can be found in Rome and Greece. In Graeco-Roman antiquity it was considered essential to instruct proficient, educated and professional people who could express their ideas correctly

using the spoken word, take political decisions, defend a position or make an accusation before a judge. Education, therefore, plays a very important role in Roman society and in other so-called Western cultures who have inherited the classical legacy.

For this reason, this article outlines the characteristics of schooling in the ancient world and its role in society, the description of who received education and how they received it, the changes it underwent over the course of history and, above all, the role of rhetoric in Roman schools. The

main objective of this work is to identify the influence of Roman education on Western culture and to reclaim the importance of rhetoric in contemporary education.

Tacitus, in a fragment of *A Dialogue on Oratory* (*Dial.*, 28-4, 29-5), provides an interesting perspective on the education of his time. The passage serves to show us the characteristics of the education system, including its challenges and expectations. It reflects the appearance in this era of stereotypes regarding education, which continue to exist in the present, such as students' lack of interest in learning or the role of the mother in educating children, as well as choosing good teachers who inculcate good habits in order to create capable, participative citizens, who are able to express their ideas appropriately, subtly and advantageously. Studying the classical model can enlighten us in our attempt to understand more fully where we come from and where we are going.

For this work, our starting point was the more traditional, historical division proposed by León Lázaro (2013). According to this author, education in Rome can be divided principally into three major stages: the first covers the eighth to the third centuries BC, that is, the Monarchy and the beginning of the Republic; the second is the period encompassing the third century BC and the second century AD, between the Punic Wars and the Antonine Dynasty, which is noteworthy for the arrival of the Greek model; and the third stage, the Late Roman Empire, when declamation was introduced as a literary genre. In addition to reviewing the characteristics of Roman

education over the different historical periods, it will be necessary to review the structure of the educational system and, lastly, the use of rhetoric and oratory and the introduction of different types of exercises in declamation and argumentation.

2. The beginnings

In Ancient Rome, it was the parents who were mainly in charge of their children's education, which consisted in teaching the elements of reading, writing and arithmetic. From birth until children began to develop the first signs of an ability to reason, they were their mother's responsibility, although she would generally delegate the first three years to a nurse who would teach them to speak, and recognise numbers and letters. The nurse would also tell them the legends of the gods and goddesses. From the age of seven, boys passed into their father's care, whereas girls continued under their mother's supervision, where they learned about domestic chores and household administration.

It was usual to educate women to become the lady of the house, to watch over and assign work to the slaves, administer food supplies and take charge of raising the children. Literary sources show the image of women sewing, weaving or doing embroidery by the hearth at home, with their slaves around them, as recorded by an epitaph from the Republican era: *casta fuit, domum servavit, lanam fecit* (CIL I, 1007). The *paterfamilias* arranged the daughter's marriage and, after the wedding ceremony, she would depend on her husband and take charge of family matters in her new home.

Women's education also included their participation in social life. This participation was far more active in the culture of Rome than in that of Greece; women attended banquets in the company of their husbands, they were noted for their discretion and virtue, and because of this they enjoyed relative freedom of movement.

The Romans valued their home life highly, along with the virtues of the ancient Republic's matrons: a private archetype held up as a public model of how a mother should be, noble and virtuous, particularly bound to the responsibilities of the State, although not solely for the function of providing it with new citizens. In *The Aeneid*, the matrons rebel and pray for a city: *Urbem orant; taedet pelagi perferre laborem* (Virgil, *Aen.*, V, 618-ff.) and they burn the ships while the men are enjoying themselves at the games. The main virtues that women should learn, apart from loyalty or faithfulness, are silence and bravery (Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.*, 247A).

In some cases, at the highest levels of the aristocracy, care was taken to ensure that girls had specialised teachers to instruct them in Latin and Greek literature and other arts, such as music or dance, but without neglecting the running of a household and the duties which have been regarded as specifically female since ancient times. The classical tradition contains honourable exceptions, such as the mothers of the Gracchi, Julius Caesar or Octavian. Not to mention Sappho, Aspasia of Miletus or Hypatia of Alexandria. (Cf. Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, *Dialogue on Love* and *Virtues of Women*).

The most widespread tradition was for the head of the family or *paterfamilias* to take charge of his sons' education. Once a boy had learned to read and write with his mother and had turned seven, he began to receive a more practical type of education, in keeping with his physical growth, as described by both Cato the Elder (Plutarch, *Cat. Ma.*, 20, 5.) and Paulus Aemilius (Plutarch, *Aem.*, 6, 8), in relation to their sons' education. The aim of this education, in such an eminently conservative and pragmatic setting as Roman society, was to provide the new members of the family with moral principles and good habits, collectively known as the *mos maiorum*, to enable them to fend for themselves in social and working life, in accordance with the family principles. For this reason, the father would let his son accompany him in some of his daily tasks. Among the most significant activities were using a plough and learning the basics of agriculture; military training in the defence of territory and family; and honouring the gods. As an example, as has already been noted in numerous studies, M. Porcius Cato taught his son himself "to read and write, he taught him about laws and made him exercise in the gymnasium, (...) to use weapons and to ride a horse" (Plutarch, *Cat. Ma.*, 20,6)¹.

The responsibility for educating a son in the family ended when he assumed the *toga virilis*, between the ages of 14 and 17, when the *paterfamilias* saw fit. At this point, the boy registered as a citizen, he received the *tria nomina*, removed the amulet or *bulla* against evil spirits that he wore around his neck, and began his instruction in public life with his first visit to the fo-

rum. Although an adolescent who underwent this coming of age rite could vote and become a magistrate as a fully-fledged citizen, in order to continue his education he still had to actively accompany a relative or family friend, who would generally have more experience in judicial practice, law or even just the trading that occurred in the forum, which was at the heart of public life in Ancient Rome. This kind of forensic internship, called *tirocinium fori*, formalised the following step in the training process; later he would have to fulfil his military obligations by learning about weapons and the organisation of the army, he would learn how to coexist with other citizens and, depending on his social status, he would work as a *tribunus militum*, that is, an officer in the Roman Legion.

The Roman system of education only contemplated the instruction of free citizens. Servants and slaves, who were responsible for service and agricultural work, had no access to studies. Each home, however, had a space reserved for the education of household slaves, where they could acquire the knowledge needed to perform their obligations effectively. Extensive evidence has been provided by different sources and studies (Bonner, 2012), regarding the later development of just such a space, among the emperor's slaves, in a kind of family school run by a pedagogue.

As for formal education, there has been evidence of it since the early days of the Monarchy, found in various accounts such as those written by Plutarch (Cf. Plutarch, *Num.*, 3), who, in reference to Romulus and Remus, claims that Faustulus, the

shepherd who found them in the she-wolf's cave, sent them to the small town of Gabii and there they *learned to read and write and everything else that well-born children should know*. (Cf. Plutarch, *Romm.*, 6).

Schools as such came into existence during the Republic in the city of Rome, among the shops in the forum, and in other Roman cities, *which hummed with the sound of children's voices as they learned to read*; later, around the third century BC, mention is usually made of the apparition of the first school with its own teacher, that of Spurius Carvilius (Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.*, 59)². At that time, the Greek model was used, according to the famous poem by Horace. (*Ep.*, II, 1, 156).

Despite the establishment of schools of rhetoric in Rome, even in the first century, parents took their children to religious processions in order to convey the importance of the *mos maiorum* and the weight of family traditions. As depicted in the Ara Pacis friezes, or according to the testimony of Pliny the Elder, "each child had his own father for a teacher, and those who were fatherless chose a distinguished, prudent elder to act as father; this was the best way to learn, by example and through practice, about how powerful the speakers were, the rights of those who disagreed, the authority of the judges, the freedom of others..." (León Lázaro, 2013, p. 473). However, the most usual practice among parents during the Republic consisted in entrusting their sons' education to a Greek teacher, as in the case of the Gracchi, who were taught by Diophanes of Mytilene and Menelaus of Marathon, respectively, Pompey's sons or Cicero's son.

3. The Greek model

In the third and second centuries BC, when the Romans began to have closer contact with the Greek world, many rhetoricians and philosophers arrived on the Italic Peninsula, as they had done in Greece in the fifth century, intending to democratise the culture there and replace the individualistic, aristocratic elitism, which was so typically Roman, with a social service which would allow a greater number of well-prepared people to gain access to public life and participate in it. (Jaeger, 2009, p. 265 ff.).

However, the proliferation of Greek schools increased the aristocratic nature of the education system and its relationship with the city, by creating a distinctly urban type of education. Education was limited to the free, city-dwelling population, and it established itself in towns with the aim of preparing the members of the ruling oligarchies. After gaining military and economic control of the whole of the Mediterranean, the Roman world was to undergo an overwhelming process of Hellenisation as a result of adopting the Greek education system. Military victory paved the way to economic and cultural development. (Blanco Pérez, 2005).

The first Latin writers, Livius Andronicus and Ennius, are fine examples of the assimilation of Greek culture in Rome (Suetonius, *Gram.*, 1). Not long after, in the Scipionic Circle, figures such as the historian Polybius of Megalopolis, Digenes of Babylon, Panaetius of Rhodes and Diophanes of Mytilene, among others, educated young men in Hellenic ideals.

This closeness to the Hellenic world was not without controversy and caused the Senate to expel philosophers and rhetoricians (Suetonius, *Gram.*, 25) in the year 173 BC, and again shortly after in 161 BC. Although these decrees “did not state the reasons for this expulsion, they may possibly be related to the distinct anti-Hellenism that existed in certain aristocratic groups who defended the old values, the rural Roman values. These groups only wished to allow certain Hellenic values to filter through, those which the ruling senatorial class would be able to assimilate. At a certain point, philosophers and rhetoricians were potentially unassimilable and they were expelled” (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1991, p. 17).

Later, in 92 BC, the censors Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus and Lucius Licinius Crassus issued another edict concerning the Latin schools of rhetoric with a serious warning (Suetonius, *Gram.*, 25) that in these schools young people were not learning the traditions of their elders and were wasting time *dedisceret paene discendo* (Cicero, *De Or.*, 3, 93). The struggle for control of the schools of rhetoric was not only a philosophical question, the training of the future rulers of the state was also at stake, that is to say, it was a political struggle between the conservative aristocracy and the new, reinforced popular faction. At the beginning of the first century BC, this conflict would end in a civil war between the two parties, led by Marius and Sulla respectively.

Despite the prohibition, in a letter to Titinius Cicero states (Suetonius, *Gram.*, 26), that when he was still a child, a certain Plotius Gallus was the first to teach rhetoric

in Latin and that, although he did not attend this school, it was because he was advised to learn from Greek teachers, as this was considered more suitable for him.

Cicero was the main architect behind a Latin version of Greek rhetorical terms used in these schools. Following the crisis of the Roman Republic and the death of Cicero, Latin rhetoric went into decline at the same time as forensic oratory began to lose its effectiveness. This produced a rupture between rhetorical training and the practice of oratory, with the latter being limited to the school environment and becoming separate from political decision-making, up to the point of being reduced to a simple treatise on eloquence.

As recalled by León Lázaro (2013, pp. 472-477), this was a gradual process and it did not entail the disappearance of the schools of rhetoric or their loss of influence. Even at the end of the first century, Vespasian created a professorial chair in Latin rhetoric in the city of Rome, which was held by Quintilian, and another in Greek rhetoric; and in the second century, at the height of the Second Sophistic, Marcus Aurelius showed his personal interest in language which is reflected in the Stoic perspective of his *Meditations* (Cf. III, 16; VII, 30 or X, 34). In his preference for philosophy over rhetoric, the emperor-philosopher endowed several professorial chairs in Athens, one in rhetoric and four in philosophy, one for each of the four major schools: Stoicism, Epicureanism, Platonism and Aristotelianism.

Previously, in the third century AD, the jurist Ulpian (*Dig.* V. 5, 2,8) mentions that

elementary schools existed even in small, rural villages; it is well known, for example, that both Virgil and Saint Augustine began their elementary education in their small provincial towns; however, in order to continue their training, they had to move to larger towns and eventually completed their education in Rome.

It was essential for rulers to have a good command of rhetoric and oratory and, for this reason, at the same time as the process of Romanisation evolved and cities flourished, education was furthered through pedagogical patronage. This was bestowed by patrons ranging from emperors to local aristocrats, who actively participated in the education system in their cities, by funding the creation and maintenance of schools. Pliny the Younger (Herrero, 1959), for example, personally bore a third of the expense of establishing a school for secondary and higher education in Como, his home town (*Epistulae* IV, 13).

4. Stages of school education

Quintilian recalls that when he began his education, parents could entrust their sons to a teacher or preceptor, who was generally Greek, or send them to a school with other boys their own age in the charge of a *pedagogue*, who would accompany them, take care of school material and ensure that they behaved themselves suitably (Quintilian, *Inst.* I,1,1-5). Both of these options persisted virtually throughout the history of Rome and choosing between them depended more on conservatism in upholding family traditions than on purchasing power. Since the Greek

education system first began to develop, some of the patrician families regarded schools as a dangerous breeding ground for the new ideas that threatened the *mos maiorum*; furthermore, grouping children of the same age together made it easier to indulge moral failures which would not have been tolerated at home (Cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* III, p. 45 ff.).

Most of the educational subjects which were taught to students in the different stages of schooling have been preserved in ancient sources³. The main source of information is the extensive body of work by Quintilian, a complete treatise on pedagogy in twelve books, which he wrote at the end of the first century AD. According to these works, classes took place in the open air, under the forum porches or, at best, in small, rented premises. Good teachers, generally philosophers, were not supposed to lose their tempers easily, but rather be patient and restrained, and avoid scandal by behaving in an exemplary way. Despite the fact that their social standing was no better-paid than a manual labourer, (Cf. Diocletian *Edictum De Pretiis Rerum Venalium*, apud León Lázaro, 2013, p. 478), they received gifts every year or free grain and some of them achieved success as a result of their renowned lessons, even to the point of becoming rich, such as Quintilian or Pollio.

Through epigrams and satire we can reconstruct how they were regarded by their peers. In one of his satires, Juvenal (*Sat.* VII, p. 140 ff.) alludes to the high standards that parents required these teachers to have in order to take care of their

sons. In a clearly ironic tone, he refers to the fees they received for entertaining their students rather than teaching them: *You're asking me to pay? Forget it! Well, what have I learned?...* Their wages were modest, specially those of pedagogues and grammarians. After fixing the wages that they would receive for their lessons, which were in any case lower than those for music classes or pantomime performances, teachers of rhetoric were paid up to five gold coins a year, though they often had to endure haggling and non-payment, which could lead to claims being brought to court.

Herodas (1981, 41-47), a Hellenistic writer in the second century BC, dedicated one of his dialogues to the epitome of a schoolteacher, Lamprisco, who had several kinds of whip to flog the boys with. In the house of Julia Felix in Pompeii, a fresco has been preserved which depicts a schoolteacher hitting a boy with sticks while two of his classmates restrain him and the others watch. Horace (*Epist.*, II, 1, 70) also claims that his teacher was in the habit of beating him when he was a child, and therefore it is no surprise that Quintilian declared that the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus did not disapprove of beating students and that it was a widespread habit among pedagogues and teachers.

In Quintilian's opinion, however, although it may seem surprising in the context of ancient times and is in keeping with a more modern and educational way of thinking, these methods are not appropriate for free men, let alone for correcting occasional mistakes or ingrained habits (Quintilian, *Inst.* I, 3, p. 14 ff.).

Once the young student had acquired basic knowledge in the family, in most cases he would be sent to school, where he would go through three stages, each with a different teacher. Elementary education began at the age of seven. The school was called *ludus litterarius* and it was run by the *magister* and other teachers, such as the *litterator* or the *calculator*, who were in charge of teaching the pupils to read and write, and do simple arithmetic.

When the boys reached eleven years, they moved on to depend on the *grammaticus* for more in-depth study of the use of language, the science of speaking without making grammatical mistakes, and poetry analysis (Quintilian, *Inst.* I, 4, 2). The method and grammatical content were the same for both the Greek and Latin languages. As in primary school, the possibility existed of hiring a preceptor who would teach classes in the home or of sending the boy to one of the state schools which had become widespread following the adaptation of the Greek education system.

Being linguistically accurate, that is, having a command of grammar, without succumbing to solecisms or barbarisms, is a *sine qua non* condition in using a language correctly, which the Romans called *puritas*, or the purity of the language. Following this, they moved on to the virtues of eloquence expounded by the teachers of rhetoric (*perspicuitas, ornatus, aptum*). Mastery of the language, reading and writing correctly at all stages of secondary and higher education, has proved to be one of the most important aspects of the educational process and it should be em-

phasised in schools, both in ancient times and in the present.

The teachers dictated texts that the students had to read, say aloud and learn by heart, at least partially. The study of Latin and Greek grammar was conducted through the use of specific passages from Greek and Latin literature which the students had to perform in front of their classmates. Once they had read the text flawlessly, they had to analyse it, evaluate it and consider whether it made suitable use of letters, syllables, morphology of words and their meaning, as well as the different points of grammar and parts of speech. Afterwards, the focus shifted to studying history and geography in more depth and developing their knowledge of mathematics and music, that is, the subjects that later became part of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* in the Middle Ages.

Both grammar and rhetoric are arts of expression, the former is used to speak and write correctly and idiomatically, while rhetoric, responsible for creating a form containing beauty, is taught as a technique in speaking well and elegantly. The origin of these reflections on grammar and the study of the rules of how language functions can be found in the school of Philology in Alexandria, founded by Demetrius of Phalerum, a disciple and student of the teachings of Aristotle and Theophrastus. The significant contribution of this school is traditionally summarised in two major areas: the stabilisation and edition of classical texts, such as that undertaken by Aristarchus of Samothrace with Homer's works, and philological commentary on

texts, with Aristophanes of Byzantium as a clear exponent.

Studying the language used by literary authors acted as a paradigm in the construction of a standard Greek language. Once the texts had been stabilised and commented upon, it was then possible to choose the canon of authors that would be used as the educational framework in the classes imparted by the *grammaticus*. This school is generally credited with creating the Alexandrian literary canon which would later hold such importance in the Roman education system, through the teaching of rules and imitating the classical models.

The choice of canonical authors to be taught in schools was a transcendental decision in terms of the subsequent history of literature and for the education of literary tastes, and this depended a great deal on the grammar teachers. They acted as literary critics who determined the quality of the works and authors to be studied, imitated and, therefore, copied and preserved in libraries for posterity. Among the Greek authors who were most widely read and studied was Homer; among the Romans were Livius Andronicus and Ennius, the fathers of Latin literature. The other authors are those whose success and fame have survived to the present day: Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Sallust, Livy, Cicero, Seneca, etc. (Quintilian, *Inst.* X, 1, 104).

The grammar schools helped to consolidate knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages in an already bilingual society (Cf. Bravo Bosch, 2011). The language

and literature of Greece represented the cultural paradigm which indicated refined knowledge and excellent taste, and this led Latin to imitate it. The same concern was reflected in the education system. Quintilian preferred children to begin by studying the Greek language, since primary education taught the Greek disciplines, but immediately afterwards this would be followed by the Latin language and knowledge related to it, so that the two languages would complement each other.

Finally, the third period involved the school of the *rhetor* which was attended by students who wished to improve their education until they were roughly twenty years old.

5. The teachings of the rhetor

In the organisation of the Roman education system the *rhetor* was the teacher of eloquence. In his school, the more ambitious students prepared for a life in the public sphere by studying the classical texts, especially those written in prose, and the difficult art of speaking, based on the study of the technical methods defined by rhetoric, as well as practice and exercises. The *rhetor* taught different rhetorical figures: commonplaces, the use of encomium or vituperation, comparisons and paraphrases, and the development of a thesis.

Both Cicero and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* frequently emphasise the importance of oratory exercises and practice, “as only those who have, through long practice, acquired a broad knowledge of vocabulary and ways to express ideas, will

be able to discuss them with the elegance and dignity that their nature requires” (Cicero, *De inv.* II, 15, 50). The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* also repeats the same idea in several places: “I simply wish to remind you, first of all, of a very important point: theory without continuous practice is worth little; you will understand, therefore, that the study of these precepts should be applied through practice” (*Rhet ad Her.* 1,1,1).

The study and development of the rules are meaningless without oratory practice. All active learning which involves the student in any field of knowledge requires supervised practice. The teacher’s corrections and comments stimulate and support the teaching of the art of rhetoric. This is Quintilian’s recommendation (I,1, 33; I, 8, 1) on how to practice the first steps in relation to reading texts. The development of knowledge, learning and, ultimately, education, does not end when an adolescent ends his time at school, but rather should be put into practice throughout his life.

Studying the rules and exercising rhetoric, however, does not consist in knowledge that is exclusively pragmatic, aimed solely at standing out in public life. In the proem to his work (*Inst.* I, 9ss), Quintilian highlights the need for the orator to be honest and to develop the great virtues of justice, fortitude, prudence or temperance, which represented the moral and social ideals of the Roman aristocracy. Philosophy and rhetoric are intertwined, in such a way that wisdom and eloquence should be regarded as synonyms and for this reason manuals on rhetoric describe

them in detail, as does Cicero when he speaks about argumentation in the deliberative genre (*De inventione*, II, 53, 159).

As a profession, being a teacher of rhetoric had a higher social status than that of *grammaticus* or *litterator*, because it principally concerned the sons of aristocrats who were preparing to enter the public arena. The first schools of rhetoric opened in the second century BC, a date which can be inferred from the expulsion decrees mentioned earlier. These schools displaced the ancient Roman tradition of a student learning from a young age by visiting the Roman forum in the company of his father or a renowned lawyer.

The appearance of the schools of rhetoric caused a major upheaval in Roman society, as the doctrine they taught there clashed with more conservative educational ideals. For Crassus (Cicero, *De orat.* 3, 93), the importance of practice over training seemed unprincipled and he felt it was an excuse to undermine Roman traditions and become rich at the expense of wealthy families with a thirst for power. The fact is that just a few years afterwards, the oratory practice which had evolved in the schools of rhetoric became popular and it spread among the more ambitious young men.

In his work, Cicero (*Brut.*, 312ss) sketches a fantastic portrait of a young man’s educational journey at the beginning of the first century BC, and describes his own concerns and experience under the teachers and tutors of rhetoric to whom he turned to complete his education: after acquiring two years’ experience in defending lawsuits in

Rome, he spent a further two years on honing his skills and joined the school of Philosophy in Antioch and the school of rhetoric in Athens run by Demetrius the Syrian (Plutarch, *Cic.*, 3, 5). In Asia, he focused on listening to the most prestigious orators, principally Menippus, Dionysius of Magnesia, Aeschylus of Cnidus or Xenocles, people whose names we now scarcely recognise. Finally, he went to Rhodes to spend more time with those teachers he had met and listened to in Rome and who had praised his oratory skills so highly: Molon and Poseidonius (Plutarch, *Cic.*, 4, 5).

Seneca the Elder also had connections to the schools of rhetoric during his early education, and he was so inspired by the atmosphere there that he did not hesitate in returning to the school with his sons (Seneca, *Con.*, X, Praef., 2 y 9) or writing, at the end of his life, on the declaimers whom he had most appreciated (Seneca, *Con.*, I, Praef., 4).

Following the death of Cicero, Latin rhetoric began to decline at the same time as forensic oratory began to lose its effectiveness. This produced a rupture between education in rhetoric and the practice of oratory, with the latter being limited to the school environment and becoming separate from political decision-making, up to the point of being reduced to a simple treatise on eloquence. With the advent of the Principate, the schools of rhetoric were restricted to fulfilling the social function of training jurists and senior government officials, especially in the field of law (Quintilian, *Inst.*, 12. 1, 13). The schools took over the role that the forum had pre-

viously occupied and provided training in the skill of eloquence by way of student exercises in composition and recitation, a tradition that has been preserved with the name of progymnasmata.

Declamation, originally, consisted of an academic exercise which was performed under the rhetor's supervision in the school of rhetoric. The students had to practise argumentation using simple speeches on fictitious subjects, and declamatory exercises arose from this as a way to prepare the future speeches, whether deliberative or judicial, which would determine the course of the Republic in the courts or in political assemblies, mainly in the Senate. Therefore, declamation was divided into two strands, *suasoriae* and *controversiae*.

The *suasoriae* were the first stage (and the most straightforward) which the student had to master before moving on to the *controversiae*. They consisted in monologues in which the student had to argue for or against a case in order to convince a certain mythological or historical figure, to justify his actions or to even to put himself in this figure's place and deliberate on the proposed conflict. Among the subjects preserved in Seneca's *suasories*, we find Cicero's dilemma on whether to beg Anthony to spare his life or his works; the Spartans' decision whether to stay at Thermopylae or flee; the expediency of Alexander entering Babylon or sailing the ocean; or the necessity of Agamemnon sacrificing Iphigenia on the coast at Aulis.

In turn, the controversies form part of the exercises relating to judicial oratory in

which a debate was held between two students who defended opposing theses. The subject would be related to one of the laws that the teachers had previously explained to the students, then a situation would be outlined, which was usually extreme, fictitious and complicated, and finally one student had to write a speech defending a position and another wrote a speech attacking it. It was made clear that the aim was not to express one's own opinion but rather to find arguments to present the relevant case to suit each occasion, regardless of the truth. The preservation of this type of rhetorical exercise in the Graeco-Roman tradition has been as a result of the work by Theon of Alexandria and Hermogenes in the second century AD, by Aphthonius in the fourth century, and by Nicholas of Myra in the fifth century AD.

6. The final references to pedagogy in the empire

The assimilation of Hellenic culture reached a height in Rome in the final stage of the empire. This synthesis, in which Christianity began to be increasingly present, both socially and culturally, as well as politically, represents the beginning of the Middle Ages and the definitive establishment of Western culture. It was a period of intense institutional bureaucratisation, which would also have an influence on the education system.

In Rome, education underwent major changes during the administrative reforms introduced by the Flavians at the end of the first century AD. Under the auspices of Hellenistic culture and after the resur-

gence of the Second Sophistic, municipal schools flourished, privileges were granted to teachers and specific professorial chairs were created with high annual salaries, such as that held by Quintilian.

Schools continued to exist and there was also an increase in the number of students able to attend and learn there, and as a result, the number of schools and teachers grew. Hadrian (117-138) suppressed the military training of students and teachers with the aim of training officials to take charge of public administration. Schools became one of the fundamental focal points in the spread of Romanisation throughout the empire, but particularly in the regions farthest away from the metropolis or in the recently conquered areas, through the education of the local elites. During the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161), privileges were granted to the teachers in charge of education exempting them from paying certain municipal taxes.

In the fourth century, Constantine (306-337) was to set a new course for the empire. In part, he would continue Diocletian's reforms and insist on using his predecessors' methods to foster and reinforce the figure of teachers but this would be based on the prevailing new Christian ideology and Greek cultural roots.

Throughout this period, Greek retained its intellectual and cultural superiority, not only in pagan settings but also within Christianity with a rich liturgy and notable apologists, such as Origen, Saint Basil or Saint John Chrysostom. In this ideological battle between Christianity and paganism, the figure of Julian the Apostate (361-363)

stands out. He prohibited Christians from becoming teachers in the schools of rhetoric and their right of admission was limited (*Cod. Ilust.* 10, 52, 7). There were other attempts to reinstate the pagan traditions, such as the controversy involving Symmachus and Saint Ambrose towards the end of the fourth century, which denotes a certain estrangement from the Roman high aristocracy in Byzantium and from Greek cultural hegemony.

Ultimately, the liberal arts lost their pro-paedeutic nature with regard to the development of philosophy and they became the basis of medieval education, first of all in the state-funded schools and later in monastic training (Curtius, 1995). A good example of the integrative synthesis between ancient culture and Christianity can be found in the figure of the Venerable Bede, an English monk from the eighth century, who devoted himself to historical research and teaching. (Cf. Fernández, 2011). From this time on, Latin literature focused on the evolution of rhetoric in epistles written in prose, with new models appearing in the work of Macrobius, Symmachus himself and Sidonius Apollinaris, who all became part of the new medieval literary paradigm. (Curtius, 1995).

7. Conclusions

A review of the main documentary sources from Antiquity provides a historical approach to the subject of Roman education from its beginnings. Our objective has been to describe how young people were educated in early times, the influence of the arrival of the Greek model, the disputes about this assimilation and its conse-

quences on the development of education in Ancient Rome, what a school day was like, who education was intended for, some of the characteristics of students and the different levels in the educational structure.

The first conclusion that can be drawn is that the ancient educational model, to which we are indebted from a historical and cultural viewpoint, can serve as a first point of comparison with the features of current pedagogy. In this way, by analysing the origin and historical development of the teaching methods and educational models used by the Greeks and Romans, we can discover our cultural heritage and observe the persistence of some of their main characteristics in contemporary society

History continues to be *magistra vitae*, for better and for worse, and together with the virtues of the ancient schools, the legacy also includes the problems and bad habits of education, such as the matter of insufficient pay for teachers and limited access to higher education, difficulties which are yet to be resolved.

The specific characteristics of teaching in Roman schools, in imitation of the Greek model, determined the appearance and progression of the different teaching figures involved in the education of young Romans, beginning with the Greek tutor and passing through the *litterator*, the *grammaticus* and the *rhetor*, as well as the teaching imparted at each educational level.

Another of the most significant features that characterise education in Roman schools

from the very beginning, is the participation in the public sphere of those involved, that is, the political consequences of education. In effect, the teaching of rhetoric to young Romans was the most usual way for students to participate in public life as key players in their society's political activity.

The method of assimilating knowledge was based on the practice achieved through some of the exercises that the *rhetor* supervised, such as the suasories, controversies and progymnasmata. In addition to the evolution of the contents of the programme taught in schools, owing to their Greek origin, political changes affected Roman education drastically, both in its beginnings with the expulsion of the Greek philosophers, and among its epigones with the spread of Christianity or the founding of Constantinople.

During the third period, school rhetoric became completely detached from the public sphere, which was influenced by the need to train public officials, and due to the fact that in the ruling political system, the empire, dissidence and freedom of expression were prohibited. The lack of political freedom prevented freedom of expression, which was necessary for the development of rhetoric and for real education in citizen participation. Christianity would eventually become an influence on the way teachers were selected and the way pagan literature was taught.

Finally, the importance of rhetoric in contemporary education should be noted. If a programme were to be implemented which could train students in the mastery of their own language and in the perfection of com-

municative resources to express their ideas and discuss current issues properly, issues which exist in the political and cultural arena, no doubt rhetoric would serve to create citizens that were more educated, more active and conscious of the political decisions existing in their society, more human, in the sense of instigating a new humanism: a humanism that is technological but also open to dialogue, original and intelligent.

Notes

¹ Translation into Spanish by Juan M. Guzmán Hermida and Óscar Martínez García, in Plutarco, *Vidas paralelas IV*, Madrid, Gredos 2017, p. 96.

² Other ancient testimonies are usually cited: C. Tac., *Dial.*, 28, 4; Liv., 6, 25; 8-9; Plut., *Rom.*, 6; *Ibid.*, *Num.*, 3; *Ibid.*, *Publ.*, 2, 1; *Ibid.*, *Galb.*, 1, 7-9; *Ibid.*, *Cor.*, 27, 1.

³ Cf. Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana, instructional guides from the third century AD used to teach Latin to Greek speakers. For more information on these manuals, consult «L'apprentissage du grec et du latin dans l'Empire romain d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Universitaire de Montpellier» by Michel Gayraud in *Académie des Sciences et Lettres de Montpellier*, 2010, pp. 35-44.

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