Cicero's Rhetoric of Philosophical Political Engagement in the Preface of *De Re Publica*

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Recent discussion of Ciceronian constitutionalism has focused on Cicero's efforts to revive the governing structure of the mixed regime as a solution to the crisis of the late Republic, neglecting the moral and philosophical aspect of his envisioned reform of Rome's ruling class and his rhetorical strategies for advancing it. In De Re Publica, Cicero endorses the traditional republican regime, but in the preface of Book 5 he laments its disappearance due to the loss of the men who formerly defended it: since these men were themselves formed by a constitution now lost, how can such men, and the constitution, be restored? Limiting myself to the preface of the first book, I argue that Cicero strives to bring back the right kind of men in three ways: he disproves Epicurean quietism as self-defeating, shames decent men into embracing the risks of engaging in politics on behalf of the traditional regime by casting them as Epicureans, and encourages the ambitious to engage in politics from motives drawn from philosophy with the aim of moderating the potentially destructive passion for glory. In importing these novel motives from Greek philosophy, Cicero makes use of a brilliant rhetorical strategy of ethos, initially casting himself as contemptuous of philosophy; he also disguises their philosophical provenance by attributing them to Roman tradition. The cumulative effect of these arguments is the establishment of the secret rule of wisdom and a new role for republican rhetoric in the context of the philosophic dialogue.

> "That man of outstanding intelligence and erudition, Plato, thought that states would at long last be happy only at such time as either learned and wise men began to rule them or if those who ruled were to concentrate all their efforts on learning and wisdom."[5] – Cicero, *Letters to Quintus* 1.29

Recent discussion of Ciceronian constitutionalism has focused on Cicero's efforts to revive the governing structure of the mixed regime as a solution to the crisis of the late Republic,[6] overlooking the moral and philosophical aspect of his envisioned reform of Rome's ruling

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[5] *Atque ille quidem princeps ingeni et doctrinae Plato tum denique fore beatas res publicas putavit si aut docti ac sapientes homines eas regere coepissent aut ii qui regerent omne suum studium in doctrina et sapientia collocarent* (Latin text taken from *Cicero: Letters to Quintus and Brutus, Letter to Octavian, Invectives, Handbook of Electioneering*, tr. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002)). Cicero has nearly translated Plato *Letter* 7.326b verbatim; cf. Plato *Republic* 5.473d. Translations in this paper are my own, except where otherwise noted.

[6] See most notably Benjamin Straumann, *Crisis and Constitutionalism: Roman Political Thought from the Fall of the Republic to the Age of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) and Jed W. Atkins, *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason: The* Republic *and* Laws (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

class and his rhetorical strategies for advancing it. In *De Re Publica*, Cicero endorses the traditional republican regime in the first two books, but in the preface of Book 5, he eventually acknowledges its disappearance in his own time due to the loss of the kind of men who formerly defended it:

> 'The Roman state rests on the mores and men of old'... But our own era, after it had inherited the republic like a remarkable picture that was nevertheless starting to fade with old age, has not only neglected to restore it using the same colors as before, but has not even taken care to do the bare minimum of preserving its outline and surface brushstrokes, so to speak. For what remains of the ancient mores on which he [the poet Ennius] said the Roman state rested? We see that they are so outdated and forgotten that they are not only not cultivated but are no longer even known. Again, what shall I say about the men? For the mores themselves have perished through the dearth of men. (*Rep.* 5.1)[7]

Since the men with republican mores were themselves formed by a republican constitution now lost, how can such men of such mores, and with these the constitution, be restored? Shedding light on this question is one of Cicero's chief aims in writing *De Re Publica*. It has long been recognized that one of Cicero's main themes in this unsatisfyingly fragmentary work is the figure of the ideal statesman, who comes up in several extant passages.[8] Moreover, in a private letter to his brother, Cicero himself describes the work as "a dialogue ... on the best constitution and the best citizen" (*sermo ... de optimo statu civitatis et optimo cive*, *Letters to Quintus* 3.5.1). But Cicero is not interested in merely giving a theoretical description of the kind of man he would like to see in the Republic; we should also expect to find the great orator employing his rhetorical skills to convince his reading audience to embrace his ideal of statesmanship. If the right kind of man has been lost, it stands to reason that Cicero's reading audience must consist largely of the wrong kind of

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[7] *Nostra vero aetas, cum rem publicam sicut picturam accepisset egregiam sed iam evanescentem vetustate, non modo eam coloribus eisdem quibus fuerat renovare neglexit, sed ne id quidem curavit ut formam saltem eius et extrema tamquam lineamenta servaret. Quid enim manet ex antiquis moribus, quibus ille dixit rem stare Romanam? quos ita oblivione obsoletos videmus, ut non modo non colantur, sed iam ignorentur. Nam de viris quid dicam? mores enim ipsi interierunt virorum penuria.* Quotations of the Latin text of Cicero's *De Re Publica* (hereafter *Rep.*) in this article are taken from Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Re Publica; De Legibus; Cato Maior De Senectute; Laelius De Amicitia*, ed. Jonathan G. F. Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); likewise, citations of book and paragraph numbers from *Rep.* follow the numbering in Powell.

[8] In *Rep.*, Cicero at times calls this ideal statesman the *prudens* (2.67) and at others the *rector* (5.4) or *moderator rei publicae* (5.2; cf. 1.45). On the Book 5 fragments treating the *rector/moderator*, see James E. G. Zetzel, *The Lost Republic: Cicero's* De Oratore *and* De Re Publica (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). The bibliography on the *rector* is vast: see Powell, "The rector rei publicae of Cicero's *De Republica*," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 13 (1994): 19–29 and Jonathan Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman in Theory and Practice* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

man, who need to be turned in the right direction. And yet scholarship has neglected the motives Cicero presents for statesmanship in the work, which vary in accordance with the different types of men addressed, nor has it investigated his rhetorical strategies for encouraging readers to engage in politics in accordance with his model of an ideal statesman who is also a philosopher.[9]

Limiting myself to the preface of the first book, I will argue that Cicero strives to bring back the right kind of men for republican government in three ways. First, he disproves Epicurean quietism as self-defeating. Simultaneously, his critique of Epicurean political abstention serves to shame decent men into embracing the risks of engaging in politics on behalf of the traditional regime, as Cicero holds out traditional Roman motives for serving the state. Finally, Cicero encourages ambitious men to engage in politics from motives drawn from philosophy with the aim of moderating the potentially destructive passion for glory. In importing these novel motives from Greek philosophy, Cicero makes use of a brilliant rhetorical strategy of ethos, initially casting himself as contemptuous of philosophy; he also disguises their philosophical provenance by attributing them to Roman tradition.

I. TARGETS OF CICERO'S ANTI-EPICUREAN DIATRIBE IN THE PREFACE OF BOOK 1

A) EPICUREANS WHO REJECT BOTH POLITICS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

In general, Cicero's apology for participation in public life in the preface of Book 1 is directed only on a superficial level at Roman Epicureans who had completely withdrawn from politics. The paucity of this type among Cicero's contemporaries obviates the need for him to dedicate his remarks in the preface, let alone the work as a whole, to the primary purpose of persuading a few apolitical Epicureans to embrace public life. The only people in this category attested by the historical record are Cicero's friend Atticus and his literary contemporary Lucretius; perhaps Catullus could be added as an intellectual lacking political ambition (though not necessarily an Epicurean). Doubtless there were others, who have

[9] On the duty of this statesman to continuously pursue learning and engage in philosophic contemplation, see *Rep.* 2.69, 3.5, and the "Dream of Scipio" (e.g. 6.24 and 6.33); see also Scipio's praise of the philosophic life at *Rep.* 1.26–29 (see L. Perelli, "L'Elogio della vita filosofica in de re publica, I, 26–29," *Bollettino di studi latini* 7 (1971): 389–401). Powell, "Second Thoughts on the Dream of Scipio," *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 9 (1996): 13–27 and Wilfried Stroh, *Cicero: Redner, Staatsmann, Philosoph* (München: C.H. Beck, 2008), 63 suggest that the *rector* is the Roman republican version of Plato's philosopher king; Walter Nicgorski, *Cicero's Skepticism and His Recovery of Political Philosophy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 205–43 delineates Cicero's ideal of "the Socratic statesman."

remained in obscurity due to their very withdrawal. In any case, a politically withdrawn mode of life was foreign not only to the Roman ethos in general, but also to Roman Epicureanism in the late Republic, as we know of a number of elites who identified with Epicureanism, such as Piso and Cassius.[10]

Besides, Cicero's arrogantly dismissive tone and slandering of Epicurean doctrine are hardly designed to be persuasive to the mind of an Epicurean philosopher thinking through the matter. To Epicurean withdrawal, Cicero opposes the example of Cato Maior, who "preferred to be tossed about in these tempestuous waves into ripe old age rather than to live very pleasantly in that tranquility and leisure" (1.4) so eagerly sought by the Epicureans. But in framing this contrast as a choice between duty and self-indulgence, Cicero provides an extremely ungenerous characterization of the philosophic life of Epicureans. He portrays this life not as dedication to the life of the mind or even the pleasures of the mind, but simply as a desire "to live very pleasantly" (*iucundissime vivere*, 1.4) and a surrender to the "enticements of pleasure and leisure" (*blandimenta voluptatis otiique*, 1.1). By implying that Epicureans are lazy and live only for sensual enjoyments, he is hardly engaged in a good-will attempt to understand Epicurean philosophic ideals on their own terms (as by contrast he

[10] Following the groundbreaking work of Arnaldo Momigliano's "Review of Benjamin Farrington: Science and Politics in the Ancient World," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 31 (1941): 149–57, recent scholarship has demonstrated how common it was for Roman Epicureans to participate in politics in the late Republic and beyond: see esp. Catherine J. Castner, *Prosopography of Roman Epicureans from the Second Century B.C. to the Second Century A.D.* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988); Miriam Griffin, "Philosophers, Politics, and Politicians at Rome," *Philosophia Togata I: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*, eds. Griffin and Jonathan Barnes (New York: Clarendon Press, 1989) 1–37; "Piso, Cicero, and Their Audience," in *Cicéron et Philodème: la polémique en philosophie*, eds. Clara Auvray-Assayas and Daniel Delattre (Paris: Editions Rue d'Ulm, 2001), 85–100; David Sedley, "Philosophical allegiance in the Greco-Roman World," in *Philosophia Togata I*, 97–119; Yasmina Benferhat, *Cives Epicurei: Les épicuriens et l'idée de monarchie à Rome et en Italie de Sylla à Octave* (Bruxelles: Collection Latomus v. 292, 2005); Geert Roskam, *Live Unnoticed (Lathe Biosas): On the Vicissitudes of an Epicurean Doctrine* (Boston, MA and Leiden: Brill, 2007); Jeffrey Fish, "Not all politicians are Sisyphus: what Roman Epicureans were taught about politics," in *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*, eds. Fish and Kirk R. Sanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72–104. However, on *Rep.* as an extended response to the philosophical views and way of life advocated by Lucretius in *De rerum natura*, see Emanuela Andreoni, "Sul contrasto ideologico fra il *De re publica* di Cicerone e il poema di Lucrezio (la genesi della società civile)," in *Studi di poesia latina in onore di Antonio Traglia* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 1979), 1:281–321. On Cicero's anti-Epicureanism in the prefaces of *Rep.* and the "Dream of Scipio," see J. Fontaine, "Le Songe de Scipion premier Anti-Lucrèce?" in *Mélanges de archéologie e d'histoire offerts à André Piganiol*, ed. Raymond Chevalier, 3 vols. (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1974), 3:1711–29); T. Maslowski, "The Chronology of Cicero's Anti-Epicureanism," *Eos* 62 (1974): 56–65; K. Büchner, *M. Tullius Cicero, De re publica: Kommentar* (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 1984); Cicero, *De Re Publica: Selections*, ed. Zetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) passim; Powell, *Laelius, On Friendship and The Dream of Scipio* (Warminster: Liverpool University Press, 1990); Zetzel, "*De Re Publica* and *De Rerum Natura*," in *Style and Tradition: Studies in Honor of Wendell Clausen*, eds. Peter Knox and Clive Foss (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1998), 237–44, Matthew Fox, *Cicero's Philosophy of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 105–6, Walter Englert, "Epicurean Philosophy in Cicero's De Republica: Serious Threat or Convenient Foil?" *Etica & Politica* 16, no. 2 (2014): 253–66.

may be seen to do in *De Finibus* 1–2) and to show them where they err. Cicero's overall attitude toward Epicureans in this preface is one of contemptuous dismissal. As I shall argue in section B below, Cicero's general tendency in this preface not to engage with Epicurean ideas seriously or even to name them suggests that his attack on *voluptas* and *otium* are also intended for another, larger group who have nothing to do with philosophy of any kind, for whom sensuality and idleness have become chief pursuits instead of dedication to the Republic.[11]

However, despite the invective tone that pervades the preface of Book 1 as a whole, one passage in particular gives evidence of an attempt to convince Epicureans of the folly of their views on rational grounds. Here Cicero seems especially concerned to draw the minority of contemporary Epicureans who are actually abstaining from public life to the study of politics as a first step in the direction of political participation. Cicero confronts the Epicurean argument that the wise man will only engage in politics when compelled (*coegerit*) by a "crisis," a concept he clearly indicates by the hendiadys *tempus et necessitas* (1.10). But is this argument Epicurean? Some scholars have seen in this passage an attack not on Epicurean withdrawal, but on Socrates's argument in Plato's *Republic* that the philosopher will only return to the Cave of political life when compelled by a necessity (*anagke*).[12] However, it is clear that the notion of engaging only in a crisis has an Epicurean rather than Platonic tenor, for several reasons. First, while in Plato's *Republic* Socrates speaks of the need for some as yet undetermined form of compulsion or persuasive argument (7.520–521a),[13] the emphasis in Cicero is on dire political circumstances that compel participation. The initial occurrence of *tempus* (or Greek *kairos*) in the hendiadys underlines this sense, and when Cicero refers to this idea a bit later he speaks only of *tempora* by which the

[11] Similarly, Zetzel, "*De Re Publica* and *De Rerum Natura*," 244, argues that "Epicurean attitudes, while useful as a focus of attack, were so absurd that their falseness could simply be assumed." He suggests that attacking Epicureanism was a foil providing Cicero the opportunity to present his own political ideals, especially in contrast to philosophers in general who believe the contemplative life is superior to the active life (237–38, 241–44). In fact, philosophers in general have often been assumed to be Cicero's target: see R. W. Sharples, "Cicero's Republic and Greek Political Theory," *Polis* 5, no. 2 (1986): 32–33, Zetzel, *De Re Publica: Selections*, and Norbert Blössner, *Cicero gegen die Philosophie: Eine Analyse von De re publica 1.1-3.* Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, no. 3. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 212–13, whose suggestion that Cicero viewed non-participating philosophers as the greatest threat to the Republic is quite an exaggeration.

[12] See Atkins, *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason*, 35, who, having stated that the attack concerns Epicureans (28), suggests that the attitude condemned resembles the philosophers in Plato's *Republic* who will only rule out of necessity (citing Plato *Rep.* 520c in 35n66).

[13] Cf. 7.539e–540b6 and 1.346e–347d.

philosopher would be compelled (*temporibus cogeretur*, 1.11).[14] Secondly, Cicero has already linked the notion of participation under necessity to the Epicureans by using similar language when he described how *those* people (*isti*) thought Cato the Elder a madman (*demens*) for engaging in politics "although no necessity compelled him" (*cum cogeret eum necessitas nulla*) and he could have enjoyed "a most pleasant life of tranquility and leisure" (*in illa tranquillitate atque otio iucundissime vivere*, 1.1). Third, Seneca tells us that Epicurus said "the wise man will not enter public life, except if something comes up" (*non accedet ad rem publicam sapiens, nisi si quid intervenerit*, *De Otio* 3.2).[15]

Furthermore, in Plato's *Republic*, even in the case of the philosophers who will have to be "compelled" to return to the Cave, they will have already gained prior political experience in Socrates's program (7.539e2–540a4), but as Cicero proceeds with his argument, we see that philosophers in this context are criticized precisely on the grounds that they lack prior experience, and would thus be of no use to the state in a crisis. Cicero argues that participation in a crisis logically requires the prior pursuit of a political career, or at least political philosophy. An Epicurean who waits for a crisis to begin concerning himself with politics will neither be in a position to render aid without having previously gained some status in the state through a political career, nor sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced to deal effectively with a crisis even if suddenly offered political power. He illustrates the first part of this claim with rhetorical questions that refer to the example of his own career: could any greater emergency (*necessitas*) ever occur than the Catilinarian conspiracy that arose during his consulship? And how could he have helped the state if not for his status as consul, itself dependent on his previous pursuit of a political career? (1.10). Cicero's own plan of life (*vitae cursus*, 1.10) shows that political ambition is necessary for the benefit of the community, since it leads to the acquisition of political experience and, in a regime with a democratic element such as Rome's, to the possibility of gaining positions in which one can be of service to the state. The second part of his response catches Epicureans in a self-contradiction: they claim that knowledge of political affairs belongs only to those who have experience of them, yet they also put themselves forward as qualified to engage in politics in

[14] When Cicero critiques Plato by name in *De Officiis* 1.28 for "thinking that they [philosophers] will engage in politics only if compelled to do so" (*eos ne ad rempublicam quidem accessuros putat nisi coactos*), Cicero makes no mention of a crisis (*tempus* or *tempus et necessitas*) but only of indeterminate compulsion (*coactos*).

[15] Both Cicero in *Off.* 1.28 and Seneca quoting Epicurus in *De Otio* 3.2 use the phrase *accedere ad rem publicam*, but Cicero pantomiming Plato has *nisi coactos* while Seneca's Epicurus says *nisi si quid intervenerit*.

a moment of crisis (1.11). The inevitable conclusion to be drawn, Cicero suggests, is the need of the philosopher to prepare himself for political service in the most crucial times by means of prior political experience in less turbulent circumstances (1.11).

In making the case that the philosopher needs political experience, Cicero is arguably inspired by Plato, as his response to Epicurean political indifference in matters of both theory and practice implicitly calls for a return to the study of political philosophy initiated by Plato and Socrates, the ultimate founder of the Greek philosophic schools (cf. *Rep.* 3.5). Plato's political philosophy in the *Republic* deals not only with the question of the best form of government but also with the question of the two lives, and explores the idea of the philosopher turned politician. Cicero could be seen as using Plato's *Republic* to correct Epicurus, since Socrates argued in the *Republic* that while it would indeed be desirable for philosophers to rule, his Guardian-philosophers should be required after their initial youthful education in philosophy to gain practical experience through involvement in administrative and military affairs from the age of thirty-five to fifty (7.539e2–540a4)[16] before the completion of their philosophic education and subsequent government of the entire city (7.540a4–b6). Admittedly, Roman readers not intimately familiar with Plato's writings, probably the vast majority, would not see Cicero pitting Plato against Epicurus in this context, naturally assuming from Cicero's emphasis on his own life that he is contrasting his own Roman practical-mindedness with Epicurean flights of theoretical fancy. But well-read Roman Epicureans very well could have recognized the implicit contrast between Epicurus's political teaching and Plato's reflections on philosophy and politics in his own *Republic*. Moreover, it is often assumed that Plato was hostile to the notion of pursuing a political career and that Cicero singles out Plato for criticism in this context, but in addition to the evidence against this assertion from the *Republic* itself, we should also consider the fact that Plato's students were very much active in politics.[17] In contrast to Epicurus, Plato understood

[16] "'After this you'll have to take them back down in to that cave again, and they'll have to take up military posts and other positions of command suitable for the young (καὶ ἀναγκαστέοι | ἄρχειν τά τε περὶ τὸν πόλεμον καὶ ὅσαι νέων ἀρχαί) in order not to fall behind the rest in experience (ἐμπειρίᾳ)…' 'How long a time do you set for this?' he asked. 'Fifteen years,' I said" (Plato, *Republic*, trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1:197). For this point, see also Sedley, "Philosophical allegiance in the Greco-Roman World," 271.

[17] See Glenn R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of the* Laws (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 7–9.

that the philosopher would need practical experience to rule well, and he clearly held political life in high esteem.

Thus Cicero may be seen selectively drawing from Platonic philosophy such notions as he deems useful and applicable to the contemporary Roman situation. In this case, Cicero adopts the idea that a philosopher will be in a position to benefit the state as ruler only if, in addition to his superior philosophical outlook, he has also acquired some degree of political experience prior to assuming the highest positions in the state. While in Plato's *Republic* this idea was found in the context of a discussion about an imaginary city whose ultimate realization was portrayed as a near impossibility, in Cicero's *Republic* it is considered as applicable to the real world of the Roman republic. And so as the author of the preface of the first book, Cicero adopts the same practice as his character Scipio of embracing an idealized form of the real (cf. *Rep.* 2.21–22, 2.52).

Cicero's correction of the Epicureans by means of Plato is most pronounced, however, in the preface's invitation to the study of political philosophy. Cicero offers Epicureans an opportunity to become political even while still at leisure—they can begin seeking theoretical knowledge of political affairs as an important object of study prior to gaining the additional desideratum of practical experience: "I would think that the wise man should be especially careful not to neglect this science of political affairs, since he ought to prepare all things, since he cannot know whether he will at some point need to use them" (1.11).[18] Cicero follows up this exhortation based on logical considerations with an appeal to the authority of other philosophers:

> If there are any who are moved by the authority (*auctoritate*) of philosophers, let them pay attention for a while and heed those whose authority (*auctoritas*) and glory among learned men are the greatest. In my view, even though some did not themselves administer the state (*rem publicam*), nevertheless, since they inquired and wrote a great deal about the state (*de re publica*), they have discharged a certain duty to the state (*rei publicae*) (*Rep.* 1.12).[19]

[18] *Arbitrarer hanc rerum civilium minime neglegendam scientiam sapienti, propterea quod omnia essent ei praeparanda, quibus nesciret an aliquando uti necesse esset.*

[19] *At tamen si qui sunt qui philosophorum auctoritate moveantur, dent operam parumper atque audiant eos quorum summa est auctoritas apud doctissimos homines et gloria; quos ego existimo, etiam si qui ipsi rem publicam non gesserint, tamen, quoniam de re publica multa quaesierint et scripserint, functos esse aliquo rei publicae munere.*

Through repetition of the terms *auctoritas* (twice) and *res publica* (thrice) in close proximity, Cicero builds up the prestige of political philosophers at the same time as he forges a strong connection between philosophy and politics in the mind of the Epicurean reader. In addition, Cicero subtly mingles his own authority with the authoritative example of these philosophers to promote the validity of political philosophy with the emphatic *ego existimo* which fronts the thought.

In these words, Cicero also implies to his learned Epicurean audience that the authoritative example of Plato among philosophers ought to lead them to reevaluate the place of politics in their studies. After all, what better description than the preceding could there be of Plato himself, who apart from attempts to serve as a philosophic adviser to Dionysius and Dion (on the testimony of the *Letters*), generally avoided participation in public life while nevertheless frequently thinking, writing, and teaching about politics? Admittedly, Cicero's use of the plural *eos* encourages the reader to think of multiple individuals, and commentators have suggested that Aristotle could also be placed in this category, and perhaps even Zeno the Stoic, who also wrote a *Republic*.[20] On the other hand, the chief inspiration for the present work and its title is evidently Plato and his immortal *Republic*, not the Stoic Zeno or even Aristotle with his *Politics* or, among his exoteric works, the dialogue *On Justice*. Above all, Cicero proposes Plato, who was disengaged from political activity but active as a political thinker, as an authoritative Greek model for the imitation of philhellenic Roman Epicureans indifferent to the science of politics (*rerum civilium ... scientia*, 1.11).

Another important implication of Cicero's argument to the Epicureans about political philosophy is that he allows for a second-best form of political engagement, and in this regard Cicero presents himself to the Epicureans as a model for imitation. This concession was also a necessary part of Cicero's *apologia* for his policy at the time of generally avoiding politics in preference for leisure,[21] an answer to potential detractors who might decry him as a

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[20] In the catalog of his philosophic works at *Div* 2.3, Cicero himself suggests that he has Plato and the Peripatetics in mind in this passage, describing the subject of *Rep.* as follows: "a large topic, and a part of philosophy given a very rich treatment by Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and the whole Peripatetic household" (*magnus locus, philosophiaeque proprius a Platone, Aristotele, Theophrasto totaque Peripateticorum familia tractatus uberrime*). Note that while the rhetorical emphasis of the passage seems to be on the Peripatetics, Plato nevertheless holds the first place.

[21] For Cicero's general avoidance of politics and public controversy at this time, see *Letters to Quintus* 3.5.4–5 (Oct. or Nov. 54 BC): "I really am drawing myself away from every political burden and am dedicating myself to literature ... and in sum, as you advise, I am completely turning to leisure and tranquility" (*abduco equidem me ab omni rei publicae*

hypocrite for condemning Epicurean withdrawal while seeming to practice it himself. Cicero answers this charge in various ways throughout the work and simultaneously makes himself a model of modified political engagement, both in the preface and through his character and chief interlocutor Scipio. The first part of the answer occurs in the preface's argument for political philosophy, where we have seen him distinguish between two forms of civic responsibility: *ad rem publicam adire* and *aliquis rei publicae munus* (1.12).[22] At the end of the preface, it becomes obvious that Cicero is now chiefly practicing the latter form of engagement when he claims that his past experience in the former type should make him an authority as a political writer: "Since in my own case I have ended up attaining something worthy of being remembered in administering the state, and a certain ability for explaining the rationale of political affairs, I have turned out to be an authority not only because of experience but also by dint of enthusiasm for learning and teaching" (1.13).[23] Given the stranglehold on the state by the triumvirs Caesar, Pompey and Crassus at the time (54 BC), it is by writing on political affairs that Cicero himself engages in a second-best form of public service.[24]

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cura dedoque litteris ... et in omni summa, ut mones, valde me ad otium pacemque converto). It was earlier in this same letter (3.5.1) that Cicero described his ongoing work on *De Re Publica*.

[22] Cicero also calls political philosophy a *munus* at 1.11 (cf. *rationes civitatis... id munus*), and uses the designation *rem publicam gerere* for active politics (1.11).

[23] *Quoniam nobis contigit ut idem et in gerenda re publica aliquid essemus memoria dignum consecuti, et in explicandis rationibus rerum civilium quandam facultatem, <evenit ut> non modo usu sed etiam studio discendi et docendi essemus auctores*. In this way Cicero rivals Plato and Aristotle, striving to outperform them by adding to the pursuit of political theory both the accomplishment of something significant as a statesman and the knowledge acquired by this practice, which in turn allow for a superior political theory; cf. Laelius' comments on Scipio's procedure at *Rep*. 2.21–22. See E. Asmis, "The Politician as Public Servant in Cicero's *De Re Publica*," in *Cicéron et Philodème*, 110–11, on Cicero's desire to improve upon his Greek predecessors as a political theorist. William H.F. Altman, *The Revival of Platonism in Cicero's Late Philosophy: Platonis Aemulus and the Invention of Cicero* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 1–3, commenting on Quintilian's claim that Cicero was *Platonis aemulus*, points to Cicero's embrace of active politics as his chief manner of rivalling Plato.

[24] Later on, in a letter written to Varro during his second period of forced leisure, Cicero was to establish this same rationale even more expressly for himself and his philosophic friends, adducing the authoritative practice of ancient Greek political theorists (*doctissimi veteres*; cf. *Rep*. 1.12, *quorum summa est auctoritas apud doctissimos homines*): "Only let this be fixed: to live together in our pursuits, from which before we sought only pleasure, but now also safety; not to fail, if someone wants to summon us, not only as architects, but also as builders for building up the republic, and rather, to respond to the summons with swiftness and joy; if no one should make use of our labor, nonetheless both to read and write "Republics" and, if less so in the senate house and the forum, then in letters and books, as the most learned of the ancients did, to devote ourselves to the republic and to explore questions about customs and laws" [*modo nobis stet illud, una vivere in studiis nostris, a quibus antea delectationem modo petebamus, nunc vero etiam salutem; non deesse si quis adhibere volet, non modo ut architectos verum etiam ut fabros, ad aedificandam rem publicam, et potius libenter accurrere; si nemo utetur opera, tamen et scribere et legere πολιτείας et, si minus in curia atque in foro, at in litteris et libris, ut* **doctissimi veteres** *fecerunt, navare rem publicam et de moribus ac legibus quaerere*.] (*Fam*. 9.2.5, trans. Yelena Baraz, *A Written Republic: Cicero's Philosophical Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

B) PLEASURE-SEEKERS OR "EPICURES"

Given how few politically withdrawn men there were in Cicero's day even among the Epicureans, Cicero's attack on Epicureanism raises the suspicion that he has another target in mind. Epicurean quietists were a very small portion of his reading audience in comparison with contemporary Romans who were holding back from courageous action on behalf of republican government out of fear or self-interest rather than philosophic principle, but whom it would not be diplomatic to name directly.[25] By means of a phony war of words against Epicurean philosophers, Cicero tries to get these men to look at themselves in the mirror and see themselves as Epicureans, to see themselves in the people being condemned, thus tactfully avoiding naming them directly. This strategy also plays to their anti-philosophic prejudices, and accounts in large part for Cicero's polemical case for the inferiority of the philosopher to the politician in the preface of a philosophic work. Since these men are not particularly inclined to the intellectual life—they are not among "those moved by the authority of philosophers" (1.12)—Cicero seeks to move them to political action through appeals to the traditional Roman cultural code, principally Roman manliness—the original and traditional meaning of *virtus*—and generous patriotism framed as the fulfillment of duty toward one's country.

1) APPEALS TO ROMAN *VIRTUS*

Cicero shames this audience by implicitly imputing cowardice to them and recalling them to the courage shown by the *maiores*. We are missing the first part of the preface as it has come down to us, but when it picks up we find Cicero enumerating brave military feats by great Romans of the past followed by the domestic political activity of Cato Maior amidst the storms of domestic politics (1.1). In describing Cato's rejection of private ease for public life, Cicero draws a contrast between the pursuit of one's own health and that of the republic. Cato could have "enjoyed himself in leisure at Tusculum, a health-giving (*salubri*) place

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2012), 84). For commentary on this passage, see Baraz, 84–86 and Leah Kronenberg, *Allegories of Farming from Greece and Rome: Philosophical Satire in Xenophon, Varro, and Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 89.

[25] In taking on this audience, Cicero repeats one of his strategies from the speech *Pro Sestio* given in 56 BC: see esp. sections 23 and 138. The existence of such men can be divined from that same speech (delivered just two years before Cicero began composing *De Re Publica*) in which he lamented that "the good are for some reason more slow to act, and having neglected the beginnings of developments are ultimately stirred to action at the last moment by dint of necessity itself" (*Sest.* 100).

nearby,"[26] but instead he decided to follow the way of "countless *viros,*" "each of whom proved to be a cause of this community's well-being (*saluti*)" (1.1). Note the use of the gendered *viros* (cognate with *virtus*) as opposed to mere *homines* to describe these manly Romans who pursued public life.[27] Those who criticize Cato as a madman are designated with the nicely indeterminate *isti*, usually thought to indicate Epicureans or philosophers in general who prefer the contemplative to the active life. Indeed, *isti* does refer to both these groups, but the relatively small number of such individuals in late Republican Rome suggests Cicero may be using these easy targets to speak to others as well. In particular, the example of Cato's avoidance of his villa at Tusculum stands out for its resonance with Cicero's frequent complaint in the letters to Atticus from the early 50s about the "fish-pond hatchers" who avoid political conflict in the senate by retreating to their villas, probably including aristocratic *optimates* such as Lucullus and Hortensius; Lucullus is even known to have had such a villa at Tusculum itself. Cicero may also have such aristocrats in mind when he exhorts the reader not to listen to those who sound the trumpet to retreat, but to "hold fast to the course that has always been followed by every excellent man" (*teneamus eum cursum qui semper fuit optimi cuiusque*) (1.3). Although *optimus quisque* seems to refer to the aristocratic class that traditionally gave the state its leaders, Cicero intends to expand the group designated by this term to include "new men" of the equestrian class, in accordance with Cato's example and his own.[28] For when introducing Cato, Cicero describes him as (1.1) "a new man, and unknown (by whom all of us who are intent on the same matters are led, as by an exemplar, to hard work and manliness)."[29]

The imagined objection that political involvement will lead to suffering creates the image of a reader who has withdrawn from politics due to a lack of manly courage. Once again, the identity of the critics who supposedly advance this objection is deliberately left vague; they are simply "those who argue the contrary" of what Cicero has said up to this point (1.4).[30] This indeterminacy allows Cicero to address any reader with similar thoughts, whether this

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[26] *licuit Tusculi se in otio delectare, salubri et propinquo loco.*

[27] *innumberabiles viros, quorum singuli saluti civitati huic fuerunt.*

[28] Cf. *Sest.* 136: "And you, young men … together with [the nobles], I exhort you, who can obtain nobility by your character and virtue, to pursue the way of life (*ratio*) in which many *new men* have prospered with both honor and glory."

[29] *homini ignoto et novo (quo omnes qui eisdem rebus studemus quasi exemplari ad industriam virtutemque ducimur).* For a study of the concept of *virtus*, see Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness:* Virtus *and the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[30] *qui contra disputant.*

reader is inclined to philosophy or not. This particular critic is said to argue against participation in public life because of its labors and risks to one's personal safety. The mere formulation of these objections, so contrary to the ideal of manly courage that was part and parcel of the *mos maiorum*, is meant to cast shame on whoever might agree with them, and Cicero adds to the humiliating effect by interrupting to point out the cowardice inherent in such thoughts even as he formulates them:

> Reasons opposed by those who argue the contrary are first, the labors which must be undergone in defending the state—a light burden, of course, for anyone responsible and hard-working, and which ought to be despised not only in such great political matters as these but also in ordinary pursuits or duties or even business affairs; to this the dangers to one's life are added, and a base fear of death is opposed by these people to brave men—to whom it normally appears a more miserable thing to waste away in the natural course of old age than to be given an occasion to give up their life for their fatherland, as opposed to giving it up to nature, which they would have had to do anyway (*Rep.* 1.4).[31]

The validity of these objections is undermined by the commentary Cicero embeds within the passage, establishing political engagement as the responsibly hard-working (*vigilanti et industrio*), courageous (*fortibus*), manly (*viris*), patriotic (*pro patria potissimum reddere*), and magnanimous (*vitam quae tamen esset reddenda naturae*) thing to do. A contrast is drawn with the envisioned reader, whose hesitation over labor or danger is depicted as the mark of an indolent, cowardly, effeminate, self-absorbed, and petty-minded person. Most of these contrasting characteristics are implicit, but one of them, cowardice, is expressly stated when Cicero refers to "a base fear" (*turpis formido*) of death. The choice of *formido* for "fear" (rather than *timor* or *metus*) also forms a nice contrast with *fortibus viris* ("brave men") which follows.[32]

[31] *His rationibus tam certis tamque illustribus opponuntur ab eis qui contra disputant, primum labores qui sint re publica defendenda sustinendi—leve sane impedimentum vigilanti et industrio, neque id solum in tantis rebus sed etiam in mediocribus vel studiis vel officiis vel vero etiam negotiis contemnendum; adiunguntur pericula vitae, turpisque ab his formido mortis fortibus viris opponitur: quibus magis id miserum videri solet, natura se consumi et senectute, quam sibi dari tempus ut possint eam vitam quae tamen esset reddenda naturae, pro patria potissimum reddere.*

[32] Cf. *Tusc.* 4.19, where Cicero relates Stoic distinctions between different kinds of fear: "they define ... '*formido*' as a lasting fear" (*definiunt... formidinem metum permanentem*). Cicero's dismissal of the fear of death repeats an idea from the *Pro Sestio*, that the brave man, realizing that everyone is destined to die eventually, considers it more miserable to endure old age than to give his life bravely for his country (*Sest.* 47).

2) APPEALS TO ROMAN *PIETAS*

In addition to the tactic of shaming the non-participating, non-philosophic Roman reader for lacking the manliness displayed by his ancestors, Cicero also exhorts this reader to public service by appealing to his sense of *pietas*. He calls for imitation of the *mos maiorum* and advances the view that political involvement is a duty owed in justice to the *patria*. One way he appeals to Roman tradition is by adducing the example of previous Roman statesmen.[33] For instance, when the extant portion of the preface to the first book begins, we find Cicero accumulating the names of those who served Rome by fighting against Carthage (1.1). Cicero clarifies the lesson to be derived from their example in the exhortation "let us hold to the course which has always been followed by every excellent man (*optimi cuiusque*)" (1.3).

A second aspect of Cicero's appeal to the non-philosophic reader's sense of *pietas* consists in arguments that encourage this reader's feelings of patriotism. Cicero suggests that we owe public service as a form of repayment to the *patria* in exchange for its having given us birth and education (1.8). Cicero engages in an extended metaphor: the *patria* is personified as a father who, having begotten his children, educated them, and provided them with peace and safety, is owed support in return (*alimenta*). The argument relies on unspoken assumptions about the obligation of children to care for their parents in old age. This sense of *pietas* toward one's parents, particularly one's father, was especially strong in Roman culture. Furthermore, since an inclination to love one's parents is something natural and pre-rational—we love our parents simply because they are ours—portraying Rome as a parent has the effect of stirring up natural feelings of love simply because Rome is the reader's home country.[34]

II. DRAWING ROMAN POLITICIANS TO PHILOSOPHIC STATESMANSHIP

But the majority of arguments for political engagement in the preface of *De Re Publica* give the impression of being addressed to elites already engaged in politics and intent on gaining distinction, or, among the very young, those intent on the same purpose. The primary purpose of the preface and of *De Re Publica* more generally thus emerges as the encouragement not of mere political engagement—a notion that requires no justification to

[33] On Cicero's use of the *maiores* as *exempla* more generally, see Henriette van der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models: The Political Strategy of a Newcomer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 61–148.

[34] Similar appeals to *pietas* toward one's ancestors and the fatherland are found in the "Dream of Scipio."

the majority of his contemporary readers—but of a particular form of public involvement characterized by individual moral restraint in the pursuit of the public good.

It is by promoting philosophy that Cicero aims to create a morally reformed ruling class. This promotion of philosophy has two sides. One aspect is the promotion of contemplative pursuits in general, encouraging readers to study philosophy in their leisure time in tandem with public life, a project Cicero takes up in the body of the work itself.[35] The other aspect is already evident in the preface of the first book, and consists in Cicero's promotion of specific ethical doctrines drawn from Greek philosophy on the basis of which he encourages the reader to engage in politics. Cicero thus strives to imbue the reader with higher motives for participating in politics that are meant to supplement and ultimately replace traditional Roman motives such as the pursuit of glory, manliness, and patriotism.

What I particularly wish to bring to light is just how subtle Cicero's rhetorical strategy is. He achieves his aims incrementally, and without pursuing them too openly lest he lose the sympathy of this segment of his audience. Indeed, his rhetoric proves a classic example of *ars celans artem*. Scholars have been misled by Cicero's pose of hostility toward philosophy in the preface of *De Re Publica*.[36] Doubtless, Cicero does not call for full-time dedication to philosophy, which is to remain an occupation of leisure, and yet his goal is to bring statesmen to pursue public life for ethical motives derived from philosophy, and ultimately to embrace philosophic pursuits as an essential complement to their public activity. At the time he was writing from 54–51 BC, with the Roman Republic at the mercy of a developing rivalry between Caesar and Pompey and hurtling toward civil war, the moderating influence of the

[35] Cf. 5n.

[36] Many have claimed that Cicero argues for a complete rejection of philosophy in favor of politics: see E. de Saint-Denis, "La théorie cicéronienne de la participation aux affaires publiques," *Revue de philologie* 12 (1938): 193–215; Olof Gigon, *Die antike Philosophie als Massstab und Realität* (München: Artemis-Verlag, 1977), 275–315; Büchner, *M. Tullius Cicero*, 79–94, 265–77; Blössner, *Cicero gegen die Philosophie*; Fox, *Cicero's Philosophy of History*, 105–10; Silvia Gastaldi, "Vita politica e vita philosophica nei proemi del De republica di Cicerone," *Etica & Politica* 16, no. 2 (2014): 379–94. For a more balanced position that argues Cicero seeks to unite political and philosophic life and to justify the proper place of each, see Eckart Schütrumpf, "Cicero's View on the Merits of a Practical Life in De republica 1: What is Missing? A Comparison with Plato and Aristotle," *Etica & Politica* 17, no. 2 (2014): 395–411; A. Grilli, *I proemi del De re publica di Cicerone* (Brescia: Paideia editrice, 1971); C. Lévy, "Philosophical Life versus Political Life: An Impossible Choice for Cicero?" in *Cicero's Practical Philosophy*, ed. Nicgorski (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press), 58–78; Atkins, *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason*, 27–31; Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman*, 31–34.

philosophic life and of moral philosophy on political ambition had never been more needful for Rome.[37]

A) DEVALUING PHILOSOPHY: A RHETORICAL STRATEGY OF ETHOS

In addition to the goals I have already described in Cicero's attack on Epicureans and epicures in the preface, this attack serves a parallel but different rhetorical purpose in its address to the class of readers I am now considering, namely Romans prejudiced against philosophy. To gain this reader's good will, Cicero begins with a rhetorical strategy of ethos, intentionally giving the impression of being hostile to philosophy himself. In a general comparison of the value of philosophy and statesmanship, he repeatedly suggests that the former is inferior (*Rep.* 1.2–3, 10–11). But this is in fact a *captatio benevolentiae* to put the majority of his reading audience at ease. In her analysis of the cultural context in which Cicero embarked on a more comprehensive philosophic project in the 40s BC, Yelena Baraz has shown that a significant portion of Roman readers found philosophy objectionable as a pursuit.[38] Baraz analyzed the prefaces of the 40s for Cicero's strategies for winning over his readers to the validity of philosophy as a pursuit. Cicero has to deal the same problem in the preface of his first philosophic work; but unlike the prefaces of the 40s, where this concern is more openly acknowledged,[39] in *De Re Publica* Cicero's first step in promoting philosophy is to seem to attack it.

[37] On this effect of the philosophic life, see *Rep.* 1.16–29. In *A Written Republic*, Baraz treats Cicero's justification of philosophic activity in the philosophic works of the 40s BC, and she posits a fundamental difference in attitude toward philosophy in the works of the 50s BC, suggesting that in *De Re Publica* and other works written in the 50s BC, Cicero took the position that philosophy was of "limited utility" (17). Likewise, Perelli, *Il pensiero politico di Cicerone: tra filosofia greca e ideologia aristocratica romana* (Florence: Bibliotheca di cultura 170, 1990), argues that Cicero allows no serious place for the influence of philosophy on the Roman regime, since Cicero was simply seeking to restore the aristocratic republican regime of Scipio's time (though Perelli sees an exception to this attitude in the preface of Book 3). By contrast, Zetzel, *Cicero: On the Commonwealth and On the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xi, suggests the rationale for my approach: "Cicero's project in the 50s [was] an attempt ... to provide a more rigorous philosophical model for Roman public behavior and institutions than had previously existed." Thus in the 50s BC, Cicero embarked on a project to improve Roman politics through philosophy that he would eventually pursue on a larger scale in the 40s.

[38] Baraz discusses the widespread prejudice against philosophy in Rome at 3–4 and 13–22. Cf. Griffin, "Philosophers, Politics, and Politicians at Rome," 18–22; I. Gildenhard, *Paideia Romana: Cicero's* Tusculan Disputations. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Vol. 30.* (Cambridge: The Cambridge Philological Society, 2007), 7-83, and Atkins, *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason*, 29–31.

[39] See the prefaces of *Fin.* 1 and *Tusc.* 2. A longer rebuttal of philosophy's detractors was apparently to be found in the *Hortensius* (cf. *Tusc.* 2.4).

Cicero adopts a pose of hostility to philosophy in order to give the impression that this work will maintain a thoroughly traditional, Roman focus on political and pragmatic issues. For example, as we have seen, Cicero uses his typical anti-Epicurean terminology to suggest that philosophy is a self-indulgent, private activity that neglects public duties (*in illa tranquillitate atque otio iucundissime vivere*, 1.1). But as I have argued, this passage can also be seen, and is indeed used, as a criticism of withdrawal from politics for any number of reasons, without necessarily referring to philosophy. So Cicero proceeds to make a more obvious criticism of philosophers as such, suggesting that their conversations about virtue lack practical effectiveness in comparison with the action of the politician. "Those people" merely "make noise" about virtue in their corners (*isti in angulis personant*, 1.2), while statesmen lead citizens to the practice of virtue by establishing an educational regimen, customs, and laws (1.2). Cicero has slightly adapted a line from Plato's *Gorgias* uttered by Callicles (485d),[40] who gives perhaps the single greatest indictment of philosophy in the Western tradition prior to Nietzsche. Adopting the persona of the notoriously anti-Socratic and hard-headed Callicles serves to strengthen Cicero's strategy of ethos, increasing the Roman reader's confidence that Cicero shares typical Roman concerns about the uselessness of philosophy. At the same time, Cicero's allusion to Callicles might signal to readers favorable to philosophy that he is not being entirely honest about his own views. Sending a subtle message to fellow learned readers that he, the politically active Cicero, has read his Plato, would seem to undercut his supposed contempt for philosophy as something useless.

His argument for the superiority of statesmanship to philosophy starts from the premise that while other arts or skills are constituted by being known, virtue consists entirely in its being put into practice or "use" (1.2).[41] This premise is later echoed in similar language by Laelius, a character whom Cicero often uses to articulate the anti-philosophic prejudices of the sort of reader he wants to reach: "[Learning] the theoretical subjects which make us useful

[40] Zetzel, *Cicero: De Re Publica*, 99, notes a contrast: "whereas in Plato Callicles' philosopher is 'whispering' in the corner, C.'s opponents are here speaking loudly."
[41] "Although an art of which one makes no use can still be retained by one's very knowledge of it, virtue lies entirely in its use" (*Etsi ars quidem, cum ea non utare, scientia tamen ipsa teneri potest, virtus in usu sui tota posita est*, 1.2). Significantly, Cicero will go on to contradict this argument and suggest that virtue can indeed be known prior to being put into practice in the preface of Book 3. The argument is also implicit here in the preface of Book 1, though in a very subtle form.

to the city: I think that this is ... the greatest proof or duty of virtue" (1.33).[42] Cicero adds the example of the Academic Xenocrates, who in effect admitted that he was only able to lead a few people to virtue: "They say that even Xenocrates, a noble philosopher and among the best, when asked what his students were learning, answered 'to do of their own free will what they were compelled to do by the laws'" (1.3).[43] Cicero concludes that the statesman's superiority is manifest, given his ability to "compel everyone by the power of his office and by the threat of punishment held out by the laws to do what the philosophers by their words are scarcely able to persuade a few people to do" (1.3).[44] Cicero strengthens his persona as a traditionalist Roman who views philosophers with contempt by quoting from Ennius, the authoritative epic poet of Roman tradition: "For my part, just as I think that 'great and powerful cities,' as Ennius calls them, should be esteemed more than villages and forts, so in my view those who preside over these cities by their wisdom and authority ought to be counted as far superior in wisdom itself compared with those who lack experience of every public affair" (*Rep.* 1.3).[45]

In this comparison, Cicero is affecting contempt for philosophers, whom he likens to rural backwaters in comparison with grand cities, who stand for statesmen. Furthermore, based on the analogy, the implicit point of comparison between the two lives seems to be the amount of fame one can achieve. Since traditionalist Romans esteemed fame and glory as unquestionable markers of worth, Cicero cleverly works in this appeal to their prejudices as well. From an analogy that concerns size and fame, Cicero squeezes out the baseless conclusion that statesmen are wiser than philosophers. It is indeed plausible that statesmen are wiser in terms of the arts of governance, but not necessarily in every respect: experience in government does not presuppose or imply acquaintance with all other branches of

[42] *'[Discendas] eas artes quae efficiant ut usui civitati simus; id enim esse... maximumque virtutis vel documentum vel officium puto.'* A bit earlier than this remark, Laelius comes across as even more obviously Calliclean than the Ciceronian persona of the preface in positing a hard line of separation between philosophy as youthful education and politics as the occupation of a man: "As for those little arts of yours, if they have any value, it's that they sharpen somewhat and (if you will) stimulate the minds of boys, so that they can in turn learn greater matters more easily" [*istae quidem artes, si modo aliquid, valent ut paulum acuant et tamquam irritent ingenia puerorum, quo facilius possint maiora discere*.] (1.30; cf. Plato *Gorgias* 485cd).

[43] *Quin etiam Xenocratem ferunt, nobilem in primis philosophum, cum quaereretur ex eo quid adsequerentur eius discipuli, respondisse, 'ut id sua sponte facerent, quod cogerentur facere legibus.'*

[44] *Qui id cogit omnes imperio legumque poena quod vix paucis persaudere oratione philosophi possunt...*

[45] *Equidem quemadmodum 'urbes magnas et imperiosas', ut appellat Ennius, viculis et castellis praeferendas puto, sic eos qui his urbibus consilio atque auctoritate praesunt, eis qui omnis negoti publici expertes sint longe duco sapientia ipsa esse anteponendos.*

theoretical and practical knowledge. Cicero's claim only works if one unduly restricts the meaning of wisdom to experiential knowledge of government, as Cicero does here.

All these arguments assuredly do demonstrate the necessity of statesmanship and political life and the inadequacy of philosophy by itself to change the world, but that is not their primary purpose vis-à-vis Cicero's anti-philosophic readers, who need no persuading in this regard. The purpose they serve for this kind of reader is rather a certain reassurance that the author shares their prejudices. They are made to feel that the work they have begun to read entitled *De Re Publica* will not be a purely theoretical or "Greek" investigation into political questions. Indeed, Cicero's need to do this is all the greater if, in fact, as textual scholars generally hold, he had stated earlier in this same preface to the first book that he was "Plato's companion regarding the state" (Pliny *NH praef.* 22).[46] If this placement of the fragment is correct, Cicero would need to convince his anti-philosophic audience that this initial declaration of allegiance to Plato still leaves the author Cicero firmly in the Roman camp on the side of practical experience and political involvement by contrast with Plato and Socrates. The preface's elevation of politics and denigration of philosophy forms part of an exercise in persuasion by means of ethos: it contributes to Cicero's crafting of a persona that this portion of his audience would find sympathetic and likeable.[47]

The rhetorical employment of authorial ethos is even more evident in Cicero's portrayal of himself in the preface. He is careful to appear eminently political and interested in philosophy only inasmuch as it is centered on political questions. First, he calls attention to his identity as a prominent Roman statesman. He refers to his own consulship, exile, and

[46] The whole testimonium reads: *non Tulliana simplicitate, qui de re publica Platonis comitem se profitetur*. Esther Bréguet, *Cicéron: La République*, 2 vols (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1980), Fr. 1.3, K. Ziegler, *M. Tulli Ciceronis Scripta Quae Manserunt Omnia*, Fasc. 39, *De Re Publica* (Stuttgart: Bibliotheca Teubneriana, 1969), Fr. 1.1b, and M. Pohlenz, "Cicero De Re Publica als Kunstwerk," in *Festschrift R. Reitzenstein*, eds. E. Fraenkel and H. Fränkel (Leipzig and Berlin, 1931), 70-105, assign the fragment to the preface of *Rep.* 1. The most recent editor, Powell, *M. Tulli Ciceronis: De Re Publica, De Legibus, Cato Maior de Senectute, Laelius de Amicitia* (Oxford: Bibliotheca Oxoniensis, 2006), declines to take a position himself, simply listing the passage among the *Testimonia*, *Apud alios auctores*, 17 (see 369).
[47] In a similar way, Cicero will later present his alter-ego Scipio as initially denigrating the theoretical speculation of Greek philosophers who lacked the political experience of Romans (1.36). And yet it turns out that it is not such theoretical speculation that Scipio rejects, but rather the method used by the Greeks: Scipio states that Plato's abstract speculation did in fact illustrate the principles of political affairs. What Scipio professes to find faulty in Plato is his method of using an imaginary state to illustrate those principles; he will "cap" Plato by using the concrete example of a real state to illustrate the same principles. Thus Scipio actually reproduces the theoretical speculation of Plato regarding political matters, but by means of a different method. See Nicgorski, "Cicero's Focus: from the Best Regime to the Model Statesman," *Political Theory* 19, no. 2 (May 1991): 235–36, Atkins, "Cicero on the Relationship between Plato's Republic and Laws," 25–29, and Powell, "Cicero's Reading of Plato's Republic," 51-56, in *Ancient Approaches to Plato's Republic*, ed. Anne Sheppard (London: University of London, 2013).

return (1.6–7) and alludes to his illustrious accomplishments in general (1.13). Secondly, he is careful to fashion his authorship of the present work on a political subject as having the same moral value as engagement in politics. He sets forth the idea that those who have written about politics have also performed a useful service to the state (1.12). Cicero then presents himself as uniquely qualified to serve the state in this way due to the knowledge he has acquired through both theory and practice (1.13).[48] Cicero thus claims to excel other political writers inasmuch as his work will be informed by his own real-world political experience. Therefore, in crafting his persona as a writer, Cicero emphasizes his identity as a man of practical experience. This authorial persona, coupled with the reassuring criticisms of philosophers, helps Cicero win the traditionalist reader's confidence and trust. It also misleads this reader into thinking that the work is concerned exclusively with politics. It disarms him in the face of Cicero's insinuation of philosophy's value and of the value of specific philosophic doctrines.

B) PROMOTING—AND DISGUISING—MOTIVES DRAWN FROM THE STOICS AND PLATO

Even as he attacks philosophy as politically ineffective and gives the impression of being a Roman traditionalist, Cicero subtly promotes motives for political involvement derived from Greek philosophy. In this section, I will show that Cicero draws on Stoic ideas to assert that there is a natural human impulse to practice *virtus*, and that he also includes the Platonic motives of fulfilling a debt owed in justice to the country that gave us our education, and of engaging in politics in order to avoid the penalty of being ruled by bad men.[49] Cicero thus strives to transcend and replace traditional Roman motives for political involvement. The genius of Cicero's method lies first in the way he embeds these arguments in the context of an extended polemic against philosophers, and secondly, in the suggestive, and indeed deceptive, association of these motives with the *mos maiorum*. This strategy allows him to associate the authority of tradition with concepts that are derived from Greek thought and thus foreign to the Roman ethos.

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[48] Cf. 19n.

[49] Asmis, "The Politician as Public Servant in Cicero's *De Re Publica*," focuses on Cicero's opposition of Stoic to Epicurean ideals in the following passages. Certainly Cicero prefers Stoicism for its greater compatibility with Roman ideals of public service in general, but I am arguing that the more fundamental contrast at work is Cicero's opposition of Stoic and Platonic ideals to the traditional Roman aspiration of gaining *gloria* through *virtus*.

Cicero's general strategy for inculcating conviction in these philosophic ideas involves disguising the philosophic provenance of these very arguments by incorporating them into a highly rhetorical passage that reads more like invective oratory than a philosophic treatise.[50] He begins by making an argument that is loosely based on Stoic *oikeiosis* theory, according to which human beings have a natural social impulse. This impulse is manifested in the desire to care for others in ascending order, starting with one's own offspring and family relations, branching out toward fellow citizens, and ultimately extending to the whole human race.[51] In keeping with these Stoic ideas, Cicero grounds public service in man's natural inclinations and suggests that the great Roman statesmen of the past were impelled by nature to perform their services to the state rather than out of desire for prestige. Having named several such individuals from previous generations, he says he could name others from more recent times but will refrain from doing so lest he give anyone cause to complain that family members have been overlooked (1.1). This catalogue is concluded with the following authoritative assertion: "I lay down only this: that so great a necessity for virtue has been given to the human race by nature, and so great a love for defending the well-being of the community, that this force has overcome all the seductive charms of pleasure and ease" (*Rep.* 1.1).[52]

By placing this statement of principle at the end of a list of Roman statesmen, Cicero implies that the *maiores* were motivated to perform their services to Rome by a natural impulse. He appropriates their authoritative example and colors it with ethical motives derived from Stoicism. There is no mention of ambition for glory and fame, which surely were among the prime motives of so many public men.[53] While the content of *virtus* is still in line with the Roman ideal of courageously taking on the burden of public service for "the well-being of the community," this service has been sundered from its traditional motive. Instead, there is supposedly an overwhelming inclination to *virtus* and an *amor* for defending the state that arise from nature (*a natura*).

[50] On Cicero's view of the philosophic style as milder in tone than the contentiousness of public orations, see *Leg.* 1.11.
[51] Cicero places a more detailed account of this theory in the mouth of Cato in *De Finibus* 3.
[52] *Unum hoc definio: tantam esse necessitatem virtutis generi hominum a natura tantamque amorem ad communem salutem defendendam datum, ut ea vis omnia blandimenta voluptatis otique vicerit.*
[53] See Blössner, *Cicero gegen die Philosophie*, 232–36, for commentary on this passage. He contrasts the motive Cicero offers here, a natural *necessitas virtutis*, with the traditional glory motive Cicero openly espouses in *Pro Archia* 28–29, and with the argument based on a firm hope of immortality at *Tusc.* 1.32–33. There is of course to be found also in *Rep.* an argument for engagement based on immortality, especially in the Dream.

These inclinations and sentiments are therefore universal and not limited to Rome. Cicero proceeds to amplify these notions: "And since we are seized most of all by an enthusiasm to increase the resources of the human race, and to render human life safer and more prosperous by our prudent efforts—and we are stirred to this resolve by the goads of nature itself—let us hold fast to the course that has always been followed by every excellent man…" (*Rep.* 1.3).[54] This time, nature is practically personified as a driver holding the reins with which he urges an animal forward. Human beings are seized (*rapimur*) by an innate enthusiasm (*studemus*). With these expressions, Cicero argues for a natural human passion for serving the public. Cicero is evidently developing the earlier claim that nature has implanted in mankind an *amor* for public service. But significantly, the object of this passion is not one's own glory, but the advantage of one's fellow man. The advantage in question is specified as safety and prosperity, which are then expanded by their application to human beings in general (*generis humani … vitam hominum*). Scholars have suggested that Cicero is arguing here for Stoic cosmopolitanism, but this is debatable, since the purpose of the universalizing terms could simply be to establish the claim that the inclination to public service is natural and common to all human beings.[55] In any case, Cicero is promoting an altruistic ideal of public service based on Stoic ideas.[56] One should act for the benefit of others in accordance with nature's dictates, a principle that replaces the traditional Roman view of public service as a means to the private good of personal glory. While, as in the first passage, this replacement is disguised by the insinuation that Roman statesmen have traditionally acted on the basis of such altruistic motives, in the second passage quoted above, an artificial connection between Stoic ideas and the *mos maiorum* is forged by the concluding exhortation to imitate the examples of the past. This exhortation employs the traditional language of Roman politics to suggest that the state's aristocratic leaders (*optimus quisque*) have always (*semper*) adhered to the altruistic vision just described.

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[54] *et quoniam maxime rapimur ad opes augendas generis humani, studemusque nostris consiliis et laboribus tutiorem et opulentiorem vitam hominum reddere, et ad hanc voluntatem ipsius naturae stimulis incitamur, teneamus eum cursum qui semper fuit optimi cuiusque…*

[55] For studies of Cicero's cosmopolitanism, see Eric Brown, "Stoic Cosmopolitanism and the Political Life," PhD diss. (University of Chicago, 1997); Thomas Pangle, "Socratic cosmopolitanism: Cicero's critique and transformation of the Stoic ideal," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 2 (June 1998): 235-62; Asmis, "The Politician as Public Servant in Cicero's De Re Publica"; Melanie Subacus, "Duae Patriae: Cicero and Political Cosmopolitanism in Rome," PhD diss. (New York University, 2015).

[56] For this interpretation, see Asmis, "The Politician as Public Servant in Cicero's *De Re Publica*," passim.

Cicero's notion of public service as the fulfillment of a natural impulse to defend the community shines forth even more clearly in the contrast between this preface and his public speech *Pro Sestio* on the question of exile. To illustrate the principles just laid down in the preface of *De Re Publica* (i.e., a natural impulse to virtue and to love of the community), Cicero confronts an objection to public service that alleges the labors and anxieties that inevitably attach to it (1.4–6). Just as in *Pro Sestio*, Cicero here anticipates an objection based on the possibility of exile at the hands of an ungrateful citizenry, but whereas in that speech he was eager to promise the rewards of glory before one's contemporaries and with posterity, here at the outset of *Rep.* he tries to detach the reader from such motives and expectations. In a list of statesmen who suffered exile or rejection at the hands of an ungrateful citizenry, Themistocles and Opimius[57] again make their appearance, but he lists many more Romans than he did in *Pro Sestio*: "the exile of Camillus, or the unpopularity of Ahala, or the hatred against Nasica, or the expulsion of Laenas, or the condemnation of Opimius, or the flight of Metellus, or the most bitter fall of Gaius Marius" (1.6).[58]

Cicero thus readily admits, unlike in *Pro Sestio*, that when it comes to statesmanship, no good deed goes unpunished, and suggests that his readers should not expect glory and gratitude but rather public humiliation and rejection. Nor does he mitigate the suffering of these public figures by pointing out that they were eventually vindicated, whether during their own lifetime or with posterity.[59] While he does point out that he himself ultimately garnered glory from his exile and return and could console himself with the thought that good citizens appreciated his efforts (1.7), unlike in *Pro Sestio* he admits that this "happy ending" was in no way guaranteed,[60] and insists that he would have been satisfied even if things had turned out differently: "But even if, as I said before, it had turned out differently, how could I complain, since nothing happened to me that was unforeseen or more serious than I had

[57] For analysis of Cicero's use of Opimius as an exemplum in his corpus as a whole, see van der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models*, 208–13; on Themistocles and other Greek exiles, see 213–16.
[58] *Nam vel exilium Camilli, vel offensio commemoratur Ahalae, vel invidia Nasicae, vel expulsio Laenatis, vel Opimi damnatio, vel fuga Metelli, vel acerbissima Gai Mari clades...* Contrast the readiness to give Roman examples here with *Sest.* 140, where there is merely a compressed allusion to "other" republican statesmen (*ceteri*). The account in *Sest.* also lacks pathos: in *Rep.*, he calls attention to their ills.
[59] Contrast *Sest.* 140.
[60] In *Sest.* 50–52, Cicero argues that his recent exile should not deter anyone from courageously standing up for the Republic because his recall from that exile shows that republican statesmen can ultimately count on the support of the citizenry.

expected as a result of such great deeds as were mine?"[61] Rather, a sufficient reward for his service was the certainty that he had preserved the common safety: "[when] upon laying down my consulship I had sworn an oath in an assembly with the Roman people that the republic had been preserved, I easily compensated for the anxiety and trouble of all injustices endured" (1.7).[62] Developing this idea, Cicero insists: "I did not hesitate to place myself in the path of the most serious storms and almost of the thunderbolts themselves for the sake of preserving the citizens, and through my own dangers to provide a communal tranquility for the rest (*commune reliquis otium*)" (1.7).[63]

This idea of "the statesman's burden" for the sake of the public's *otium* is familiar from *Pro Sestio*, as commentators have noted.[64] But there is an important difference that should not be overlooked. In *De Re Publica*, Cicero is downplaying the chief motive for such endurance that he had held out in the speech: glory arising from recognition by one's grateful fellow citizens, whether contemporaneously, posthumously, or both. Thus, in *De Re Publica*, Cicero aims to show that public service should be naturally generous, and not mercenary. Faithful to his persuasive procedure thus far, he also enlists the great statesmen of the past in the service of his ideal. By capping a list of statesmen and their misfortunes with his own example, he subtly imputes to them his same motive of desiring to preserve the common safety. The *auctoritas* of the *maiores* and of Cicero himself (who like the *maiores* was doubtless moved by other motives besides natural love for others) is in this way marshalled to promote a more altruistic motive for political engagement derived from Stoic thinking.

Cicero also seeks to replace the glory motive with motives taken from Plato but not expressly attributed to him. The first such motive is the conviction that, as a matter of justice, we owe public service to our country as to the parent who gave us birth and raised us. The persuasiveness of this Platonic notion derives from its proximity to traditional Roman patriotism, from which it is nevertheless distinct:

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[61] *Sed si aliter, ut dixi, accidisset, qui possem queri, cum mihi nihil improvise, nec gravius quam expectavissem, pro tantis meis factis evenisset?*

[62] The beginning of this sentence is lost, but the basic sense has been plausibly reconstructed: *[* * * cum ... rem publicam ...] salvam esse consulatu abiens in contione populo Romano idem iurante iurassem, facile iniuriarum omnium compensarem curam et molestiam.*

[63] *non dubitaverim me gravissimis tempestatibus ac paene fulminibus ipsis obvium ferre, conservandorum civium gratia, meisque propriis periculis parere commune reliquis otium.*

[64] See Zetzel, *Cicero: De Re Publica*, 106, comparing *commune otium* with *Sest.* 138-39.

> For our fatherland has not begotten or educated us on the condition that it should not expect any repayment for support (so to speak) from us, and that it should only serve our comfort, and provide a safe refuge for our leisure and a tranquil place for rest; but rather on the condition that it should lay claim for itself, for its own utility, the majority of, and most capable parts of, our intelligence, talent, prudence; and that it should leave to us for our own private use only as much as it retains as a surplus (*Rep.* 1.8).[65]

In my discussion of appeals to Roman *pietas* above,[66] I noted that the metaphor of the fatherland as parent would naturally resonate with Roman cultural norms. But as commentators have observed, the notion of owing repayment to our country as to a parent who gave us our education also recalls an argument from Book 7 of Plato's *Republic*, as well as Plato's *Crito*.[67] In the *Republic*, Socrates says they will persuade their philosophically educated guardians that it is just for them to return to the Cave to rule because they owe their philosophic education to the city; in the *Crito*, Socrates imagines the laws of Athens chiding him for refusing to accept the verdict of the city that nourished and educated him. Although the Romans in Cicero's audience, unlike Plato's guardians, have presumably not received a philosophical education from their city, nevertheless they have been educated by Rome, whose protection created the conditions in which they could be brought up. There is, moreover, another Platonic intertext to this passage, from one of the letters to Archytas:

> But as to you, they reported that you think it a heavy trial not to be able to get free from the cares of public life.... But this also you must bear in mind, that none of us is born for himself alone; a part of our existence belongs to our country, a part to our parents, a part to our other friends, and a large part is given to the circumstances that command our lives. When our country calls us to public service it would, I think, be unnatural to refuse; especially since this means giving place to unworthy men, who enter public life for motives other than the best (Plato, *Letter* IX, 357e3–358b1).[68]

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[65] *Neque enim hac nos patria lege genuit aut educavit, ut nulla quasi alimenta exspectaret a nobis, ac tantummodo nostris ipsa commodis serviens tutum perfugium otio nostro suppeditaret et tranquillum ad quietem locum; sed ut plurimas et maximas nostri animi ingeni consili partes ipsa sibi ad utilitatem suam pigneraretur, tantumque nobis in nostrum privatum usum, quantum ipsi superesse posset, remitteret.*

[66] See section I. B 2 above.

[67] Plato *Rep.* 7.520b; see *Crito* 50a–52d, esp. 50d5–e7 and 51c6–d5, on one's nurture and education at the hands of the city. On the rareness of the word *alimenta*, see Zetzel, *Cicero: De Re Publica*, 106, who also claims that "Cicero's concept of duty to the fatherland is much more active than Plato's, *Cr.* 51c"; cf. Büchner, *M. Tullius Cicero*, 88.

[68] Translation by Morrow, "Letters," in *Plato: Complete Works*, eds. J.M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1634–76.

Cicero imitates the general notion that we have not been born to serve our own private interests alone.[69] In particular, Cicero's discussion of *partes* argues for an intertextual connection with Plato's *Letter* 9. Cicero has taken up Plato's assignation of "parts" of ourselves to different duties, though Cicero further specifies what Plato calls our "existence" according to our faculties (*nostri animi ingeni consili*). He also alters the Platonic passage by creating a binary opposition between the two objects toward which these faculties may be directed: private or public use. This rhetorical simplification serves the needs of the present argument before the present audience. He is at pains to bring about a change in basic orientation toward the public instead of a self-interested attitude that renders a person unwilling to serve if there is no glory to be gained. Further, by personifying the *patria* as a parent to whom one owes the obligation of providing sustenance in his or her old age, Cicero plays on Plato's assertion that it would be "unnatural" to refuse public service to our country. Indeed, there is good reason to think that Plato considered such refusal unnatural because our country is similar to our parents, since Plato places obligation to country first on his list, immediately before parents.

Furthermore, Cicero blends this philosophic argument about fulfilling a natural obligation to one's country with the argument that the safety of the community as a whole depends on the willingness of individual statesmen to disregard consideration of their personal safety, a point he previously made in *Pro Sestio*.[70] But in using a philosophic argument to bolster this vision of self-sacrifice for the common benefit, Cicero is choosing to emphasize a different motive than he had in the speech. While in *Pro Sestio* the chief motive he emphasized was "striving after the good opinion of good men" (139) and the related need to uphold one's own *dignitas* (23), in the present work, he places the accent on duty to one's country regardless of personal gain.[71] Cicero implies that it would be unjust to refuse to serve.

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[69] Zetzel, Cicero: *De Re Publica*, 106, commenting on this passage (*Rep*. 1.8), notes that "at *Off.* 1.22 C. cites Pl. *Epist.* 9.358a for the doctrine of our responsibility to country and fellowmen." But as I argue in what follows, Cicero, although he does not cite that Platonic letter directly here (1.8), seems to be engaging with it.

[70] Cf. *Sest.* 139: "But those who strive after the good opinion of good men, which alone can truly be called glory, ought to seek leisure and pleasures for others, not for themselves" (*qui autem bonam famam bonorum, quae sola vere gloria nominari potest, expetunt, aliis otium quaerere debent et voluptates, non sibi*). See also *Sest.* 99–100.

[71] *Sest.* does contain an appeal to one's basic obligation to one's country and fellow citizens, but even this appeal is coupled with the recompense of glory given by that country and those citizens, a theme pursued throughout the speech (138): "But my whole speech is addressed to ... those who think they have been born ... for their country, for their fellow citizens, for praise, for glory" (*sed mihi omnis oratio est ... cum iis, qui se patriae, qui suis civibus, qui laudi, qui gloriae ... natos arbitrantur*).

He aims to change the thinking of the otherwise politically ambitious in his audience who might be deterred from participation if they were to judge that glory before their peers and the people was no longer attainable. Cicero's teaching is that even without glory as a reward, there is still an obligation to serve the country. Retiring into one's own private concerns and enjoyments runs contrary to justice, which is an obligation stemming from our natural relationship with the country in which we have been born.

In a second major argument that draws on Plato in the preface, Cicero mingles Roman political vocabulary with Platonic ideals to promote engagement in politics, moved by what he implies are the most just of motives: to avoid the punishment of being ruled by bad men, and to protect the republic from them. He makes these points in direct response to arguments against engagement attributed to those who "make excuses for themselves to enjoy their leisure more easily" (1.9).[72] The vagueness of their identity suggests they are a foil for a point Cicero wants to make to some other unnamed audience. These people supposedly object that it is "not proper for a free man, while struggling against morally degraded and monstrous adversaries, to endure the blows of their verbal abuse or the painful expectation of injuries that are not to be endured by a wise man" (1.9).[73] The objector appears therefore to consider himself a free man and wise. *Sapiens* might denote a philosopher—Cicero's Epicurean bogeyman once again[74]—but in this context, it seems rather to signify a prudent person, someone with basic good sense who realizes it is foolish knowingly to expose oneself to the attacks of hateful and hate-filled people. This objector also holds that a person loses his freedom if he is constantly embroiled in political struggles; he seems to identify his *libertas* with the right to enjoy uninterrupted *otium*.

Cicero responds that such thinking is in fact not good sense. For through lack of involvement, one exposes oneself—and the whole state—to the mistreatment of the *improbi* that one thought he could avoid by remaining withdrawn: "Just as if for men who are good, brave, and endowed with magnanimity, there could be any more just reason for entering political life than not having to obey wicked men, and not allowing them to tear the republic

[72] *quae sumunt sibi ad excusationem quo facilius otio perfruantur.*
[73] *neque liberi [esse] cum impuris atque immanibus adversariis decertantem vel contumeliarum verbera subire vel exspectare sapienti non ferendas iniurias.*
[74] The reference cannot be to the Stoic *sapiens* because the Stoic ideal viewed politics as a duty (see e.g. *Fin.* 3.54 and *Tusc.* 5.70).

apart" (*Rep.* 1.9).[75] Cicero's answer indicates that political engagement is the sensible thing to do; it is also necessary to guard one's freedom, and that of others. The response also attributes the classic republican virtues of bravery and magnanimity to those who take action. The ambitious reader already considers himself free, sensible, manly, and magnanimous. So Cicero uses the foil and the response to flatter such a person. But he also identifies this person as one of the *boni*, who must act to defend himself and the state against the *improbi*. The argument thus suggests to the reader that brave men are on the side of the *boni*. This politically charged word denotes Cicero's allies in the fight for republican institutions, the opponents of the triumvirate and of the seditious tribunes who aid them. Cicero therefore plays on the reader's sense of himself to gain him as an ally for the republican cause. But he has also implicitly undermined the Roman honor motive by proposing two new considerations for the Roman elite to follow. As to the first consideration, Cicero has imported an argument about motivation for rule from Plato's *Republic*: "The good ... do not wish to serve for honor, for they are not ambitious. So they must have imposed on them in addition an obligation and a penalty.... But the most serious aspect of the penalty, if they are not themselves willing, is to be ruled by someone inferior" (1.347b–c).[76] To this reason, which is fairly self-interested, Cicero has added the just motive of defending the state from being harmed by others. The first reason, in the context of Plato's *Republic*, is conceived as an argument directed at good men who are "not ambitious." But the portion of Cicero's audience to which he chiefly directs these remarks is quite the opposite. Cicero speaks not just to a few philosophers in his audience disinclined to rule, but to a large body of men who see themselves as eminently practical, and are ambitious for public honors. These men are not in fact yet "good" because they lack the philosophical motivations to which he wants to lead them. Thus he tries to make men good by telling them what *boni* do: they engage not out of thirst for honors, but with a desire to prevent a fundamental disorder which is also contrary to their own interests, presumably to their own safety—the oppressive rule of evil over good. To this reason from Plato, Cicero adds the motive of acting in the interests of

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[75] *proinde quasi bonis et fortibus et magno animo praeditis ulla sit ad rem publicam adeundi causa iustior, quam ne pareant improbis, neve ab eis dilacerari rem publicam patiantur.*

[76] Cf. Plato *Letter* IX: "When our country calls us to public service it would, I think, be unnatural to refuse; especially since this means giving place to unworthy men, *who enter public life for motives other than the best*" (trans. Morrow, "Letters"; emphasis mine). Such refusal is unnatural apparently because it would be unnatural for the base to dominate the noble.

everyone else, the *res publica*. Furthermore, denoting such considerations as *iustior* suggests that the argument from earlier in the preface that one owes *alimenta* to the *patria* represents a lower form of justice. It is therefore truer to the nature of justice to act with the motive of preventing a fundamental disorder—the evil ruling the good—and in order to shield others from the harm the evil would otherwise be free to inflict. Cicero will gladly make use of many arguments to gain his end—any tool in a fight—but here is our first indication that the different motives offered may be ranked.

III. CONCLUSION

In fact, these two motives contain in germ the substance of two notions of justice that Cicero will further develop as the work proceeds: justice as the harmonious order obtaining between reason and the passions (Laelius's teaching in Book 3), and justice as defending others from harm regardless of the cost to oneself (Scipio's teaching in the Dream). In the body of the work, Cicero ultimately suggests that justice within the state is a sort of harmony among the different social orders modulated by the statesman.[77] The bridge from individual to political justice, therefore, is the philosophic statesman, the very figure whom we have seen him inspiring the reader to emulate in the preface, who (as the reader will eventually learn) combines these two notions of justice in his own life with the goal of producing exterior harmony in the state.

We have seen that in the preface of *De Re Publica*, Cicero embarks on the promotion of an ideal of philosophic statesmanship by assuming the persona of a conventional Roman politician that puts the majority of his readers at ease and makes them more receptive to the philosophic ideas subtly introduced. Cicero's method of gradually insinuating philosophically derived ethical motives for serving the state while rhetorically casting them as traditional Roman ideas suggests that his aim is ultimately to establish the secret rule of wisdom. Conventional Roman morality has been lost, but its rhetorical appeal still holds sway and is used to draw the reader without his even realizing it into a new philosophically grounded moral system for reviving republican politics.

[77] See 2.69 and 6.21; in the latter passage, the Sun as *dux et moderator* appears to be a thinly veiled symbol for the *rector* or *moderator rei publicae*.

This secret rule of wisdom is to be achieved, therefore, through Ciceronian rhetorical tactics that hold up the ideal of the philosophic statesman, represented in the body of the work by appealing figures from Roman tradition such as Scipio and Laelius, whom the reader is gradually invited to emulate. Ever striving through learning and philosophic contemplation to obtain the interior harmony of the subordination of the passions to reason, the statesman should by example and action promote that same harmony in the state. But unless Cicero can convince his fellow Romans to pursue politics at all, and to pursue it on the model just described despite ingrained prejudices against philosophic activity, that vision for political justice will remain nothing but a dream. Cicero's *De Re Publica* is not simply an argument in favor of republican government: it is a rhetorically charged call to action aimed at raising up a new class of philosophic men to revive the now-defunct Republic.

The rhetorical nature and purpose of this philosophical dialogue also suggest that Cicero devised a new role for rhetoric under the *de facto* tyranny of the first triumvirate that dominated Rome during the 50s BC. When the clarion call of his speech *Pro Sestio* (March 56) to take action against the enemies of the Republic proved fruitless upon the renewal of the triumvirs' agreement (April 56), Cicero turned from republican oratory, now precluded, to philosophic writing as the means of carrying on the fight for republicanism.

In contrast to his public speeches, however, in the trio of dialogues written from 55–51 (*De Oratore*, *De Re Publica*, and *De Legibus*) he would ultimately call conventional Roman morality into question. Although starting from that morality as a means of reaching his readers, he would employ his rhetorical skills to affirm the greatness of the Republican constitution while promoting philosophic pursuits as a means of reforming and transforming the Roman ruling class into the kind of men with the knowledge and noble motives that could bring back the Republic.