

Cicero

LIFE

Marcus Tullius Cicero was born in 106 B.C. at Arpinum of a well-to-do equestrian family. He finished with distinction his studies in rhetoric and philosophy at Rome and began to frequent the Forum under the guidance of the great orator Lucius Licinius Crassus and the two Scaevolae, the Augur and the Pontiff. He formed a friendship with Titus Pomponius Atticus that would last all his life. In 89 he saw military service in the Social War under the command of Pompeius Strabo, the father of Pompey the Great. In 81, or perhaps even earlier, he made his debut as a pleader. In 80 he defended the case of Sextus Roscius, which brought him into conflict with important members of the Sullan regime. Between 79 and 77 he made a long voyage to Greece and Asia, during which he studied philosophy and, under Molon of Rhodes, rhetoric. On his return he married Terentia, who gave birth to Tullia in 76 and Marcus in 65. In 75 he was quaestor in Sicily. In 70 he undertook the prosecution brought by the Sicilians against their ex-governor Verres, and by his triumph won for himself the reputation of being Rome's leading orator. In 69 he was aedile. In 66, while praetor, he supported the proposal to grant Pompey exceptional powers for the struggle against Mithridates, king of Pontus. He was consul in 63 and suppressed the conspiracy of Catiline. The first triumvirate troubled him: the alliance between the military power of Pompey, the great wealth of Crassus, and the growing popularity of Caesar, precisely because it was a private agreement, appeared to him to threaten the Senate's authority. After its formation his star was on the wane. In 58, accused of having put to death without trial Catiline's accomplices, he had to go into exile; his house was razed to the ground. Recalled to Rome in 57, he returned in triumph. Between 56 and 51 he attempted, with difficulty, to collaborate with the triumvirs and continued his forensic activity. He composed the *De Oratore* and the *De Republica* and began work on the *De Legibus*. In 51 he was governor of Cilicia but accepted with reluctance the absence from Rome. When civil war broke out in 49, he somewhat tardily joined the cause of Pompey. He went to Epirus with the other senators but was not present at the battle of Pharsalus. After Pompey's defeat he obtained pardon from Caesar. In 46 he wrote the *Brutus* and the *Orator*, and he divorced

Terentia to marry his young ward Publilia, whom he would divorce after a few months. In 45 his daughter Tullia died. While Caesar's domination kept him removed from public affairs, he began to compose a long series of philosophical works. In 44, after the murder of Caesar, he returned to political life and at the end of the summer began his fight against Antony (the *Philippics*). After the about-face of Octavian, who, abandoning the Senate's cause, joined Antony and Lepidus in a second triumvirate, Cicero's name was added to the proscriptions. He was slain by Antony's assassins on 7 December 43.

WORKS

Speeches: *Pro Quintio* (81), *Pro Roscio Amerino* (80), *Pro Roscio Comoedo* (77?), *Pro Tullio* (72 or 71), *Divinatio in Q. Caecilium* and *Verrines* (70), *Pro Fonteio* (69), *Pro Caecina* (69 or 68), *Pro Cluentio* (66), *De Imperio Cn. Pompei* or *Pro Lege Manilia* (66), *De Lege Agraria* (63), *Pro Rabirio Perduellionis Reo* (63), *Pro Murena* (63), *Catilinarians* (63), *Pro Sulla* (62), *Pro Archia Poeta* (62), *Pro Flacco* (59), *Cum Senatui Gratias Egit* (57), *Cum Populo Gratias Egit* (57), *De Domo Sua* (57), *De Haruspicum Responso* (56), *Pro Sestio* (56), *In Vatinius* (56), *Pro Caelio* (56), *De Provinciis Consularibus* (56), *Pro Balbo* (56), *In Pisonem* (55), *Pro Planco* (54), *Pro Scauro* (54), *Pro Rabirio Postumo* (54), *Pro Milone* (52), *Pro Marcello* (46), *Pro Ligario* (46), *Pro Rege Deiotaro* (45), *Philippics* (44–43). These are the speeches that have come down to us by direct tradition, some of which are incomplete. We have, moreover, about thirty titles and various fragments of lost speeches, among them the *Pro Cornelio* (from 65) and the *In Toga Candida* (from 64, the year of Cicero's candidacy for the consulship), which we can reconstruct from the commentary of Asconius Pedianus (see below).

Rhetorical works: *De Inventione* (ca. 54), *De Oratore* (54), *Partitiones Oratoriae* (ca. 54), *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* (52), *Brutus* (46), *Orator* (46), *Topica* (44).

Political works: *De Republica* (54–51), *De Legibus* (52–?).

Philosophical works: *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (46), *Academica* (45), *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* (45), *Tusculan Disputations* (45), *De Natura Deorum* (45), *De Divinatione* (44), *De Fato* (44), *Cato Maior de Senectute* (44), *Laelius de Amicitia* (44), *De Officiis* (44).

Correspondence: *Ad Familiares* (16 books), *Ad Atticum* (16 books), *Ad Quintum Fratrem* (27 letters), *Ad M. Brutum* (2 books, of disputed authenticity).

Poetic works (only fragments): *Juvenilia*, *Aratea*, *De Consulatu Suo*, *Marius*, *Limon*.

Lost prose works: *Consolatio* (45), *Hortensius* (45), *Laus Catonis* (45), *De Gloria* (44), *De Virtutibus*, *De Auguriis*, *De Consiliis Suis*. We also have notices of a geographical work (*Chorographia?*) and a work of curiosities (*Admiranda*).

Translations: of Plato's *Timaeus* (preserved in part), of his *Protagoras*, of Xenophon's *Economicus* (a few fragments).

SOURCES

For knowledge of Cicero's life and works the chief sources are his own works, especially the correspondence, the *Brutus*, the proems of several dialogues and treatises, and a number of the speeches (to some of which Asconius Pedianus, in the age of Nero, devoted a historical commentary [see p. 578]). The biography of Cicero by Plutarch is also important.

I. TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN ROMAN CULTURE

Cicero and the crisis of the Republic

Cicero, it has been said, is the person of the ancient world whom we know best, because of the variety of his works in different genres (speeches and rhetorical, political, and philosophical essays) but also because of his rich correspondence, which often allows us to trace the connections between his personal experiences, which sometimes are confided in full sincerity to his friends, and the reworking of them in the writings intended for a wider public. This would still not be much were Cicero not a particularly interesting person on account of the position he occupies in Roman culture and the extraordinary value of his intellectual experience. Protagonist in and witness of the crisis that brings on the decline of the Republic, he develops an ethical-political program in a vain attempt to remedy the situation. His own view, of course, remains a partial one, tied as it is to the striving for dominance of a social group, basically the landowning classes. It is a view that, in order to become accepted by the community as a whole, must be able to employ the most effective stratagems that the techniques of communication can provide. Cicero, the great advocate, the superb manipulator of words for the purpose of persuasion, utilizes such stratagems in his speeches and theorizes about them in his rhetorical treatises. Set in its own time, his art of speaking loses the qualities of vain pomposity with which scholastic and humanistic Ciceronianism had invested it, and it reveals itself, among other things, as a prudent and productive technique, useful for mastering the audience and governing its passions. (This reflects a basic condition of Roman culture, for which oratory constituted the fundamental model not only of high education but also, to a notable extent, of literary expression itself.)

Rhetoric as political instrument

Oratory and philosophy in the service of Cicero's program

Cicero attempted to give substance to his political-social program through practical applications that might be adapted, sometimes opportunistically, to the contingencies of the situation; several speeches give evidence of this. But as his years and his disappointments mounted up, he felt the increasing need to reflect on the bases of politics and morality and went back to Hellenistic thought. The aim of his philosophical works is the same one that inspires some of his most important speeches: to provide a solid intellectual, ethical, political base for a dominant class whose need for order would not be translated into obtuse isolation and whose respect for the national tradition (*mos maiorum*) would not hinder the absorption of Greek culture, a dominant class that, though it performed the duties owed to the state, would not become insensitive either to the pleasures of an *otium* filled

with art and literature or to the pleasures of that courteously refined style of life that is summed up in the term *humanitas*, that consciousness of culture that is the fruit of civilization, the capacity to distinguish and to appreciate what is beautiful and fitting.

*Contrasting drives in
Cicero's thought*

In this sense a great part of Cicero's work can be read as the search for a difficult balance between modernization and the necessity of preserving traditional values. Behind the intellectual activity of Cicero one perceives a society pervaded by contrasting drives that are often destructive: the influx of wealth from the conquered countries long ago made the rigid morality of the early days a hopeless anachronism, yet the swift abandonment of the virtues and values that had brought about Rome's greatness was now calling into question the very survival of the republican state.

2. THE SUPREMACY OF THE WORD: POLITICAL CAREER AND PRACTICAL ORATORY

Cicero's oratorical activity is indissolubly bound up with the political events at Rome during the last half-century of the Republic. It is necessary therefore for our treatment to follow a chronological sequence, which, without being too detailed, makes clear the historical setting in which he operated and the circumstances by which he had to measure himself.

First Successes and the Trial of Verres

*The Pro Roscio
Amerino*

Cicero already had several cases to his credit when, in 80, he took up the defense in a case that, because of its political implications, had great reverberations in Roman society (the *Pro Roscio Amerino*). The father of Sextus Roscius had been slain on the orders of two of his own relatives who were in league with Lucius Cornelius Chrysogonus, a powerful favorite and freedman of Sulla, who then had had the name of the slain man inserted in the proscription lists so that he could acquire his considerable estates at auction for a ridiculous price. The murderers, in order to have a free hand, tried to get rid of the son of the slain man too and resorted to accusing him of the murder.

To succeed, the defense could not pass over the responsibility of Chrysogonus, who had been the real director of the entire affair. Yet obvious motives of prudence and political expediency urged the young pleader to involve Sulla as little as possible: he was dictator at the time and held nearly absolute power, and he was Chrysogonus's most influential protector. However much disgust Cicero probably felt at the more repugnant aspects of the Sullan regime, such as the proscriptions and other kinds of arbitrary action, he could not but heap praise upon Sulla. In fact he made himself the spokesman for those members of the nobility who, though they appreciated Sulla's action in suppressing the democratic and popular part, regretted having had to pay for it by placing power in the hands of a single man and by witnessing the social rise of characters such as Chrysogonus.

The oratorical style of the *Pro Roscio Amerino* is not yet that of the mature

Cicero. The orator shows that he is still tied to the Asianism then in fashion: the phrases race by swift and sonorous, with a lively cadence, full of neologisms, and nearly as rich in metaphors as poetry. In later years Cicero would make great efforts to polish his style. Already wholly Ciceronian, by contrast, is the skill at portraiture, at depicting persons and settings in pictures full of color and often containing a happy streak of satire. The portrait of Chrysogonus stands out above all: the man whom Sulla had bought as a slave in the market of Delos now has hair pomaded and curled in ringlets; he often appears in the Forum amidst a large entourage; he lives on the Palatine, the most elegant quarter in Rome, in a luxurious house decorated with Corinthian vases, statues, and carpets; at night one can hear from far away the uproar of his parties, which are sumptuous, though lacking in real elegance. His is the first in a long series of satiric pictures, which continues down to the picture, in the *Philippics*, of Antony and his train of dissolute characters.

The Verrines

After the success of his defense of Roscius Cicero left Rome for a couple of years, for reasons of health or perhaps because he feared the revenge of Sulla and Chrysogonus. He made a voyage of study to Greece and Asia, which helped him to improve his eloquence. Returning to Rome after the death of Sulla, he held the quaestorship in Sicily in 75. He won the reputation of being an honest and scrupulous governor, to such an extent that a few years later, in 70, the Sicilians asked him to handle the prosecution in a case they were going to bring against the ex-governor Verres, who had plundered the province with incredible rapacity. Cicero very energetically gathered the evidence in a short time. This made it possible for him to advance the dates of the trial, which otherwise would have taken place in conditions politically far more favorable to Verres (one of the consuls designate for 69, Quintus Hortensius Hortalus, the famous orator of the Asianic school, was in fact Verres' defender in the trial). At the actual trial Cicero did not have a chance to display in its entirety the immense mass of evidence and proofs he had collected and organized, and he was able to deliver only the first of his *actiones in Verrem*, since after only a few days Verres, overwhelmed by the accusations, fled from Italy and was sentenced by default.

Cicero subsequently published, in the form of a speech of prosecution, the *Actio Secunda in Verrem*, divided into five books, which is, among other things, a historical document of the highest importance for understanding the methods of Roman provincial administration (Verres' was certainly a sensational case, but thoroughgoing exploitation was the rule). The Roman aristocrats needed huge sums of money to finance the forms of "liberality" (i.e., the corruption of individuals and groups) that were necessary to advance their political careers; in addition, they needed to increase their own consumption and private use in order to keep up with the new standards of behavior that had been imposed since the period of the conquests. The governorship of a rich province was therefore an opportunity from which it was easy to profit.

The victory over Hortensius, Verres' defender, was also a victory in the field of literature. In comparison with the naturalness with which the young rival commanded all the nuances of the language, the exaggerated Asiatic mannerism of Hortensius must have seemed somewhat cloying. The style of the *Verrines* is already fully mature. Cicero has eliminated some of the exuberance and redundancy without thereby approaching the dry, lifeless eloquence of the Atticists. The formation of the periods is harmonious for the most part and structurally complex. The syntax is extremely flexible, and Cicero does not eschew, when it is appropriate, the concise, punchy phrase. The range of registers is controlled with complete sureness, from the simple, plain narration to the colorful anecdote, from withering irony to tragic pathos. Here, too, Cicero shows himself a master in the art of portraiture. He gives us several more or less wretched characters in the governor's entourage, but above all Verres himself, depicted as a despot eager for the property and blood of his subjects and at the same time a dissolute figure, languorously lolling in his litter, always sniffing a bouquet of roses.

The Program of Concord among the Affluent Classes

Having entered the Senate after his quaestorship, Cicero in 66, the year of his praetorship, spoke in favor of the legislative program proposed by the tribune Manilius, which granted Pompey extraordinary powers throughout the East. The grant was made necessary by the urgent need to meet decisively the threat posed by Mithridates, king of Pontus, who was gravely harming Rome's economic interests in the eastern regions (*Pro Lege Manilia* or *De Imperio Cn. Pompei*).

Speaking before the people in favor of the tribune's proposal and thus supporting Pompey, to whom Manilius asked that operations against Mithridates be entrusted, Cicero insisted above all on the importance of the taxes that flowed in from the eastern provinces: the population of Rome would be deprived of the benefit of these taxes if Mithridates continued undisturbed in his behavior. In the *De Imperio Cn. Pompei*, which Cicero himself later repudiated, scholars have wanted to see Cicero coming as close as he ever did to the politics of the *populares*, which were directed at gratifying and corrupting the urban masses with donations and also at infringing upon the Senate's authority. The aristocracy for its part viewed the concentration of enormous powers in the hands of a single individual who was one of its own members as extremely dangerous to its stability. Cicero was defending not so much the interests of the people as those of the publicans, the proprietors of the companies that contracted for the taxes, whose very lucrative activities in the eastern provinces were greatly hindered by Mithridates. The publicans constituted a leading group within the equestrian order, from which Cicero himself came. But it is not right on that account to see Cicero as the representative of the big equestrian businessmen within the Roman Senate. The truth is that he needed their support to cement that concord among the affluent classes (senators and knights) in which he

was starting to discern the salvation from the crisis threatening the Republic. To realize his program, he also needed to reach the highest office of the state, and for this reason, too, the support of the equestrian class was vital for the *novus homo*, upon whom the nobility surely did not look with favor. The connection with Pompey is explained by the fact that in this period he, too, was looking for the support of the knights. But if Pompey was inclined to court the tribunes of the plebs, who sometimes expressed the aspirations of the poorest classes, Cicero was not, since he was always openly opposed to agrarian laws or programs for debt relief.

*Cicero's consulship
and the conspiracy of
Catiline*

Relying on Cicero's fundamentally moderate nature ("moderate" in a political sense), a part of the nobility decided to join together with the equestrian class and support the brilliant *homo novus* from Arpinum as a candidate for the consulship. Meanwhile, the needs of the proletarian masses in Rome and other regions of Italy found a doubtful champion in an aristocrat of Sullan origin, Catiline, who also aspired to the supreme magistracy. As consul in 63, Cicero suppressed the conspiracy of Catiline. From then on he would be the theoretician of that *concordia ordinum*, "concord of the orders," that had brought him to power.

In the year of his consulship Cicero delivered before the Senate and the people four speeches, of which three are extant, in which he opposed the agrarian law proposed by the tribune Rullus, who may have been a tool of Caesar (the *De Lege Agraria*), and once again took a stand against the popular party, this time in defense of Gaius Rabirius (*Pro Rabirio Perduellionis Reo*), an aged knight on whom revenge was being taken for deeds of thirty-seven years before, connected to the murder of the seditious tribune Saturninus.

The Catilinarians

But the most famous among Cicero's consular speeches are, of course, the four *Catilinarians*, in which he exposed the subversive plans that the decadent nobleman had formed after being defeated in the election, compelled him to flee from Rome, and justified his own decision to have Catiline's accomplices executed without trial. Artistically, perhaps the first *Catilinarian*, in which Cicero attacked Catiline before the assembled Senate, stands out. The tones are vehement, threatening, and full of pathos. Cicero had recourse to a rhetorical device he had never employed before, the *proso-popoeia* ("personification") of the Country, which is imagined as addressing Catiline in words of harsh reproach. Nor can one forget the portrait of Catiline and his followers, corrupted by luxury and vice, which is drawn in the second *Catilinarian*.

The Pro Murena

In the days between the first and second *Catilinarians*, when the outcome of the conflict was as yet undecided, Cicero found himself obliged to defend Lucius Licinius Murena, consul designate for the new year, on a charge of electoral corruption (*Pro Murena*). Cicero hoped to find in Murena a sturdy continuer of his own policy of resisting revolution, the policy that joined the senatorial and equestrian orders in a defensive alliance. The charge of corruption intervened, however, and it had been made by the defeated candidate, Servius Sulpicius Rufus, and supported by the prestige of a descen-

dant of Cato the Censor, Cato the Younger (later called Cato of Utica). The latter also did harm in other ways to the policy of *concordia ordinum*: with his moral rigidity, inspired by the principles of Stoicism, he took a particularly intransigent position on questions of the relation between the state and private economic interests, which often brought him into conflict with the publicans and the equestrian class.

In defending Murena, Cicero chose the path of irony and jest. He made fun of the empty juridical formulary that was the basis of Servius's intellectual formation and maintained that Murena's military successes constituted a far better claim to the consulship. He wittily mocked Cato's anachronistic Stoic rigor. The *Pro Murena* is one of Cicero's most amusing speeches. Despite his sincere esteem for both Servius and Cato, he was able to find here the tones of a light, witty satire, which never falls into mere derision or vulgar mockery. But the speech is interesting for other reasons too: by taking a stand against Cato's archaic morality, Cicero in fact begins to sketch the lines of a new ethical model the definition of which would occupy him to his last years, a model in which respect for the *mos maiorum* is tempered by a softening of customs, by a receptiveness to the joys of life, which the new standards of society now permit.

Cicero in exile

In the following years Cicero did not cease to glorify the historical importance of his consulship (which he also celebrated in a poetic work [see p. 201]) and his fight against Catiline. He regarded himself as a "father of his country," a title that was indeed decreed for him, and as a second founder, after Romulus. Nonetheless, the formation of the first triumvirate by Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus signaled a rapid decline in Cicero's political fortunes. A tribune of the people, Clodius, who also had personal grudges against Cicero, proposed in 58 a law that would condemn to exile anyone who had put Roman citizens to death without a trial. The law aimed at avenging Cicero's action in suppressing the Catilinarian conspirators. No longer supported by the nobility, who could do without him once the danger from Catiline was removed, and abandoned by Pompey as well, who had to pay attention to the demands of his fellow triumvirs, Cicero was forced to give way before Clodius's attack. When he was recalled from exile in 57, Cicero found Rome a prey to anarchy. There were continual street fights between the opposing gangs of Clodius and of Milo, the latter of whom, defending the cause of the optimates, was a personal friend of Cicero's.

The Pro Sestio: from the concordia ordinum to the consensus omnium bonorum

In this climate when in 56 he found himself defending Sestius, a tribune accused by Clodius of acts of violence (*Pro Sestio*), Cicero expounded a new version of his theory about the concord of the well-to-do classes. As a simple understanding between the senatorial class and the equestrian, the *concordia ordinum* was shown to be a failure. Cicero now expands the concept to *consensus omnium bonorum*, that is, the active agreement of all who were well-to-do, landholding persons, loyal to the political and social order, and disposed to carry out their own duties towards their country and their family. The *boni*, a category that cuts vertically through the existing social

strata without being identified with any one in particular, henceforth would be the principal intended audience for Cicero's ethical-political preaching. The enemies of order are identified as those whom poverty or debt drives to desire subversion and overthrow.

The duty of the boni

The duty of the *boni* would be, not to take selfish refuge in the pursuit of their own private interests, but to lend active support to the politicians representing their cause. The generally acknowledged need for a more authoritative government at Rome nonetheless drives Cicero to desire that the Senate and the *boni*, in order to surmount their disagreements, entrust themselves to the guidance of eminent persons of great authority; this theory would be explored in the *De Republica* (see pp. 189 f.). In this light probably we ought to explain Cicero's stance towards the triumvirs during these years. He hoped to influence their action and to bring it about that their power not infringe upon that of the Senate but keep within the limits of republican institutions; the stance does not signify a betrayal of the *nobilitas*.

The period of collaboration with the triumvirs is nonetheless a period of great uncertainty and political vacillation for Cicero. On the one hand, he continues to attack Clodius and the popular party, as in the *In Pisonem*, a violent invective against Caesar's father-in-law. On the other, he supports the policy of the triumvirs: in 56 he speaks in favor of renewing Caesar's command in Gaul (*De Provinciis Consularibus*), and he also defends various people linked to Caesar (*Pro Balbo* in 56, *Pro Rabirio Postumo* in 54, etc.).

The Defense of Marcus Caelius: Cicero and Roman Youth

The Pro Caelio

Among the anti-Clodian speeches a special place is occupied by the one in defense of Marcus Caelius Rufus, a brilliant young man and personal friend of Cicero (*Pro Caelio*, 56 B.C.). Caelius had been the lover of Clodia, sister of the tribune (and Catullus's Lesbia), one of the elegant, corrupt ladies in whom aristocratic Rome abounded at the time. A heap of accusations had been made against Caelius, among them an attempt at poisoning Clodia. It was a trial in which the personal animosities of all the parties involved were closely entwined with political questions of far more general importance. Attacking Clodia, whom he identified as the single director of all the machinations against Caelius, provided Cicero with a way to discharge his resentment towards her brother: the woman is depicted as a common whore and even accused of incestuous relations with Clodius. On account of its picturesque variety of tones, which range from the cynicism of a man of the world to a funereal pathos, the speech is among Cicero's most successful. Not only the fertile vein of satire but also the maturing of the new ethical models proposed brings the *Pro Caelio* close to the *Pro Murena*. In reviewing the stages of Caelius's life Cicero can give a cross section of Roman society in his day, and he strives to justify to the judges the new customs that the youth have recently adopted, which can give rise to scandal only in the eyes of gloomy moralists too attached to the past. The virtues that once made the Roman state great are no longer found even in

books. It is time now to slacken the reins on the young, lest they lose sight of fundamental principles; the moment will come when, with glowing eagerness, they will return to the noble path of the *mos maiorum*. If the split between archaic rigidity and the new opportunities presented by an affluent society should become too deep, society would run the risk of its ideological fabric being loosened. The young would move towards a complete overthrow of values, which would end up substituting the pursuit of pleasure for service to the community. The cultural model Cicero proposes aims at bringing the new behavior back within the scale of values that are still dominated by the traditional virtues but stripped of their excessive rigidity and rendered more responsive to the needs of a world in transformation.

Real Speeches and Written Speeches: The Defense of Milo

The Pro Milone

The clashes between the gangs of Clodius and of Milo continued for a long time. Then in 52 Clodius was killed. Cicero undertook the defense of Milo (*Pro Milone*). The speech is considered one of his masterpieces because of the balance among its parts and his skill in handling the arguments, which are based on the notion of legitimate defense and on the glorification of what he depicted as tyrannicide. But in the form in which it is preserved for us it is a radical reworking carried out after the trial. Before the judges Cicero was a colossal disaster (and Milo had to flee into exile): his nerves gave way on account of the extreme tension in the city, which was prey to raids by Clodius's partisans, while Pompey's troops tried to impose order.

From the Civil War to the Dictatorship of Caesar

The Caesarian speeches

In 49, upon the outbreak of the civil war, Cicero adhered to Pompey's cause without enthusiasm. He was conscious that whatever the outcome, the Senate would be weakened in relation to the overwhelming power of the victor. After Caesar's victory Cicero obtained his pardon. In the hope of helping to make the regime less authoritarian, at first he sought means of collaborating with it and accepted the task of making several speeches before the dictator that pleaded the case of repentant Pompeians. The Caesarian speeches—the *Pro Marcello*, the *Pro Ligario*, the *Pro Rege Deiotaro*, the last a tetrarch of Galatia suspected of an attempt on Caesar's life—are from 46 and 45. Although he was working in a not ignoble cause, the pardoning of Pompeians who had laid down their arms some while before, Cicero probably fell short of his full dignity; it is rather difficult to accept the sincerity of the Caesarian speeches, which abound in praise for Caesar. The *Pro Marcello* nonetheless strives to expound to Caesar a political program of reforming republican government and the prerogatives of the Senate. Even then, in all likelihood Cicero had few illusions, and Caesar's move to perpetual dictatorship would have very quickly disabused him of them.

The Struggle against Antony

The Philippics and the hopes placed in Octavian

After Caesar's murder, which he greeted with joy, Cicero returned to being a leading politician. The dangers for the Republic were not over: Caesar's closest collaborator, Antony, was aiming at taking up his role,

while the young Octavian, Caesar's heir, with an army at his command, was emerging onto the Roman political scene. Cicero's political maneuvering attempted to detach Octavian from Antony and bring him under the protection of the Senate. In order to induce the Senate to declare war on Antony and proclaim him a public enemy, Cicero, beginning in the summer of 44, delivered the *Philippic* speeches against him, perhaps eighteen in number. Fourteen of them are extant. The title refers to the very famous speeches of Demosthenes against Philip of Macedon. Whether it originated with Cicero is a debated question; some ancient writers call them the *Antoniana*, whereas *Philippic* is in fact used by Cicero in his private correspondence, though in a joking sense. On account of the vehemence of its attack and its tones of indignant denunciation, the second *Philippic* stands out especially. The only one that was not actually delivered, but circulated privately in a written version, the speech simply breathes hatred: with a satiric force matched only by certain passages of the *In Pisonem*, it presents Antony as a dissolute tyrant, a thief of public money, a drunkard who "vomits gobs of food stinking of wine all over the tribunal."

The second triumvirate and the murder of Cicero

Cicero's political maneuvering was destined to fail. In an abrupt about-face Octavian withdrew from the Senate's protection and formed an agreement with Antony and another Caesarian leader, Lepidus, who together made up the second triumvirate. The three became absolute masters of Rome. Antony expected and was given the head of Cicero, whose name was added to the lists of the proscribed. After giving up an attempted flight, he was found by the assassins at Formiae in the first days of December of 43.

The Significance of Cicero's Political Program

Consistency of Cicero's program

Despite the many fluctuations, Cicero's political career followed a consistent line. In the context of a general rapprochement between Senate and equites the *homo novus* supported the *nobilitas*, and even afterwards he remained faithful to the idea of concord and to the senatorial cause. His attempt at collaboration with the triumvirs was a response to the need for an authoritative government, and here, too, Cicero was concerned to preserve the prestige and the prerogatives of the Senate. Even the temporary rapprochement with Caesar, after the civil war, was dictated by his desire to mitigate Caesar's autocratic tendencies and to maintain power within the familiar framework of republican traditions.

The failure of Cicero's program

The program of concord among the well-to-do classes (*concordia ordinum*, later *consensus omnium bonorum*) was in each case an embryonic attempt to overcome the struggles between dominant political groups and factions in the name of the higher interest of the community, or what Cicero regarded as the healthy part of it. There were a number of reasons for its failure. On the one hand, the conditions did not exist for Cicero to secure a following of clients or of soldiers sufficient to make his political view triumphant. On the other hand, like many of his contemporaries, he underestimated the importance private armies would have in the solution to the crisis. He may also have had too many expectations of the *boni*. At the time of the

civil war the landholding classes for the most part considered that their needs were best met by Caesar's policy. Even after Cicero's death they did not hesitate to consent to Augustus's domination, which definitively marked the death of the republican institutions.

3. THE SUPREMACY OF THE WORD: THE RHETORICAL WORKS

A response to the crisis

Nearly all Cicero's rhetorical works were written from 55, a couple of years after his return from exile, onwards. Like the *De Republica* and the subsequent philosophical works, they are produced by the need for a political and cultural response to the crisis.

Eloquence and Philosophy

The De Inventione

Whether the orator ought to be content with the knowledge of a certain number of rhetorical rules or whether he needed a broad education in law, philosophy, and history had long been debated in Greece. Cicero in his youth had begun, but not completed, a small treatise on rhetoric, the *De Inventione*—*inventio* is the discovery of material by the orator—for which he had drawn extensively on the nearly contemporary *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (see p. 120). Particularly interesting is the proem, where the young lawyer declares in favor of a synthesis of eloquence and *sapientia* (i.e., philosophical education), since he regards the latter as necessary to the formation of the orator's moral conscience; eloquence without *sapientia*, the eloquence of demagogues and popular agitators, has ruined a state more than once. Cicero's solution is worked out explicitly for Roman society. Many years later he will return to the same themes in the *De Oratore*.

Summary of the De Oratore

The *De Oratore* was composed in 55, during a period of withdrawal from the political scene, while Rome was thrown into turmoil by the gangs of Clodius and Milo. In the form of a dialogue, it is set in 91, in Cicero's youth. The participants are some of the most distinguished orators of the day, among whom the most prominent are Marcus Antonius (143–87 B.C.), grandfather of the triumvir, and Lucius Licinius Crassus, who is in effect Cicero's own spokesman. In the first book Crassus argues for the orator's need for a very broad education. Antonius opposes to this the ideal of a more instinctive, self-taught orator, whose art is based on confidence in his own natural powers, on practice in the Forum, and on familiarity with the example of previous orators. In book 2 they take up more analytic questions, and Antonius sets forth the problems concerning *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *memoria*. A witty, caustic figure also appears, Caesar Strabo, who is given a long, delightful digression on witticisms and clever sayings. In the third book Crassus discusses the questions having to do with *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio*, that is, with the orator's *actio* in general ("delivery," pretty much), and also confirms the need for a very broad general culture and philosophical training.

The setting of the De Oratore: the imminence of catastrophe

The choice of the year 91 for the setting of the dialogue has a precise significance. It is the very year of Crassus's death, which happened a few days after the days on which the dialogue is imagined to have taken place; and Crassus's death precedes by only a little the Social War and the long

civil conflicts between Marius and Sulla, in the course of which several other of the principal interlocutors, including Antonius himself, would die cruelly. The crisis of the state is an obsession besetting all the participants in the dialogue and deliberately clashes with the serene, refined setting in which they meet to hold their conversations, the Tusculan villa of Crassus. Awareness of the terrible end of all the participants in the dialogue gives a tragic note to the proems that precede the individual books.

*Platonic model and
Roman contents*

In trying to preserve verisimilitude in the characterization of the individuals, Cicero is obliged to re-create the atmosphere of the last days of peace under the old Republic. The model inspiring him is essentially the Platonic dialogue. With a sovereign gesture, the streets and squares of Athens are replaced by the garden of a Roman nobleman's country villa.

The reuse of the Platonic model for a rhetorical work was a notable departure from the arid Greek manuals of the day and from those produced by the school of Latin rhetors, who limited themselves to enunciating rules. Cicero, by contrast, was able to produce a lively and interesting work, which, however much it is based on a perfect familiarity with the specialist literature in Greek, is nourished by Roman experience and maintains close ties with forensic practice; almost all the examples illustrating Greek theories are drawn from Roman life and the Forum. A saying of Sulpicius, one of the participants in the dialogue, may serve as a summary of the work's principal thesis: "Eloquence is not born from rhetorical theory, but rhetorical theory from eloquence" (1.146).

*The orator as a good
man*

According to this view, talent, the technique of word and gesture, and the knowledge of the rules of rhetoric cannot be considered adequate for the training of the orator; a broad cultural education is required. This is the theory of Crassus, who closely links the orator's cultural education (above all philosophy, especially moral philosophy) to his ethical-political trustworthiness. The orator's versatility, his ability to defend the *pro* and the *contra* in any argument, by which he is able to convince and to sway his audience, may be a grave danger if it is not counterbalanced by the virtues that anchor him to the system of traditional values, wherein respectable people recognize themselves. Crassus demands that *probitas* and *prudencia* be firmly rooted in the soul of anyone who is to learn the art of the word; to entrust the art to one who lacked these virtues would be like putting arms into the hands of madmen (3.55).

*Coincidence between
rhetorical and political
training*

The training of the orator thus comes to coincide with that of the politician of the ruling class. He should not be a man of specialized education—men of the ruling class should not practice any profession: for this free men of lower status, as well as slaves, exist—rather, he should be a man of broad general culture, able to master the art of the word and persuade his listeners. He should make use of his ability, not to cajole the people with demagogic suggestions, but to harness it to the will of the *boni*. In the *De Oratore* Cicero has in fact revealed the ambiguous status of an art that oscillates constantly between ethical-political wisdom and the technique of naked domination.

The Orator

Having composed for his son in 54 a kind of textbook on rhetoric, the

Partitiones Oratoriae, cast in a question-and-answer format, Cicero in 46 takes up again the themes of the *De Oratore* in a shorter treatise, the *Orator*, adding to it a section on the characteristics of rhythmical prose. While drawing the portrait of the ideal orator, Cicero stresses the three goals his art should aim at: *probare* (to put forward the thesis with strong arguments), *delectare* (to produce a pleasant esthetic impression with the words), and *flectere* (to arouse the emotions by means of pathos). Corresponding to the three goals are the three stylistic registers that the orator must be able to display by turns: low, intermediate, and elevated or “pathetic” (the last especially suitable in the closing peroration).

The History of Eloquence and Controversies about Style

Beyond Asianism and Atticism

The definition of the orator’s highest task as the ability to move the feelings originated in the controversy with the Atticist tendency, whose supporters reproached Cicero with not having distanced himself sufficiently from Asianism. The charges referred to the redundancy of his oratorical style, the frequent use of figures, the accentuation of the rhythmical element, and the abuse of witticisms. Cicero’s opponents esteemed instead the simple, lean style, the models for which were found in the Attic orators, principally Lysias. In this dispute Cicero took his stance, in the same year 46, in the dialogue *Brutus*, which not by chance is dedicated, as is the *Orator*, to Marcus Brutus, one of the chief representatives of Atticism.

The Brutus

In the *Brutus* Cicero, who takes the role of principal interlocutor—the other two are Brutus himself and Atticus—sketches a history of Greek and Roman eloquence and therein shows his gifts as a historian of culture and a fine literary critic. Given the fundamentally self-defensive character of the *Brutus*, it is understandable that the history of eloquence culminates in a recollection of the stages of Cicero’s own oratorical career, from the rejection of his youthful Asianism to his achievement of full maturity after his quaestorship in Sicily.

Cicero’s view of the history of oratory represents a break with the traditional schemes that opposed to one another the stylistic categories to which Asianists and Atticists were strongly attached. The break reflects a basic tendency of Cicero’s oratorical practice: different situations demand an alternation among different registers, and the orator’s success before his audience is the fundamental criterion by which to gauge the success of his style. The Atticists are criticized for the excessively cold and intellectual character of their eloquence, which rarely succeeds in being effective: they are ignorant of the art of swaying their listeners. Great oratory “without systems” has its chief model in Demosthenes, who is also an “Attic” writer, but of a very different sort from Lysias or Hyperides.

The De Optimo Genere Oratorum

Contemporary with the *Brutus* and, in a sense, complementary to it is another short treatise on a rhetorical subject, the *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*. This was intended to be the introduction to the Latin version of two famous opposing speeches, Demosthenes’ *On the Crown* and Aeschines’ *Against Ctesiphon*, delivered in the same trial, which was held in Athens in 330. We

do not know whether Cicero actually translated the two speeches. In the work he defends the excellence of the two orators, especially Demosthenes: one recognizes in him the most perfect model of Attic eloquence.

The Topica

In 44 Cicero composes the last of his works of rhetorical theory, the *Topica*, which is inspired by Aristotle's work of the same name. It treats the *topoi*, the commonplaces to which the orator may have recourse when seeking arguments to develop in his speech. But as is easily understandable, the *topoi* are not useful in oratory alone. They can serve the philosopher, the historian, and the jurist (considerable space is reserved for juridical arguments in the *Topica*); even the poet ought to learn to make use of them. Written in a few days and for the sake of popularization, the work does not have great literary claims.

4. A PROJECT OF STATE

*The De Republica:
a projection into
the past*

The model of the Platonic dialogue reappears more evidently in the *De Republica*, on which Cicero worked extensively between 54 and 51. He did not attempt, however, to construct the picture of an ideal state, as Plato had done in the *Republic*: in a move that would become increasingly habitual with him, he projects himself into the past, in order to identify the Roman constitution in the time of the Scipios as the best form of state.

*Summary of the
De Republica*

The dialogue unfolds in 129 at the suburban villa of Scipio Aemilianus, who along with his friend and collaborator Laelius is one of the principal speakers. Unfortunately, the reconstruction of the course of the work, especially in certain sections, is quite hypothetical because of the extremely fragmentary way in which the dialogue has been preserved. A considerable part was discovered at the beginning of the nineteenth century in a Vatican palimpsest by the future cardinal Angelo Mai; certain pieces of other sections have been transmitted through quotations by ancient writers such as Augustine; and the final section of the work, the *Somnium Scipionis*, has come down to us independently. In the first book Scipio starts from the Aristotelian doctrine of the three fundamental forms of government (monarchy, aristocracy, democracy) and their necessary degeneration into their extreme forms (respectively, tyranny, oligarchy, and ochlocracy, or government by the "dregs" of the people). Taking up a theory of the Greek historian Polybius, Scipio shows how the Roman state of their ancestors was saved from that necessary degeneration by tempering the three basic forms: the monarchic element is reflected in the consulship, the aristocracy in the Senate, the democracy in the *comitia*, or "assemblies." Book 2 was concerned with the development of the Roman constitution. The third book treated justice and was in large part devoted to an attempt at refuting the sharp criticism that the Academic philosopher Carneades had leveled at Roman imperialism. The criticism centered principally on the notion of the "just war," a notion that the Romans, on the pretext of aiding their own "allies" (i.e., subjects) in difficulty, had employed to justify the gradual extension of their dominion and the enlargement of their sphere of influence. The fourth book was concerned with the education of the citizens and of the leaders who must regulate their relations. In books 4 and 5 Cicero introduced the figure of the *rector et gubernator rei publicae*, or the princeps (this part of the work is especially full of gaps). In the sixth book the dialogue concluded with Scipio Aemilianus's recollection of the dream in

which, some time earlier, his grandfather Scipio Africanus had appeared to him in order to demonstrate to him, from the height of heaven, the smallness and insignificance of all human things, including earthly glory, and to reveal to him the blessedness that awaits the souls of great statesmen on the far side.

The mixed government

The theory of the mixed government went back, through Polybius, to the Peripatetic philosopher Dicaearchus and to Aristotle himself. In Scipio's version, the tempering of the three basic forms does not take place in equal proportions. Scipio looks upon the democratic element with evident antipathy, regarding it chiefly as a "safety valve" to ventilate and dissipate the people's irrational passions. The praise for the mixed government thus becomes an exaltation of the republican aristocracy of Scipio's day.

The figure of the princeps

Given the lacunose condition in which the relevant part of the work has reached us, it is difficult to spell out how the figure of the princeps was portrayed and how he fit into the organism of the state. Several points can nonetheless be regarded as assured. The singular noun *princeps* refers to the type of the eminent politician, not to his uniqueness. In other words, Cicero seems to be thinking of an elite of eminent persons that guides the Senate and the *boni*, and the role of the princeps is probably modeled on the role that Scipio Aemilianus himself had played in the Roman Republic. This means that Cicero does not prefigure what happened in the Augustan period (though there have been interpretations along this line), but aims at keeping the role of the princeps within the limits of the republican form of government. He is thinking, not of a constitutional reform, but of the consolidation of political consensus around prestigious leaders. The authority of the princeps is not an alternative to that of the Senate but the support it needs to save the Republic.

The ascetic utopia of the princeps

Since his authority does not exceed constitutional limits, the princeps will need to steel his soul against all selfish passions, chiefly against the desire for power and wealth. This is the disdain for all human things that the *Somnium Scipionis* enjoins upon the rulers of the state. (Cicero would return to this question in the *De Officiis* when treating of *magnitudo animi* [see p. 197].) Cicero thus paints the picture of an ascetic ruler, the representative on earth of the divine will, reinforced in his dedication to the service of the state by his disdain for human passions. The Ciceronian ideal could be realized only with difficulty. As we have seen (pp. 180 f.), it is likely that both his own conviction that a more authoritative government was needed and, at the same time, his awareness of the dangers accompanying the concentration of enormous powers in the hands of a few leaders impelled Cicero to attempt a rapprochement with Pompey and the triumvirs, since he hoped to keep their action under the control of the Senate. But the same historical forces that raised up the warriors would rapidly lead to the dissolution of the Republic.

The De Legibus

Inspired again by the model of Plato, who had followed the *Republic* with the *Laws*, Cicero complemented the dialogue on the state with the *De Legibus*, begun in 52 and probably not published during his lifetime. The first

three books are preserved, and fragments of books 4 and 5. The action this time is not placed in a bygone era, but in the present, and the interlocutors are Cicero himself, his brother Quintus, and his friend Atticus. It is set in Cicero's villa at Arpinum and in the nearby woods and countryside, which are depicted in a variant form of the motif of the *locus amoenus*. This in turn goes back especially to Plato's *Phaedrus*. The speakers are characterized with naturalness and realism; thus Quintus is depicted as an extreme optimist, Cicero as a moderate conservative, and Atticus as an Epicurean who is almost embarrassed by his own philosophical choices. In book 1 Cicero expounds the Stoic theory according to which law did not arise by convention, but is based on the reason innate in all men and is, therefore, given by god. In the next book, Cicero bases the exposition of the laws that ought to be in effect in the best state—herein lies the chief difference from Plato—not on a utopian legislation, but on the Roman legislative tradition, the guiding principles of which are to be found in pontifical and sacral law. In book 3 Cicero gives the text of the laws concerning magistrates and their competence.

5. A MORALITY FOR ROMAN SOCIETY

The incentives to philosophy

In his youth Cicero had attended the lectures of the most diverse philosophers, and he continued to be interested in philosophy practically throughout his life. Yet he began to write philosophy only in 46, with the small work *Paradoxes of the Stoics*, dedicated to Marcus Brutus, which expounds the Stoic theories most contrary to ordinary opinion. Then in 45 philosophical works come from him one after the other, at an almost incredible rate of production, and this at the same time as the most grievous events in Cicero's life. In February of that year his daughter Tullia died, and to relieve his intense grief he wrote a *Consolatio*, which is lost. But private events were not the only ones pushing him towards philosophy: the dictatorship of Caesar had deprived him of any possibility of participating in public affairs. Now almost indifferent to political events, Cicero lived in isolation and buried himself completely in composing his philosophical works.

The Hortensius and the Academica

The *Hortensius*, now lost, was an exhortation to philosophy, on the model of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*. The *Academica*, which treated problems of epistemology, was written in two stages: the first, the *Academica Priora*, in two books, and the *Academica Posteriora*, in four. We have book 2 of the first part, entitled *Lucullus* because in it Lucullus is Cicero's interlocutor, and book 1 of the second part, the *Varro*, in which Varro expounds his own theories, having Atticus and Cicero as interlocutors (this book is lacking its conclusion).

The De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum

The *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, dedicated to Brutus, is considered by some to be Cicero's masterpiece in philosophy. It is certainly one of his most elegant, most harmoniously constructed works. It deals with ethical questions, that is, the problem of the highest good and the highest evil, as

the title indicates. This problem is addressed in three dialogues, in five books. In the first dialogue, books 1 and 2, the theory of the Epicureans is set forth, followed by Cicero's refutation. In the second, books 3 and 4, the Stoic theory is compared with the Academic and Peripatetic theories. The third dialogue, book 5, expounds the eclectic theory of Antiochus of Ascalon (Cicero's teacher and Varro's), which is closest to the author's own thought.

*The Tusculan
Disputations*

Another treatment of ethical questions, the *Tusculan Disputations*, is also one of Cicero's greatest philosophical works and certainly the most passionate of them. It, too, is dedicated to Brutus and set in Cicero's villa at Tusculum, whence the title. The work, which marks Cicero's closest approach to the theories of the most rigorous Stoicism, is conducted in the form of a dialogue between Cicero and an anonymous interlocutor and so becomes almost an interior monologue. The five individual books deal, respectively, with the themes of death, grief, sadness, spiritual disturbances, and virtue as the guarantee of happiness. We thus have here a great *summa* of ancient ethics, a vast essay on the subject of happiness. In the *Tusculans* Cicero seeks an answer to his own personal questions too, a solution for his doubts; hence the author's profound emotional participation in the subjects treated, which gives the style a passionate solemnity and bestows on certain pages a lyrical intensity but rarely equaled in Latin prose.

*The De Natura
Deorum, the De
Divinatione, and the
De Fato*

Three dialogues deal with religious and theological matters: the *De Natura Deorum*, in three books, also dedicated to Brutus; the *De Divinatione*, in two books; and the *De Fato*, which has come down to us incomplete. The last two are explicitly presented by the author as integral with the first and complementary to it.

*The Cato Maior and
the Laelius*

The *Cato Maior de Senectute* and the *Laelius de Amicitia* are two brief dialogues in which philosophical precepts are embodied in two figures of the Roman tradition (they are discussed below). Other works, such as the *De Gloria*, the *De Virtutibus*, and the *De Auguriis*, are lost. In the fall of 44 Cicero begins writing the *De Officiis*, which is virtually his philosophical testament.

*Compilation and
originality in Cicero
the philosopher*

Cicero's effort, generally speaking, is towards rethinking the entire body of methods, ideas, and theories that had arisen in the Hellenistic philosophical schools, in order to recompose it in a solid edifice of common sense. He means in this way to offer the Roman ruling class a point of reference, with a view to reestablishing its dominance over society. He does not take up only immediate problems; he poses questions regarding the very roots of the social, political, and moral crisis in Roman society and tries to devise long-term solutions. It is unnecessary to inquire into Cicero's philosophical originality. Even the rapid rate at which he composed his philosophical works shows that they are more than anything compilations from Greek sources. But Cicero is original in the choice of subject and in the shaping of the arguments, since the problems posed by society are new and original and the questions that he puts to society are new. Cicero knits together the torn limbs of Hellenistic thought in order to extract from it an ideal structure that will operate effectively in regard to Roman society.

The Theory of Knowledge

The theory of knowledge in Cicero's philosophical method

For a theory of knowledge Cicero in his mature years held to the probabilism of the Academics, a sort of pragmatic Skepticism that, though it did not deny the existence of a truth beyond the phenomena, was chiefly concerned to guarantee the possibility of a probable knowledge that would be useful for orienting action. In book 2 of the *Academica* Lucullus reproaches Cicero for destroying the very possibility of knowledge by refusing to admit the existence of sure criteria of our perceptions. If everything is but a matter of opinion, Lucullus says, there will no longer be either certainty or truth. Cicero replies that even a general doubt does not entail the negation of truth; he does not even think, as the Skeptics do, that there exist multiple truths. He and his Academic (and in part Peripatetic) sources have grasped the need to avoid opposite errors, both the radical dogmatism that refuses to doubt certain appearances and the radical Skepticism that pushes doubt to the point of bringing into question the very possibility of any knowledge. Wiser is the method that strives to define the real conditions of human experience and to approach the truth through appearances and probability. This also defines the method adopted by Cicero in regard to the most serious philosophical problems, including ethics.

Ethical Systems in Conflict: Cicero's Philosophical Eclecticism

Eclecticism and humanitas

In a famous passage of the *Tusculans* (5.83) Cicero defines the method he follows in dealing with the most important problems: by refusing to formulate a firm opinion, he strives to set forth the different possible opinions and to compare them in order to see whether some are more consistent and more probable than others. Cicero's philosophical eclecticism meets the need for a rigorous method that strives to create among the different doctrines a dialogue from which any polemic spirit is excluded. The same ideology of *humanitas*, to the development of which Cicero made a notable contribution, urged a person to adopt an intellectual attitude of open tolerance. This is manifested even in the conduct of Cicero's philosophical dialogues, which reflect the behavior of good Roman society. The softening of polemical force, the rejection of any harshness in contradiction, the tendency to present one's theories merely as personal opinions, the constant use of polite formulas, the care shown not to interrupt another's reasoning—all these traits reveal the usages of an elite social circle concerned to develop a suitable code of good manners.

Cicero's anti-Epicureanism

But there is one case in which contradiction and refutation, though not descending to the fray, do sometimes become more violent and indignant: Cicero's eclecticism is very far from including Epicureanism, to whose explanation and refutation are dedicated, for example, the first two books of the dialogue *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*. There are two principal grounds for Cicero's aversion to Epicureanism, closely linked to one another. First, the Epicurean philosophy leads to a lack of interest in politics, whereas the *boni* ought to participate actively in public life.

Second, Epicureanism excludes the divinity's providential function (to the extent that it does not deny its existence) and thus weakens the links with traditional religion, which remains the fundamental basis of ethics for Cicero.

The dialogues on religious subjects

These considerations explain, at least in part, the point of the dialogues on religious and theological subjects. In book 1 of the *De Natura Deorum* the Epicurean theory of divine indifference to human affairs is expounded and refuted. In book 2 the Stoic theory of providential pantheism is examined, and then in book 3, which has lacunae, Cicero seems to take the side of Academic Skepticism. What is more interesting, because more directly related to the Roman setting, is the *De Divinatione*, a dialogue in two books between Cicero and his brother Quintus, in which the author shows himself as hesitating between the denunciation of the falsity of traditional religion and the necessity of maintaining it in order to preserve domination over the lower social classes, which are easily taken advantage of because of their credulity; the declaration of unfavorable auspices, for instance, could serve to interrupt or adjourn political assemblies.

The De Finibus

The comparison between the different philosophical systems is carried on throughout the entire corpus of Ciceronian dialogues, but it is developed especially extensively in the *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*. After the Epicurean theories have been refuted, Cato the Younger takes up, in the third book, the defense of traditional Stoicism, before which Cicero's position was always one of substantial perplexity (let us recall *Pro Murena* [see p. 182]). Cicero recognized that Stoicism furnished the most solid moral basis for the citizens' commitment to the community. Yet by virtue of his taste and culture he felt himself remote from an intransigent Stoic such as Cato or from an Academic of rigid morality such as Brutus. Their ethical rigidity seemed anachronistic to him, scarcely practicable in a society that had undergone radical transformations after the period of the great conquests. Cicero's eclecticism also signifies openness and sympathy for philosophies that were moderately open to pleasure, such as the Peripatetic philosophy, and his Academic probabilism furnished the theoretical basis for his attempt to reconcile diverse tendencies. The *De Finibus* can be seen as an aporetic dialogue. Near the conclusion Cicero, when considering the problem of the highest good, seems to hesitate between the theories of Antiochus of Ascalon (an Academic who had reacted vigorously to the Skepticism of his teachers and returned to dogmatic positions) and a more critical attitude.

Old Age and Friendship

The Cato Maior and the idealization of Cato

The two brief dialogues *Cato Maior de Senectute* and *Laelius de Amicitia*, both composed in 44 and dedicated to Atticus, occupy a special place among Cicero's philosophical works. In both the author brings on stage familiar figures of the Roman tradition. Cicero is working on the *Cato Maior* during the first months of 44, shortly before the murder of Caesar, in a period of forced political inactivity. In the person of Cato the Elder, whom he selects as his spokesman, Cicero transforms the bitterness he feels

over an old age that, in addition to physical decline and the imminence of death, seems to fear above all the loss of the possibility of political participation. The action is set in 150, the year before Cato's death. In projecting himself into the figure of an old man who preserves intact his authority and prestige, Cicero finds a way of taking refuge in an ideal past, of escaping from his own inactivity by imagining himself in the clothing of the old censor. In portraying him he has taken many liberties with the historically verifiable picture (see p. 89). His Cato appears softened and gentled. The rough Sabine farmer stubbornly attached to his profits has given way to a refined cultivator of *humanitas* and sociability who, with a touch of estheticism, even prefers the beautiful to the useful. In his old age the taste for *otium* is perfectly harmonized with the tenacity of political engagement, two opposing demands that Cicero had in vain attempted to reconcile throughout his life.

*The Laelius and
the new basis of
friendship*

The atmosphere is different, more combative, in the *Laelius*, which accompanies Cicero's return to the political scene immediately after the murder of Caesar. The dialogue is imagined as taking place in 129, the same year as the *De Republica*, a few days after Scipio's mysterious death during the Gracchan disturbances. Recalling his departed friend, Laelius converses with his interlocutors on the nature and value of friendship itself. *Amicitia*, for the Romans, was above all the forming of personal ties for the purpose of political support. Starting from the attempt to get beyond the clientship and faction that traditionally belong to the aristocratic state, the dialogue follows the Greek philosophical schools in seeking the ethical bases of society in a relation that binds together the will of friends. The novelty of Cicero's approach consists in the effort to enlarge the social basis of friendship beyond the restricted circle of the *nobilitas*. Such values as *virtus* and *probitas*, which are recognized by large segments of the population, are established as the foundation of friendship. Cicero writes for those respectable people to whose political-social centrality he long ago entrusted the fate of his program for the renewal of the state (let us recall the fundamental *Pro Sestio* [see p. 182 f.]). Trust in a renewed value system in which friendship plays a central role should cement the unity of the *boni*. But the friendship promoted by the *Laelius* is not only a political friendship: throughout the work one notes a desperate need for sincere relations, which Cicero, who was caught in the grip of conventions imposed by public life, may have been able to enjoy only with Atticus. There remains, nonetheless, a vast gulf between an elevated notion of morality and virtue and the inescapable reality of political practice. *Amicitia* reveals a degree of ambiguity in that it presents itself simultaneously as the ideal of a life gladdened by brotherly affections and as a system of more or less veiled forms of connivance among the supporters of the social order.

The Duties of the Ruling Class

*The De Officiis and
the Stoicism of
Panaetius*

The writing of the *De Officiis* was probably begun in the fall of 44. It is a treatise, not a dialogue, dedicated to Cicero's son Marcus, then a student of philosophy in Athens. The work was produced rapidly, for the most part

at the same time as several of the *Philippics* (see p. 184 f.). While battling with a man who in his eyes is bringing the country to utter ruin, Cicero seeks in philosophy the bases for a program of vast scope, directed at the formulation of a morality of daily life that will allow the Roman aristocracy to regain control over society. The philosophical basis is provided by the modern Stoicism of Panaetius. Established on clear, firm principles, resolute in its rejection of Epicurean hedonism and the resulting ethic of disengagement, respectful of tradition and the political-social order, but without fanaticism and old-fashioned roughness, the philosophy of Panaetius provides the detailed casuistry necessary for regulating the daily behavior of members of the ruling classes.

*The reconciliation
between philosophical
theory and political
practice*

In the *De Officiis* Cicero claims to be addressing the young in the first place, which confirms the pedagogic function that he generally attributes to his work of philosophical popularization. To have his program accepted he needed to overcome much resistance. Roman culture was traditionally averse to philosophical, speculative thought, in which it saw an undue avoidance of duties towards the state and the community. The task Cicero took on was precisely that of demonstrating how, in profoundly altered times, the performance of those duties was not possible unless the philosophical thought of the Greeks had first been absorbed and reflected upon. In Panaetius, who had been able to furnish the Roman aristocrats with a model of life firmly rooted in their national usages, he was able to find a stable point of reference for a discourse that could move easily between theoretical thought and the enunciation of precepts valid for everyday life.

*Summary of the
De Officiis*

The three books into which the *De Officiis* is divided deal, respectively, with the honorable, the useful, and the conflict between them. For the first two books the source is the treatise *On Duty (Peri tou Kathekontos)* by Panaetius of Rhodes; the third is a rather eclectic compilation from various sources. Panaetius, who had been part of the circle of Scipio Aemilianus, had given Stoic doctrine a markedly aristocratic stamp. It is likely that the intended audience for his treatise was the Roman governing classes. He tried to free the doctrine from its rough, plebeian features (such as its injunction to "call things by their proper names," that is, not to avoid obscene terms) and especially to soften its moral rigidity, so as to render it practicable for a wealthy, educated, and refined ruling class. Panaetius's teaching was distinguished from the early Stoa chiefly by a positive judgment on the instincts: they should not be oppressed by reason, but rather corrected and disciplined by it. The traditional cardinal virtues of Stoicism—justice, wisdom, courage, and moderation—were reinterpreted so as to be seen as an organic development of these fundamental instincts.

The System of the Virtues

Benevolence

For Panaetius the fundamental virtue was "sociability," a kind of societal fellowship in which the traditional cardinal virtue of justice was joined to benevolence: if the former aims at "giving to each his own," the latter has the task of collaborating in a positive way for the well-being of the community and of placing the person and the possessions of the individual at the disposal of his fellow citizens. The benevolence theorized about by Panae-

tius corresponded perfectly to the life of the Roman aristocrats, who, by their *officia* and donations to their fellow citizens, were able to attract a political following that could raise them to the highest offices of state. *Beneficentia* naturally posed serious problems for Panaetius, and still graver problems in the time of Cicero. It had been seen too often how *largitio*, or in general the corruption of the masses through demagogic proposals, could be a dangerous tool in the hands of unscrupulous individuals who were resolved to turn the state into their private possession. As examples of "unjust" beneficence Cicero cites the agrarian laws and the proposals for debt relief. For this reason Cicero emphasizes that beneficence must not be put in the service of personal ambition.

Greatness of soul

Panaetius had replaced the cardinal virtue of courage with *magnitudo animi*, "greatness of soul," a gentlemanly virtue that springs from a natural instinct to outdo others and shows itself in the ability to impose one's own domination, an ability the Roman people had already displayed before the world. (Within the Roman people itself, greatness of soul is preeminently a virtue of its governing classes.) One observes, however, a kind of paradox: at the base of *magnitudo animi* the *De Officiis* places an almost ascetic disdain for worldly goods such as honors, wealth, and power. To secure advantages for one's friends or for the state presupposes in the one who secures them a firm control over personal desire. Manifest in this view is the desire to confine with strong bonds a virtue that, if not adequately held in check, can become the passion of the tyrannicide or turn against the Republic and senatorial domination (while Cicero was writing, the example of Caesar was still in everyone's mind).

Instinct guided by reason

The example of *magnitudo animi* clearly shows the relation that, in Panaetius's thought and especially in its reworking by Cicero, links *logos*, "reason," to the natural instincts, and it illustrates the social program into which such a theory fits. The task of reason is to control the instincts, to transform them into virtues, emptying them of whatever is egoistic and of dishonest tendency (let us recall the *Somnium Scipionis* [see p. 190]). Once transformed into virtue, instinct can be placed at the service of the community and the state and can contribute actively to rendering the country still greater and more glorious; if there is no transformation, the path is open to anarchy and tyranny. The dialectic of reason and instinct also expresses the contradiction between, on the one hand, the aggressiveness that the *populus Romanus* should display towards the conquered nations, an aggressiveness that in a civil, refined period is also capable of disguising itself as tolerance and humanity, and, on the other hand, the necessity of not allowing such aggressive tendencies to prevail internally, since they would necessarily have self-destructive results.

The Origins of Etiquette

Decorum

In the ethical system of the *De Officiis* the general regulator of the instincts and virtues, which permits them to be integrated into a harmonious whole, is the final virtue, moderation. Externally, to the eyes of others,

it is manifested in a suitable harmony of thoughts, gestures, and words that is called *decorum*. This signifies an ideal of *aequabilitas*, almost of uniformity, which is possible only for the man who has been able to submit his instincts to the firm control of reason. The self-control that Cicero favors pursues a certain goal: the approval of others, which *decorum* allows to be reconciled with order, consistency, and just measure in words and actions. The constant attention to what others may think and the concern not to hurt their feelings are a result of the dense web of social obligations in which the members of the upper classes at Rome find themselves enmeshed.

*An etiquette before
the letter*

Cicero does not eschew entering into detailed rules for the behavior to be adopted in daily life and the usual intercourse with others. In a long section of the *De Officiis* (1.126–140) the author, starting from the modesty with which “obscene” parts of the body need to be treated, lingers in detail over the gestures and attitudes in which *decorum* is or is not shown. He gives advice on toilette and clothing and then provides a long series of rules for conversation, partially suggested by the rules already codified for oratory. Finally, he describes what the Roman aristocrat’s house should be like—large and elegant enough to enhance its owner’s prestige but without pomp and excessive luxury. With these rules Cicero began a tradition of etiquette that was destined to have a long history in Western culture. Yet in Cicero’s day the description of etiquette had not yet become a literary genre in its own right: Cicero’s rules are but one of the sections of a treatise that aims at constructing, on solid philosophical bases, a model of the *vir bonus* that includes the most varied aspects of his existence.

Flexibility and the Pluralism of Values

*The plurality of possible
life choices*

One of the most interesting innovations in the ethical model proposed in the *De Officiis* is that the concept of *decorum* permits a plurality of attitudes and life choices. The appropriateness of the actions and behavior expected of the individual is rooted in each man’s personal qualities and intellectual and moral disposition. Like actors in the theater, each one must play in life the part best suited to his talent; hence the legitimation of choices of life other than the traditional one of pursuing a public career, provided that the person who so undertakes does not forget his duties to the community. In this way there comes about a revaluation in the choices of life that were most suspect in Roman society, such as devoting oneself exclusively to economic matters or to one’s own property or following an intellectual or scientific vocation. The archaic aristocratic model, which saw in politics and service to the state the only activity worthy of a Roman, is thereby shown to be no longer valid. The new demands of society have conferred a previously unthinkable dignity on a number of social figures. The pluralism in models of life accepted by the late Cicero obviously reflects the different vocations and activities of those *boni* from all Italy of whom he had begun to speak in the *Pro Sestio* (see p. 182 f.): in part actively engaged in politics, in part, to the extent that they are absorbed in other activities, the secure supporters of politicians who work to assure the social

*Flexibility of
philosophy*

order. Philosophy cannot but take note of the changes that have occurred. Its specific task remains to reweave the web of values and to transform and make more pliable the ancient model in such a way that the new, emerging figures are not excluded but are absorbed and can be readily integrated.

6. CICERO AS PROSE WRITER: LANGUAGE AND STYLE

*Linguistic purism
and neologisms*

When preparing to write his poem, Lucretius had to complain of the inadequacy of the Roman language for rendering the philosophical terminology of the Greeks (see p. 169). Cicero encountered analogous problems in his philosophical works, and in his rhetorical works, too, he needed to work out a suitable literary terminology. Cicero's decision, like Lucretius's, was basically purist: to avoid Grecisms. Hence a constant, dogged lexical experimentation in the translation of Greek terms, some evidence of which remains in Cicero's correspondence with Atticus. One may mention, for instance, the long period of perplexity after which Cicero decided to translate the Greek *kathekon* by *officium*, or, in rhetorical terminology, his various attempts to find a Latin equivalent of the technical term *periodos*. The result of this experimentation was the introduction of many new words into Latin. Cicero thus laid the foundation for the abstract vocabulary that was to become the inheritance of the European cultural tradition: for example, *qualitas* (*poiotēs*), *quantitas* (*posotes*), *essentia* (*ousia*), and so on.

*Cicero as model for
Western prose*

The careful choice of words was of the utmost importance for achieving clarity of expression. But Cicero's most notable contribution to the evolution of European prose lay in the creation of a complex and harmonious kind of period, based on perfect balance and responson among the parts, the model for which, beginning with his speeches, he found in Isocrates and Demosthenes. Given the ever-present oratorical model, the demands of the ear and of the rhythm are often prominent, but the Ciceronian period also has in general a rigorous logical structure. The creation of such a period involved the elimination of inconsistencies in construction, of anacolutha, of constructions "according to sense," and of the many other forms of incongruence that archaic Latin prose had inherited from the colloquial language. Next came the organization of the phrases in large units that would show an accurate and explicit subordination of the various parts to the leading notion, in other words, the replacement of parataxis (coordination) by hypotaxis (subordination). A perfect capacity for controlling the syntax makes it possible to organize the long and complex, yet always lucid and coherent, periods in which Cicero's pages abound.

*Logical structure and
hypotaxis*

*Variety of the Cice-
ronian style*

If these are the features that best define the outward appearance of the structure of Cicero's discourse, what most strikes the reader is certainly the variety of tones and stylistic registers that come into play, with a great ease of movement among the different stylistic effects. Each of the three degrees of style (simple, moderate, and sublime) can be used suitably in accordance with the corresponding needs of the discourse: *probare*, *delectare*, and *movere*. (It is, of course, a question of knowing where and when to use each,

according to the canonic Greek principle of *to prepon*, "what is fitting.") To each level of style and each expressive register corresponds a suitable collocation of words, an appropriate sonority made of harmony and eurhythm; the *ornatus suavis et adfluens* works through the very form and the sound of the words. In particular the disposition of the words must be such as to follow the *numerus*.

*The numerus and
rhythmic prose*

In practice the *numerus* acts like a system of metrical rules adapted to prose, so that weighty thoughts are given a solemn, steady movement and plain speech is given a familiar intonation. (As a theoretician Cicero legitimately claimed to have devoted more attention to this aspect of discourse than Greek theoreticians had.) The locale for these metrical-rhythmical effects is the *clausula*, that final part of the period in which the listener's ear should be impressed by the effects produced by the succession of feet, for example, the dactyl and paeon for the steady tone, or the iambic sequence for the discursive, familiar tone. Here we cannot treat in detail the effective, skillful variety of Cicero's *clausulae*. It is enough to know that in periodic prose Cicero, an original interpreter of the Greeks, was able to avoid the Asianic excesses of a Hortensius and more nearly approached, in the final analysis, the model of Isocrates, who had been able to combine the use of brief metrical clauses in series with the art of writing periods of ample construction.

7. THE POETIC WORKS

*Ancient judgments
on Cicero as poet*

"With the passage of time," wrote Plutarch in his *Life of Cicero*, "he believed he was not only the greatest orator but also the greatest poet of Rome . . . but as for his poetry, since many great poets came after him, it has remained completely unknown, completely disdained." Cicero alone was deceived about himself and about his fate as a poet. His contemporaries already showed little appreciation; following generations showed none at all. Martial would make him a paradigm of deluded vain ambition: "You will make verses without any inspiration of the Muses, without any assistance from Apollo. Bravo! You share this virtue with Cicero" (*Epigrams* 2.89.3-4). He began very early and continued writing verses for nearly all his life.

Cicero's poems

In his youth Cicero composed short poems on mythological subjects in an Alexandrianizing style: *Glaucus*, in trochaic tetrameters, *Alcyones*, and so on. The *Limon*, probably a miscellaneous work (cf. Suetonius's *Prata*, on which see p. 546), contained among other things a collection of judgments on poets made in verse; one on Terence is preserved, in a fragment. Cicero's most successful poetic work was probably the *Aratea*, a hexameter translation of Aratus's *Phaenomena*, of which considerable portions are extant. Cicero also translated the second section of Aratus's poem under the title *Prognostica*.

There were also epic poems: the *Marius*, which sang of the deeds of the other great man from Arpinum (a youthful work, hardly belonging to his

mature period), and the *De Consulatu Suo*, in three books, composed around 60 to celebrate the year of his glorious battle against Catiline; a large section of the latter has been preserved by Cicero himself in the *De Divinatione*. Of Cicero's works this was the one most ridiculed, already by his contemporaries and then by the literary critics of the first century A.D., not only because of its small poetic value but also because of the tiresome praises the author heaps on himself. Two verses in particular became the targets of criticism: *cedant arma togae, concedat laurea laudi*, and *o fortunatam natam me consule Romam!* The *De Temporibus Suis*, to which Cicero refers in several letters, must have been different but equally self-praising.

The two periods of Cicero's poetry writing

Based on what we can tell from the remains of his youthful verse, Cicero's first attempts at poetry, various in meter and subject, would make him a precursor of the neoterics: inclined towards a certain artistic experimentation though not, properly speaking, Callimachean, a poet of a Hellenistic type but not far removed from the poetics of a Lucilius. His tastes must have quickly made him more of a traditionalist, tied in particular to the archaic model of Ennius, to the point where he was more or less bitterly hostile towards the "modern poets," the *neoteri* or *poetae novi*, as he himself with some disdain termed the representatives of the new poetry that was making a name for itself. Two periods can perhaps be distinguished: the period of his first works, with a taste and manner that was substantially Alexandrian, since it was devoted to short poems of a learned or didactic character; and the period of the epic-historical poems in an Ennian, or at least archaizing, manner. Between these two phases should be placed, in all likelihood, the translation of Aratus's erudite *Phaenomena*. His influence as a versifier, however, must not have been insignificant, at least in the technical-artistic aspects. He contributed not a little to regularizing the Latin hexameter: the position of the caesuras in the verse, for example, and the specialization of certain metrical-verbal forms in clausula. Indeed, the Latin hexameter emerged from his poetic exercises more elegant, certainly more flexible and lively in rhythm, and already in certain regards very close to the structure that it would acquire in the Augustan age. Echoes, especially of the *Aratea*, are to be heard in Lucretius, in Virgil's *Georgics*, and even in Horace and Ovid. If Cicero was a precursor in the technique of the hexameter, his example was probably decisive in attaining greater freedom of expression with word arrangement and in pushing the discourse beyond the rigid confines of the verse. The master of the large, articulated prose period fostered in poetry the development of enjambment and interlocking word order.

Cicero's influence on the Latin hexameter

Enjambment and movement in Cicero's verse

By means of enjambment the logical-syntactic completion of the thought is put off until the following verse; thus some words are artfully thrust forward or held back, and as a result the breathing time needed for the phrase is lengthened. Once the static coincidence is overcome between metrical unit (the six feet of the hexameter) and unit of sense (the completed phrase), the sequence of thoughts can overflow the closed measure of the verse, making a new start and, as it were, invading the space of the next

verse. Another effect of stylistic intensification is created by the interlocking word order, in which two closely linked words are separated by the interposition of other words. The most complex and most elegant case is found in verses such as "aestiferos *validis erumpit flatibus* ignes" or "extremas *medio contingens corpore* terras" or even "corniger *est valido conixus corpore* Taurus," in which the arrangement of the adjective at the beginning of the verse and the noun at the end creates a perceptible, tense split between linked words and at the same time frames the whole verse. This artificial structure, an Alexandrian technique, is destined to find favor with Virgil, too. The force of Cicero's stylistic model can be seen in the fact that all three verses just cited are good examples of that special artificial arrangement of words, Alexandrian in origin, that would be dear to the verse technique of the Augustan age: two adjectives in the first part of the verse, the two corresponding nouns in the last part, and in the middle the verb that acts as hinge, according to the scheme *a b c b a*. (Some philologists call this a "silver verse," reserving the term "golden verse" for the scheme *a b c a b*.) Thus, without yet achieving the expressive effects of the very fluid Augustan hexameter, the Ciceronian hexameter did succeed in creating a metrical-syntactic structure far less static than that created by the archaic hexameter.

Cicero as translator

The best proofs of Cicero's poetic art are his translations from the Greek poets, despite the fact that he often proves to be more magniloquent than capable of true pathos. Still, even in this case, apart from certain defects of emphasis, Cicero persisted and succeeded in realizing his constant program of Latinizing Greek culture; and this too must be accounted a valuable service of his.

8. THE CORRESPONDENCE

Survey of Cicero's correspondence

For understanding Cicero's personality we have at our disposal a tool of incomparable value: a considerable number of the letters he wrote to friends and acquaintances is preserved, along with some letters of reply from them. Cicero's correspondence, in the form in which it has been transmitted to us, comprises sixteen books *Ad Familiares* (to relatives and friends; the letters date from 62 to 43 B.C.), sixteen books *Ad Atticum* (to Atticus, Cicero's best friend throughout his life; the correspondence covers the period from 68 to 44), three books *Ad Quintum Fratrem* (from 60 to 54), and two books *Ad Marcum Brutum* (of disputed authenticity; the letters are all from 43), for a total of around nine hundred letters. These run from 68 to July of 43 (there are none from the year of his consulship) and were published at an unknown date after Cicero's death, edited perhaps, at least the *Ad Familiares*, by his faithful freedman Tiro.

Variety of contents and tones

Cicero's correspondence is rich and varied, its contents ranging from notes scribbled in haste to lively accounts of political events to elaborate letters that resemble short essays; examples of the last include the letter to his brother Quintus on the good governance of a province (*Ad Quintum*

Fratrem 1.1) and the one to Lucceius on the way to write history, an invitation to celebrate Cicero's struggle against Catiline (*Ad Familiares* 5.12). The variety of contents, occasions, and addressees is reflected in the variety of tone: Cicero is now playful, now concerned over political affairs and personal problems to the point of anxiety, now reserved and committed.

A real correspondence

It should be emphasized that these are real letters. When Cicero wrote them, he was not thinking of their publication, as will later be the case with Seneca's correspondence. Thus they show us an unofficial Cicero, who in private confidences reveals openly his sometimes far from edifying behind-the-scenes political moves, his doubts, his frequent uncertainties and hesitations, the highs and lows of his spirits. The character of genuine correspondence is reflected also in the style, which is very different from that of the works intended for publication: Cicero does not avoid periodic constructions, which are often elliptical, slangy, thick with allusions that are occasionally in a kind of code (hence grave problems of interpretation for modern critics), abounding in Grecisms and colloquialisms; the syntax includes much parataxis and many parentheses; the vocabulary is studded with picturesque words, such as diminutives (*aedificatiuncula, ambulatiuncula, diecula, vulticulus, bellus, integellus*, etc.) and Greco-Latin hybrids (*toculio*, "usurer," from Greek *tokos*, "interest"). It is a language that reflects quite faithfully the everyday speech of the Roman upper classes.

Historical value of the correspondence

The exceptional historical value of Cicero's correspondence should not be forgotten. At times approaching what we would regard as a daily newspaper, it allows us to follow day by day the development of political events. Thanks to Cicero's correspondence, the era in which he lived is the one in all of ancient history that we know in greatest detail. Cornelius Nepos (*Life of Atticus* 16) was right to speak of that correspondence as a true and genuine *historia contexta eorum temporum*.

9. CICERO'S LITERARY SUCCESS

Varying judgments of antiquity

Cicero saw himself more as a politician and statesman than as a writer and thinker. So too did most of his contemporaries, who would surely have been surprised, if not perplexed, by his subsequent canonization as the greatest writer of Latin prose and one of the founding authors of the Western literary tradition. This may be why many of the contemporary reactions we can discern to Cicero as a writer are distinctly negative. His style was opposed by the Atticist orators as being too ornate, was criticized by Asinius Pollio for carelessness, lack of pure *Latinitas*, and overabundant metaphors, and was rejected by Sallust, who preferred archaic vocabulary and nervous, brief phrases to Cicero's rotund diction and stately periods. But already Velleius Paterculus foretells that his fame will last forever (2.66.5), and Seneca the Elder says he rivals the Greek orators (*Contr.* 1 *praef.* 6).

An anti-Ciceronian alternative was perfected later in the first century A.D. in the paratactic, pointed style of Seneca the Younger, but the same century saw the beginning of Cicero's canonization as a prose author in the

schools (when exactly Cicero first became a school author is uncertain). In the middle of that century, Q. Asconius Pedianus wrote a commentary on Cicero's speeches, putting them into chronological order and attacking one traditional dating as false. And by the end of the century Quintilian could oppose the fashion for Seneca by establishing Cicero as the infallible master of rhetorical theory and the unsurpassable practitioner of oratorical eloquence. As Quintilian puts it, "For posterity the name of Cicero has come to be regarded not as the name of a man, but as the name of eloquence itself. Let us therefore fix our eyes on him, take him as our pattern, and let the student realise that he has made real progress if he is a passionate admirer of Cicero" (*Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.112, trans. Butler). A compelling negative proof of Cicero's canonical status at this time is provided by Larcus Licinus's polemical treatise "Ciceromastix," a title otherwise reserved only for Homer and Virgil. In the next generation, Pliny the Younger explicitly took him as his model (*Epistles* 4.8.4), and Tacitus imitated his style in his *Dialogus*; and in the second century even such archaizers as Aulus Gellius and Fronto continue at least to pay lip service to Cicero as a master of style, even if their own tastes in fact inclined towards greater austerity and less grandiloquence.

Through the rest of antiquity he remained a standard author in the schools. The speeches were read far more than the theoretical texts, and among the speeches the *Catilinarians* and the *Verrines* were the most popular. The scholarly commentaries that had begun at least as early as Asconius Pedianus continued throughout late antiquity. In the fourth century C. Marius Victorinus wrote commentaries to the philosophical and rhetorical treatises, Macrobius and Eulogius wrote on the *Somnium Scipionis*, and Boethius wrote on the *Topics*. As the example of Boethius suggests, Cicero's prestige was scarcely if at all diminished by the advent of Christianity. Lactantius was called the Christian Cicero, Jerome could dream with horror that he was not a Christian but a Ciceronian, and Augustine could take him as a model for style, for public oratory, and for philosophy. More identifiable Latin papyri of Cicero survive than of any other Latin author except Virgil—there are three papyri of the *Catilinarians* alone, including two used to teach Latin to Greek speakers—and surviving manuscripts of Cicero include three palimpsest fragments from the fifth century.

Middle Ages

From the very beginning of the Middle Ages, Cicero was one of the most important mediators of ancient ideas and values and a teacher of philosophy and rhetoric. Already Bede collected his famous sayings, Alcuin based a short rhetorical treatise upon the *De Inventione*, and Einhard quoted the *Tusculan Disputations* and imitated several speeches; and Cicero remained a school author throughout the Middle Ages. The Cicero of the Middle Ages, unlike that of pagan antiquity, is above all the philosopher, especially the political philosopher. To be sure, in the Middle Ages Cicero was revered as "king of eloquence," and the speeches were, at least to a small extent, in circulation (unlike the letters to Atticus, which were completely unknown), but they survived only in small groups in medieval manuscripts

that did not start to be put together until the end of the eleventh century (and as late as about 1150 Wibald of Corvey's large collection of Cicero's speeches, philosophical and rhetorical treatises, and letters *ad familiares* seems never to have been copied). But despite the relative popularity of certain speeches (again the *Catilinarians* and the *Verrines*, now with the addition of the *Philippics*), on the whole the speeches tended to circulate more in the form of excerpts in *florilegia* than intact and in their own right. With the collapse of the ideal of pagan eloquence, for the first time Cicero's philosophical writings began to exert more influence than his speeches: Chaucer bases the *Parliament of Fowls* upon the *Somnium Scipionis* but otherwise shows no trace of acquaintance with Cicero's works; Dante neglects Cicero's speeches and letters and does not include Cicero among the best prose authors but is familiar with the *Laelius* (with which he consoles himself when Beatrice dies), *Cato*, *De Officiis*, and *De Finibus*.

Renaissance

Petrarch's fascination with Cicero both as a writer and as a man paved the way for the Renaissance's canonization of Cicero as ideal thinker, stylist, and statesman and led to Cicero's replacement of Virgil as the dominant Latin author among the humanists. Petrarch, who preferred Cicero to Aristotle as ethic to logic, saw enacted in Cicero's career the fundamental oppositions between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* and between politics and philosophy, and he was followed in this by such humanists as Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, who found in Cicero's ideal of *urbanitas* an ancient model for the republican culture of the Renaissance city-state. One consequence was that Petrarch was the first to separate systematically the speeches from the other works. But Petrarch also rediscovered Cicero's *Pro Archia*, in 1333 at Liège, and, above all, his letters to Atticus, Quintus, and Brutus, in 1345 at the chapter library in Verona, whereupon he immediately wrote a letter to Cicero to tell him of the discovery (this is the first of Petrarch's letters to dead authors). Such discoveries inaugurated the febrile humanist search for further writings of the master. In 1355 Boccaccio unearthed the *Pro Cluentio*; in 1389 Colluccio Salutati rediscovered the letters *ad familiares* (which Petrarch never knew); in 1415 Poggio Bracciolini found the *Pro Murena* and the *Pro Roscio Amerino* in Cluny and five other speeches in Langres, Cologne, and other cities; and in 1421 Landriani found a manuscript with the *De Oratore*, the *Orator*, and the *Brutus* at the cathedral library of Lodi (after which these works, not widely known in the Middle Ages, started to overshadow such other previously dominant rhetorical treatises as the *De Inventione* and the spurious *Ad Herennium*). But despite the humanist interest in Cicero's person (expressed often in the form of severe criticisms), which led to his letters becoming among his most frequently read and quoted works, the philosophical treatises remained extremely popular. The Renaissance was especially fond of the *Cato*, of which about 350 fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts have been found (this text was also a favorite of the Middle Ages: about 50 medieval manuscripts have survived), but the *Laelius* was also widely read (Theodorus Gaza translated both treatises into Greek during the fifteenth

century). The *Somnium Scipionis*, understood as a program for a renaissance of ancient ideals, became the object of frequent commentaries (so by Vives), and the *De Officiis* was the first classical text to be printed, at Mainz in 1465, followed soon after by the rhetorical treatises.

Cicero has played an important role in modern history and political thought as a symbol of moderatism and a martyr to tyranny; yet his tendency to privilege liberty over equality and democracy, and the cultured upper classes over the plebs, has exerted an influence that has not always been beneficent. In stylistics, Cicero triggered a Renaissance controversy about the proper prose style to be adopted by the modern writer, which may strike us nowadays as trivial but which permitted the articulation of fundamental oppositions between changeless taste and historical evolution, between imitation and creativity, between past and present—the controversy between, on the one hand, the Ciceronians, who considered only Cicero himself a model worthy to be followed and attacked the usage of words and constructions exemplified only from other authors (so Poggio Bracciolini and Pietro Bembo), and, on the other hand, the anti-Ciceronians, who admitted many models (so Lorenzo Valla, Pico della Mirandola, and Politian). As late as 1528 Erasmus, who in the preface to his edition of the *Tusculan Disputations* of 1523 had declared that Cicero had been saved as a Christian, published an anti-Ciceronian *Ciceronianus*, which was attacked three years later by J. C. Scaliger; and indeed the issues involved continued to be debated wherever Latin prose composition was taught, until even recent times. Even when Latin ceased to be the sole language for learned public discourse in Europe, Cicero remained a powerful model for vernacular eloquence, not least because his writings continued to be held up as a model to many generations of schoolchildren. Thus, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many neo-Ciceronian writers, such as Bossuet, Swift, Addison, Dr. Johnson, Burke, and Gibbon, favored a periodic, Latinate style, while in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries political oratory in a self-consciously Ciceronian mode enjoyed a renaissance in England (Pitt, Burke, Fox, and Sheridan), France (Robespierre), and America (Webster).

But with Romanticism's preference for Greek over Latin and for *Volk* over elites, Cicero's fortunes began a decline from which they have never fully recovered. Their nadir was reached in the nineteenth century with Theodor Mommsen's stinging attack upon Cicero as an unprincipled opportunist, a mere rhetorician, in his treatises a flabby journalist and in his speeches a shifty lawyer. Since then scholars have worked to rescue Cicero's reputation in many particulars; his gradual disappearance from the schools has at least permitted his creative style and his inventive rhetorical strategies to be newly rediscovered; and the experience of recent times of convulsion and crisis has made his own achievements under comparably difficult circumstances seem less facile and more worthy of respect. So Cicero has once again won the respect he deserves—but not the love he once enjoyed. It is hard to imagine that he will ever

again achieve the cultural centrality he possessed in the generations following Petrarch.

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Latin Literature

A HISTORY

Translated by Joseph B. Solodow

Revised by Don Fowler and Glenn W. Most

1994

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS
BALTIMORE AND LONDON