Cicero, statesmanship, and republicanism in Roman historiography

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CHAPTER THREE

Plutarch, Seneca, and Cassius Dio on Cicero's ethical competence

1. Introduction: From exemplarity to ethical competence

1.1 EXEMPLARS AS ETHICAL LEADERS

In the previous chapter, we saw that the discourse of exemplarity is all about ethical conduct: *exempla* are vehicles for expressing ethical norms and values for the present. The figure of Cicero could be a suitable model of civic virtue for early imperial writers—though perhaps in less distinct ways than his contemporary Cato. In the *exempla* discussed in chapter 2, leadership constituted a large part of exemplary action. The early imperial writers not only present models of behaviour, they also reflect on the manner in which the deeds and words of these models are publicly admired and followed (imitated). The *exempla* about Cato especially show what a moral paragon can do in a leading position; he could encourage other Roman citizens to consider the meaning of 'true' republican values and lead them to adjust their moral standards. In this chapter, I will further explore the relationship between moral excellence and (exemplary) leadership, focusing particularly on the presence of these qualities in the imperial portrayal of Cicero. What kind of moral criteria does a Roman statesman have to meet in order to become a guide of conduct for his fellow citizens?

To be able to answer this question, we will have to shift the focus of our discussion from the perception or commemoration of exemplary deeds to the responsibilities and ethical awareness of the exemplary agent. We will concentrate on 'operation one' of Matthew Roller's model: the action itself, or rather the individual's decision to undertake the action.[1]

The type of moral leadership that Roman exemplars represent, which teaches others about virtue and vice, is a popular subject in the social sciences. It is from this field that we will borrow some terminological tools for this chapter. Leadership, as it was thematized in chapter 2, possesses a double meaning: on the one hand, it encompasses the public function of figures like Cicero and Cato, who were senators and magistrates of the Republic; on the other hand, leadership also connotes the moral-didactic relationship between an exemplar and his followers, who are induced to imitate the exemplar's behaviour. Modern leadership studies provide a concept that combines the institutional with the moral aspect: ethical leadership, which is thought to be one of the most successful leadership styles. The following overview shows how well the modern concept of the ethical leader maps onto the construct of the Roman exemplar:[2]

- Ethical leaders are *principled* persons who have a clear sense of right and wrong;
- they have a reputation for being *ethically competent*;
- their character is associated among other things with *integrity*, honesty, and conscientiousness;
- they are known to *care* for their community;
- they have the moral *courage* to "uphold their moral values even in the face of significant external pressures, adversity, or risks".[3]

Ethical leadership rests on the principle of role modeling: a good ethical leader 'infects', as it were, his followers with the norms and values

[1] See chapter 2, § 1.2.1.

[2] Brown & Treviño 2006: 602: "ethical leaders are exemplary models". Compare the remark by Heres & Lasthuizen 2013: 52, "ethical leadership is, to an important extent, in the eye of the beholder" with Langlands 2018: 37, "the issue of evaluation, and of how one judges what is worthwhile and what is appropriate, is fundamental to Roman exemplary ethics".

[3] Heres & Lasthuizen 2013: 53.

that are appropriate in a specific moral context.[4] The agreeable and conscientious nature of ethical leaders together with their extraordinary care for others in the community makes them highly successful.[5] One of the most important criteria for ethical leadership is to "walk the talk and talk the walk", that is, to remain consistent in the decisions one makes and the actions one undertakes; this also includes (publicly) reflecting on the ethical implications of one's behaviour.[6]

I choose to use the concept of ethical leadership as complementary to the framework of exemplarity, just as I have already applied it in chapter 2. The criterium of ethical reflection especially connects the discourses of exemplarity and ethical leadership. Rebecca Langlands has argued convincingly that exemplary stories are tools for teaching the essentials of Roman ethics; not only do *exempla* provide moral lessons, they also appeal to one's cognitive and critical skills to the extent that they stimulate reflection about the meaning of virtue and vice, and cultivate the ability to discern which moral action is required under which circumstances.[7] While Langlands' research concentrates primarily on the ethical dynamics evoked by exemplary stories, I would like to highlight the act of moral discernment on the part of the individual setting the *exemplum*. In Langlands' theory it is implied that Roman citizens who have successfully completed the trajectory of learning from *exempla* will be individuals who are competent enough to become ethical models themselves, but the thesis of her book mainly explores ethical competencies as the end result of the process of exemplarity, not as the basis for exemplary conduct. Let us, then, have a closer look at the relevance of such ethical competencies for becoming a Roman exemplar and ethical leader.

[4] Brown & Treviño 2006: 600–602; Heres & Lasthuizen 2013: 59–60. I will stay away from the term 'role model' in the analyses below and prefer to use the term 'leader' or 'model'; this is partly due to the confusion within classical scholarly discussions of exemplarity over the difference between 'exempla' and 'role models': see chapter 2, § 1.2.2.

[5] This is shown by modern empirical research, see Heres & Lasthuizen 2013: 64.

[6] *Ibid*. 55–57. Cf. Menzel & Cooper 2013: 20 and Brown & Treviño 2006: 595–597.

[7] With regard to the functions of exemplary stories, Langlands 2018: 128 lists not only traditional ones like "creating aspiration" and "modeling excellent behaviour", but also "promoting self-reflection, enabling epistemological progress, testing precepts and assumptions, honing moral judgment and exploring complex ethical ideas".

1.2 ETHICAL COMPETENCE

As mentioned above, one of the criteria for being an ethical leader is having the stamp of ethical competence. Not easily captured in a few words, within leadership theory ethical competence entails "the quest for knowledge and action that defines right and wrong behaviour".[8] Ethical competence relies on the individual's mediating between their cognitive skill to absorb moral rules and standards (of a certain ethical context or, we might say, of a community) and their capacity to implement actively this ethical knowledge in private as well as professional behaviour. Donald Menzel's influential definition of ethical competence (fig. 1) is based on six sub-competencies, which reinforce and interact with each other—hence the cyclical structure. Commitment

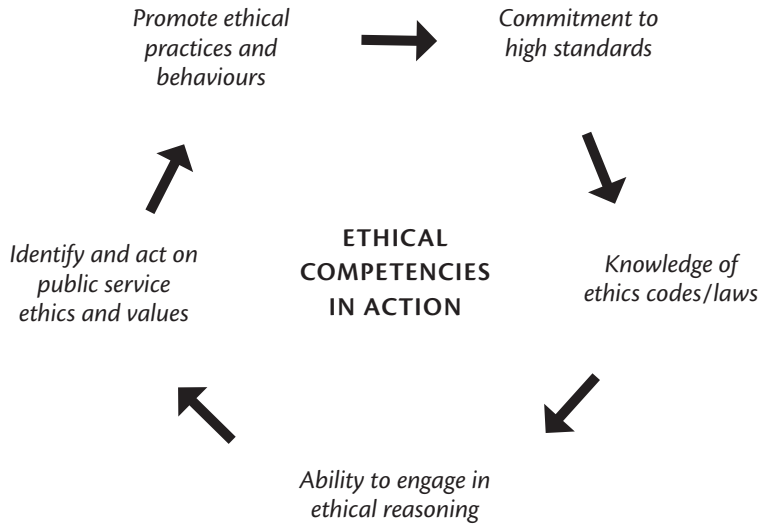

Fig. 1 – The dynamics of ethical competence (From: Menzel 2013)

to high standards, knowledge of ethics codes and the ability to engage in ethical reasoning are all internal assets; the final two competencies concern external or public actions. Menzel's definition demands an

[8] Menzel 2018: 1752.

individual who is committed to high moral standards, who has knowledge of the appropriate ethical code(s) within a community, and who is able to reflect on this code. Most importantly, the ethical code is applied in the management of public situations, with the complementary aim of promoting correct ethical practices among others. The ethically competent person gains a leading role by having the ability to reflect openly on the moral complexity of these situations; they thereby stimulate similar behaviour in others, and increase the interest in addressing moral issues.[9]

1.3 A ROMAN MODEL OF ETHICAL COMPETENCE

When Menzel designed his inclusive model of ethical competence, he was mainly thinking about how leadership functions in modern organizations. It can, however, be applied to any community or organizational system where social cohesion is strong and where there is a clear relation between a leading individual and a collective. Applied to the political community of Rome (fig. 2),[10] the ethical competencies of a Roman statesman could be defined along the following lines. Starting from the top right of the model, the first competency, a commitment to high moral standards, resembles the Roman emphasis on *virtus* as crucial to the understanding of goodness and social status. The second competency, knowledge of the ethics codes or laws, consists of Roman ethical education, which included the study of philosophy but which also, for example, entailed a thorough knowledge of the *mos maiorum*.[11]

[9] It is true that the terms 'ethical' and 'moral' are usually employed interchangeably. James McGregor Burns 2014 draws a distinction between ethical virtues, ethical values, and moral values. The first he defines as "Ten Commandments" rules, "old-fashioned" ideas about personal conduct; the second as values relating to honesty, integrity and accountability; the third as values pertaining to liberty, equality, justice, and community. Without subscribing fully to such a complex categorization, I think that, in general, ethical relates rather to an abstract, philosophical way of thought that strives to define good and bad within a given cultural context, while moral often refers to the social effects and the public evaluation of specific conduct; ethical is therefore associated with cognitive abilities, and moral less so. In what follows, I will make use of these terms in accordance with this tentative distinction.

[10] Since the scope of this chapter is defined by the actions of magistrates or state leaders, we are necessarily looking at elite layers of society and male members of the aristocracy.

[11] On the traditional Roman focus on morality and national history, with the *mos maiorum* as 'code de vie noble' and pedagogical framework at the same time, Marrou 1965: 342–351. At 346, he

Fig. 2 – Menzel 2013 adapted: A possible model for Roman ethical competence

Next, the Roman statesman would be expected to be able to use this knowledge for reflecting on ethical problems in his daily life, i.e. he should bring Roman ethics into practice. The fourth competency for a Roman statesman would be to act according to the correct ethical norms and values in his *public* activities. As a magistrate, he was expected to illustrate what is and is not appropriate Roman behaviour. His final competency would be to promote Roman values actively in his public speeches and administrative tasks, setting models of conduct for his peers and the people and activating their sensibility for debating questions of morality. It should be noted that in applying this model to the literary texts below, I will not address all these ethical competencies separately. In practice, as we will see, the texts do not allow us to make a sharp distinction between the personal ability to bring ethical knowledge into practice and the action of publicly reflecting on moral values.

Despite its schematic nature, which obviously simplifies the reality of (Roman) moral thinking, Menzel's model does help us in two ways. It attempts to explain the mechanism by which appropriate norms and

values are transmitted from exemplars to followers; and it focuses on the manner in which ethically competent individuals *themselves* translate their virtue and their knowledge of the ethical code into morally approved behaviour. That is to say, the ethical competence model integrates an aspect of cognitive and moral competence on the part of the leader that theoretical models of exemplarity usually lack.

Now, as for Cicero, whose philosophical writings made a great contribution to Roman political ethics and who personified the ideal of the intellectually trained politician, one would imagine that he scored highly on all ethical competencies, and for this reason could also be considered a veritable ethical leader. But, as we have seen in chapter 2, his leadership skills are not all that visible in the early imperial tradition. In the texts under examination in the present chapter, we will see that the perception of Cicero's leadership does not change much throughout the imperial period. Moreover, and this is what the current chapter will explore in detail, his ethical-philosophical qualities are not such a straightforward part of his reputation either. Cicero's status as philosopher is a dubious feature of his reception in the historiographical texts of the empire. For one thing, his political-philosophical writings are almost entirely neglected. Plutarch, for example, makes note of Cicero's writing activities in the period that Caesar was dictator, but draws no connections between Cicero's philosophical theory and his public career.[12] However, in their narratives of Cicero's life both Plutarch and Cassius Dio suggest that he would have fared better had he stuck to his philosophical studies.[13] Cicero's philosophy is always looming in the background of the imperial narratives, right because it is the *absence of philosophy* that led to the critique on Cicero's conduct.[14]

Cicero fulfilled his own share in this process. He actively developed the image of defender of his country by means of a rhetoric that spoke greatly to the people of the city of Rome. He also carefully developed an image of himself as *vox publica*, the voice of the people, in

observes: "l'essentiel est de former la conscience de l'enfant ou du jeune homme, de lui inculquer un système rigide de valeurs morales, des réflexes sûrs, un style de vie."

[12] Cf. *Cic.* 40–41, on Cicero's literary pursuits during Caesar's dictatorship.

[13] Plut. *Cic.* 5.1–2, where the oracle of Delphi is said to have discouraged Cicero from embarking upon a political career; Cass. Dio 38.18–29, the dialogue between Cicero and the mysterious philosopher Philiscus, who admonishes Cicero to quit politics, and predicts his death.

[14] A similar observation is made in Swain 1990.

the speeches that he published during his life.[15] Students of Cicero's oeuvre know that he used the same powerful voice to philosophize about statesmanship and the status of Roman politics. Yet, in the public speeches there was little space for theoretical musings. The historiographers seem to have been aware that, to use John Dugan's words, "his training and deeply ingrained habits as an orator appear to have rendered him a person constantly negotiating rhetorical problems and acutely self-conscious of the sort of *ethos* he was presenting to his varied audiences."[16] Imperial readers of Cicero's oratory might have gotten the impression that his intellectual talents were employed mainly on behalf of party politics and his own contentious honour; Cicero's eloquence would have been the kind that was pandering exclusively to the public gaze.

In the sections below, we will examine Cicero's ethical competencies according to the model discussed above. We will look at the perception of Cicero's *virtus*, his respect for the Roman ethics code, his practical implementation of ethical-philosophical precepts, and his capacity for promoting moral behaviour in others. The final aim is to gain more insight into the reasons why Cicero lacked the image of the ethical leader, someone whose ethical excellence can be considered as inspiring and edifying.

1.4 TEXTS

The authors and texts in this chapter have been selected on the basis of their explicit analysis of Cicero's moral or immoral behaviour, in the hope that my discussion will offer a solid basis for evaluating more implicit judgments about Cicero's political reputation. Like the next chapter, the present chapter has a strong focus on Greek literature. This means that many valuable testimonia regarding Cicero's ethical leadership will not be considered here, such as Quintilian's nuanced judgment of Cicero as *vir bonus*, a good man who, however, was not without fault; the recurring praise for Cicero as *orator oratorum* in Taci-

[15] See Pieper, Van der Velden & Jansen 2022.
[16] Dugan 2005: 334.

tus' *Dialogus*; or the portrait by Pliny the Elder in which Cicero is elevated as a good republican citizen.[17]

I will devote special attention to Cassius Dio's portrait of Cicero. This portrait is usually regarded as being highly negative and influenced by anti-Ciceronian invective.[18] I aim to nuance this view by addressing the intellectual discussion that is at the bottom of Dio's approach to Cicero's character and his actions. In order to properly value Dio's account we require a certain sensibility for the cultural discourse in which his work is embedded and especially for imperial concepts of political leadership. Therefore, I will approach Dio's work from a broader perspective, by comparing and contrasting it with the theories of statesmanship in the works of Plutarch and Seneca, two of the most important philosophical writers of the imperial era. While Dio was born almost a century after Seneca's death and at least thirty years after Plutarch's, he knew Seneca's writings,[19] and he used Plutarch's work for his own history.[20] Regardless of any direct connections between the works of these writers, all of them were participants in the cultural debates pertinent to intellectual life under the empire; they touch upon the same themes and repeatedly reflect on the republican past as well as on political life under imperial rule. The figure of Cicero is an important part of this reflection on Rome's past: Cicero's life offers insight into the ambitions, experiences, and disappointments of the senatorial elite in Rome, to which Seneca and Dio belonged and to which Plutarch was closely connected.

With regard to the necessity of virtue for a political leader, the need for philosophical education, and the practical application of philosophical tenets, Plutarch and Seneca show great similarities in thought. Both argue from a common framework of exemplarity, in which great men from the past function as models for behaviour.[21] The analyses

[17] Compare Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.112 with 11.1.22–24; Tac. *Dial.* 22; Plin. *HN* 7.116–117.

[18] Millar 1964: 46–55 is the most often quoted example of this attitude. See also Millar 1961; Van Stekelenburg 1971: 25; Gowing 1992 and 1998 ("[Dio] views him chiefly a a meddling, irritating man who thoughtlessly impeded Rome's conversion to monarchy", 1998: 383); Lintott 1997: 2514–2515; Welch 2019 ("[Dio's] judgment that Cicero was a weak politician and a failed philosopher", 105). More nuanced views in Kemezis 2014: 111n.46 and Montecalvo 2014: 7–14.

[19] Cass. Dio 61.10.2; see below.

[20] Martinelli 2000 reviews 19 different instances of Dio using Plutarch as a source; cf. Hose 1994: 420. Christopher Pelling is especially good at noting the similarities between Plutarch and Dio; for an example regarding the account of the Catilinarian conspiracy, see Pelling 2002: 46.

below, which present their Roman and Greek perspective in parallel, will show that there are many similarities between their theories about politicial participation in society. Such a juxtaposition will allow us to think beyond a 'Greek' and 'Latin' tradition, and to consider the narrative of Cicero's political conduct as one that is shared across traditions, and which is part of Roman standards of morality maintained by the intellectual elite across the empire. Moreover, Plutarch's work complements Seneca's civic philosophy in interesting ways. As Rebecca Langlands has recently noted, the Greek philosopher gives expression to the Roman practice of exemplarity in a way that none of the Latin writers do.[22] Despite or perhaps rightly because of the Greek prism through which he regards Roman politics, Plutarch is an extremely useful source for analyzing the perception of political behaviour in the Roman world.

By comparing the ideas of Plutarch, Seneca and Cassius Dio, I hope to show not only that their perceptions of Cicero's political reputation are quite well in accord with each other, but I also aim to illuminate the similarities in outlook between these two Greek intellectuals and Rome-raised Seneca with regard to what it means to be a good citizen and a successful political leader.[23] All maintain a strong focus on exemplary behaviour, the importance of which is not necessarily located in the deeds themselves but in the manner in which the (historical) individuals cope with their failures and successes.

The plan of this chapter is twofold. § 2 will be a case study of Cicero's inability to discern the moral boundaries of public conduct. This

[21] Within Plutarchan scholarship, the question that has occupied scholars most is the matter of what I call below 'the ethics of imitation' (cf. n. 91), i.e. the process of imitation and emulation evoked by the description of the lives of great men from history: see in particular the work by Tim Duff e.g. 1999, 2008; Whitmarsh 2001, see esp. 55–56; Pelling 2002: 237–251; Stadter 2014: 231–245. Cf. Langlands 2020 for a recent discussion of these earlier views. Plutarch's fascination with 'great men in history' inspired a vast corpus of literature about the Plutarchan ideal of statesmanship; good studies with further bibliography are Squilloni 1989; Van Raalte 2004; De Blois 2008; Desideri 2011; Fulkerson 2012; Stadter 2014: 215–245. Beneker 2016 discusses the biographies of Cicero and Demosthenes with regard to political virtue.

[22] Langlands 2020: 93. Also essential in this respect are Pérez Jiménez 2002, who connects the 'topos of imitation' within Plutarch's work with the discourse of exemplarity; and Jacobs 2020 discusses how the 'heroes' of Plutarch's *Lives* are seen to respond to and imitate the ethical and political conduct, i.e. *exempla*, of heroes from the other *Lives*. Brenk 2008 is slightly reproductive but still relevant. Mayer 2008 is the classic study of exempla in Seneca's work.

[23] For Cassius Dio and Plutarch's connection to Rome, I refer to the Introduction.

theme becomes most prominent in the imperial discussion of his licentious style of speaking, or παρρησία. *Parrhēsia* is known as the motor of Athenian democracy, a critical faculty which all Athenian citizens could publicly employ to protect their community against mismanagement and harmful leadership. However, when Plutarch and Cassius Dio describe Cicero's *parrhēsia*, it has no beneficial effect at all. As I will argue below, not he but Cato will become the counterpart to typical Demosthenic *parrhēsia*, "truth-to-power" frankness.[24]

Cicero's lack of ethical competence and the larger question of his failure to integrate philosophy into his political career will be addressed in § 3. The Greek historiographers' projection of sophistic and philosophical ideas on Cicero's career turn him into an ambiguous, almost disappointing public figure who did not live up to his potential. One of the passages in imperial literature that is most illustrative of this attitude but often misunderstood, is Cassius Dio's representation of Cicero's exile in book 38 of the *Roman History*. In order to grasp the intellectual stakes in the imperial debate about Cicero's failure to 'philosophize', we will examine which ethical competencies are required of imperial statesmen on the basis of Senecan and Plutarchan political philosophy. In the works of both writers, Cicero's political conduct is used as an example of the improper translation of ethical awareness into public action.

2. Cicero's failure to speak frankly

One of the most explicit—and harshest—analyses of Cicero's political conduct is found in book 38 of Cassius Dio's history. Book 38 is dedicated to the years 59–58 BC. The beginning of book 38 centres on Caesar's rising power and the tumultuous situation in the senate, which was the result of his unprecedented legal measures. The second major plot of book 38 concerns Cicero's personal vendetta with Caesar and Clodius, which resulted in his exile.[25] Cicero would have plotted

[24] For the notion of truth-to-power παρρησία, see SACKS 2018: 51–53, 56–57.

[25] For a recent and extremely thorough analysis of this story plot, see BURDEN-STREVENS 2020: 53–60.

against the lives of Caesar and Pompey, together with Lucullus.[26] He also openly abuses Caesar in a speech given on behalf of his former co-consul Antonius Hybrida, accusing him of complicity in the Catilinarian affair; the abuse (λοιδορεῖν) is mentioned separately by the historiographer as an outrageous 'feature' of the speech.[27] Caesar ('normally so sanguine')[28] forms a pact with Clodius to remove Cicero from the political scene. The historiographer explains that it was a challenge to destroy a man with so much power in the state due to the force of his rhetoric (ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ διὰ τὴν τῶν λόγων δεινότητα δυνάμενον).[29] Clodius decided to appeal not only to the people but also to the equestrians and the senate, around whom, so Dio claims, Cicero pulled the strings not because of their appreciation of him but rather because of their fear of him (ἅτε καὶ διὰ φόβον μᾶλλον ἢ δι᾽ εὔνοιαν ἰσχύοντα).[30]

Cicero was feared because of his frank speech, for which Dio uses the classical Athenian term *parrhēsia*. We would expect that the ability to speak freely is a positive quality in the context of republican politics, but in Dio's eyes it is not:

> Παμπληθεῖς γὰρ ἐκ τῶν λόγων ἐλύπει, καὶ οὐκ ἐς τοσοῦτον οἵ τι ὠφελούμενοι ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ᾠκειοῦντο ἐς ὅσον οἱ βλαπτόμενοι ἠλλοτριοῦντο. πρὸς γάρ τοι τῷ τοὺς πλείους τῶν ἀνθρώπων προχειρότερον ἐπὶ τοῖς δυσχερεστέροις ἀγανακτεῖν ἢ τῶν ἀμεινόνων χάριν τισὶν ἔχειν, καὶ τοῖς μὲν συναγορεύσασί σφισιν ἀποδεδωκέναι τὸν μισθὸν νομίζειν, τοὺς δ᾽ ἀντιδικήσαντας ἀμύνεσθαι τρόπον τινὰ προαιρεῖσθαι, πικροτάτους ἐχθροὺς ἑαυτῷ ἐποίει περιεῖναί τε καὶ τῶν κρατίστων ἀεί ποτε ἐπιχειρῶν καὶ τῇ παρρησίᾳ πρὸς πάντας ὁμοίως ἀκράτῳ καὶ κατακορεῖ χρώμενος, ἅτε καὶ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ δύνασθαι συνεῖναί τε καὶ εἰπεῖν ἅ μηδεὶς ἄλλος, καὶ πρὸ τοῦ χρηστὸς εἶναι δοκεῖν, θηρώμενος. ἔκ τε οὖν τούτου, καὶ διότι μέγιστόν τε ἀνθρώπων ηὔχει καὶ οὐδένα ἐξ ἴσου ἑαυτῷ ἤγεν, ἀλλὰ ἔν τε τοῖς λόγοις ὁμοίως καὶ ἐν τῷ βίῳ πάντας τε ὑπερεφρόνει καὶ ἰσοδίαιτος οὐδενὶ ἠξίου

[26] Cass. Dio 38.9.2; cf. App. *B. Civ.* 2.12.43, who claims the plotters were Cato, Bibulus and Cicero. On Dio's version of this "Conspiracy of Vettius", see Montecalvo 2014: 174–181. The conspiracy is evidenced by *Att.* 2.24 and several speeches, where Cicero exculpates himself. It is not clear why Dio would choose to implicate Cicero in the plot other than for the narratological reason of strengthening the image of Cicero as warmonger.

[27] Cass. Dio 38.10.4–11.2.

[28] *Ibid.* 38.11.3.

[29] *Ibid.* 38.12.4.

[30] *Ibid.* The use of fear as a political weapon is a common Dionean topos, see Kuhn-Chen 2002: 174–176.

[31] Cass. Dio 38.12.6–7.

εἶναι, φορτικός τε καὶ ἐπαχθὴς ἦν, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων καὶ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν ἐκείνων οἷς ἤρεσκε, καὶ ἐφθονεῖτο καὶ ἐμισεῖτο.[31]

For he had hurt a great many people by his speeches, and those who were helped by him were not drawn to his side in the same degree as those he offended were alienated from him. For, besides the fact that the majority of men are more inclined to be annoyed about nastiness than to be thankful to someone for favours done, and that they believe that they have paid their advocates the due amount, whereas their goal is to avenge themselves in some way on their opponents, Cicero made himself bitter enemies by always attacking the most powerful men and by applying to all alike a frankness of speech that was intemperate and excessive, since he was in pursuit of a reputation for being knowledgeable and for saying what nobody else could, more than for appearing to be a good citizen. For this reason, and because he was the greatest boaster alive[32] and considered nobody to be on a par with himself, but in his speeches just as in life looked down on everybody and did not deem anybody to live on equal footing with him—for this reason he was burdensome and annoying, and as a result he was even begrudged and hated by the very people he favoured.

In Dio's eyes, Cicero's frankness is destructive. It is intemperate (ἄκρατος) and excessive (κατακορής), and due to his extravagant openness Cicero consciously evoked ill-will (φθόνος) among his fellow citizens. Cicero's litigious speech forms a theme in the invective tradition and in Plutarch's writings as well, but Dio is the only one to apply the Greek notion of *parrhēsia* to his behaviour.[33] While every student of Cicero could think of a couple of reasons why the orator may be blamed for excessive rhetoric, it is more difficult to understand why a Greek intellectual such as Dio, having been educated to appreciate the bold speaking of his Athenian ancestors, would find fault with political frankness at all.

In fact, as I will demonstrate below, the fault lies not in the use of *parrhēsia* as such, but in Cicero's failure to implement certain ethical values in his application of frankness—or, as Dio phrases it, in his disinterest in being a 'good' citizen (χρηστός).[34] In this chapter we

[32] I follow the unrivalled translation by WHITE 1914.

[33] See [Sall.] *Inv. in Cic.* 2.1 (*immoderata eloquentia*), 6.1; Plut. *Cic.* 25–27 (examples of Cicero's licentious speech), cf. 38.2–6. Cf. VAN DER BLOM 2019: 44, 47–48.

[34] WELCH 2019 gives a good overview of Dio's concept of (civic) virtue.

will examine the virtue of speaking frankly as a specific quality of the good statesman. Originally the watchword of fifth-century Athenian politics, in the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period it became an essential instrument for moral improvement in the counsel of rulers as well as the private context of friendship.[35] This 'therapeutic' use of *parrhēsia* continues to characterize the imperial discourse on statesmanship. I will argue that Plutarch and Dio envisage frank speech as inherent to the conduct of the good leader who has a guiding role towards his superiors and the people. Even though, in Dio's case, *parrhēsia* is seen as the main drive behind Roman republican oratory, the interpretation of its role in political debate is based on the premise that *parrhēsia* should be deployed with the purpose of moral advancement. Cicero's 'frank' criticism does not conform to this ideal. His use of *parrhēsia* reflects, in fact, the counterside of the classical Athenian concept, and opposes the image of the ethically competent statesman who is supposed to offer constructive criticism based on truth.

2.1 *PARRHĒSIA* IN GREEK LITERATURE

Classical Athenian parrhēsia

Etymologically, the Greek term *parrhēsia* is a combination of πᾶς (all) and ῥῆσις (speech). Its literal meaning is therefore "speaking everything".[36] Someone who speaks freely can be called a παρρησιαστής, a term traceable to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1124b) but otherwise not frequently used in texts from the classical period.[37] *Parrhēsia* as a concept is often translated as "freedom of speech",[38] but is also com-

[35] Scarpat 1964: 58–61; Konstan 1996; Konstan 1998: 3–5; Sacks 2018: esp. 51–53, 56–57.

[36] Scarpat 1964: 35; Momigliano 1973: 260; Fields 2020: 10.

[37] *Parrhēsiastēs* is freely used in modern literature to refer to a person who has *parrhēsia*, but this does not reflect ancient practice. See Foucault 2019, Monoson 2000. Cf. Saxonhouse 2005: 92, 'parrhesiast'. There are 40 instances of the term according to the *TLG*, the earliest of which date to the Hellenistic period: Aristotle *Eth. Nic.* 1124b, and a fragment from Callisthenes, T2b Jacoby. Further occurrences in Diog. Laertius *Anarcharsis* 1.101; *Menedemus* 2.127; *Archesilaus* 4.33 (all same wording). [Plut.] *X orat.* on Lycurgus, 842d; Diod. Sic. 14.5.7; Luc. *Dial. D.* 3.12; Joseph. *AJ* 2.299; Philo, *In Flacc.* 178. Cf. Phot. *Bibl.* Bekker 497b on Lycurgus; *Suda* τ 588 s.v. Τιμαγένης (on Timagenes of Alexandria; cf. τ 836 s.v. Τουσκλάνῳ), and λ 77 s.v. λαλιά (as ἡ δημηγορία; summary of Diog. Laert. 4.33).

[38] Momigliano 1973; Raaflaub 2012.

monly referred to as "frankness", "frank criticism", or even "openness" or "revealing speech".[39] As these interpretations demonstrate, *parrhēsia* as a term refers to speech content as well as technique: on the one hand it denotes a rhetorical strategy (saying everything), and on the other it refers to a sincere (unembellished, straightforward) attitude towards the topic at hand.[40]

The development of *parrhesia* is strongly connected with the history of the Athenian democracy. In the Athenian assembly, ἰσηγορία was used to indicate the formal citizen's right to speak their mind in the assembly, while παρρησία carried a heavy moral association, being related to truth-telling.[41] The term *parrhēsia* first occurs in Euripides' tragedies, and is frequently seen throughout the works of the Attic orators and Plato. Demosthenes regularly takes recourse to the concept of frankness at the beginning and end of his speeches, partly as a form of *captatio benevolentiae*, and partly to send a critical message to the assembly.[42] The closing words of the fourth oration against Philip of Macedon offer a helpful contextualization of frankness of speech:[43]

> Ταῦτ᾽ ἐστὶ τἀληθῆ, μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας, ἁπλῶς εὐνοίᾳ τὰ βέλτιστ᾽ εἰρημένα, οὐ κολακείᾳ βλάβης καὶ ἀπάτης λόγος μεστός, ἀργύριον τῷ λέγοντι ποιήσων, τὰ δὲ πράγματα τῆς πόλεως τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἐγχειριῶν. Ἢ οὖν παυστέον τούτων τῶν ἐθῶν, ἢ μηδέν᾽ ἄλλον αἰτιατέον τοῦ πάντα φαύλως ἔχειν ἢ ὑμᾶς αὐτούς.[44]
>
> This is the truth, spoken with complete frankness and purely from goodwill in the best words; not a speech full of harm and conceit due

[39] Fields 2020, Foucault 2019, and Konstan 1996 show that the definition of *parrhēsia* is not just literal but ideological, in that it stands in direct contrast to flattery and deceit. 'Revealing speech': Saxonhouse 2005: 87.

[40] Cf. Hülsewiesche 2002: 106, "Parrhesie [ist] die inhaltlich freimütige Rede, die bis zur frechen Rede geht".

[41] Scarpat 1964: 44–45, cf. 52; Monoson 2000: 53. Moral also in the meaning of ideological, definitive of Athenian citizenship. In Eur. *Phoen*. 387–391, freedom of speech is said to distinguish the citizen from the exile or non-citizen.

[42] For παρρησία connected with ἀλήθεια, see Dem. 6.31, 9.3, 10.76, 23.204, 37.55, 60.26. Cf. Dem. 3.3, 8.21 and 24, and Isocr. 20.72, 24.12, for *parrhēsia* as a more general guarantee of the sincerity of the orator's words. Cf. also Eur. fr. 737; Plut. *Mor*. 59d, 715f. On the invocation of *parrhēsia* at the beginning of speeches, Monoson 2000: 60–61.

[43] Although the matter should not concern us here, this speech is often regarded as spurious by modern scholars. The current passage might offer an excellent argument for negating the originality of this speech; nowhere else in Demosthenes' speeches is *parrhēsia* framed in such clear terms. For an overview of the discussion, see MacDowell 2003; cf. Hajdú 2002: 44–47, 447–448.

[44] Dem. 10.76.

> to flattery, which will make the speaker rich and which puts state affairs into the hands of the enemies. Either these habits must be halted, or nobody else should be blamed for the bad situation than you yourselves.

Like all *Philippics*, the oration carries an exhortatory, critical tone. It aims at activating the Assembly to raise resources for the defence against Philip as well as convincing them that it is not in their best interest to listen to other politicians who trivialize Philip's policy. Throughout the speech, the speaker shows himself as being aware of the danger incurred through expressing such criticism.[45] This final paragraph illustrates how his frankness is part of a matrix of ethical concepts related to social and public relationships: cognate qualities are truth (ἀλήθεια) and goodwill (εὔνοια), opposites are flattery (κολακεία) and deceit (ἀπάτη) together with doing willful harm to others (βλάβη).[46] Also on the opposite spectrum of frankness is the interest in self-gain—the antithesis of the frank speaker is the speaker who is only interested in making money and who betrays his city. In the context of assembly rhetoric, *parrhēsia* is a term that signals the speaker's integrity and his sincere adherence to the truth, particularly a truth which will benefit his community.[47] Moreover, the above passage clarifies that in the context of public oratory generally, frank speech is a valued quality in a people's representative, the orator who (in contrast to the flatterer) sacrifices his own interests for the sake of the city and whose main goal is to protect the state.

In her study of the 'practice of *parrhēsia*' in the Athenian sources, Arlene Saxonhouse very briefly mentions the above passage from the *Fourth Philippic* to support her conclusion that "the truly parrhesiastic speaker eschews the art of rhetoric".[48] Deceit, ἀπάτη, was a danger

[45] On the inherent risk in *parrhēsia*, see esp. Foucault 2019: 42–43.

[46] A helpful contextualization of the nexus of acts and "modes of communication" associated with *parrhēsia* is found in Fields 2020: 2.

[47] Monoson 2000: 60 usefully distinguishes four aims embedded in the claim of *parrhēsia*: 1) to "identify the speaker's motivation as a commitment to truth and to the exposure of truth"; 2) to "suggest that the speaker willingly incurred a risk by speaking"; 3) to "emphasize moral virtue of speaker and audience"; 4) to "affirm the usefulness of rigorous, critical appraisal of proposals before the Assembly".

[48] Saxonhouse 2005: 92. This conclusion is based on ancient conceptualizations of frankness and not on postmodern interpretations of speech (acts). In this regard, see Fields 2020 who con-

looming large over political debates, where clever orators could easily persuade the people by catering to their desires. Though this appears to be a very Platonic type of argument, it is a more broadly shared notion in Greek classical and post-classical literature that represents the "ethics of *parrhēsia*":[49] the speaker should at all times keep in mind for whose benefit they will employ frankness, and what should be the boundaries of free speech.[50] Several modern scholars have made a distinction between 'negative' and 'positive' *parrhēsia*,[51] but the sources themselves seem rather to imply a quality whose good or bad use was the responsibility of the speaker. When used badly, *parrhēsia* is usually accompanied by an adjective with pejorative meaning,[52] and turns into an instrument of unrest that does not benefit but harms the state. In these cases the use of *parrhēsia* reflects the ethical incompetency on the part of the speaker who has lost sight of what is in the public interest.[53]

In the waning democracy of the fourth century, classical writers further developed the ethical interpretation of *parrhēsia*. While Demosthenes came to function as the model for oratorical *parrhēsia*, the Pla-

tends that any declaration of frankness is a rhetorical act with a particular (political) goal. Cf. Sluiter & Rosen 2004: 7.

[49] See the excellent discussion in Monoson 2000, chs. 2 and 6, to which my own discussion is heavily indebted.

[50] The inability to see what these boundaries are and the dangers associated with excessive speech made *parrhēsia* "the favourite target of democracy's critics", thus Raaflaub 2004: 224.

[51] E.g. Scarpat 1964: 37, on Eur. *Or*. 905; Foucault 2019: 41. A good discussion of the "semantics of *parrhēsia*", which includes many of the classical loci cited here, is Sluiter & Rosen 2004: 4–8.

[52] ἀμαθής: Eur. *Or*. 905; κατακορής: Pl. *Phaedr*. 240e; cf. Isoc. *Bus*. 11.40 who associates it with κακηγορία. Isocr. 7.20 (*Areopagiticus*) is an interesting case, since παρρησία carries no adjective, but is clearly pejorative, standing in opposition to ἰσονομία as a positive ideal. Here again, I would argue, it is not 'freedom of speech' itself which is inherently bad, but its equation with equal rights in government; in Isocrates' sceptical view of democracy, in the wrong hands frankness becomes a licence for anarchy; cf. Christodoulou 2012. It is the misuse of frankness, such as Isocrates apparently observed in political life, that offers problems, and turns frankness, which would be the mark of a well-functioning democracy, into licence or impudence, which is actually what he argues in Isoc. 8.14 (*On the Peace*): "I know that it is contentious to oppose your opinions, and that *although we have a democracy*, there is no *parrhēsia* except that expressed here by the most senseless persons who care nothing about you, and by the comic poets in the theatre" (ἐγὼ δ' οἶδα μὲν ὅτι πρόσαντές ἐστιν ἐναντιοῦσθαι ταῖς ὑμετέραις διανοίαις, καὶ ὅτι δημοκρατίας οὔσης οὐκ ἔστι παρρησία, πλὴν ἐνθάδε μὲν τοῖς ἀφρονεστάτοις καὶ μηδὲν ὑμῶν φροντίζουσιν, ἐν δὲ τῷ θεάτρῳ τοῖς κωμῳδοδιδασκάλοις; italics mine). Similarly, Pl. *Rep*. 557b. Cf. Aeschin. 1.31, where it is said that a man of bad morals will never be thought (by the audience) to say anything beneficial to the city. He can rightfully use *parrhēsia* just like anyone else, but it will be regarded as having no merit.

[53] Cf. Saxonhouse 2005: 96, "Freedom of speech is enshrined not for the benefit or freedom of the individual; it exists in the vision of these orators for the sake of the city."

tonic dialogues articulated the template for a form of *parrhēsia* related to intellectual leadership. In book 8 of the *Laws*, Plato asserts that the ideal state requires a leader who "honours frank speech above everything else", and who "will say whatever he deems best for the city and for the citizens".[54] Aristotle confirms in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that a man of excellence (the μεγαλόψυχος) possesses *parrhēsia*. In his words, it is necessary that this man values truth above a good reputation and—we may add, accordingly—speaks and acts openly (καὶ ἀμελεῖν τῆς ἀληθείας μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς δόξης, καὶ λέγειν καὶ πράττειν φανερῶς); because he spurns common opinion the great-souled man is a *parrhēsiastēs* and a truthful person (παρρησιαστὴς γὰρ διὰ τὸ καταφρονητικὸς εἶναι καὶ ἀληθευτικός).[55] Aristotle adds that this man organizes his life around no one unless he is a friend; those who are dependent on others are flatterers (κόλακες).[56] Indeed, *parrhēsia* is one of the qualities of a good man, in both the private and the public sphere.[57]

Parrhēsia *in Greek literature of the Roman world*

The Roman constitution, even during republican times, did not recognize a universal citizen right to express one's opinion (what would have been Greek *isēgoria*) and contribute to state policy (by means of critical speech, *parrhēsia*).[58] Only recently has Scarpat's influen-

[54] Pl. *Leg.* 835c.

[55] Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 4.1124b26–30.

[56] *Ibid.* 1124b31–1125a2.

[57] In a private setting, frank criticism was regarded as a necessary feature in advising one's friends on their moral conduct. Cf. *Gorg.* 487a–488b, where Socrates contends that a good friend needs to possess three qualities: knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), goodwill (εὔνοια), and frankness of speech (παρρησία). Additionally, if he is to be an adequate judge of his friend's moral behaviour, he should be wise and free of shame. For such behaviour in the face of kings, see Isoc. 2.14.2–3 (*To Nicocles*).

[58] The Latin writers lacked an exact parallel for the Greek concept, the political reality of Roman *libertas* being difficult to reconcile with that of Greek παρρησία: see Hellegouarc'h 1963: 542–559, who compares the "conception égalitariste et démocratique" of the Greeks with the "conception aristocratique et hiérarchisée" of the Romans; Momigliano 1973: 260–262; Hülschewiesche 2002: 115; Raaflaub 2012; Fields 2020: 14, with n. 80. In his letters, Cicero uses the word παρρησία untranslated, see *Att.* 1.16.8 and 9.2a.2, with Scarpat 1964: 57, 113. In its meaning of 'unveiled speech' the term lived on in the rhetorical handbooks as *licentia*, *libera oratio*, or simply παρρησία: *Rhet. Her.* 4.48–49; Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.27–29; Cic. *Or.* 3.205, and *Or.* 138; see Lausberg 2008, §761. The notion of *libertas*, originally more or less the equivalent of republicanism (Wirszubski 1950: 4–5), acquired new meaning in the works of Tacitus, who associates the loss of it since the Republic with moral de-

tial study of the semantic development of *parrhēsia* in classical and in Christian times been supplemented by an examination of the concept in Greek imperial prose.[59] In her monograph *Frankness, Greek Culture and the Roman Empire*, Dana Fields argues convincingly that frankness of speech "still had political relevance" in dealing with Roman rulers,[60] in philosophical (ethical) discussions on freedom and self-mastery and in the context of public rhetoric. Both on the local and the imperial level, *parrhēsia* was a highly evaluated aspect of political conduct. Fields demonstrates that, contrary to the traditional idea first set out by Scarpat and also by Foucault, the history of *parrhēsia* is not exemplary for the so-called "turn to the self" in the post-classical period.[61] Political participation in the imperial age is often explained in reference to the classic dichotomy of democracy versus monarchy, a reference that is in many ways provoked by the discourse in the historiographical sources and which therefore is, to a certain extent, a reflection of ancient political thought. Fields argues that through the discourse of frankness—in which *parrhēsia* is only one term within a large conceptual framework—Greeks in their roles of imperial adviser, philosopher, or *rhētor* did attempt (and succeed) to play their part in political decision-making on the level of "individual judgment and personal interaction".[62] Generally, it can be said that the imperial discourse on *parrhēsia* boils down to two interrelated issues. One is the antithesis between flattery and frankness vis-à-vis the (Roman) ruler; the other is the matter of truth-telling that leads to moral improvement in contradistinction to rhetorical deceit and self-promotion that is harmful for the city or community.

generation and the dearth of intellectualism, cf. *Hist*. 1.1. In political terms, when the authority of the subject of free speech is not acknowledged sufficiently, *libertas* turns into *licentia* (Hellegouarc'h 1963: 558); the term *licentia* thus resembles the type of *parrhēsia* coming from depraved men that critical Athenian intellectuals, like Isocrates and Plato above, lament.

[59] Scarpat 1964: 62–69 does briefly discuss snippets from Plutarch and Lucian. See also Hülsewiesche 2002: 103–117, who offers a (very) rough overview of the continuation of the concepts *isēgoria* and *parrhēsia* from classical into imperial times.

[60] Fields 2020: 4.

[61] As Fields shows, this idea is reinforced by the traditional view that imperial Greeks (in Rome and in the provinces) were devoid of political influence. This is surely inherent to the image of the Second Sophistic as a particularly cultural and literary movement in influential studies such as Anderson 1993, Swain 1996, Whitmarsh 2001. Yet see also Swain 1996: 70–77 on the political identity of the imperial Greeks and the notion of "civic classicism", and the contributions in Swain 2000, esp. by Desideri, Salmeri, and Ma.

[62] Fields 2020: 8.

For the texts under discussion in this chapter it is important to realize that views of frank speech in the empire perpetuate the conceptual frames as well as the terminology introduced in the classical Athenian sources. Take, for example, the opening of Dio of Prusa's *On Kingship* 3, where Dio emphasizes his knowledge of Trajan's virtuous character: "But I, noble emperor, I have enjoyed your presence, and I am perhaps as well acquainted with your character as anybody to know that you find delight in truth and frankness (ἀληθείᾳ καὶ παρρησίᾳ) rather than in flattery and deceit (θωπείᾳ καὶ ἀπάτῃ)".[63] We immediately recognize the classical, 'Demosthenic' dichotomy of truth and *parrhēsia* versus flattery and deceit. While the actual theme of the introduction of *On Kingship* 3 is an anecdote about Socrates, the articulation of the values of frankness and truth is firmly rooted in Demosthenic vocabulary; indeed, Socrates and Demosthenes were both famous paradigms of *parrhēsia* in post-classical times.[64] On the oratorical level, this 'frank' introduction proclaimed before the emperor is a self-promotional act on Dio's part: here I am, he says, a Greek who discourses in the Attic tongue of my ancestors. In addition, Tim Whitmarsh has shown that the classical, rhetorical theme of flattery vs. frankness plays a crucial role in the formation of Dio's moral identity as professional orator.[65] On the level of power relations, the introduction constitutes a bow to Trajan's benign and tolerant leadership, which allowed his inferiors to speak their minds openly,[66] as well as a wink to the emperor's intellectual capacities, since it presumes he would appreciate this classicistic

[63] Dio Chrys. Or. 3.2–3: ἐγὼ δέ, ὦ γενναῖε αὐτοκράτορ, παραγέγονά σοι, καὶ τυχὸν οὐδενὸς ἧττον ἔμπειρός εἰμι τῆς σῆς φύσεως, ὅτι τυγχάνεις χαίρων ἀληθείᾳ καὶ παρρησίᾳ μᾶλλον ἢ θωπείᾳ καὶ ἀπάτῃ. On a historical note, Plutarch, in *Advice* 815d, calls *parrhēsia* the "sacred (i.e. biggest, emergency) anchor" of state that allows statesmen to protect their city; he gives as examples the Pergamenes under Nero, the Rhodians ("lately") under Domitian, and the Thessalians under Augustus. Swain (2000: 13–50; cf. Swain 1996: 187–241) offers a lucid and comprehensive overview of early modern and modern scholarship on Dio of Prusa, excepting the seminal study of Dio in Whitmarsh 2001.

[64] See Fields 2020: 12–17; cf. Scarpat 1964: 68. On Demosthenes as a model specifically for Dio of Prusa, Fields 2020: 106–114. Apart from Plutarch's explicit presentation of Demosthenes as a symbol of *parrhēsia* in *Dem.* 12.3–4, 14.3, where the phrase (λέγειν) μετὰ παρρησίας echoes Demosthenes' own formulation, see e.g. the echo of Demosthenes in the speeches of Cassius Dio: 41.28.1 (λέξω μετὰ παρρησίας; Caesar to his soldiers) or 52.3.3 (λέξω μετὰ παρρησίας, Agrippa to Octavian).

[65] Whitmarsh 2001: 194–197. Cf. Konstan 1997 on the theme of frankness vs. flattery in *On Kingship* 3.

[66] Cf. Jones 1978: 115–123; Konstan 1997: 133–135 on the philosophical message of the introduction. For a slightly different view, see Swain 1996: 200. Harris 1980: 889–893 discusses the political implications of Dio's celebration of the Hellenic heritage under Roman rule; cf. Hahn 1906.

opening.[67] In our discussion of Plutarch, Cassius Dio and other imperial authors, we should take into account that Athenian conceptual language strongly affects the Greek authors' representation of Roman republican frankness. This means that certain ethical strands of the discussion on frankness, especially in the context of rhetorical performance, are continued in imperial times: the idea that *parrhēsia* is an outward mark of moral virtue greatly affected Greek imperial conceptions of free speech. Imperial conceptions of frankness are strongly influenced by the Platonic-Aristotelian mix of ideas, whether or not in combination with the 'Demosthenic' strategies exemplified by Dio of Prusa's *On Kingship*.

Reinhold Hülsewiesche, in his overview of 'Redefreiheit' in the ancient world, argues that in the Roman world *parrhēsia* remained a meaningful concept only in the rhetorical tradition as (figurative) political freedom of speech.[68] However, we should be careful to rule out *in primis* the political associations of *parrhēsia* in the literature of the empire.[69] Dana Fields' monograph revives the historical, civic function of *parrhēsia*, but also consistently argues that any claim of *parrhēsia* indicates a rhetorical strategy on the part of the speaker.[70] Due to this focus on political participation rather than political virtue, she is less interested in frankness as an *ethical quality*.[71] In the present chapter, I would like to accentuate the ideological instead of the rhetorical dimension of

[67] Cf. Whitmarsh 2001, who focuses on the establishment of a pedagogical relationship between emperor and philosopher in Dio's speeches, "Trajan's ethical superiority, rather, lies in his exposure to philosophical paideia" (208), that is, Greek culture and education. On the exemplarity of ancient Greek models in Dio's speeches, cf. Salmeri 2000: 84–85; on this (ideological) feature of imperial Greek oratory in general, Bowie 1974; Swain 1996: 91–96; Webb 2006.

[68] As representative of this rhetorical tradition, he remarkably refers to Cassius Dio: Hülsewiesche 2002: 114, 116.

[69] Whitmarsh 2001: 141–147, who rules out that in Musonius Rufus' (first century AD) treatise on exile the term can still represent the "democratic conception", too. In fact, Whitmarsh is the one to show that ethics is politics in the rhetorical strategies of the sophists; by acting as 'educators' of the Roman rulers and transmitting Greek *paideia* onto their Roman peers, the Greeks are actually able to establish a powerful political identity.

[70] Cf. Fields 2020: 191, "this rhetorical game".

[71] However, Fields does not ignore the ethical aspects; e.g. p. 5 ("the implications of the term are both ethical and political"), 14 (Marcus Aurelius uses *parrhēsia* as "a short-hand for philosophic virtue, like so many authors in this study"); 31 (*parrhēsia* playing a role in the creation of ethical identities); 111 (Dio of Prusa as a philosophical frank speaker); 122–125 (the moral character of the *dēmos*). In general, she approaches frankness as a (civic) "value shared between speaker and audience" (194), thus embedding the ethical aspects of *parrhēsia* in her definition of it. However, while she explains brilliantly how frankness relates to discussions of identity and power, and emphasizes

frank speech. As arises from the texts of Plato and Aristotle, *parrhēsia* was one of the markers of ethical goodness in a statesman. It is related to political virtue, to political truth if you will, in the sense that a man's moral quality was measured based on the extent to which truthfulness inspired his frankness. In other words, frankness is perceived as much a feature of behaviour as it is of speech; a good statesman is capable of self-control and moderation, and his frankness of speech is one of the outward signals of these ethical abilities. In Plutarch's writings, frankness becomes a prerequisite for the good statesman, one constituent part of his political reputation. He thus normalizes Plato's ideal of the philosopher-king as the model of *parrhēsia*, and expands on Aristotle's vision of the excellent man by arguing how *parrhēsia* can be used beneficially with regard to his fellow citizens. Cassius Dio, then, adopted a similar attitude in making *parrhēsia* one of the criteria for good statesmanship in his Roman History. Before we focus on the quality of *parrhēsia* as part of the Plutarchan and Dionean image of Cicero, we should consider the ethical discussion about frankness in Plutarch's *Moralia*. These texts give us some direction as to understanding the meaning of *parrhēsia* for the intellectual elite, and specifically the Greek-educated elite, in the imperial period.

2.2 PLUTARCH'S THERAPEUTIC *PARRHĒSIA*

While Plato and Aristotle had primed the concept of frankness to connote personal and civic excellence, Plutarch further contextualises frankness in the civic setting of the Roman world, particularly Greek provincial government. In the treatises *How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend* and *Advice on Civic Life* he emphasizes the peculiar strength of 'therapeutic *parrhēsia*', a type of frankness which is morally beneficial. Whereas Socrates handles frankness as an important criterion for true friendship, Plutarch introduces *parrhēsia* as a healing quality not just in private relationships but also in social networks.[72]

its importance for imperial Greek self-positioning, she does not define in what ways *parrhēsia* was constitutive of imperial conceptions of the good (states)man.

[72] Cf. Hülsewiesche 2002: 112, restricting this use of 'philosophical' *parrhēsia* to private criticism. Contra Sheppard 1984–1986, who argues that Plutarch's ideal of frankness is "not to be used

In Plutarch's writings, *parrhēsia* is an element of social interaction on the collective level. In the following sections we will explore in particular the meaning of frankness for the civic leader. Such a reading should also provide more depth to the common views of Plutarchean *parrhēsia* as a strictly moral or philosophical value.[73]

The treatise *How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend* contains a section on *parrhēsia* which can almost be read as a separate treatise.[74] Although its framework is not necessarily political, Plutarch's idea of the contexts in which frankness is to be used and avoided are all socially oriented; he deals with situations pertaining to the private sphere as well as to public performance—even the subject of approaching Roman rulers is addressed. The treatise dates to the period between 90 and 116 AD (perhaps specifically to 96/97), and is addressed to the Athenian king Antiochus Philopappus.[75] In it, Plutarch provides us with an elaborate overview of the benefits and pitfalls of *parrhēsia*. We have already seen that in the classical discussion the notions of flattery and freedom of speech often occur in tandem. Plutarch's work is inspired, in particular, by Plato's ideas about true friendship (love). In *Gorgias*, the need for true *parrhēsia* from our friends in order to put limits on φιλαυτία, (blind) love for oneself, is thematized in contrast to deceptive (untruthful) adulation.[76]

in a public situation" as following from *Flatterer* 70e-f. The argument there, however, is that one should never correct a friend *en public* (as part of a wider argument about *kairos*, finding the right moment)—not that frankness belongs strictly to the private sphere.

[73] GALLO & PETTINE 1988: 21–22; cf. SCARPAT 1964: 68, who, although he categorizes Plutarchean *parrhēsia* under "valore morale", notes "con la trasposizione del concetto di parrhesia nella sfera morale, non andò perduto il carattere di pubblicità implicito in qualunque discorso politico. Col concetto di parrhesia è unita sempre per i Greci la rappresentazione di una pubblica condotta di vita."

[74] For previous literary analyses of this work, see ZIEGLER 1964: 164–166; VALGIGLIO 1992: 3971; WHITMARSH 2006; GALLO & PETTINE 1988: 7–26; SIRINELLI 1989: 65–79. WHITMARSH 2006 and FIELDS 2008 provide good cultural-historical contextualization.

[75] For the question of the dating, see JONES 1966, who opts for the wider time frame, and WHITMARSH 2006, who suggests the specific date of 96/97 AD, which he relates to a physical encounter between Plutarch and Philopappus. This means that the treatise was either written slightly before or simultaneously with the *Parallel Lives*, which would have been started after 96 AD (the year of Domitian's death) and finished before Plutarch's death in 120, and *Advice on Civic Life*, which JONES estimates was written perhaps between 96–98 AD but in any case finished before 114 AD (JONES 1971: 35, 135–137). On *Advice on Civic Life*, see also CARRIÈRE 1984: 10–13, who opts for three possible dates between 100–101, 103–104 or 107–109 AD. On Antiochus Philopappus, JONES 1971: 59; WHITMARSH 2006: 93–94.

[76] Compare *Gorg.* 286d with *Flatterer* 50a-b. There are also interesting similarities with Plato's

Parrhēsia, according to Plutarch, needs to be developed like an art (φιλοτεχνεῖν) in so far as it is the greatest and the most powerful medicine within the bond of friendship —that is, on the condition that one practice the type that is true and based on friendship.[77]

> Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθὴς καὶ φιλικὴ παρρησία τοῖς ἁμαρτανομένοις ἐπιφύεται, σωτήριον ἔχουσα καὶ κηδεμονικὸν τὸ λυποῦν, ὥσπερ τὸ μέλι τὰ ἡλκωμένα δάκνουσα καὶ καθαίρουσα, τἄλλα δ᾽ ὠφέλιμος οὖσα καὶ γλυκεῖα.[78]
>
> For true and loving frankness attends to mistakes, providing rescue and care to what hurts, like honey stinging and purifying open wounds, but being otherwise helpful and sweet.

In an extensive medical analogy, Plutarch explains that friends are the protectors of each other's soul, and that frankness is one of the remedies for curing the faults of the other. However, although *parrhēsia* sometimes needs to "bite" to remove the evil, it should always be used moderately and without excess. Moreover, it should be well-timed and appropriate.[79] One solution Plutarch offers is mixing frankness with praise rather than vituperation, something a noble friend, a father, or a teacher would do to set the character of their relatives or pupils straight (πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν ἤθους).[80] There are thus a couple of errors easily made with regard to *parrhēsia*, which Plutarch discusses in quite some detail and with vivid examples taken from both the Greek and Roman historical tradition. The first mistake we should avoid making is to offer our criticism without taking away what is crude, τὸ ἄκρατον,[81] and failing to remain moderate (ἀμετρία). Frank speech is not the same as blame or vituperation, μέμψις or ψόγος. For those who use *parrhēsia* are respected and admired, and those who distribute blame attract ac-

Phaedrus, though thematically the relation with this Platonic treatise is much looser: compare *Flatterer* 51d on outward appearances, where Plutarch quotes from Pl. *Phdr*. 239d, and *Phdr*. 240e with 68d, on *parrhēsia* resulting from ebriety; at *Phdr*. 240b there is mention of the flatterer (as a stereotype). Cf. Foucault 2019: 185–191. Plato's life offers an exemplum twice, in *Flatterer* 67c-e, and 70e. On the Platonic theme of Plutarch's treatise, Russell 1973: 94–96.

[77] *Flatterer* 74d.

[78] *Ibid*. 59d.

[79] *Ibid*. 74d: δεῖ καὶ περὶ τὴν παρρησίαν φιλοτεχνεῖν, ὅσῳ μέγιστόν ἐστι καὶ κράτιστον ἐν φιλίᾳ φάρμακον, εὐστοχίας τε καιροῦ μάλιστα καὶ κράσεως μέτρον ἐχούσης ἀεὶ δεομένην. Cf. 73d.

[80] *Ibid*. 73d, where again the analogy of the doctor is used. See also §3.1.5 below.

[81] *Ibid*. 66b. For the argument as I paraphrase it, see 66a-e. The term ἄκρατος (οἶνος) in its technical sense refers to undiluted wine, which of course also had a negative effect in that it was too strong to enjoy.

cusation themselves, and they are despised instead of listened to.[82] As a related mistake,[83] a catalyst for this negative reaction is the apparent influence of self-love or self-promotion in freely giving one's opinion. The charge of φιλαυτία should in any way be avoided.

A second mistake to be avoided is to become arrogant or scurrilous:

> Δεύτερον τοίνυν ὥσπερ ἐκκαθαίροντες ὕβριν ἅπασαν καὶ γέλωτα καὶ σκῶμμα καὶ βωμολοχίαν ἡδύσματα πονηρὰ τῆς παρρησίας ἀφαιρῶμεν.[84]
>
> Now, a second point, let's remove from our frank speech vulgar sauciness, cleansing it, as it were, from every form of arrogance and ridicule and scurrility and buffoonery.

People who apply ridicule and clownish language (τὸ παιδιῶδες) will in the end only destroy themselves; they are dancing on the brink of a volcano, as Plutarch explains it.[85] This behaviour is merely a display of ill-temperedness (ἀκρασία) and hatred (ἔχθρα) mixed with bad manners (κακοήθεια) and arrogance (ὕβρις). Frank speaking should represent sincerity (σπουδή) and good character (ἦθος), and it should observe the right timing (καιρός).[86]

A third situation one should watch out for is employing frankness in public and trying to glorify oneself simultaneously:

> Οὐ γὰρ φιλικὸν ἀλλὰ σοφιστικὸν ἀλλοτρίοις ἐνευδοκιμεῖν σφάλμασι, καλλωπιζόμενον πρὸς τοὺς παρόντας, ὥσπερ οἱ χειρουργοῦντες ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις ἰατροὶ πρὸς ἐργολαβίαν. ἄνευ δὲ τῆς ὕβρεως, ἣν οὐδεμιᾷ θεραπείᾳ προσεῖναι δίκαιόν ἐστι, καὶ τὸ τῆς κακίας σκεπτέον φιλόνεικον καὶ αὔθαδες.[87]

[82] *Ibid*. 66e: ὅθεν αἰδοῦνται τοὺς παρρησιαζομένους καὶ θαυμάζουσι, τοῖς δὲ μεμφομένοις ἀντεγκαλοῦσι καὶ καταφρονοῦσιν. The undefined and unexpressed "they" in this reasoning is, I think, telling of Plutarch's informal style. Cf. 70d, where Plutarch writes: "for hurt is caused by him who abuses, while a service is done by him who admonishes (γίνεται γὰρ οὕτω τὸ μὲν λυπηρὸν τοῦ λοιδοροῦντος, τὸ δὲ ὠφέλιμον τοῦ νουθετοῦντος)".

[83] This is how Plutarch presents it in 66e: the action of μέμφεσθαι (or ἐξονειδίζειν), reproaching someone, appears to be the result from being personally offended, which is where φιλαυτία comes into the picture.

[84] *Flatterer* 67e.

[85] *Ibid*. 68a.

[86] *Ibid*. 68c. These things become impossible once one is drunk, in relation to which Plutarch warns about the effects of alcohol, an allusion to Plato's description of drunken frankness in *Phdr*. 240e. Cf. Plut. *Apoph*. 207f, and *Quaest. conv*. 712a on the reading of (Old) comedy (whose *parabaseis* would be characterized by σπουδή and παρρησία) at symposia.

[87] *Flatterer* 71a.

> For it is not a mark of friendship but of sophistry to gain glory in another's faults, showing off in front of the audience, like doctors who operate in a theatre with the aim of attracting new patients. Apart from arrogance, which ought never to influence any therapy, one needs to realize this is contentious and high-minded, parts of vice.

In other words, frank speaking should never have rhetorical success as its final goal, but should aim at private and salutary support:

> Διὸ δεῖ σφόδρα φυλάττεσθαι καὶ τοῦτο μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων τοὺς μὴ παρεπιδείκνυσθαι μηδὲ δημαγωγεῖν ἀλλ᾽ ὀνησιφόρως καὶ θεραπευτικῶς χρῆσθαι τῇ παρρησίᾳ βουλομένους.[88]
>
> That is why this should be taken seriously, in addition to the previous things, by those who want to employ freedom of speech not to make a display or to win popularity but in a beneficial and serviceable way.

There is one group that is allowed to make somewhat of a display: old men, who can truly pride themselves on a good reputation (δόξη) and on their status (ἀξίωμα), might offer criticism while referring to their own successes.[89] Those who do not have this status, on the other hand, end up making themselves annoying (ἐπαχθής) and burdensome (βαρύς). As Plutarch had emphasized at the start of his reflections on frankness in friendship, honest criticism needs to come from feelings of goodwill (εὔνοια),[90] and should not intend to take someone down or gain profit out of it.

The reference to older men who have proved themselves and the emphasis on *parrhēsia* as a means of moral instruction are part of a bigger argument relating to the ethics of imitation.[91] In the context of mixing praise with criticism, Plutarch notes particularly that the element of praise might incite the addressee to choose the higher path of virtue:

[88] *Ibid*. 71d.

[89] *Ibid*. 71a. Cf. *On Self-praise* 546f and 547a, where it is confirmed that old men tend to exalt themselves; however, they should be indulged whenever they have obtained true virtue and glory. On this treatise, see Ingenkamp 1971: 62–69.

[90] *Flatterer* 74c.

[91] On the nature of Plutarch's writings as providing ethical instruction for his readers seminal studies are Duff 1999: esp. 52–71; Pelling 2002: 237–251; Stadter 2014: 231–245. Langlands 2020 is the first explicitly to connect Plutarch's moral programme, in which the description of virtue incites the reader to imitate and emulate this virtue (Plut. *Per*. 2.2–3, *Dem*. 1.6 with Duff 1999: 34–49), with the Roman discourse of exemplarity.

> Οὐ γὰρ μόνον ἀνίησι τοῦ ψόγου τὸ τραχὺ καὶ κελευστικόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ζῆλον ἐμποιεῖ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν αἰδουμένῳ τὰ αἰσχρὰ τῇ τῶν καλῶν ὑπομνήσει καὶ παράδειγμα ποιουμένῳ τῶν βελτιόνων ἑαυτόν.[92]
>
> For not only does he soften the harsh and the hortatory element of the criticism, but he evokes the desire in a man for emulating himself, since he is made to feel ashamed of bad deeds when remembered of his good conduct, and makes himself into an example of even better deeds.[93]

In another passage Plutarch describes the effect of men employing good *parrhēsia* as driving their friends towards virtue, and leading them away from vice (παρορμῶσι πρὸς τὰ καλὰ καὶ τῶν αἰσχρῶν ἀπελαύνουσι).[94]

Plutarch's discussion of frankness is framed as a discussion on ethical virtue. His emphasis lies on the role of frankness in (interpersonal as well as public) relationships and on the remedying effects of criticism. Moderation, sincerity, and an abstention from self-promotion are required qualities for justly and correctly applying frankness. Plutarch's argument around these behavioural aspects turn *parrhēsia* into a matter not (simply) of natural ability but of training and competence; in fact, the hortative tone of this treatise suggests that it aims at the

[92] *Flatterer* 72d.

[93] For this difficult passage I used the translation of Babbitt 1927. Cf. *On Self-praise* 539e-f and 544d-e, where the exact same thought is voiced, and self-praise is defended on the grounds that it can sometimes be used to incite others to virtuous deeds.

[94] *Flatterer* 74b. The language of movement towards the good and away from evil is reminiscent of Diodorus Siculus' reflections on freedom of speech for the historiographer in the prooemium to book 15. Here, Diodorus stresses that historiographers, who he refers to as "we", through their habitual frank criticism (τῇ συνήθει τῆς ἱστορίας παρρησίᾳ), award the proper praise (τὸν δίκαιον ἐπιλέγειν ἔπαινον) to men for good deeds, and judge bad men (τοὺς φαύλους), when they make mistakes, as worthy of just punishment (ἀξιοῦν δικαίας ἐπιτιμήσεως). For, he says, "we believe that through this kind of approach those who are naturally inclined to virtue are urged towards attaining immortality in reputation as a result of excellent deeds, but those who have the opposite disposition are turned away from their impulse for wickedness through fitting words of reproach" (διὰ τοῦ τοιούτου τρόπου νομίζομεν τοὺς μὲν εὖ πεφυκότας πρὸς ἀρετὴν τῷ διὰ τῆς δόξης ἀθανατισμῷ προτρέψεσθαι ταῖς καλλίσταις ἐγχειρεῖν πράξεσι, τοὺς δὲ τὴν ἐναντίαν ἔχοντας διάθεσιν ταῖς ἁρμοττούσαις βλασφημίαις ἀποτρέψειν τῆς ἐπὶ τὴν κακίαν ὁρμῆς.) Plutarch as well as Diodorus—writing from different perspectives but with a shared interest in educating citizens about the nature of virtue—give us quite a clear idea of how praise and frank (or constructive) criticism operate on the exemplary level; by both, *parrhēsia* is regarded as being an indispensable element of the discourse of moral imitation. Diodorus' words evoke the theme of Livy's prooemium 11, although the theme of frank criticism is absent there; see chapter 2, §1.2.2. On *parrhēsia* as "an intricate aspect of moral assessment" in Diodorus' *Library*, see Sacks 1990: 33–35; cf. Sacks 2018: 51–62 for a wider contextualization of *parrhēsia* in Hellenistic literature.

moral improvement of the reader. Moreover, frank speech becomes part of exemplary conduct, both as a means of instructing others and as one of the criteria according to which an individual can be judged in terms of public and private virtue. The frankness of an individual is thus subordinated to his social role as a friend and citizen.

2.3 CATO AGAIN (WHY CICERO COULD NOT MEASURE UP AGAINST DEMOSTHENES)

We will now turn to the treatise *Advice on Civic Life*, where Plutarch revisits the concept of therapeutic *parrhēsia*, this time as the quality of a good politician, and actually comments on the behaviour of historical figures, including Cicero. To be fair, this discussion will rather highlight the *absence* of *parrhēsia* in the account of Cicero's political action. While Plutarch explicitly names frankness as one of the qualities of a good statesman, it is omitted from the characterization of Cicero. However, as we will see, the terminology used in analyses of Cicero's style of speaking overlaps with that figuring in *How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend*; both treatises deal extensively with the topic of political speech. The context of Plutarch's analyses of Cicero's speech, moreover, and the foils he employs to throw Cicero's speech into relief, are explicitly associated with the notion of *parrhēsia*.

Advice on Civic Life is addressed to Menemachus of Sardis, about whom we do not have much information other than that he was a fellow Greek aristocrat interested in how to maintain an influential position under imperial rule.[95] The treatise contains all kinds of practical comments on the duty of politicians in Greek or otherwise provincial communities.[96] Every aspect of a political career is handled, including the style of speaking (λόγος) which a politician should adopt.[97] In gen-

[95] Carrière 1984: 29–33.

[96] Due to its practical nature as a collection of practical tips and tricks, I prefer the translation advice over precepts for παραγγέλματα; 'political', in my opinion, does not do justice to the focus on local city government and social relationships in Plutarch's treatise, which is why I have opted for 'civic'. Compare the translations in Pelling 2002, whose 'Advice on public life' comes closest to and has inspired my interpretation; Stadter 2014: 5, Renoirte 1951 ("conseils"). On the meaning of "precepts" and Plutarch's position in the philosophical tradition, see Carrière 1984: 4–5.

[97] *Advice* 802e–805e.

eral, the discourse of the politician, councillor, and ruler alike should be "full of genuine character, true spirit, the ancestral freedom of speech, foresight, and loving involvement" (ἤθους ἁπλάστου καὶ φρονήματος ἀληθινοῦ καὶ παρρησίας πατρικῆς καὶ προνοίας καὶ συνέσεως κηδομένης ὁ λόγος ἔστω μεστός).[98] Plutarch adds that this discourse should show pleasure in virtue and also exhort (be ἀγωγός) to virtue through an edifying use of words and ideas: again, frankness of speech is an element of imitable behaviour that is morally constructive.[99] Moreover, it should be seen as a hereditary feature of the Greeks; whether we interpret πατρικός as meaning 'ancestral' or 'fatherly', either way it represents an emphasis on community rather than individualism.

Right after defining the proper style of civic speaking, Plutarch gives us examples of bad style.[100] This pertains to the use of jokes and ridicule as part of one's public speech, which is pardonable only under certain circumstances. It is here that Plutarch combines political history with philosophical thought, which the ideas in the treatise *How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend* touch upon and are illustrated by Roman history. The exemplar adduced for a bad style of speaking, and misuse of freedom of speech is none other than Cicero:

> Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ σκῶμμα καὶ γελοῖον ἔστιν ὅτε γίγνεται πολιτικοῦ λόγου μέρος, εἰ μὴ πρὸς ὕβριν ἢ βωμολοχίαν ἀλλὰ χρησίμως ἐπιπλήττοντος ἢ διασύροντος λέγοιτο. Μάλιστα δ' εὐδοκιμεῖ τὰ τοιαῦτα περὶ τὰς ἀμείψεις καὶ τὰς ἀπαντήσεις· τὸ γὰρ ἐκ παρασκευῆς καὶ κατάρχοντα γελωτοποιοῦντος ἐστι καὶ δόξα κακοηθείας πρόσεστιν, ὡς προσῆν τοῖς Κικέρωνος σκώμμασι καὶ τοῖς Κάτωνος τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου καὶ Εὐξιθέου τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους συνήθους· οὗτοι γὰρ ἔσκωπτον ἀρχόμενοι πολλάκις.[101]
>
> It is in fact true that jesting and ridicule are part of a statesman's speech sometimes, if they are not spoken with the aim to insult someone or play the buffoon, but as a useful form of rebuke or reproach. Such things are most reputable in the case of responses and retorts; for when it's premeditated and unprovoked, that is the behaviour of a

[98] *Advice* 802f. North Fowler 1936 translates παρρησίας πατρικῆς as 'a father's frankness', but if we interpret πατρικός as related to history rather than family, it might well be a reference to the Athenian democratic roots of the term. On the passage, see, very briefly, Fields 2020: 107, who goes on to test (with success) its precepts on the speeches of Dio of Prusa.

[99] *Advice* 803a.

[100] Cosenza 2000 contextualizes this and similar passages within Plutarch's theory of political virtue.

[101] *Advice* 803c.

> clown, and it attracts a reputation for bad manners, as this attached itself to the jokes of Cicero and Cato the Elder and Euxitheus the friend of Aristotle; for they often began making jokes.

While the point of departure is different (here, the topic at hand is ridicule in political speech), the conceptual framewjork of this passage resembles Plutarch's approach to *parrhēsia* in *How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend*. The idea of useful criticism stands opposed to feelings of self-importance or a lack of restraint. The terminology used to define good and bad speech in the two treatises is similar; just as Plutarch had advised the removal of all scurrility and buffoonery from frank speech (67e), he advises the (aspiring) politician here to refrain from ridicule and silliness, even though jokes are a part of oratorical discourse. Again, the principle of moderation should guide the speaker. Plutarch refers to Cicero's jokes as an illustration of the kind of βωμολοχία and unprovoked γελωτοποιία one would want to avoid in political speech. The counterexample in this part of *Advice on Civic Life* is Demosthenes, particularly his *Philippics*, which illustrate a solemn and high-minded style of speaking. Following the passage quoted above, Plutarch includes several retorts from Demosthenes to political opponents in order to illustrate how ridicule should be employed correctly.[102]

The mention of Demosthenes' *Philippics* invites the question: what of Cicero's Roman imitation of these speeches, in which he openly and without scruples inveighed against Antony?[103] Plutarch's moral treatises do not mention the *Philippics*. The biographies do, although even there, they receive little attention.[104] In the *Cicero*, the only reference to the speeches is implicit, informing us that Cicero "drove Antony out, raised a faction against him, and sent the two consuls Hirtius and Pansa to war against him, and then he convinced the senate to vote (ἔπεισε ψηφίσασθαι τὸν σύγκλητον) lictors and a praetor's insignia for Caesar on the ground that he was defending the country".[105] In the life

[102] The good example of the *Philippics*, together with the speeches in Thucydides (Sthenelaus in book 1; Pericles and Archidamus in book 2), was already introduced right before this passage on jesting (803b), creating a sustained antithesis between Demosthenes and Cicero.

[103] The (Greek) imperial reception of the *Philippics* is discussed further in chapter 4.

[104] Note *Cic.* 41.4, where Plutarch mentions in passing that he derived information from "Antony's replies to the *Philippics*" (ἐν ταῖς πρὸς τοὺς Φιλιππικοὺς ἀντιγραφαῖς).

[105] *Cic.* 45.3: τὸν μὲν Ἀντώνιον ἐξέκρουσε καὶ κατεστασίασε καὶ πολεμήσοντας αὐτῷ τοὺς δύο ὑπάτους, Ἵρτιον καὶ Πάνσαν, ἐξέπεμψε, Καίσαρι δὲ ῥαβδούχους καὶ στρατηγικὸν κόσμον, ὡς δὴ προπολεμοῦντι τῆς πατρίδος, ἔπεισε ψηφίσασθαι τὴν σύγκλητον.

of Antony Plutarch uses similar, implicit, language to describe Cicero's performance in the senate, this time specifying that he persuaded the senate to declare Antony a public enemy (ἔπεισε τὴν βουλὴν ἐκεῖνον … πολέμιον ψηφίσασθαι)—a reminder of the central theme of the *Philippics*. The reader is left to himself to fill in the precise way by which Cicero fuelled the opposition against Antony, namely by his oratory. Not only does this diminish the literary legacy of Cicero's actions in the years 44–43 BC, it also negates the status of model speeches for Cicero's *Philippics*. In *Advice on Civic Life*, then, the orator who does stand model for Plutarch's ethically stimulating speech is Demosthenes.[106]

The image of Cicero as a joker and a clownish figure is not limited to the *Moralia*, but is a systematic element of Plutarch's portrayal of the orator, as is again demonstrated by the biography.[107] Apparently fascinated by Cicero's cleverness of speech, his δεινότης, Plutarch devotes a long stretch of text to examples from the collection of Cicero's jokes (*Cic.* 25–27). He introduces the passage with the remark that Cicero made many men famous by speaking or writing about them; sometimes, however, whenever Cicero expressed criticism towards someone else, he could be mean and petty, as in the case of Pelops of Byzantium, whom he refused to help in gaining honours (τιμαί) from his people.[108] "This now", Plutarch says, "was a mark of his desire to emulate others, just as he often neglected propriety due to being carried away by the cleverness of his speech"(ταῦτά τε δὴ φιλότιμα, καὶ τὸ πολλάκις ἐπαιρόμενον τοῦ λόγου τῇ δεινότητι τὸ πρέπον προΐεσθαι, *Cic.* 25.1). The failure to keep measure is a running theme in the biography. At its beginning, Plutarch stresses the bad reputation Cicero received as a result of his excessive rhetorical tricks:

> Ἡ δὲ περὶ τὰ σκώμματα καὶ τὴν παιδιὰν ταύτην εὐτραπελία δικανικὸν μὲν ἐδόκει καὶ γλαφυρόν, χρώμενος δ᾽ αὐτῇ κατακόρως πολλοὺς ἐλύπει καὶ κακοηθείας ἐλάμβανε δόξαν.[109]

[106] Instead of focusing on Cicero's eloquence in the episode after Caesar's death, Plutarch draws his readers' attention to Cicero's political power (δύναμις) in the state, and his motivations for using this power: his hatred (μῖσος) for Antony and his lust for honour (ἡ φύσις ἥττων οὖσα τιμῆς); see *Cic.* 15.1.

[107] Reading the *Moralia* and *Lives* in tandem is especially fruitful, since they form a "unity" in which the theory of the former is tested and proven in the latter, as is noted by DUFF 1999: 5. For similar approaches, see most essentially VALGIGLIO 1992: esp. 3979–3992; the plethora of studies collected in NIKOLAIDIS 2008; XENOPHONTOS 2016.

[108] *Cic.* 24.7.

> And his ready wit in using jokes and such playfulness seems to be pleasant and part of the courtroom, but by using it in excess he hurt many and acquired the reputation of malignity.

While making jokes is part of the rhetorical deal, as Plutarch admits here and in *Advice on Civic Life*,[110] Cicero's lack of moderation, together with an apparent lack of understanding of the moral implications of his behaviour, turns his eloquence into an antagonizing force. Instead of framing Cicero's frank and critical ways of speaking about the conduct of others as *parrhēsia*, Plutarch emphasizes Cicero's tendency to transgress the boundaries of morality; the term κακοήθεια quite literally signals a bad moral disposition. In this particular passage, we might have expected παρρησία to fill the place of εὐτραπελία, since the term κατακόρως and its cognates are regularly combined with the former term to indicate the bad effects of frankness.[111] In fact, εὐτραπελία, when employed pejoratively, is a direct synonym for βωμολοχία,[112] which, as we have seen in *Advice on Civic Life* 803c, was the antithesis of frankness according to Plutarch's theory. Tellingly, the term παρρησία is never used by Plutarch to define Cicero's style of speaking, neither in *Advice on Civic Life* nor in the Cicero. The omission in the Cicero is significant since the term does occur, quite in harmony with the picture presented in *Advice on Civic Life*, in the parallel biography of Demosthenes. Indeed, Plutarch presents Demosthenes as a model of *parrhēsia* among the Greeks, building his good reputation precisely upon this specific quality: "but having taken as the noble subject of his career (πολιτεία) the defence (δικαιολογία) of the Greeks against Philip and having fought worthily on her behalf, he soon gained a reputation (δόξα) and was elevated above the rest (περίβλεπτος ἤρθη) because of his speeches and his frankness of speech (παρρησία), so that he was admired in Greece and was revered by the great king [i.e. Philip]."[113] As

[109] *Cic.* 5.4.

[110] Cf. *Cic.* 27.1.

[111] Cf. Plut. *Apoph.* 207f, *Quaest. conv.* 712a, cf. *On Self-praise* 541e (τὸν κόρον τῶν ἐπαίνων); Cass. Dio 38.12.6 and 46.29.1 (about Cicero), 54.3.5. See also n. 86.

[112] *LSJ* s.v. εὐτραπελία 2.

[113] *Dem.* 12.3: Λαβὼν δὲ τῆς πολιτείας καλὴν ὑπόθεσιν τὴν πρὸς Φίλιππον ὑπὲρ τῶν Ἑλλήνων δικαιολογίαν, καὶ πρὸς ταύτην ἀγωνιζόμενος ἀξίως, ταχὺ δόξαν ἔσχε καὶ περίβλεπτος ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων ἤρθη καὶ τῆς παρρησίας, ὥστε θαυμάζεσθαι μὲν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι, θεραπεύεσθαι δ' ὑπὸ τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως. Cf. 14.3 on his *parrhēsia* with the *dēmos*. LINTOTT 2013 *ad loc.* also sees a connection with Plutarch's

Andrew Lintott notes, for Plutarch, Demosthenes' *parrhēsia* is a token of his genuine, "morally correct" attitude.[114]

A short comparison of the picture of Cicero in the biography and *Advice on Civic Life* with the tenets of *How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend* teaches us that he behaves oppositely to Plutarch's ideal statesman. In the latter treatise, Plutarch had described the situation in which the person relishing his freedom of speech at the cost of another (out of love for himself) became ἐπαχθής and βαρύς (71a). The term ἐπαχθής also figures in the biography in the description of the aftermath of the Catilinarian conspiracy, where Cicero is shown to exalt and glorify himself to the frustration of his fellow citizens.[115] Held up against the 'rules' of frank speech outlined in *How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend*, Cicero's self-promoting speech is an aberration, and does not merit the label *parrhēsia*. Nor, finally, does his provocative jocularity match the Plutarchan image of the exemplary citizen who remedies private or public problems with his frankness, the 'therapist' leader who conciliates and offers moral guidance rather than divides. Cicero's unrestrained speech is presented as an ethical flaw, the incompetence to recognize the (moral) conditions under which (frank) speech may be used appropriately.

The analysis might end here were it not for the fact that Cicero has an important foil who further elucidates the ethical preliminaries for frankness.[116] We have seen in previous chapters that a particular fellow senator of Cicero's always seems to surpass him in speech at crucial moments: Cato the Younger.[117] In *Advice on Civic Life* Cato is a fitting model for frank speech. According to Plutarch, there are few things more important for a politician than to strive for friendly relations with other statesmen and to create harmony in the state. Cato's behaviour serves as a good example of what this would look like in practice.

discussion of *parrhēsia* in *Advice* 802f "as one of the requirements for a political orator in his [i.e. Plutarch's] time".

[114] Lintott 2013: 7.

[115] *Cic.* 14: καὶ τὸν λόγον ἥδιστον ὄντα καὶ χάριν ἔχοντα πλείστην ἐπαχθῆ καὶ φορτικὸν ἐποίησε τοῖς ἀκροωμένοις, ὥσπερ τινὸς ἀει κηρὸς αὐτῷ τῆς ἀηδίας ταύτης προσούσης. Note that φορτικός here is a synonym of βαρύς. See also *Cic.* 28.1.

[116] Cf. Mallan 2016: 261.

[117] Plutarch (818d) also attributes a glorious role to Cato during (?) the Catilinarian conspiracy, where he convinced the senate to distribute grain among the people, and thereby "ended the uprising", κατέπαυσε τὴν ἐπανάστασιν; see Carrière 1984: 198.

> Καὶ Κάτων διενεχθεὶς πρὸς τὸν Πομπήιον ἐν οἷς ἐβιάζετο τὴν πόλιν μετὰ Καίσαρος, ἐπεὶ κατέστησαν εἰς πόλεμον, ἐκέλευσε Πομπηίῳ παραδοῦναι τὴν ἡγεμονίαν, ἐπειπὼν ὅτι τῶν αὐτῶν ἐστι καὶ ποιεῖν τὰ μεγάλα κακὰ καὶ παύειν. Ὁ γὰρ μεμιγμένος ἐπαίνῳ ψόγος οὐκ ἔχων ὕβριν ἀλλὰ παρρησίαν, οὐδὲ θυμὸν ἀλλὰ δηγμὸν ἐμποιῶν καὶ μετάνοιαν, εὐμενὴς φαίνεται καὶ θεραπευτικός· αἱ δὲ λοιδορίαι τοῖς πολιτικοῖς ἥκιστα πρέπουσιν.[118]
>
> For example, Cato, who differed in opinion with Pompey on the means by which he was claiming rule over the city together with Caesar, ordered the transfer of the command to Pompey when they were at war, saying that it was of the same men to commit terrible things and stop them. Mixing blame with praise, not possessing arrogance but frankness, and not applying anger but a sharp wit and intelligence, he comes across as well-disposed and willing to serve. Words of abuse do not fit politicians at all.

The Catonian *exemplum* is mentioned in one breath with examples (not quoted here) from the Attic orators, Aeschines, Demosthenes and Hypereides, and men like Solon and Pericles. Plutarch finishes with the *exemplum* of Demosthenes' *Philippics*, which are 'purified' from all kinds of abuse, including ridicule.[119] This remark clearly refers back to his earlier denunciation of ridicule in speeches, where Cicero was adduced as a negative model in contrast to Demosthenes. Cato and Demosthenes, then, are a like-minded duo in their use of appropriate civic discourse.[120]

In the *Lives*, Cato's *parrhēsia* is mainly a mark of resistance against Caesar and Pompey, true to the original 'Demosthenic' meaning of the term. However, there are also tales of Cato's ability to benefit others by means of his frank criticism in interpersonal relationships. In the biography of Pompey, Plutarch remarks that Pompey admired Cato for his frank speech and for the strength with which he alone publicly fought for justice.[121] Moreover, this quality makes him want to be his friend; this wish recalls the ideal of Platonic frankness within friendship. A dif-

[118] *Advice* 810c.

[119] *Ibid.* 810d: οἱ δὲ Φιλιππικοὶ καθαρεύουσι καὶ σκώμματος καὶ βωμολοχίας ἁπάσης.

[120] Scarpat 1964: 68 dubs Cato the 'modello romano di *parrhēsia*'.

[121] *Pomp.* 44.2: θαυμάσας δὲ τὴν παρρησίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν τόνον ᾧ μόνος ἐχρῆτο φανερῶς ὑπὲρ τῶν δικαίων, ἐπεθύμησεν ἀμῶς γέ πως κτήσασθαι τὸν ἄνδρα. In *Cato Min.* 33, Cato is admired for speaking freely even when Caesar throws him into prison in 59 BC. Cato's refusal to give in to Pompey or Caesar is similarly celebrated in Val. Max. 6.2.5, where his righteous conduct as praetor, which antagonizes Pompey, is characterized as *libertas* and *fiducia*.

ferent example of Cato's frank way of speaking is his conversation with the Egyptian king Ptolemy in the *Cato the Younger*.[122] Just as Croesus spoke in honesty with Cyrus in Herodotus' *Histories*, so Cato speaks with Ptolemy, lecturing him about happiness, εὐδαιμονία, and advising him against complying with the wishes of corrupt Roman governors in Egypt. Ptolemy is struck by the truthfulness (ἀλήθεια) and the intelligence (σύνεσις) of the man, regaining his senses again as someone does after a fit of madness or delirium (οἷον ἐκ μανίας τινὸς ἢ παρακοπῆς ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων ἔμφρων καθιστάμενος). The interaction between Ptolemy and Cato resembles the traditional pattern of the philosopher-adviser conversing frankly with his ruler, which became a prominent aspect of the discourse of *parrhēsia* in the imperial period (see above, § 2.1).[123] Most importantly for our argument, however, is that Cato's frankness stimulates Ptolemy to reflect on virtue and vice, and on what is best for his state; accordingly, the king changes his behaviour. Therefore, Cato not only lives up to the Demosthenic model by brilliantly and sincerely correcting Pompey's conduct, but he also fulfils Plutarch's (Platonic) ideal of the friendly parrhesiast who gives direction to others for improving their character and their lives.

2.4 CICERO AS A NEGATIVE EXEMPLAR OF *PARRHĒSIA* IN CASSIUS DIO

In this final section, we will return to Cassius Dio's account of republican *parrhēsia* and its role in the portrayal of Cicero. Our reading of the *Moralia* has provided us with a toolkit with which to explain the function of frankness within a sociopolitical setting. As we will see, Dio adopted the familiar conceptual interpretation of *parrhēsia* as a feature of political deliberation that should improve, not sabotage political relationships, and which more broadly speaking is the expression of ethical concerns about the civic status quo. Furthermore, within the narrative of the *Roman History*, as Mallan observes, more than an interpersonal speech act, *parrhēsia* is contextualized historically as a feature

[122] *Cato Min.* 35.2–5.
[123] Cf. Geiger 1971 *ad* 35.5.
[124] Mallan 2016: 260–261; Kuhn-Chen 2002: 197–198.

of the old republican political system which loses its foundation in the first century BC.[124]

Before we are able to understand what is wrong with Cicero's 'excessive' frankness, however, it is worthwhile looking at Dio's portrait of Cato: the image of Cato as the Roman exemplar of frankness of speech, as we have encountered in Plutarch's writings, is continued by Dio. Cato is a representative of the conservative Republic in which outspokenness was still a highly appreciated civic value. He is the filibustering maverick who blocks and refuses to endorse Caesar's laws,[125] but Dio interprets this behaviour as a positive mark of his conservatism, i.e. his aversion to any kind of innovation.[126] If there is any way to access Dio's notion of *parrhēsia* in its original form as political defence or protective mechanism, it is through Cato. An iconic passage in this regard is the private conversation between Cato and his son at Utica, which celebrates the value of free speech for the Republic. Realizing that it is impossible to defeat Caesar, Cato orders his crew at Utica to leave and his son to join Caesar's side. When his son asks him why he would not do the same, Cato famously responds: "I, having been raised in freedom (ἐν ἐλευθερίᾳ) and with freedom of speech (ἐν παρρησίᾳ), cannot in old age change and learn how to live in slavery instead". His son, on the other hand, being born and raised in a dynastic political system, should respect (θεραπεύειν) the fate (τὸν δαίμονα) that was given to him, which is to say he should endure Caesar's rule.[127] This ideological expression of the importance of free or frank speech for the republican institution that is attributed to Cato here, also features a few books earlier by an actual example from Cato's political practice, which is especially relevant in comparison with Dio's portrayal of Cicero, as we will see shortly. In book 39, Dio relates that under the First Trium-

[125] See Cass. Dio 38.3 (famous episode of Cato thrown into prison) and 38.7 (refusal to take public oath) on Cato's opposition to Caesar's agrarian laws; 38.17 on Cato's role in Cicero's feud with Clodius.

[126] *Ibid.* 38.3.1 (ἦν δὲ ἄλλως μὲν ἐπιεικής καὶ οὐδενὶ νεοχμῷ ἀρεσκόμενος). In book 37, Cato is introduced as a man of true inborn virtue, praise that Cicero never receives from the Greek historiographer: 37.57.3, ἔμφυτος ἀρετή.

[127] *Ibid.* 43.10.5: ἐγὼ μὲν ἔν τε ἐλευθερίᾳ καὶ ἐν παρρησίᾳ τραφεὶς οὐ δύναμαι τὴν δουλείαν ἐκ μεταβολῆς ἐπὶ γήρως μεταμαθεῖν· σοὶ δ' ἐν τοιαύτῃ καταστάσει καὶ γεννηθέντι καὶ τραφέντι τὸν δαίμονα τὸν λαχόντα σε θεραπεύειν προσήκει. Cato's words here evoke the traditional connection between Cato and *libertas* in Latin texts: see chapter 2. On the passage, MALLAN 2016: 262–26; cf. GOAR 1987: 73–76.

virate in 55 BC, Cato violently opposed the plan to prolong Caesar's command in Gaul for another three (*sic*) years in the senate by speaking (δημηγορήσαι) randomly (κατανάλωσε τὸν καιρόν, which we might also translate as 'he filibustered') about the condition of the state and by refusing to stick to the allotted two hours—an act landed him in prison.[128] In Dio's words, the day was wasted (κατετρίβη) since none of the tribunes got to speak. Dio next explains Roman procedure by adding that in *contiones* (σύνοδοι τοῦ δήμου) private citizens were allowed to speak before the magistrates, because it was important that citizens could share their thoughts without being influenced by the opinion of a superior; speaking first, they could speak out with complete frankness (ἐπὶ πάσης παρρησίας τὰ δοκοῦντα αὐτῷ λέγειν).[129] The freedom of mind and body Cato which says he has grown up in, is illustrated in this passage by his resistance to Caesar. It is this civic *parrhēsia* benefitting the state that Dio describes five books later as being lost under Caesar's dictatorship.[130] *Parrhēsia*, then, is a practice that sharply brings into focus the change from republic to monarchy.[131] If *parrhēsia* has a positive effect on political decision-making in the Republic, then Cato represents its true value.[132] Though his oratorical strategies are not always fruitful, at least not in Dio's account, it is clear from the personal words before his death that he applies them because of a genuine concern for the constitution.

After our reading of Plutarch it should come as no surprise that the symbolic figure for misuse of parrhēsia in Dio's *History* is Cicero; in fact, he is the symbolic figure for 'frankness' overall. There are no less than 8 passages in which Cicero either identifies himself or is identified (by internal characters, or by the narrator) with freedom of speech.[133]

[128] *Ibid.* 39.34.3–4.

[129] *Ibid.* 39.35.2: ἐν γάρ τοι ταῖς συνόδοις ταῖς τοῦ δήμου, ἐν αἷς γε καὶ ἐβουλεύοντο, πάσαις τοῖς ἰδιώταις πρὸ τῶν τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐχόντων ὁ λόγος ἐδίδοτο, τοῦ μηδένα αὐτῶν, ὡς ἔοικε, τῇ τοῦ κρείττονος γνώμῃ προκαταλαμβανόμενον ὑποστέλλεσθαί τι ὧν φρονοίη, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ πάσης παρρησίας τὰ δοκοῦντα αὐτῷ λέγειν. On the passage, which is the only one referring to this specific rule, MORSTEIN-MARX 2004: 163.

[130] At Cass. Dio 44.10.2. When two tribunes, Gaius Marullus and Lucius Flavus issue a pamphlet that they were prevented from speaking their mind freely and safely on behalf of the state (οὔτε ἐλευθέραν οὔτ᾽ ἀσφαλῆ τὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ κοινοῦ παρρησίαν ἐχόντων), Caesar becomes very angry (περιοργής) and accuses them in front of the senate.

[131] Cf. KUHN-CHEN 2002: 197.

[132] MALLAN 2016 skips over the positive connotations, focusing on the "futility" (263) of Cato's *parrhēsia*.

This stands in stark contrast with other characters in the *Roman History*. Cato is characterized twice as being a frank speaker, and on one of these instances only implicitly. Other individuals, either in republican or imperial times, are connected with the practice of *parrhēsia* just once.[134]

We have already seen at the beginning of this chapter that Dio associates Cicero's particular freedom of speech with several ethical flaws, among which the most important is a lack of self-control.[135] A comparison of Dio's presentation of frankness with Plutarch's 'therapeutic' *parrhēsia* confirms that it is primarily Cicero's lack of ethical competence that bothers the imperial historiographers, i.e. his failure to recognize the social conventions underlying the use of frankness. Let us have another look at Cassius Dio's analysis of Cicero's conduct, which was quoted in Greek at the beginning of this chapter:

> Cicero made himself the most bitter enemies by always attacking the most powerful men and by applying to all alike a freedom of speech that was intemperate and excessive. For he was in pursuit of a reputa-

[133] These passages are: Cass. Dio 38.12.6 (the narrator refers to Cicero's excessive frankness in the aftermath of the Catilinarian conspiracy); 38.15.3 (Pompey asks Cicero to stay in Rome during the Clodian affair, and defend himself and the senate with his *parrhēsia*); 38.29.1 (Philiscus sees Cicero's frankness as a political risk); 39.10.2 (Cicero checks himself after his return from exile, especially with regard to Caesar, knowing that his frankness had caused his expulsion); 45.22.5 (in the speech against Calenus, Cicero reflects on the existence of *parrhēsia* under Caesar), and 45.46.3 (same speech, Cicero identifies himself as a frank speaker, even at the risk of death); 46.26.1 (Calenus' speech, he mocks Cicero's unrestrained speech); 46.29.1 (the narrator refers to Cicero's excessive frankness in the debate with Calenus).

[134] The historiographer's attribution of *parrhēsia* to different political leaders throughout the Republic and empire is a topic that would benefit from closer study. See Cass. Dio 5 fr. 18.3 (Coriolanus' *parrhēsia* towards the people); 12 fr. 46.1 (Hanno was δεινὸς τῇ παρρησίᾳ, and spoke ἀπαρακαλύπτως); 30–35.100 Gaius Titus, pejoratively (τῇ τε παρρησίᾳ μετὰ ἀναισχυντίας κατακορεῖ χρώμενος); 54.3.5 L. Licinius Varro Murena (the son of L. Licinius Murena, cos. 62 BC, and conspirator against Augustus), pejoratively (ἀκράτῳ καὶ κατακορεῖ τῇ παρρησίᾳ πρὸς πάντας ὁμοίως ἐχρῆτο); 57.2.5 Asinius Gallus, the son of Asinius Pollio, in a positive vein (παρρησίᾳ ἀεί ποτε πατρῴα καὶ ὑπὲρ τὸ σύμφερον αὐτῷ χρώμενος); 66.12.1 Helvidius Priscus, son-in-law and follower of the Stoic Thrasea Paetus under Nero, pejoratively (τὴν τε τοῦ Θρασέου παρρησίαν οὐ σὺν καιρῷ μιμούμενος); 68.20.2 Parthamasiris, Armenian king under Trajan; 69.4.3 Apollodorus the Architect (under Hadrian); 74[75].9.1, 4 the senator Cassius Clemens, whose *parrhēsia* is admired by Septimius Severus. See also the famous debate between Agrippa and Maecenas in book 52, where both men's *parrhēsia* is emphasized and admired by Augustus: 52.41.1 (cf. 52.3.3). Augustus' special appreciation of frank speech is further noted at 53.21.4, 55.4.3, 55.7.4, 56.40.3, 56.40.1. MALLAN 2016: 269–272 discusses several of these passages.

[135] Cf. MALLAN 2016: 260, "[Dio] seems aware of an ethical boundary between frankness and unrestrained offensiveness."

> tion for being knowledgeable and for saying what nobody else could, more than for appearing to be a good citizen.[136]

According to this passage, there are three social values Cicero fails to observe. Firstly, if we think back to the definitions of frankness presented by Plato, Demosthenes and Plutarch, we recall that morally just frankness depends on integrity or virtue, on the genuine concern for the addressee, and on modesty or altruistic motives as opposed to self-promotional strategies. Cicero acts exactly oppositely to all these criteria. His frankness does not come in a modest format (ἄκρατος καὶ κατακορής), nor does he differentiate between his addressees (πρὸς πάντας ὁμοίως [...] χρώμενος), something which Plutarch advises in his *Moralia*. Secondly, instead of acting out of sincere concern for the state or his fellow citizens, as Demosthenes had done and Cato the Younger does in his own time, Cicero is preoccupied with his own reputation—not the reputation of being a morally good citizen, an ἀνὴρ χρηστός, but the reputation of being a wise and brazen man. Thus, personal ambition surpasses civic effort, a serious deviation from the ethical ideal that statesmen should above all contribute to the welfare of their community. The final social rule Cicero ignores is related to the fact that he merely 'attacks the most powerful men' (τῶν κρατίστων ἐπιχειρῶν). Now, at first sight, based on Plutarch's discussion of parrhēsia, the problem appears to lie in ἐπιχειρεῖν, Cicero's aggressive attitude, with which he creates hatred instead of harmony. This is by all means as far from Plutarch's therapeutic *parrhēsia* as can be. However, if the problem lies in τῶν κρατίστων, an aspect of the situation which significantly affects the consequences of Cicero's attacks, Dio's message might have a slightly different meaning, which is tailored to the imperial reader. In truth-to-power relations *parrhēsia* is a tricky business, but, as we have seen in Plutarch's example of Cato frankly addressing Pompey, it is very possible for the lower-placed official to express criticism about his superiors. In the imperial period, frankness could be employed by ambassadors or magistrates towards Roman rulers (even the emperor), as we have seen in § 2.1 of this chapter. Yet Cato knew, just as any imperial reader did, that frankness was a strategy that should be applied moderately or else at least according to certain (hierarchical) rules of

[136] Cass. Dio 38.12.7, above, p. 176–177.

conduct; the exemplum of his interaction with Pompey in Plutarch's *Advice on Civic Life* 810 c, as well as the admiration of Pompey for Cato in the *Pompey*, illustrate that kind of sensitivity. Cicero, in contrast, transgresses these rules by not acknowledging the status of the men he spoke to, by not applying measure, and by failing to differentiate between his addressees (τῇ παρρησίᾳ πρὸς πάντας ὁμοίως ἀκράτῳ καὶ κατακορεῖ χρώμενος). He is the imperial reader's worst nightmare.[137]

This brings us to the question of how we should interpret the negative portrayal of Cicero's excessive frankness in Dio's *History*. In my opinion, Dio's pointed remarks about Cicero's conduct are not so much the product of an attempt at blackening the orator's reputation as they are the expression of his views on Roman civic morality. In explaining the utility of *parrhēsia* in book 39, as we have seen above, Dio supposes that free speech in the Republic was a protective mechanism on the part of the citizens against the personal will and power of influential magistrates. While Cato, then, illustrates a classicistic type of 'true' *parrhēsia* associated with the traditional republican constitution (and resonating with the ancient Athenian interpretation of free speech), Cicero represents a type of 'topsy-turvy' *parrhēsia*, a freedom of speech that works in reverse, or counterproductively. In line with the argument of Plutarch's moral treatises, Dio insinuates in his books on the late Republic that Cicero and other republican politicians disregarded what mattered most in the context of city politics, that is, to strive for the common good over personal status.[138] In particular, the books handling the final years of Cicero and the Republic express a strong ideological vision on (good) government, while at the same time illustrating how the political elite fails to meet these moral standards. One peculiar passage in book 46, describing the fight against Antony, offers a specially strong condemnation of the behaviour of the senators. "The senators (οἱ βουλευταί) themselves", Dio says, "were responsible for these disasters [i.e. the battles, the proscriptions]. For they should have

[137] Fields 2020: 191 sums up nicely the relevance of this careful use of *parrhēsia* for imperial citizens: "As the social and political environment of the post-classical Greek world becomes more hierarchical and stratified, the term *parrhēsia* develops from its egalitarian origins amid the radical democracy of classical Athens to become increasingly identified with criticism directed from below at those more powerful."

[138] Such communal spirit is "für Dio … eine zentrale Tugend", according to Kuhn-Chen 2002: 163–165.

appointed one man as their leader who served the state's best interest (ἕνα τινὰ τὸν τὰ ἀμείνα φρονοῦντα προστήσασθαι), and attached themselves to him through everything. But they did not do so, supporting some men and magnifying them at the cost of others, but subsequently trying to take them back down, and as a result they had no friend, but made all of them enemies."[139] By this kind of factional strife, in which alliances change abruptly and without consideration for the communal welfare, both the senators and the people, who become involved in this power struggle, destroy the state, in Dio's opinion.[140] In his account of the battle of Philippi, the historiographer explicitly connects the loss of freedom (ἐλευθερία) and freedom of speech (παρρησία)—the hallmarks of the Republic—with the rise of political factions; one faction leading the Roman people to single rule, the other safeguarding their autonomy (οἱ μὲν ἐς δυναστείαν αὐτοὺς ἦγον, οἱ δὲ ἐς αὐτονομίαν ἐξῃροῦντο). As a result of this war, the people would never again reach a situation in which they had proper or full freedom of speech (ὅθεν οὐδ' ἀνέκυψεν ἔτι πρὸς ἀκριβῆ παρρησίαν ὁ δῆμος).[141] As Dio makes very clear, in the party politics of the late Republic, there is no place for true *parrhēsia*, ἀκριβὴς παρρησία; that belonged to the Republic as it once was, the Republic of Cato's ideals.

Staged against the background of this historical argument about the internal destruction of the republican constitution, Cicero is Dio's go-to politician for exemplifying the problems which the Republic was facing, especially the problem of free speech. Throughout the books on the late Republic, Cicero is associated with antagonism. The passage discussed above (38.12.6–7) is not the only moment when Cicero's rhetorical excesses are judged negatively. Cicero's contemporaries and the historiographer himself all denounce his frank manner of speaking, apart from one instance which might just as well be ironical: in 58 BC,

[139] Cass. Dio 46.34.1: Αἴτιοι δὲ τῶν κακῶν τούτων αὐτοὶ ἑαυτοῖς οἱ βουλευταὶ ἐγένοντο. δέον γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἕνα τινὰ τὸν τὰ ἀμείνω φρονοῦντα προστήσασθαι καὶ ἐκείνῳ διὰ παντὸς συνάρασθαι, τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἐποίησαν, ὑπολαβόντες δὲ δή τινας καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἑτέρους ἐπαυξήσαντες ἔπειτα καὶ ἐκείνους ἀντικαθελεῖν ἐπεχείρησαν, κἀκ τούτου φίλον μὲν οὐδένα, ἐχθροὺς δὲ πάντας ἔσχον.

[140] *Ibid.* 46.34.4. HOSE 1994: 422–424 reads 46.34–35 not only as crucial for the argument of the books on the history of the late Republic but for the general message of the *Roman History*; according to HOSE, this authorial evaluation addresses Dio's "senatorial readership", and is an expression of the "politisch-didaktische Funktion" of his work (424).

[141] Cass. Dio 47.39.2.

Pompey encourages Cicero to stay in Rome and protect himself as well as the senate against Clodius by means of his *parrhēsia*, disguising to Cicero—who believed himself to be one of Pompey's *amici*—the fact that he was at the same time encouraging Clodius to get Cicero out of the way.[142] There is a significant build-up in the picture of Cicero as a frank speaker which makes the reader aware of the moral conditions under which freedom of speech can be exercised in a political setting, and the genuine repercussions for the speaker who ignores these.

The reverse political effect of Ciceronian frankness is thematized in the account of Cicero's exile—which, in fact, according to Dio's account was the direct result of his antagonistic attitude towards Caesar and Clodius.[143] Cicero is advised by the fictional philosopher Philiscus not to return to Rome, considering his boldness and the many enemies he has made:

> Φοβοῦμαι δέ, ἔς τε τὰ πράγματα ἀποβλέπων καὶ τὴν σὴν παρρησίαν ἐννοῶν, τήν τε δύναμιν καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀντιστασιωτῶν σου θεωρῶν, μήποτέ τι καὶ αὖθις σφαλῇς. … Καίτοι πῶς μὲν οὐ δεινόν, πῶς δ᾽ οὐκ αἰσχρὸν ἀποτμηθῆναί τέ τινος τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ἐς τὴν ἀγορὰν τεθῆναι, κἂν οὕτω τύχῃ, καὶ ἄνδρα τινὰ αὐτῇ καὶ γυναῖκα ἐνυβρίσαι; καί με μὴ ὡς φαῦλά σοι οἰωνιζόμενον μισήσῃς, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς διοσημίαν τινὰ προδεικνύντα φύλαξαι. μηδέ σε ἐξαπατάτω τοῦθ᾽, ὅτι καὶ φίλους τινὰς τῶν δυνατῶν ἔχεις…[144]
>
> But I fear, looking at the state of affairs in Rome and knowing of your outspokenness, and considering the power and the multitude of your opponents, that you might come to fall again. … Seriously, wouldn't it be horrible, wouldn't it be full of shame to have one's head cut off and be put on display in the forum, when this should so happen, and for a man or a woman to be disgraced there? And please don't hate me for portending awful things to you, but heed me like some god-given sign predicting your future. Don't let yourself be fooled by the belief that you have friends among powerful men…

[142] Cass. Dio 38.15.3: [Pompey] γνώμην δὲ ἐδίδου καταμεῖναι καὶ ἑαυτῷ τε ἅμα καὶ τῇ βουλῇ μετὰ παρρησίας βοηθῆσαι. For Dio's account of this 'master plan' devised by Caesar and Pompey to destroy Cicero's career, see 38.14.7–16.1. Pompey's contrived rhetoric here, his pretension of honesty in praising Cicero's *parrhēsia* while secretly supporting Clodius, would in its own way be an illustration of the self-serving speech of late republican politicians.

[143] *Ibid.* 39.10.2. See § 3.3 for more details about Dio's account of Cicero's exile.

[144] *Ibid.* 38.29.1–3.

Philiscus proceeds by describing how men who want power will sacrifice even their dearest friends, commenting perhaps on Pompey's machinations in the affair with Clodius right before the exile, and quite certainly referring to Octavian's later betrayal of Cicero. Cicero's frankness of speech is here directly connected with the destruction of his political career. According to Philiscus, Cicero's frankness does not combine well with the megalomania of the most influential Roman leaders. Asserting that for this reason Cicero will fail politically, he asks Cicero to imagine his own death and the subsequent desecration of his body.[145] It is important to note that Philiscus does not judge Cicero's *parrhēsia* anywhere as being bad; his argument is that it is problematic in the light of dynastic rule. It is the same argument Cassius Dio the historiographer makes earlier in book 38, in the passage we have already discussed.

With this knowledge, then, we arrive in books 45–46 at Cicero's second ἀριστεία (after his fight against Catiline in 63 BC) in the period after Caesar's death: his struggle against Antony, and the delivery of the *Philippics*. Fufius Calenus, one of Antony's historical supporters, acts in the narrative as a stand-in for Antony during the period of the Philippic debates (43 BC).[146] Calenus makes Cicero's frankness part of a sustained argument about the unreliability of the orator and his rhetorical trickery. Such an equation of frankness with deception stands in stark contrast to the classical Athenian opposition between *parrhēsia* as truth-telling, on the one hand, and deceitful words spoken in pursuit of personal gain, on the other.[147] However, Calenus applies the term not seriously but ironically, in response to an argument Cicero made at the end of his speech, where the orator had stated that he enjoyed such a splendid career precisely because of his *parrhēsia*: "in no way have I ever feared death as the result of my boldness—this is why I have been so very successful".[148] At other moments in the speech, too,

[145] *Ibid.* 38.29.1–3. Narratologically, Philiscus' words anticipate the account of Cicero's murder and the mutilation of his body in book 47.8.

[146] Antony was not in Rome when Cicero performed *Philippics* 3–14: MANUWALD 2009: 20–31. See chapter 4, § 3 for more details about the figure of Calenus and Dio's Philippic debate.

[147] Conspicuous passages in this respect are Cass. Dio 46.4.1 (Cicero is a trickster), 46.6.4 (Cicero fawns upon, σαίνων καὶ γελῶν, everyone), 46.22.2 (Cicero flatters, θεραπεύει, his enemies while simultaneously plotting against them).

[148] *Ibid.* 45.46.3: οὔτε γὰρ ἄλλως τὸν θάνατόν ποτε τὸν ἐκ τῆς παρρησίας ἐφοβήθην. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ κατώρθωσα πλεῖστον… Cf. 45.22.5. See BERTRAND 2008: 81 on 45.31.3, where Dio's Cicero refers to

Dio's Cicero identified himself with the practice of *parrhēsia*; what is more, he twice referred to it as a basic principle of political deliberation that is lost under 'tyrannical rule', and as part of the Republican constitution he is defending.[149]

Calenus does not support Cicero's interpretation of his frankness as saving the state. He ridicules his opponent's frankness by reducing it to a dog's noise: "for you were surely not lacking in frankness; indeed, plenty and to no purpose you barked (ὑλάκτεις)".[150] The association with garrulity and disruption is topical and familiar from the Athenian sources.[151] By means of this imagery, Calenus breaks down Cicero's careful construction of himself as a parrhesiast, painting a picture of a man who speaks freely and frankly but to no beneficial purpose. To some extent, this portrayal of Cicero's licentious speech reminds us of Plutarch's analysis in the *Moralia* and the Cicero (see above, § 2.3), where Cicero is similarly denied the practice of *parrhēsia* as a genuine service to the state. Moreover, we are reminded of Philiscus' words

the rostra as τὸ βῆμα τὸ ἐλευθερίον, the podium of liberty; in Bertrand's opinion, this is a reference to *parrhēsia* as the prime feature of the republican constitution. If so, this must be a projection of Dio's Greek concept of free speech onto the Roman forum. Whereas the podium in the Assembly was theoretically open to any member of the ecclesia, speaking from the Roman rostra was an act reserved for those holding a magistracy. Although Bertrand is right to notice the rostra was marked by symbols of the people's *libertas* (esp. the Marsyas statue), this *libertas* connoted something very different from classical Greek *parrhēsia*: Wirszubski 1950: 13. Cf. Pina Polo 2012: 53, who states: "The Rostra gained a special place in the collective memory of the Romans as a symbol of the continuity and efficiency of a political system which backed the power of the elite. From this Rostra this elite monopolized the capacity to speak before the people". On the status and (aristocratic) appearance of the rostra in the republican period, Freyberger 2009: 29–30, 32–36, 50–55; Coarelli 2014: 51–54.

[149] Cass. Dio 45.18.2, 45.22.1; in both cases the envisaged 'tyrant' forbidding freedom of speech is Antony. Since the idea that free speech is inherent to a free state is a familiar topic from Cicero's own writings, it is remarkable that only this invective speech against Antony conceptualizes the importance of frankness, and not the speech on amnesty in book 44.23–33, which is a rather extensive celebration of Roman civic ideals. For the ideal in Cicero's works, see *Orat.* 1.30; *Brut.* 6. For the speech on amnesty in Dio book 44, see most recently La Bua 2020: 92–95 and Montecalvo 2014: 305–337.

[150] Cass. Dio 46.26.1: οὐ γάρ που καὶ παρρησίας ἐνδεὴς ἦσθα· πολλὰ γοῦν καὶ μάτην ὑλάκτεις. At 46.16.4 Calenus taunts Cicero by mimicking his words "I alone fight for liberty" (ἐγὼ μόνος ὑπὲρ τῆς ἐλευθερίας ἀγωνίζομαι) and "I alone speak frankly on behalf of the Republic" (ἐγὼ μόνος ὑπὲρ τῆς δημοκρατίας παρρησιάζομαι). See chapter 4, § 3.2.4. On the use of δημοκρατία for the Roman Republic, Fechner 1986: 38–39; Freyburger-Galland 1997: 118–120; Bellissime 2016.

[151] Above, § 2.1. See Cass. Dio 46.1.3, 7.3, 28.1 and 28.4, where Calenus emphasizes Cicero's θρασύτης; and 46.16.1, ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἂν εἰπεῖν ἔχοι· εἰ γὰρ εἶχεν, οὐδὲν ἂν τούτου πρότερον ἐξελάλησεν ("but he would have nothing to say; for if he had, he would've blurted it out immediately"). With regard to the latter example, cf. *Suda* λ 77 s.v. λαλιά, which is associated with *parrhēsia*.

in book 38, where the philosopher warned Cicero that his frankness would eventually cause his death. Calenus' speech is obviously vilifying in tone and purpose, but just like Philiscus, he argues that Cicero's frankness does more harm than good in the current political situation. Both Calenus and Philiscus are made to demonstrate that, contrary to Cicero's beliefs, his frank criticism only stands *in the way* of true success, since it turns his fellow senators against him.

I used the phrase 'made to demonstrate' because the words of these internal figures largely confirm the historiographer's own comments about Cicero's *parrhēsia*. Throughout, the *Roman History* sustains the image of Cicero's polemicizing *parrhēsia*. Apart from the passage in book 38 quoted above, the historiographer raises the theme on two other occasions. The first concerns Cicero's *De consiliis suis*, a booklet containing critical information on Caesar and Crassus' complicity in the Catilinarian affair.[152] The writing of this book could have been labelled an instance of justified *parrhēsia*, a truth-to-power act against the dynastic leaders of the Republic. Yet, Dio chose to present it differently. The reader is told that the book was kept hidden in light of the recent banishment, which was the fruit of Cicero's "intemperate frankness" (ἡ ἄκρατος παρρησία).[153] This is a very deliberate attempt to stage Cicero's freedom of speech as something ruinous instead of an act that is courageous and sincere.[154] Whereas Dio could have acknowledged

[152] Cass. Dio 39.10.2–3. On *De consiliis suis*, Rawson 1982.

[153] Cass. Dio 39.10.2: ἅτε καὶ τῶν τῆς ἀκράτου παρρησίας ἐπικαρπιῶν νεωστὶ πεπειραμένος, βιβλίον μέντοι τι ἀπόρρητον συνέθηκε.

[154] Interestingly, Dio does not recognize Cicero's act of writing *De consiliis suis* to be the kind of alternative historical account that is truthful and nuances the versions of potential despotic leaders for which he praises the republican political system (as opposed to the imperial regime) in book 53.19.2–3: "for in the past every event was reported in the senate and in the assembly, even if something would happen on a distance from Rome, hence everyone learnt of it and many wrote about it. For this reason, too, the truth of the events, even if some writers told them while influenced to a large extent by fear and favour, or friendship or enmity, was found in one way or the other in different writers who wrote about the same things, or from the public records. Since that time events started to be more secret and hidden from the public eye…" (πρότερον μὲν γὰρ ἔς τε τὴν βουλὴν καὶ ἐς τὸν δῆμον πάντα, καὶ εἰ πόρρω που συμβαίη, ἐσεφέρετο· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πάντες τε αὐτὰ ἐμάνθανον καὶ πολλοὶ συνέγραφον, κἀκ τούτου καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια αὐτῶν, εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα καὶ φόβῳ τινὰ καὶ χάριτι φιλίᾳ τε καὶ ἔχθρᾳ τισὶν ἐρρήθη, παρὰ γοῦν τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς τὰ αὐτὰ γράψασι τοῖς τε ὑπομνήμασι τοῖς δημοσίοις τρόπον τινὰ εὑρίσκετο. ἐκ δὲ δὴ τοῦ χρόνου ἐκείνου τὰ μὲν πλείω κρύφα καὶ δι᾽ ἀπορρήτων γίγνεσθαι ἤρξατο…). Dio uses the same word, ἀπόρρητος, to describe the literature produced since Augustus' rule and Cicero's *De consiliis suis* (βιβλίον … τι ἀπόρρητον), thus already signalling the change in freedom and introduction of censure under dynastic rule in the late Republic. Cf. Millar 1964: 37–38. On the historical meaning of the passage, Manuwald 1979: 93–94, Kuhn-Chen 2002: 198.

Cicero's historiographical frankness, he denounces him for his oratorical *parrhēsia*, perhaps because it was again directed against men who were more powerful than him. The second occasion concerns Dio's evaluation of the debate between Cicero and Calenus in book 46.29.1. In this instance, the historiographer presents himself as the arbiter by proclaiming no victory for either Calenus or Cicero; he notes that Cicero, "who in fact himself applied to all alike a freedom of speech that was intemperate and excessive, did not expect to receive similar frankness from others in return" (αὐτὸς μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἀκράτῳ καὶ κατακορεῖ τῇ παρρησίᾳ ἀεὶ πρὸς πάντας ὁμοίως ἐχρῆτο, παρὰ δὲ δὴ τῶν ἄλλων οὐκ ἠξίου τὴν ὁμοίαν ἀντιλαμβάνειν).[155] The debate about Antony ends up being a wasted day (ὥστε τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐχ ἥκιστα μάτην κατατριβῆναι). Dio uses the same terminology (κατατρίβειν) in his account (39.34.3–4) of Cato's filibustering episode in 55 BC, when the time for counsel was wasted as a result of his obstinacy. In contrast to Cato, however, who tried to protect the institution by his action, Cicero has lost sight of the public welfare: "and then, having ceased to consider the affairs of the state, he turned to slandering Calenus" (καὶ τότε οὖν ἀφεὶς τὸ τὰ δημόσια διασκοπεῖν ἐς λοιδορίας αὐτῷ κατέστη).[156] Completely controlled by his emotions, Cicero used his bold speaking not to the benefit but to the detriment of the state.[157]

Moreover, note that the first part of the sentence quoted from 46.29.1 is almost identical to Dio's earlier remark in 38.12.6 (καὶ τῇ παρρησίᾳ πρὸς πάντας ὁμοίως ἀκράτῳ καὶ κατακορεῖ χρώμενος), where for the first time the historiographer defined the aims and consequences of Cicero's frank criticism. The repetition of this phrase in the account of his final years, with the intervention of Philiscus' prophecy of death as long as Cicero continued his practice of *parrhēsia*, signals Cicero's upcoming death in the next months, which every reader knew had been a

[155] Cass. Dio 46.29.1.

[156] *Ibid.* 46.29.1. Cf. KUHN-CHEN 2002: 164 n. 130 on the topos of disregarding the common good in Dio's republican narrative. We can add Cicero to the examples KUHN-CHEN gives of republican figures singled out for their disregard of the common good (*inter alios* Tiberius Gracchus, Pompey, Caesar).

[157] As MALLAN 2016: 268–269 explains, this is more than a "superfluous dig at Cicero"; the comparison with the Cato episode actually strengthens MALLAN's argument that Dio saw the behaviour of Cicero (and Calenus) as symptomatic for the degeneration of the Republic.

[158] As tradition has it; cf. Vell. Pat. 2.66; Plut. *Cic.* 46.2, 49.1 (the people did not see Cicero's face on the rostra but rather the image of the soul of Antony, τῆς Ἀντωνίου ψυχῆς εἰκόνα). Sen. *Suas.* 6

direct result of his controversy with Antony.[158] Within Dio's work, this death happens quite soon after this episode in book 47.[159]

It is Cicero who teaches the reader that rhetoric has its boundaries; that a statesman should be very careful in observing the rules of conduct in his contact with more powerful individuals; and that morality surpasses frankness of expression in value, especially in political debate, since otherwise frankness will lose its original function and become a personal weapon. It is also Cicero who teaches the reader the particularly gloomy lesson that fearless speech expressed in the presence of those who are more powerful could be lethal. In Dio's narrative, Cicero has exchanged ethical equilibrium for political ambitions. His figure thus poses questions about the proper conduct in the exercise of power, and illustrates that self-promotional strategies of the kind he employs transgress the moral expectations the Roman community holds of a statesman, since they lead to strife instead of concord.

2.5 BROADENING THE SCOPE: WHERE IS THE PHILOSOPHER?

There is a tragic aspect to the use of frank speech by Dio's Cicero, which he, as Cato did, considered an inherent right in the republican political system. Like Cato, he expresses frank criticism in opposition to dynastic rulers, in his case Antony, but he is not able to do this in such a manner that he gains admiration or creates followers. On the contrary, he creates enemies, as not only the historiographer but also internal characters (Philiscus, Calenus) emphasize. Even though Cato's frankness tends to obstruct political deliberation, Dio leaves no doubt that Cato associates freedom of speech with the protection of the traditional republican constitution. Cicero, on the other hand, is more concerned with his own reputation than with upholding the Republic. This image confirms the portrayal of Cicero in Plutarch's writings,

and 7 are based on the premise that Antony was responsible for Cicero's death; for our purposes, see esp. the historiographical testimonials about Cicero's death 6.17 (Livy), 6.19 (Cremutius Cordus), 6.20–21 (Bruttedius Niger; Cicero killed at Antony's orders), 6.23 (Aufidius Bassus); 6.26 (Cornelius Severus; Cicero's death is Antony's crime).

[159] Cass. Dio 47.8.

where Cicero is said to act mainly out of ambition when employing criticism in his speeches or writings. While Cato, embodying Demosthenic free speech to defend the state and Platonic frankness in his civic relationships, fits the classical image of the citizen *parrhēsiastēs*, Cicero, on the contrary, uses frankness as a weapon to achieve what he wants personally, and not only undoes the healing effect of *parrhēsia* but also symbolizes its opposite, namely harmful speech. At the cost of the Republic, his imperial self cannot demonstrate any sign of constructive criticism.

As this summary comparison of Cicero and Cato demonstrates once more, the recurring motive of frankness is embedded in a wider discourse on good statesmanship: literally so in Plutarch, who handles parrhēsia as one of the qualities of the good civic leader; more implicitly in Dio, who has especially turned Cicero's *parrhēsia* into a destructive force and part of the rivalry in republican politics, which severely undercuts the foundation of the state. In Dio's *Roman History*, then, freedom or frankness of speech has become a peg on which to hook the history of Cicero's fall—and, within the historiographer's personal perception of the actual decision-making process in republican politics, the doomed fate of the Republic.[160]

The reading of Plutarch has shown that the impossibility of capturing Cicero's frank speech with the term parrhēsia is explained by imperial standards concerning political morality. Dio has opted for a more explicit treatment; the notion of *parrhēsia* symbolizes Cicero's rhetorical manoeuvres throughout the *Roman History* but always with an emphasis on its negative effects. Dio applies the classical concept only to show it has lost its true or original meaning in the context of Cicero's public performance. Indeed, these imperial ideas on frankness, as we have seen, are rooted in Platonic and Aristotelian theory on civic leadership and civic excellence; *parrhēsia* is a virtue traditionally associated with well-developed intellect, being the expression of a critical mind. Held up against this philosophical light, Cicero's behaviour is seriously flawed. While Plutarch sees it as the duty of a speaker who knows how to negotiate frankness dependent on the circumstances to instruct his

[160] This is implied at Mallan 2016: 269. Both Mallan and Kuhn-Chen 2002: 197–198 note the importance of *parrhēsia* as a motif of discontinuity in Dio's account of the transition of Republic to monarchy, but they do not present it (like I do) as one of the causes of Cicero's fall.

fellows on moral matters, Cicero makes people angry and sets them up against himself. What is even more serious is that he does not seem to be aware of it. As the imperial historiographers portray him in the passages discussed above, he shows no sign of any higher ethical values informing his behaviour (like justice or moderation), nor does he appear to reflect on the role (its legal limitations, its effects) of frank criticism within the context of republican decision-making (which is why the debate with Calenus turns into a brawl).

But what, then, about Cicero's extensive philosophical education? What about the dozens of philosophical (rhetorical as well as political) writings he produced, in which he systematically discusses the civic virtues, the ideal constitution, and the qualities of the perfect statesman-orator? Stephanie Kurczyck, in a monograph dealing with Cicero's representation of his own past, shows quite clearly that especially in his philosophical writings, Cicero was acutely aware of the ethical conduct expected of a Roman statesman. In these works, Cicero also "instrumentalizes philosophical thought for the interpretation of his own past" by way of justifying his political choices, as Kurczyck argues.[161] Moreover, in her words, "Die eigenen Taten und die unabhängige Haltung gegenüber ihrer Resonanz werden als Äußerung eines standfesten und an höheren Werten orientierten Charakters gewertet."[162] Cicero paid great attention to constructing the persona of a philosophical writer who consistently practiced what he preached in real life. Moreover, he put forward the image of the philosophically educated orator, the public speaker whose superb moral knowledge made him a leading figure of the community and an educator of the people.[163]

Although Cicero's *parrhēsia*, especially in comparison with the picture presented of the ideal politician-*parrhēsiastēs* in the *Moralia*, lacks

[161] Kurczyck 2006: 333.

[162] *Ibid.* 328.

[163] Gildenhard 2007 gives an illuminating overview of this element of Cicero's philosophical programme. Essential passages thematizing the complementary relationship of politics and philosophy are *Orat.* 12–13; *Off.* 1.3 (to his son Marcus); *Tusc.* 1.7–8 (with Gildenhard 2007: 148–156), "I have always judged this to be the perfect form of philosophy, which can speak copiously and elegantly about the most important questions; to this practice I have devoted my time with such intensity, that I even dared to hold disputations in the manner of the Greeks" (*Hanc enim perfectam philosophiam semper iudicavi, quae de maximis quaestionibus copiose posset ornateque dicere; in quam exercitationem ita nos studiose operam dedimus, ut iam etiam scholas Graecorum more habere audemus*, 1.7); *Acad.* 1.11.

any sign of reflection on proper morals, Plutarch does echo the image constructed by Cicero himself at other moments in his biography of the orator. He attributes to him a spectacular sense of justice in combination with rhetorical excellence:

> Μάλιστα γὰρ οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐπέδειξε Ῥωμαίοις ὅσον ἡδονῆς λόγος τῷ καλῷ προστίθησι, καὶ ὅτι τὸ δίκαιον ἀήττητόν ἐστιν ἂν ὀρθῶς λέγηται, καὶ δεῖ τὸν ἐμμελῶς πολιτευόμενον ἀεὶ τῷ μὲν ἔργῳ τὸ καλὸν ἀντὶ τοῦ κολακεύοντος αἱρεῖσθαι, τῷ δὲ λόγῳ τὸ λυποῦν ἀφαιρεῖν τοῦ συμφέροντος.[164]
>
> For this man showed the Romans in exceptional fashion how much pleasure speech can add to what is right, and that justice is invincible if it is clothed in the right words; and that it is essential that the harmonious politician in his acts always prefers what is good over what is flattering, and in his speech removes all harm from what is useful.

Here, Cicero is associated with several aspects of political virtue: τὸ καλόν, τὸ δίκαιον (δικαιοσύνη), the observance of public benefit (τὸ σύμφερον). Moreover, he is said to be someone whose statesmanship is ἐμμελής, harmonious (literally, 'in tune'). This man demonstrates the type of civic excellence and leadership Plutarch and his philosophic predecessors Plato and Aristotle propagate;[165] and with respect to Cicero's self-image, the picture Plutarch paints in this passage is much more in tune with the Ciceronian ideal of the statesman-orator, or, for that matter, with Cicero's autorepresentation in the philosophical writings.[166] How do we reconcile this 'model' Cicero with the unabashed Cicero who forgets to serve the common good?

The puzzle of Cicero's imperial *ethos* is not solved by examining the role of frankness alone in the accounts of his career. While his excessive *parrhēsia* explains specific (negative) evaluations of Cicero's behaviour, it does not explain the deeper moral assumptions underlying the account of his deeds, and it causes apparent contradictions in the representation of his status as preeminent Roman citizen. In the second half of this chapter we will examine more comprehensively to what extent Cicero matches imperial ideals about political leadership. More specifically, how do imperial conceptions of statesmanship affect the por-

[164] *Cic.* 13.1.

[165] That Plutarch has the Platonic ideal in mind when describing Cicero as the good statesman, appears later in the work, in *Comp. Dem. et Cic.* 3.4; see below, §3.2.1.

[166] This is an observation more broadly shared, as Pieper [forthc.] shows.

trayal of Cicero's political conduct? The answer to this would enable us to embed and position further the discussions of Cicero's virtuousness in an intellectual discourse extending beyond individual testimonials. It will moreover clarify the complex relationship between the image of Cicero as a beacon of intellectualism and, at the same time, a negative model of disproportionate civic conduct.

3. The Roman statesman as ethical leader

3.1 PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE: TWO RESPONSES

3.1.1 Writing politics

In this third part of the chapter, we will use the model of ethical competence as a tool to guide us through the different aspects of political morality and ethical leadership as they are described by Seneca and Plutarch. I will compare their views on the different ethical competencies described in § 3.1: high moral standards, ethical education, the practical application of ethical awareness in private or professional life, and the ability to teach others about ethical questions. In § 3.2, the conceptualization of these competencies will be tested on their presentation of Cicero's statesmanship. In § 3.3, we will once more return to Cassius Dio's ambiguous portrayal of Cicero in book 38, using the findings of the previous sections in order to demonstrate the extent to which Dio's account of Cicero's exile, too, is informed by the imperial ideal of ethically competent statesmanship.

There are good grounds for reading Plutarch and Seneca side by side, as I do here. As Roman citizens with ties to the highest echelons of imperial society, writing philosophy was not an enterprise separate from their public life. Both of them explored the parameters of Roman morality and the concept of the 'good Roman (wo)man'; in their daily activities they served Roman rule. Naturally, my comparison takes into account the differences, too. While Plutarch emphasizes the especial necessity for men who are advanced in their political career to instruct

and inspire aspiring politicians, Seneca shows himself to be more concerned with the pedagogical relationship between the emperor and his adviser(s). As the personal tutor and counsellor of Nero he lived the ideal expressed in *On Clemency*, "that the most important things in securing good government are not the form of constitution and the provision of legal restraints, but the right education to ensure good character in the ruler and the right advice to encourage him in the best use of his power".[167] Moreover, the two writers differed greatly in their method of embedding philosophy in Roman public and private life, as Lieve Van Hoof explains in what is to date the most extensive comparison (to my knowledge) between the philosophical writing of Plutarch and Seneca:[168]

> Indeed, while both Plutarch and Seneca regularly evoke loaded polarities such as politics and philosophy, activity and leisure, city and countryside, care of the body and care of the soul, concern with others and concern with the self, or external and internal orientation, Plutarch's preference, in contrast to Seneca's, does not lie a priori with the traditional 'philosophical pole'. Plutarch's advice in fact varies depending on the context, perspective, or discourse.[169]

As Van Hoof explains, while Seneca's treatises and letters provide an overview of Stoic philosophical theory, Plutarch's *Moralia* offer a mix of ideas and lessons which Van Hoof calls 'practical ethics';[170] Plutarch's ethical writings teach the Roman elite to manage their ambitions and expectations in society with the help of practical, ethical-philosophical instructions.[171] He would not have been interested in presenting a consistent ethical theory, like Seneca offered in his letters to Lucilius and his treatises. Nor would he draw a strict distinction between a philosophical and a political life, which is common in Roman Epicureism and, to a lesser extent, Stoicism.[172] The consistent emphasis on civic

[167] Griffin 2000: 539. On the public aspects of Seneca's writing, see also Schofield 2015.

[168] Van Hoof 2007; Van Hoof 2010: 19–65 on the methodological differences.

[169] Van Hoof 2010: 30.

[170] Van Hoof argues against the slightly derogatory term 'popular philosophy'; on the popular nature of Plutarch's work, cf. e.g. Aalders & De Blois 1992, passim, but see esp. 3396–3404; De Lacy & Einarson 1959, North Fowler 1936: 156–157. The controversy around Plutarch's 'popular' philosophy is explained well by Van Hoof 2010: 1–7, Van der Stockt 2011, and Pelling 2011.

[171] Van Hoof 2010: 27, 56.

[172] *Ibid.*, 34, 37–39.

life within Plutarch's philosophy is a well-known feature of his work.[173]

Although I subscribe to Van Hoof's interpretation of Plutarch's treatises as a type of practical ethics and I acknowledge the differences between the Senecan and Plutarchan project, my discussion of these writers will focus rather on the points of contact, which are also mentioned by Van Hoof in the observations quoted above. Regardless of their particular (philosophical) scope, Seneca as well as Plutarch wrote in order to instruct and support their fellow citizens and friends.[174] They address the question of the (mental as well as physical) freedom of Roman imperial citizens, and offer precepts to live a good and useful life. Most importantly, they agree on what it takes to be an ethically competent individual who is of good service to his family, his friends, his community: namely, to acquire moral knowledge, i.e. the knowledge to distinguish good from wrong, in order to instruct your daily and your professional actions; and to inspire others to do the same.

I will first examine the ideal of the philosophically educated statesman in the works of Seneca and Plutarch. As we will see, for the first three ethical competencies discussed below (ethical education, virtue, and the practical application of philosophy), the ideas of Seneca and Plutarch are quite comparable and complement each other in several ways. With regard to the competency of ethical instruction, I have found Plutarch's socially oriented concept of the statesman as an ethical guide of conduct more helpful than the concept of private advisorship as it is set out in Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius* and the moral treatises; it is especially in this area that Plutarch offers useful descriptions of the process of (civic) exemplarity which are lacking in Seneca's writings.

The works of Seneca and Plutarch are a treasure house of ideas about ethical leadership, but I have especially looked for explicitly theoretical passages that help us to understand their portrayal of Cicero, which I discuss in § 3.2. There, I shall illustrate which intellectual and ethical competencies Cicero is shown to possess or lack, and explain why

[173] See also Aalders & De Blois 1992: 3384–3385, paraphrasing *Old Man* 791c: "Politische Aktivität ist in Plutarchs Augen eine wesentliche und sogar die höchste Form menschlicher Betätigung, sie ist ein göttlicher Auftrag, und Plutarch betrachtet die politische Aretè als die vollkommenste Form der Aretè." Cf. *Advice* 821f.

[174] Cf. Braund 2009: 51–57 for some educational aspects of Seneca's treatises. Setaioli 2013 explains in more detail how Seneca's writings were a form of 'therapy', educating the addressees on how to improve their soul and character.

there is attached such a strong value judgment to his 'lesser' behaviour in the political arena. Contrary to Cicero's own *perfectus orator*, the imperial Cicero is a leader who loses his ethical competence (the ability for ethical reflection in social contexts) after the peak of his career, as a result of which he falls from grace.

3.1.2 Ethical education as a criterion for statesmanship

Ethical education—knowledge of the Roman ethics code—is the ethical competency which we will examine first. It is a most essential part of the imperial ideal of statesmanship, as Seneca and Plutarch demonstrate.[175]

Seneca often expresses criticism on the active life in politics, since it brings with it vices which disturb one's mental balance.[176] One can be virtuous in the private sphere as much as in public life; the Stoic intellectual should not necessarily direct himself to the public need but rather to the pursuit of individual virtue.[177] However, Griffin notes that the topic of the private versus the public life is examined in extraordinary detail by Seneca, in different treatises and letters, where he moreover does not always openly prefer otium over the *vita activa*.[178] The letters speak of the special position of the sapiens in civic life, an ideal which is brought into effect in Seneca's own assumption of the persona of the good adviser in the political treatise addressed to Nero, *On Clemency*.

More to the point, in letters 94 and 95 to Lucilius, Seneca discusses the relation between general philosophical tenets and practical rules of conduct in a public career. He argues that 1) *praecepta* can be useful since virtue divides itself into a rational (*contemplatio*, *disciplina*) and practical (*exercitatio*, *actio*) element;[179] and 2) *praecepta* need to be the

[175] For the different ethical competencies, see above, §§ 1.2 and 1.3.

[176] E.g. *Ep*. 94.69–73; *Tranq*. 7.4–6. See Griffin 1976: 315–366 for Seneca's fluctuating views on the philosopher's participation in politics, ranging from total abstention to the obligation of fulfilling honourable offices.

[177] Braund 2009: 8.

[178] Griffin 1976: 315 and Griffin 2000: 545. Entirely devoted to this question are *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *On Otium*, addressed to the influential citizen Annaeus Serenus. On Annaeus, von Rhoden 1893.

result of ethical principles or norms, *decreta*.[180] Practical rules, 'consolations' and 'exhortations' need to be supplemented by and grounded in philosophical knowledge.[181] Seneca's frame of thought here is the increasing degeneration of Roman moral values and lifestyle, which he believes can be cured by a combination of *praecepta* and *decreta*. There is a remarkable place for *exemplaria virtutis* such as Cato, Scipio, or Laelius, who, if we describe them in detail for our fellow men, teach the differences between vice and virtue:

> *Proderit non tantum quales esse soleant boni viri dicere formamque eorum et lineamenta deducere, sed quales fuerint narrare et exponere, Catonis illud ultimum ac fortissimum vulnus, Laeli sapientiam et cum suo Scipione concordiam, alterius Catonis domi forisque egregia facta…* [182]
>
> It will be useful not only to say what kind the good men commonly are, or describe their form and their outline, but to narrate and expound how they behaved; of Cato that final and most honourable wound, the wisdom of Laelius and the friendship with his Scipio, of the other Cato his distinguished action at home and abroad…

While the study of philosophical principles is an important means of becoming a better man, Seneca's pedagogical method also includes the narration of the lives of great Roman statesmen, such as the Catos and Laelius. All these examples demonstrate the integration of ethical qualities in political action. More than being practical examples of specific virtues or vices, these exempla, when told with enough attention to the character of these men (*quales fuerint narrare et exponere*), can teach about a certain philosophical attitude in life and in death.

Much more strongly than Seneca, Plutarch believes that for the Roman intellectual, philosophy and politics are (should be) two sides of the same coin. Intellectual training and moral awareness could be a direct reason for the appeal of great leaders like Dion and Brutus, as Plutarch states in his introduction to their lives:

> Ὧν ὁ μὲν αὐτῷ Πλάτωνι πλησιάσας, ὁ δὲ τοῖς λόγοις ἐντραφεὶς τοῖς Πλάτωνος, ὥσπερ ἐκ μιᾶς ὥρμησαν ἀμφότεροι παλαίστρας ἐπὶ τοὺς μεγίστους

[179] *Ep*. 94.45–47, featuring Marcus Agrippa as a positive example.

[180] On the theory of precepts and rules in these two letters and Seneca's place within Stoic ethics, see Ioppolo 2000.

[181] *Ep*. 95.34.

[182] *Ep*. 95.72. According to the principle, laid out by Posidonius, of *ethologia*: *Ep*. 95.65–66.

> ἀγῶνας. καὶ τὸ μὲν ὅμοια πολλὰ καὶ ἀδελφὰ πράξαντας μαρτυρῆσαι τῷ καθηγεμόνι τῆς ἀρετῆς ὅτι δεῖ φρονήσει καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ δύναμιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ τύχην συνελθεῖν, ἵνα κάλλος ἅμα καὶ μέγεθος αἱ πολιτικαὶ πράξεις λάβωσιν, οὐ θαυμαστόν ἐστιν.[183]
>
> These two [Dion and Brutus], the one having enjoyed the company of Plato, the other having been raised on the texts of Plato, they were both driven toward the greatest battles as if coming from the same wrestling school. And it is not so remarkable that they, having engaged upon many similar and related matters, bore witness to their leader in virtue, showing that political power and fate need to be united in sagacity and justice for political deeds to gain beauty and greatness.[184]

Practical wisdom (φρόνησις) and a proper sense of justice (δικαιοσύνη), two of Plato's four cardinal virtues, result in political success. To put it differently, political influence (or: power) consists in ethical proficiency.[185] For the discourse of philosophy, as Plutarch remarks in the treatise *Why Philosophers Should Converse Especially with Men in Power*, "wishes to make everything that she touches upon effective, and efficient and alive, and she imbues men with the motivation to act, and with judgments aimed at the public benefit, and with honourable purposes, with sagacity and greatness of mind combined with mildness and caution".[186] In passages like these, the term φιλοσοφία is tantamount to civic values. It is this that motivates and validates any politician's conduct.

Sophia Xenophontos has argued convincingly that Plutarch, in fact, envisages politics as a "site of moral education" having three successive stages which together form a cycle: apprenticeship, leadership of the people, and teaching aspiring politicians.[187] Plutarch's ethical and political treatises present a unified image of the statesman as ethical instructor.[188] Towards the end of the treatise *Whether an Old Man*

[183] Plut. *Dion* 1.2.

[184] On the topic of Dion and Brutus' 'philosophical' rulership, see the essay by Dillon 2008.

[185] Van Raalte 2004 deals in more detail with the philosophical profile of Plutarchan politicians. She argues that in Plutarch's work, philosophy alone is not enough to make a successful statesman; he also requires exceptional rhetorical skills.

[186] 776c-d: ἀλλ' ἐνεργὰ βούλεται ποιεῖν ὧν ἅν ἅψηται καὶ πρακτικὰ καὶ ἔμψυχα καὶ κινητικὰς ὁρμὰς ἐντίθησι [Reiske: ἐπιτίθησι] καὶ κρίσεις ἀγωγοὺς ἐπὶ τὰ ὠφέλιμα καὶ προαιρέσεις φιλοκάλους καὶ φρόνημα καὶ μέγεθος μετὰ πραότητος καὶ ἀσφαλείας. On this and similar ideas, Roskam 2002.

[187] Xenophontos 2016: 126–150.

[188] See Duff 1999, esp. 49–51; Pérez Jiménez 2002; Xenophontos 2016.

Should Engage in Politics, Plutarch remarks that engaging in politics resembles practicing philosophy—it is seniors who are especially aware of the capacity for ethical reflection a politician should have. The ultimate model is Socrates, who "was the first to show that life at every moment and in every aspect, in all experiences and activities alike, accepts philosophy".[189] Indeed, Plutarch's ideal of the philosophically educated statesman, being the "incarnation of an exemplary ethos",[190] who has a strong duty towards his people, has its roots in the Platonic philosopher-king. Yet while the idea of ethical imitation and perfection is Platonic at the core, Plutarch focuses on the reality of Roman life, striving for moral education on the basis of practical advice and concrete examples from Greek and Roman history. As Russell has noted, Plutarch and Seneca are not so different in their belief that practical precepts, grounded in exempla virtutis, enable moral improvement, of themselves,[191] and—I would add—also of others.[192]

3.1.3 *The necessity of* virtus/aretē *for a political leader*

Another essential ethical competency for the state leader is his commitment to high moral standards; this is at first sight an individual quality, but in the Roman mind the individual always carries a responsibility toward the collective. While Seneca and Plutarch have different ideas about ethical leadership—the former more familiar with the role of private adviser, while the latter thinks service to the community is the highest form—they agree that personal virtue is the key to any successful civic involvement.

Letter 120 to Lucilius is devoted to the question of how the notion of the good and honourable (*boni honestique notitia*) comes to men.[193] Seneca poses that we can only learn about the good by observing and

[189] *Old Man* 796e.

[190] Squilloni 1989: 227, on Plutarch's ideal leader.

[191] Russell 1973: 88. Cf. Braund 2009: 7–8.

[192] Cf. Griffin 2000: 555–558 on *On Otium*.

[193] According to Langlands 2018: 102–104, in *Ep.* 120 Seneca rather shows the limits of the process of learning through *exempla*; my analysis of this letter takes a more positive approach, since I think it tells us much about the influence of the exemplar as a leader of others.

comparing deeds done by others;[194] these deeds provide an 'image of virtue', *imago virtutis*.[195] With these words Seneca nicely captures the essence of the Roman *exempla* tradition. The argument quickly leads into a discussion of *perfecta virtus*.[196] According to Seneca, perfect virtue entails being consistent with oneself (*par sibi*) always and in every action; the virtuous individual is not "good as the result of fitting counsel (*consilio*), but led by habit (*more*) in such measure that he cannot only do the right thing (*recte facere*), but cannot do anything if not right".[197] True virtus, Seneca continues, can be summarized as follows:

> *Hanc in partes divisimus: oportebat cupiditates refrenari, metus comprimi, facienda provideri, reddenda distribui: comprehendimus temperantiam, fortitudinem, prudentiam, iustitiam et suum cuique dedimus officium. Ex quo ergo virtutem intelleximus?*[198]
>
> This we have divided into parts: desires needed to be restrained, fears suppressed, necessities to be foreseen, and what is due needs to be done. We included in it moderation, bravery, wisdom, justice and we gave to each of these its own function. In whom do we then recognize virtue?

The wise man shows the qualities of a fixed and steady mind. He is larger than life; in fact, he is a master of life by being perfectly balanced:

> *Ostendit illam nobis ordo eius et decor et constantia et omnium inter se actionum concordia et magnitudo super omnia efferens esse. Hinc intellecta est illa beata vita secundo defluens cursu, arbitrii sui tota.*[199]
>
> His regularity proves his virtue to us, and his sense of propriety, his constancy, and the fact that all his deeds are in accordance with each other, as well as his greatness that places him above everything. From there this happy life is fathomed, flowing in its natural course, which is completely in his own power.

[194] *Ep.* 120.4.

[195] *Ep.* 120.8.

[196] See Wildberger 2014 for Seneca's concept of wisdom and (political) virtue, with discussion of *Ep.* 120 at 317 and 321; she also notes how the Roman discourse of exemplarity influences Seneca's concept of virtue.

[197] *Ep.* 120.10: *praeterea idem erat semper et in omni actu par sibi, iam non consilio bonus, sed more eo perductus ut non tantum recte facere posset, sed nisi recte facere non posset.*

[198] *Ibid.* 120.11. I am aware that I have personalized Seneca's passive construction, which is part of his formal survey of the elements of virtue.

[199] *Ibid.*

Accordingly, a *vir perfectae virtutis* is someone who accepts that he "is a citizen and soldier of the world who believes he endures labours as if he were commanded".[200] This remark is typical of Seneca's Stoic perspective on politics: while his view of personal excellence is still rooted in civic action, true virtue for him exists in adopting a philosophically detached attitude to one's public tasks and one's place on earth.

There are two facets to Seneca's image of Roman virtue that deserve extra attention. The first is that it unites the mastery of emotions, the cognitive ability for reflection or anticipation on what is needed (*provideri*), and a decisiveness to act upon those needs (*distribui*). As discussed in the introduction, ethical competence relies on the cognitive skill for recognizing and identifying ethical problems, and translating this knowledge into particular, relevant actions. The term *intellegere* is used twice in the above passage (*virtutem intelleximus*; *intellecta est beata vita*), and again in 120.13 (below, *intellectum*).[201] Seneca places emphasis on the rational insight that is created by the behaviour of a moral exemplar. This cognitive transfer between model and followers must be part of the reason why Seneca attaches so much value to consistency of action on the part of the exemplar.

How does this rational insight come about? This is the second noteworthy aspect of this passage, Seneca's description of the public's eager response to the exemplar of virtue:

> *Fecit multis intellectum sui et non aliter quam in tenebris lumen effulsit advertitque in se omnium animos, cum esset placidus et lenis, humanis divinisque rebus pariter aequus.*[202]
>
> He enabled many to understand him, and he shone no differently than a light in the dark, and he directed the minds of everyone to himself through being placid and mild, equal of character in human and divine matters alike.

Brad Inwood paraphrases: "the source of our insight [in what is good] is a moral paragon".[203] I would add that the paragon does more than

[200] *Ep.* 120.12, *civem esse se universi et militem credens labores velut imperatos subiit.*

[201] Cf. *Ep.* 120.4.

[202] *Ep.* 120.13. The same metaphor occurs in Plut. *Mor.* 806a, who adds that the great men illuminate their pupils like the sun shines on the planets around her, making them grow and making them shine too (συνεκφωτίζειν).

[203] Inwood 2007: 328.

provide moral knowledge to the people; he makes them part of his 'club', as it were. The wise man turns the onlookers to him (*advertit in se*) like a light in the dark, language which suggests a leader-follower relationship. Virtue attracts, is Seneca's philosophy; it is infectious.[204] The passage in *Ep.* 120 is a remarkable addition to his image of virtue as a light elsewhere in his work. In *Ben.* 4.22, Seneca describes how virtue draws men to her by enveloping their minds in her beauty, and capturing them through their admiration of her light and splendour.[205] In *Ep.* 120, then, Seneca takes the extra step of attributing extraordinary virtue to an individual who acts as moral exemplar. In this case, not virtue itself, but an individual *with* virtue can draw all minds to him; importantly, the light has now become a metaphor (*non aliter quam lumen*) for the intellectual influence this man exercises on his fellows.

Plutarch describes this process of attraction-by-virtue in more detail. At the beginning of his *Advice on Civic Life*, he affirms that public leaders should be free from fault in their behaviour (ἤθη), counsel (βουλεύματα), actions (πράξεις), and lives (βίοι);[206] they should furthermore act in an unchangeable (ἄτρεπτος) and steadfast (δυσμετάθετος) fashion.[207] Why? Because they have the responsibility to transmit this virtue to the community.[208] In the treatise *How to Praise Oneself Inoffensively*, Plutarch offers a very concrete method of doing so. He insists that through the medium of praise speeches the politician can provide stimuli for greater and more splendid actions (πλειόνων καὶ καλλιόνων πράξεων ἀφορμάς) than he had himself described. The politician will not praise himself in order to showcase his own virtue but instrumentalizes his virtue, as it were, to make his fellow citizens zealous to achieve even more virtuous deeds themselves.[209] Furthermore, in this type of praise grounded in virtue, the civic leader can show the differ-

[204] An analogous passage is Plut. *Numa* 20.8, where Numa is defined as Plato's philosopher king, who inspires his people to live their lives in happiness and concord, with justice and temperance, by his distinctive exemplarity and shining life (ἐν εὐδήλῳ παραδείγματι καὶ λαμπρῷ τῷ βίῳ).

[205] The language of admiration is a sign that also here, we are in the realm of exemplary discourse: Langlands 2018: 88–92.

[206] *Advice* 801a.

[207] *Advice* 799b.

[208] Cf. Aalders & De Blois 1992: 3392; cf. *To an Uneducated Ruler* 780b.

[209] *On Self-praise* 539e-f. See also 821d, where the power of the people's goodwill combined with the absolute virtue of the leader are said to be a steady wind pushing a man into politics: καὶ ὅλως, ὅταν ἀλήθεια καὶ ἀρετὴ προσγένηται [τῇ εὐνοίᾳ], φορόν ἐστι πνεῦμα καὶ βέβαιον ἐπὶ τὴν πολιτείαν.

ence between good and bad counsel, and divert his fellows from taking the wrong course (μᾶλλον δὲ ἀποστρέψαι τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἐπὶ τὰ κρείττω τὴν διαφορὰν ἐνδεικνύμενον).[210] Again, the presence of absolute virtue in combination with the ability to address directly what is right and wrong defines leaderlike behaviour. We will return to this matter in the next two sections.

3.1.4 Philosophy in practice: dealing with fame

How does the statesman implement the ethical code in his daily behaviour, and how does he show that he is capable of ethical reflection? For Plutarch and Seneca, a strong sign of moral incompetency in the political citizen is inconsistency of action and an excess of ambition.[211] There is a fine line between vice and virtue, as Seneca often remarks in his letters, and vice is always lurking just around the corner. Both Seneca and Plutarch devote considerable space to the question of which vices to avoid in personal and public life.

According to Seneca, as we have seen, the life of a person who has perfect *virtus* is completely *arbitrii sui*, lived according to his own judgment. Although the wise man is aware of his social function, he remains constant in mind and action, and he stands above everything and everyone else (quite literally so, since Stoic theory poses that the *sapiens* has part of the divine). He is completely free.[212] What is more, a person without a character firmly rooted in virtue is prey to a vacillation of the mind (*fluctuatio*), and a continuous (mental) movement between his simulation of virtues and his love for vices (*inter simulationem virtutum amoremque vitiorum adsidua iactatio*).[213] In *Ep.* 94, Seneca gives examples of men who were defeated by the desires, *cupiditates*, which unhinged their minds. In political men, these desires express themselves as crazy and vain ambition. Thus, Alexander was led by *furor*; Pompey

[210] *On Self-praise* 545d-e.

[211] On the value of constancy (consistent behaviour) in Plutarch, see FULKERSON 2012; for Seneca, see STAR 2012: 23–61.

[212] Cf. e.g. *Ep.* 104.33–34 , 94.56 (nature produces us free men), 95.71 (with the example of Cato the Younger); *Constant.* 5.4 (true virtue is free and immovable), 19.2 (liberty of mind is standing above injustice done to you).

[213] *Tranq.* 2.8, *Dial.* 10.5.1 (Cicero).

possessed by an *insanus amor* of false greatness; Caesar led on by *gloria* and *ambitio*; and Marius' *ambitio* destroyed him.[214]

Plutarch similarly battles ambition and lust for wealth in his description of good leaders.[215] He explains to Menemachus right away in *Advice on Civic Life* that there are people who enter politics from a desire for 'empty' glory (ὑπὸ δόξης κενῆς) or love of competition (φιλονεικίας τινός), or who use it as some sort of pastime (τῇ πολιτείᾳ διαγωγῇ χρώμενοι).[216] The man who goes into politics for these reasons will be overpowered (ἐκπλήττηται) and led astray (ἀναστρέφεται). A strong political vision is crucial to combat such empty desires.[217] In a way reminiscent of Seneca's ideas in *Ep.* 94, Plutarch also asserts that the policy or purpose (προαίρησις) of a man of state should be secure (τῆς ἀσφαλείας ἐχομένη), and steer clear of the turbulent and mad effects of 'empty fame'.[218]

Plutarch offers a very practical reason for avoiding excessive love of competition and fame: a civic leader in the provinces must always keep in mind that he is being ruled, too. According to Plutarch, just as Pericles repeated to himself when he assumed the general's cloak that he ruled free men, Greeks, and Athenian citizens, so an official in the province should repeat to himself that "being under rule yourself, you rule a city assigned to proconsuls, to governors of the Emperor".[219] It is in the interest of one's community to be humble and encourage concord and cooperation. Therefore, it is emphasized repeatedly that a leader should prevent feelings of φθόνος;[220] he should also discourage

[214] *Ep.* 94.62. In Seneca's words, they appeared to lead others (*agere alios visi sunt*), but in fact they were being led (*agebantur*) [by their ambition] (94.61). Newman 2008 studies Seneca's perception of honour and fame (*gloria*) especially in the letters to Lucilius.

[215] Cf. esp. *Advice* 819f; 813c.

[216] *Advice* 798c-d.

[217] *Advice* 798e. For Plutarch, γνώμη, a strong opinion, and λογισμός, a reasoning behind one's actions, are crucial qualities for a good politician.

[218] *Advice* 815c.

[219] *Advice* 813e. If Plutarch is serious with this Pericles example, and I think he is, this is a very remarkable way of reusing classical models; it shows us the flexibility of Greek intellectuals in reinterpreting the concept of Athenian freedom, their desire to establish continuity with the past regardless of political circumstances, and above all a strong wish for peace over the freedom of individual *poleis*. Cf. 816f–817c where the theme is explored further; Plutarch suggests that teaching politics (πολιτικὴ παιδεία) in his time included lessons about being ruled.

[220] Avoidance of φθόνος in: *Advice* 804d, 807a, 811e, 816e, 820a (on pure virtue), 824b. Compare the treatise *On Self-praise,* which contains many similar ideas and is in itself a manifesto for goodwill

the formation of factions within a community. Slander, διαβολή, and other forms of calumny are things to avoid at any cost.[221]

3.1.5 Teaching others about complex ethical situations

The final ethical competency is being able to teach others about the ethics code by openly identifying and discussing issues of morality; by doing this, an ethical leader will act as a model of virtue that inspires others to adopt the proper moral behaviour in similar situations. We have seen that Seneca envisages the perfectly virtuous man as a shining light and model of instruction for his fellow citizens. Yet Seneca leaves open the question precisely why these citizens would be the wise leader's responsibility.

Plutarch, in his *Advice on Civic Life*, leaves no doubt about the necessity of instructing one's fellow citizens. To start with, his description of the good statesman (ὁ χρηστός) around the end of the treatise stresses his nature as a man of the people (κοινὸς ὤν). He cares for the people around him; he laughs (συνχαίρειν) and he cries (συναλγεῖν) with them. He is equal (ἴσος) to the people, and looks the same (ὁμαλός), as if he lives on the same footing (ὁμοδημεῖν καὶ συνανθρωπεῖν). Finally, he is their counsellor (σύμβουλος), their advocate (συνήγορος) and a benign mediator (διαλλακτής) in the event of a conflict. The frequency of words with the prefixes ὁμο- and συν- in this passage is notable, and signals the collective aims of the good statesman.[222] To quote the words of Alan Wardman: "Thus the function of the 'politicus' is seen to depend on his own gentleness of character. His aim is to create a unified state, in which the citizens feel that the state as a whole is more important to them than their individual friends or enemies."[223] A special role is reserved for older men. In the treatise *Whether an Old Man*

in the community. See Fields 2008 for the social implications of envy in the "agonistic elite culture" of Plutarch's time.

[221] *Advice* 803a-c, 810a, 825e-f. Cf. Seneca's conclusion in *Constant*. 19 on the *sapiens*' refusal to be involved in conflict (*rixa, conluctatio*) and his immunity against calumny (*iniuria, contumelia*). In 817c, Plutarch gives this Stoic thought a very practical turn, explaining how a civic leader should disregard the calumny of his Roman superiors.

[222] I paraphrase *Advice* 823a-c. Cf. 824b, where similar language is used.

[223] Wardman 1974: 62–63.

Should Engage in Politics, Plutarch argues that senior citizens should engage in politics for no other reason than the education (παιδεία) and the instruction (διδασκαλία) of the young (οἱ νέοι); the elder gives guidance to the young man, whose soul is moulded and modelled by his words and deeds.[224] The idea of 'modelling' the soul of others lies at the core of Plutarch's understanding of exemplary education, and it is an interesting addition to the process of learning-by-exempla as it is usually described in Latin literature.[225]

The leader's role as mediator (διαλλακτής/-ήρ) is worked out quite elaborately in *Advice on Civic Life*. For Plutarch, a good statesman is a type of doctor-cum-mediator, solving conflicts between other citizens wherever they arise.[226] It is imperative that the statesman himself does not choose sides and has no enemies (except when these are the type of Aristion, Nabis or Catiline, who were a sickness to the city):

> Τοὺς δ' ἄλλως ἀπᾴδοντας ὥσπερ ἁρμονικὸν ἐπιτείνοντα καὶ χαλῶντα πράως εἰς τὸ ἐμμελὲς ἄγειν, μὴ τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσι σὺν ὀργῇ καὶ πρὸς ὕβριν ἐπιφυόμενον, ἀλλ' ὡς Ὅμηρος ἠθικώτερον· «ὦ πέπον, ἦ τ' ἐφάμην σε περὶ φρένας ἔμμεναι / ἄλλων» καὶ "οἶσθα καὶ ἄλλον μῦθον ἀμείνονα τοῦδε νοῆσαι.[227]
>
> But those who show dissent in another manner one ought to call to order like a musician tightens and gently loosens the strings, and one should not come at these trespassers in anger or with arrogance, but, like Homer does, in a morally instructive way: "Truly, my friend, I did think you surpassed other men in your wisdom", and "You know how to devise a better speech than this".

The term ἠθικώτερος summarizes the task of the statesman in difficult situations: to give moral guidance, not reproof.

Plutarch has a special interest in this problem-solving ability of the civic leader. The greatest and ultimate goal of the 'art of statecraft', as Plutarch terms it, is preventing *stasis*, civil strife.[228] The politician has

[224] *Old Man* 790e-f: ἀλλ' εἰ διὰ μηδὲν ἄλλο τῷ γέροντι παιδείας ἕνεκα τῶν νέων καὶ διδασκαλίας πολιτευτέον ἐστίν … ἐπευθύνει τὸν νέον, ἔργοις ἅμα καὶ λόγοις πλαττόμενον ἐμψύχως καὶ κατασχηματιζόμενον.

[225] Current theories of exemplarity do not recognize such active interaction between model and imitator; see chapter 2, § 1.2.1.

[226] On the image of the doctor-politician, also e.g. *Advice* 825d; *Agis Cleom.-Gracchi Comp.* 4.2 is a very good example from the *Lives*. Cf. SWAIN 1996: 177 with note 129; WARDMAN 1974: 57–63.

[227] *Advice* 809e.

[228] A civic leader should instead focus on five core qualities in a city, rhetorically formulated in al-

the noble task of creating concord and harmonious relations among the people.[229] In a rather long passage, which is worth quoting to understand the mechanism of ethical instruction he describes, Plutarch explains exactly how the statesman can successfully play the mediator between two opposing parties:

> Τὸ μᾶλλον οἰόμενον ἀδικεῖσθαι μέρος ἐξομιλοῦντα πρότερον καὶ συναδικεῖσθαι δοκοῦντα καὶ συναγανακτεῖν, εἶθ᾽ οὕτως ἐπιχειροῦντα πραΰνειν καὶ διδάσκειν ὅτι τῶν βιάζεσθαι καὶ νικᾶν ἐριζόντων οἱ παρέντες οὐκ ἐπιεικείᾳ καὶ ἤθει μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ φρονήματι καὶ μεγέθει ψυχῆς διαφέρουσι, καὶ μικρὸν ὑφιέμενοι νικῶσιν ἐν τοῖς καλλίστοις καὶ μεγίστοις· ἔπειτα καὶ καθ᾽ ἕνα καὶ κοινῇ διδάσκοντα καὶ φράζοντα τὴν τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν πραγμάτων ἀσθένειαν, ἧς ἓν ἀπολαῦσαι ἄμεινόν ἐστι τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσι, μεθ᾽ ἡσυχίας καὶ ὁμονοίας καταβιῶναι, μηδὲν ἐν μέσῳ τῆς τύχης ἆθλον ὑπολελοιπυίας.[230]
>
> [He should] first conciliate the party who believes to have been offended most, and appear to share their feeling of injustice and their anger, then try in this way to soothe them and teach them that those who can let go are better than those who fight because they want to have the power and win, not only in fairness and character but also in mind and greatness of soul, and that they who can yield in something small will be victorious in the best and greatest matters. Next, he should instruct them individually and collectively, and tell them about the weak condition of the Greek state, in which it is better for well-thinking men to benefit from this one thing, leading our lives in peace and in concord, since fate has left no prize open for competition.

The Greek civic leader, in Plutarch's eyes, is able to do more than provide an example of virtuousness to his community. Not only is he expected to act according to high moral standards, he also needs to engage publicly as well as privately in discussions about ethical norms and values. Apart from knowing what is right and acting justly, he should give instructions on how to handle morally problematic situations.[231] This

literative asyndeton: εἰρήνης ἐλευθερίας εὐετηρίας εὐανδρίας ὁμονοίας (824c), "peace, freedom, prosperity, good men, concord". On the role of concord in Plutarch's writings, see PAVIS-D'ESCURAC 1981, SQUILLONI 1989: 235 n.36, SWAIN 1996: 177–182. For the historical reality of ὁμόνοια as political virtue in the Greek cities of the Roman Empire: SHEPPARD 1984–1986.

[229] Cf. *Advice* 800a, where the word ῥυθμίζειν, again a musical metaphor, is used to describe the politician's task of uniting the people.

[230] *Advice* 824d–e.

[231] Cf. Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 44 on the duty of the politician to soothe (πραύνειν) not inflame (ἐρεθίζειν) an angry crowd.

man seems to approach the (unattainable) Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king,[232] but if we look at the practical examples Plutarch offers, including from his own career,[233] his attitude is rather down-to-earth and applicable to everyday city life.[234] Always remember, Plutarch says, "I'm not in office for me, I'm in it for my country".[235] Moreover, at the end of the passage quoted above, the Greek city leader is encouraged to preach concord and harmony because of the inferior position of the Greek state. That remark greatly clarifies (though it also poses new questions) why Plutarch saw such a great responsibility for civic leaders like Menemachus and himself: provincial government under the Empire could be a tricky business, and the Greek statesman needed specific ethical competencies to deal with conflicting interests on the local as well as imperial level.

3.2 CICERO, ETHICAL LEADER IN SENECA AND PLUTARCH

It is time to apply Plutarch's as well as Seneca's ideal of ethical competence onto their portrayal of Cicero, and examine where and how he fails to be an ethical leader. One incentive for discussing the portrayal of Cicero in the context of ethical competence is that complex characterizations of Cicero, including both praise and blame, frequently lead modern classicists to engage in elaborate debates about the imperial authors' final judgment, which can be positive or negative as long as it is not inconsistent or unsystematic.[236] This is not helpful. In this section I will zoom in on Cicero's image in Seneca and Plutarch, discuss-

[232] On the influence of Plato's Republic on Plutarch's political treatises mixed with practical views from the Peripatetic school see Aalders & De Blois 1992.

[233] *Advice* 811c, 816d.

[234] Cf. Palm 1959: 30–44 and Van Hoof 2010 on Plutarch's practical, realistic approach.

[235] *Advice* 811c: οὐκ ἐμαυτῷ γέ φημι ταῦτ' οἰκονομεῖν ἀλλὰ τῇ πατρίδι.

[236] See also the Introduction. For Seneca as a case in point of this tendency, compare Gambet 1970: 172, "Seneca's evidence for Cicero is characterized at almost every turn by the same consistency which marked its author's life" with Keeline 2018: 196, "In Seneca the Younger Cicero is conspicuous by his absence". Both scholars signal that Cicero only occasionally features in Seneca's work, and feel the need to conclude that this indicates a dismissive attitude towards Cicero. My analysis is built rather on the conviction that Seneca could appreciate the complexities of Cicero's character; what is more, I will show that his diverse treatment of Cicero's life and career is correlated with his views about statesmanship and citizenship.

ing well-known and less-known passages, with the aim of presenting a more comprehensive judgment of his moral qualities, which can be both disappointing and positive models at the same time. I will explain that Cicero's philosophical virtue is not negated, which is why he may still function as a model of excellence, but that there is a problem with the translation of cognitive qualities into actual behaviour. The philosophical theory discussed in § 2 will enable us to trace the different steps in Cicero's ethical development, and to recognize where and how his ethical exemplarity is frustrated. My analysis will also deepen our insight into the question of why Cicero was such an easy target of moral criticism and accusations of hypocrisy.

3.2.1 Cicero's high moral standards and ethical training

Plutarch's Cicero is born with the qualities to become a wise leader, and his education brought him all the moral knowledge the good citizen has need of. Little Cicero presents the essence of the Platonic intellectual: "as Plato thought fitting for nature prone to learning and philosophy, he became such that he loved every form of knowledge and spurned no type of literature or education".[237] It is indeed a highly philosophical and *Greek* training that Cicero would enjoy as an adolescent. When still in Rome, Cicero already associated himself with Greek scholars (φιλόλογοι), this in addition to the traditional Roman practice of the *tirocinium fori* (which he took under Mucius Scaevola).[238] Plutarch dwells on Cicero's experiences in Greece, and the varied group of philosophers and orators he met. According to the biographer, his contact with the Academics and Stoics in Athens even made Cicero consider spending the rest of his life in philosophical contemplation there.[239] This would not happen, for though his nature was prone to learning, it was also ambitious (φιλότιμος).[240] Here, still at the very be-

[237] *Cic.* 2.3: γενόμενος δ', ὥσπερ ὁ Πλάτων ἀξιοῖ τὴν φιλομαθῆ καὶ φιλόσοφον φύσιν, οἷος ἀσπάζεσθαι πᾶν μάθημα καὶ μηδὲν λόγου μηδὲ παιδείας ἀτιμάζειν εἶδος.

[238] On the *tirocinium fori*, Marrou 1965: 345–346; Goldbeck 2012.

[239] *Cic.* 4.2.

[240] *Cic.* 5.2. In *Cic.* 40, Plutarch devotes some space to Cicero's actual philosophical pursuits at the time of Caesar's dictatorship, but his prime interest lies with Cicero's coinage of Latin terminology for the subject of natural philosophy.

ginning of the biography, in the formative stadium of his life, Cicero is already presented as struggling with two contrasting lives, the philosophical and the political.

Throughout the biography, Plutarch plays with the Platonic disposition or potential that Cicero represents and the clash between his knowledge-loving nature and the political reality. The biographer attributes the highest sense of justice (τὸ δίκαιον) to the orator as well as extraordinary sagacity (σύνεσις περιττή) in handling political conflict.[241] Plutarch's statement (*Cic*. 13.1; see above, § 2.5) that Cicero personifies the marriage of justice and eloquence illuminates his major contribution to Rome's history and captures the reason for including Cicero among the *viri illustres* of the *Lives*. In addition, Cicero was a good patriot with a big heart for the Republic, a theme that recurs outside the *Cicero* as well.[242] At one point in his life, Cicero even represents the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-leader (Plutarch pragmatically bends the concept of king into that of the political leader). In the comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero, the biographer notes, quoting Plato, *Rep*. 473d:[243]

> Ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ Ῥώμῃ λόγῳ μὲν ἀποδειχθεὶς ὕπατος, ἐξουσίαν δὲ λαβὼν αὐτοκράτορος καὶ δικτάτορος ἐπὶ τοὺς περὶ Κατιλίναν, ἐμαρτύρησεν ἅμα τῷ Πλάτωνι μαντευομένῳ παῦλαν ἔξειν κακῶν τὰς πόλεις, ὅταν εἰς ταὐτὸ δύναμίς τε μεγάλη καὶ φρόνησις ἔκ τινος τύχης χρηστῆς ἀπαντήσῃ μετὰ δικαιοσύνης.[244]

[241] *Cic*. 13.1 and 18.4 (on the Catilinarian conspiracy), respectively.

[242] *Cic*. 22.3 (voice of the people), 49.3 (Augustus to his grandson); *Cato Min*. 32.4 (although, here, as often, Cicero is also seen being led by egocentric reasons); *Ant*. 19.1; *Pomp*. 49 (Cicero loved by the senate); *On Exile* 605f.

[243] Socrates' words run thus (the parts quoted by Plutarch are printed in bold): "Unless, I said, either the philosophers will govern in the cities or these said kings and rulers will pursue philosophy lawfully and appropriately, and **this, political power and philosophy, will agree in one person**, and when the many souls who go after one without the other are excluded from necessity, **there is no end to evil**, my dear Glaukon, **in the cities**, nor, I think, for the human race; and until this moment that state we outlined presently will not grow to her potential or see the light of the sun." (Ἐὰν μή, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἢ οἱ φιλόσοφοι βασιλεύσωσιν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἢ οἱ βασιλῆς τε νῦν λεγόμενοι καὶ δυνάσται φιλοσοφήσωσι γνησίως τε καὶ ἱκανῶς, **καὶ τοῦτο εἰς ταὐτὸν συμπέσῃ, δύναμίς τε πολιτικὴ καὶ φιλοσοφία**, τῶν δὲ νῦν πορευομένων χωρὶς ἑφ' ἑκάτερον αἱ πολλαὶ φύσεις ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀποκλεισθῶσιν, **οὐκ ἔστι κακῶν παῦλα**, ὦ φίλε Γλαύκων, **ταῖς πόλεσι**, δοκῶ δ' οὐδὲ τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ γένει, οὐδὲ αὕτη ἡ πολιτεία μή ποτε πρότερον φυῇ τε εἰς τὸ δυνατὸν καὶ φῶς ἡλίου ἴδῃ, ἣν νῦν λόγῳ διεληλύθαμεν.) Plutarch refers to the same passage at *Numa* 20.6–7. The idea of political leaders testifying to Plato's philosophical tenets also occurs in *Dion* 1.3; see above, § 3.1.2.

[244] *Comp. Dem. et Cic*. 3.4.

> In Rome itself, having been appointed consul in name, but with the power of a sole ruler and dictator in the period of the Catilinarian conspiracy, he proved true, along the lines of Plato's prophecy, that there would be an end to the evil in the city states when in the same person a great power and wisdom should unite with justice, as the result of some happy fortune.

The preposition ἅμα does more than suggest that Cicero simply confirmed Plato's words in book 5 of the *Republic*.[245] Instead of having its usual temporal value, ἅμα here expresses the value of linking two things or people together within the same space; in other words, it places Cicero and Plato on the same team. The remark connects Cicero and Plato on the level of philosophical leadership, and is possibly a reference to the indebtedness of Cicero *philosophus* to Plato's work. The image is not without irony: the Roman orator carried out in practice what the Greek philosopher only prophesied in his literary dialogues. Again, as often in Plutarch's biography, the difference between the active life, which Cicero eventually chose, and the contemplative pursuit of literature is thematized. While the above passage is an enthusiastic celebration of Cicero's ethical leadership as consul, there are no similar praises in the account of events after 63, even though Cicero enjoyed a similar authority in the years 44–43 BC. Plutarch's positive evaluation of Cicero's political conduct is situated exclusively in the period before and during the Catilinarian conspiracy.

In Seneca's treatises, it is also the consul Cicero who receives praise for his patriotism.[246] In the *Consolation to Marcia*, Seneca adduces Cicero as the example of someone who would have benefited from an early death, specifically during his consulship, which constituted the height of his career:

> *M. Cicero si illo tempore quo Catilinae sicas devitavit, quibus pariter cum patria petitus est, concidisset, liberata re publica servator eius, si denique filiae suae funus secutus esset, etiam tunc felix mori potuit. Non vidisset strictos in civilia capita mucrones nec divisa percussoribus occisorum bona,*

[245] As is implied by PERRIN's Loeb translation (1919: 217): "[C]icero bore witness to the truth of Plato's prophecy".

[246] On Seneca's reception of Cicero, see the essential studies by KEELINE 2018: 196–222; GOWING 2013; FEDELI 2006; SETAIOLI 2003; GAMBET 1970 (cf. GAMBET 1963: 157–183); GRIMAL 1984.

> *ut etiam de suo perirent, non hastam consularia spolia vendentem nec caedes locatas publice nec latrocinia, bella, rapinas, tantum Catilinarum.*[247]
>
> M. Cicero, if he would have fallen in the period in which he shunned Catiline's dagger strikes, with which he was attacked in the same manner as the country, the Republic liberated and he its saviour—if indeed he would have followed his daughter in death, he could still have died a happy man. He wouldn't have seen the swords swung at the heads of citizens nor the goods of the murdered being divided among the slayers, in order that they would have died at their own cost; he would not have seen the consular spoils put up for auction, or the murders that were officially contracted, nor the thievery, wars, plundering, so many Catilines!

This passage is usually discussed as evidence that in his portrayal of Cicero, Seneca was strongly influenced by (his own education in) the rhetorical schools of Rome. It is true that this passage rehearses standard Ciceronian *topoi* (the 'saviour of the country', the good consul Cicero against the villainous Catiline). However, whereas modern scholars focus on the one-dimensionality of this 'exemplary' Cicero, I rather want to focus on the contextualization of his figure.[248] The *exemplum* of Cicero's consular *aristeia* is part of a series of three: it is sandwiched between *exempla* from the lives of Pompey and Cato. In this passage, Cicero is characterized by Seneca as the saviour of the Republic. Though the quality of Cicero's own ethical standards are not the subject of this *exemplum*, it is implied by the context. Elsewhere Seneca more explicitly defines Pompey, Cicero and Cato as *boni*, good men.[249] In the *Consolation to Marcia*, the philosopher refers to the lives of these *boni cives* in order to claim that there is no such thing as a premature death, for when a man has reached a high-point in life he also often experiences bad things after that; dying at the climax of one's life is best.

[247] *Dial*. 6.20.5.

[248] The declamatory or 'exemplary' influences in Seneca's portrait of Cicero are addressed by Keeline 2018: 197–203, who closely follows Gambet 1970 in his interpretation. Grimal 1984 allows for more depth, in arguing that Seneca, due to his identification with Cicero as a man of letters and political exile (cf. Fedeli 2006: 220), was genuinely interested in Cicero's personality and life; cf. Setaioli 2003: 56–61.

[249] *Tranq*. 16.1. There, Seneca discusses horrible deaths of good men (*bonorum exitus mali*). The examples given are Socrates, Pompey, and Cicero, who were ungraciously killed by their former clients, and Cato who fell on his own sword to save the Republic.

All three republican politicians are commemorated in connection to their service to the state. Cicero saved the republic (*liberata re publica servator eius*); Pompey was the pride and pillar of the Roman empire (*decus istud firmamentumque imperii*); Cato lived not just for personal freedom but for the freedom of the Roman people (*vir libertati non suae tantum sed publicae natus*).[250] Within this cluster of *exempla* about republican heroism, Cicero's deeds are amplified as a symbol of virtue and Roman excellence.

3.2.2 Cicero's ability to apply philosophical (& rhetorical) knowledge to problematic situations

Another essential ethical competency, as we have seen above, is being able to apply one's philosophical knowledge and moral training to ethically complex or conflicting situations. Cicero does this formidably, according to the sources, during the Catilinarian conspiracy. Plutarch, Seneca, and others emphasize his industriousness, his wisdom and his patriotism in handling the political conflict.[251] Elaborate accounts of the conspiracy, already beginning with Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline* (and possibly based on Cicero's own records of the events), disclose his intricate plan to uncover the conspirators' schemes.[252] Up until the point of the final debate on the fate of the conspirators, Cicero's decisiveness and his leadership in protecting the Republic are praised.

As soon as the executions have been carried out, however, Cicero's conduct falls short of what is expected from an ethical leader, i.e. proper reflection on the potentially difficult aspects of the events. Instead of, for example, addressing the extraordinary nature of the punishment of the conspirators (immediate execution instead of exile) or the problem of executing Roman senators, Cicero devotes himself to self-justification and self-praise in order to counter the (admittedly, mostly *ad hominem*) criticism from society. The articulation of Cicero's behav-

[250] *Dial.* 6.20.4 (Pompey); 6.20.6 (Cato).

[251] Sen. *Suas.* 6.23 (Aufidius Bassus), 6.24 (Asinius Pollio), 6.26 (Cremutius Cordus); Sen. *Dial.* 6.20.5 (see above), *Ben.* 5.17.2; Plut. 12.5, 18.4, 22.3; Vell. Pat. 2.34; Flor. 2.12; App. *B. Civ.* 2.1.7; Cass. Dio 37.33.1.

[252] For Sallust's discussion of Cicero's consular actions, see chapter 1, §2.

iour by Plutarch and Cassius Dio reflects this criticism quite strongly (and sometimes misleadingly). Plutarch states that after the conspiracy, "Cicero enjoyed the highest power in the city, but made himself odious to many, not by any bad action, but by praising himself all the time and puffing himself up he was disliked by many".[253] Not only did Cicero fail to analyze the ethical implications of his decisions, he also made himself guilty of one of the great mistakes a political leader could make: to praise himself too excessively. By making himself ἐπίφθονος, i.e. creating φθόνος, he risked destroying the community; a risk Plutarch explains well in his ethical and political treatises (see above, § 3.1.4). Cicero's boundless personal ambition, φιλοτιμία ἄκρατος, stood in the way of his service to the (re)public.[254]

In the period before the exile, Cicero's fear of being destroyed by Clodius makes him prone to taking up arms. Plutarch describes in the *Cato the Younger* that right after Cato himself is sent on a mission to Cyprus by one of Clodius' laws, Cato "advises Cicero not to cause civil strife and plunge the city into war and murder, but to yield to necessity and become the saviour of the fatherland again".[255] The seriousness of this image of Cicero as warmonger can be articulated against the background of Plutarch's theoretical writings: there, Plutarch thematizes the importance of concord and harmony, and part of *Advice on Civic Life*, as I have discussed above, is devoted to the necessity, especially from the Greek perspective, for a the statesman to prevent the rise of *stasis*.

Exiled Cicero illustrates a similar inability in practicing his moral skills in public and in private. In Plutarch's words, Cicero behaves desperately and is deeply grieved, mourning for Italy like a rejected lover, even though he receives much honour from the local elite. This is especially remarkable, the biographer notes, considering his excellent *paideia*:

> Πολλῶν δὲ φοιτώντων ἀνδρῶν ὑπ᾽ εὐνοίας καὶ τῶν Ἑλληνίδων πόλεων διαμιλλωμένων πρὸς αὐτὰς ταῖς πρεσβείαις, ὅμως ἀθυμῶν καὶ περίλυπος

[253] *Cic*. 24.1; cf. *On Self-praise* 540f. For a similar view, see Cass. Dio 37.38.2, 38.12.6–7. Note how Plutarch makes sure to emphasize that Cicero is not a bad man (πονηρός).

[254] *Cic*. 24.2.

[255] *Cato Min*. 35.1: Τοιαύτῃ δὲ καταληφθεὶς ἀνάγκῃ Κικέρωνι μὲν ἐλαυνομένῳ παρῄνεσε μὴ στασιάσαι μηδὲ εἰς ὅπλα καὶ φόνους τὴν πόλιν ἐμβαλεῖν, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπεκστάντα τῷ καιρῷ πάλιν γενέσθαι σωτῆρα τῆς πατρίδος.

> διῆγε τὰ πολλά, πρὸς τὴν Ἰταλίαν, ὥσπερ οἱ δυσέρωτες, ἀφορῶν, καὶ τῷ φρονήματι μικρὸς ἄγαν καὶ ταπεινὸς ὑπὸ τῆς συμφορᾶς γεγονὼς καὶ συνεσταλμένος, ὡς οὐκ ἄν τις ἄνδρα παιδείᾳ συμβεβιωκότα τοσαύτῃ προσεδόκησε. καίτοι πολλάκις αὐτὸς ἠξίου τοὺς φίλους μὴ ῥήτορα καλεῖν αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ φιλόσοφον· φιλοσοφίαν γὰρ ὡς ἔργον ᾑρῆσθαι, ῥητορικῇ δ' ὀργάνῳ χρῆσθαι πολιτευόμενος ἐπὶ τὰς χρείας.[256]
>
> Many men visited him out of goodwill, and the Greek cities were hotly contending against one another by sending embassies. Still, despondent and in deep grief he spent most of his time, with his head turned to Italy, in the manner of lovesick people, and he became petty and weak as a result of his misfortune, and downcast, in a way you would not expect from a man with such an extensive ethical education. And yet he often asked from his friends not to call him an orator, but a philosopher; for he had chosen philosophy as his proper work, and he used oratory as an instrument in reaching his political goals.

Just as Philiscus would later do in Dio's *Roman History*, Plutarch expresses wonder about the difference between Cicero's ethical training and his personal comportment in exile. While Cicero's professional study of philosophy is mentioned here as his primary goal in life, Plutarch attributes this idea to Cicero himself and voices it as part of Cicero's strategy of self-presentation. In fact, the image of Cicero *philosophus* is broken down by the biographer's sceptical judgement of Cicero's personal conduct. While the terminology used to describe this conduct (μικρός and ταπεινός; love-sick people, δυσέρωτες) is already quite negative, the remark that one would not expect (ὡς οὐκ ἄν τις προσεδόκησε) this kind of behaviour from a man like Cicero drives home the message that he does not live up to the standards of the intellectual leadership he represents. The particle καίτοι ('and yet') enhances Plutarch's refusal to endorse Cicero's image of himself as a philosopher. His scepticism matches the overall portrayal of Cicero in the period after the consulship.

While Plutarch probably based part of his judgment on the desperate tone and the lamentations marking the private letters to Atticus

[256] *Cic.* 32.4. Xenophontos 2016 is an excellent analysis of how Plutarch envisages *paideia* as mainly ethical education. I opt for a different interpretation than Perrin 1915: 'lofty discipline'; Warner 1958: 'training and education'; or Lintott 2013: 'education'. Cf. Swain 1990 on *paideia* as an ethical measuring stick in the *Cicero*.

during the period of the exile,[257] the narrative itself puts emphasis on Cicero's public visibility in Macedonia, which he cannot enjoy. Indeed, it is public opinion which, in Plutarch's analysis, has taken away all reasonableness from Cicero's soul:

> Ἀλλ᾽ ἡ δόξα δεινὴ τὸν λόγον, ὥσπερ βαφήν, ἀποκλύσαι τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ τὰ τῶν πολλῶν ἐνομόρξασθαι πάθη δι᾽ ὁμιλίαν καὶ συνήθειαν τοῖς πολιτευομένοις, ἄν μή τις εὖ μάλα φυλαττόμενος οὕτω συμφέρηται τοῖς ἐκτὸς ὡς τῶν πραγμάτων αὐτῶν, οὐ τῶν ἐπὶ τοῖς πράγμασι παθῶν συμμεθέξων.[258]
>
> But public opinion is able to wash away all reason from the soul, like a dye, and impress the emotions of the people on politicians through their interaction with and closeness to them, unless one is extremely on his guard and decides only to engage in external matters in so far as they pertain to political action itself, not to the emotions that come with the action.

Cicero has lost the λόγος to analyze and examine the situation; his failure to recognize his own fallibility as a politician rules out any conduct that would be proper to an intellectual like him. As Plutarch also described in the *Advice on Civic Life*, a citizen trained in philosophy should be able to foresee the dire consequences of potential fame, and avoid excessive ambition altogether.

The negation of Cicero's capacity for personal reflection is sustained in the account of the events after his return from exile. Even in Plutarch's account of the civil war, in which Cicero initially has a favourable role, he is eventually shown to make the wrong political choices. As the biographer describes it, Cicero tried to mediate between Caesar and Pompey in the period right before the war broke out. The manner in which Cicero's attempts at mediation are described are reminiscent of the good leader-cum-mediator from *Advice on Civic Life*, whose main task is to prevent *stasis*.[259] Just like the good Plutarchan statesman who tries to calm both parties while listening to them separately, Cicero tries to placate Caesar and Pompey individually: "privately, Cicero gave much advice to Caesar by sending letters, and he made entreaties to

[257] Cf. Cic. *Att*. 3.3–27, the bulk of which was written in Thessaloniki, the final place of his exile. Lintott 2013: 16, however, is sceptical that Plutarch had read Cicero's letters. But cf. n. 260 below.

[258] *Cic*. 32.5.

[259] See above, §3.1.5. Plutarch even uses similar terminology: the term πραύνειν, to soothe or placate, is of central value for the statesman-mediator.

Pompey in person, addressing both of them in soothing and assuaging words" (ἰδίᾳ δὲ συνεβούλευε πολλὰ μὲν Καίσαρι γράφων πολλὰ δ᾽ αὐτοῦ Πομπηίου δεόμενος, πραύνων ἑκάτερον καὶ παραμυθούμενος). However, despite Cicero's efforts to mediate, the situation is soon beyond saving, and he is shown to experience a serious dilemma about which side he should choose, since neither is preferable.[260] When Caesar marches to Spain, Cicero makes up his mind and sails to Pompey at Dyracchium. Yet instead of receiving praise for his decision to fight with Pompey, he is corrected in his choice by Cato, who believes that Cicero's place is in Rome:

> Καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις ἀσμένοις ὤφθη, Κάτων δ᾽ αὐτὸν ἰδὼν ἰδίᾳ πολλὰ κατεμέμφετο Πομπηΐῳ προσθέμενον· αὑτῷ μὲν γὰρ οὐχὶ καλῶς ἔχειν ἐγκαταλιπεῖν ἣν ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς εἵλετο τῆς πολιτείας τάξιν, ἐκεῖνον δὲ χρησιμώτερον ὄντα τῇ πατρίδι καὶ τοῖς φίλοις εἰ μένων ἴσος ἐκεῖ πρὸς τὸ ἀποβαῖνον ἡρμόζετο, κατ᾽ οὐδένα λογισμὸν οὐδ᾽ ἐξ ἀνάγκης πολέμιον γεγονέναι Καίσαρι καὶ τοσούτου μεθέξοντα κινδύνου δεῦρ᾽ ἥκειν.[261]
>
> And he was welcomed heartily by the others, but Cato, when he spoke with him in private, blamed him greatly for attaching himself to Pompey: as for himself, it wasn't alright to abandon the political policy he had taken from the beginning, but Cicero, although he was more useful for his fatherland and his friends if he remained neutral in Rome and adapted himself to the outcome of the events, had become an enemy of Caesar without any reason or cause, and came here to partake in such great danger.

Like Plutarch in his portrayal of Cicero in exile, Cato comments on Cicero's lack of reason, i.e. his inability to behave rationally. As Cato puts it, there was no reason or necessary cause (κατ᾽ οὐδένα λογισμὸν οὐδ᾽ ἐξ ἀνάγκης) for Cicero to join Pompey and antagonize Caesar. He could have continued to serve Rome and his fellow citizens by remaining there, but instead he chose to plunge into battle. Especially notable is the comparison Cato makes between himself and Cicero. Cato argues it was impossible for him to remain in Rome without undermining his political stance (τῆς πολιτείας τάξιν), referring to his continuous

[260] *Cic.* 37.2. Plutarch echoes Cicero's own words (*Att.* 8.7.2) in saying "as a result, he knew from whom to escape, but he did not know to whom he should escape" (ὥστ᾽ ἔχειν μὲν ὃν φύγῃ, μὴ ἔχειν δὲ πρὸς ὃν φύγῃ; compare the Latin, *ego vero quem fugiam habeo, quem sequar non habeo*).

[261] *Cic.* 38.1.

opposition to Caesar and his relentless defence of republican institutions. In Cato's eyes, Cicero does not have such a political programme, which means he could have taken a neutral position in the war; the remark that Cicero had come κατ᾽ οὐδένα λογισμὸν, without any rationale informing his plan, brings home the image of a Cicero who behaves irrationally because he has no clearly formulated political viewpoint.[262]

This altercation between Cato and Cicero is one of several in Plutarch's biographies of both men.[263] For reasons of space I cannot discuss all of these separately, but the above passage exemplifies quite well how differently Cicero and Cato were thought to perceive their political role in Roman society. Cicero's choice to join Pompey is just as informed by social considerations as by a concern for the state; Cato's actions, on the other hand, are consistently the result of his conservative political policy. Moreover, while the above passage focalizes Cato's attitude towards Cicero, the biographer does not disagree with Cato's words. He describes that the exchange with his friend made Cicero change his mind about coming to the Pompeian camp (Κικέρωνος ἀνέστρεφον οἱ λόγοι τὴν γνώμην), and that his obvious chagrin about this decision made him generally odious to Pompey and the army.[264] Plutarch's description of Cicero's stay at Dyracchium again supports the image of a man who is inconsistent in his actions, and who could not employ his intellectual and political training as part of his leadership or guidance of his fellow citizens.

[262] Cf. LINTOTT 2013: 8 with regard to Plutarch's portrait: "Cicero's career, however, seems to develop without any apparent devotion to a political principle."

[263] The most important exchanges between Cicero and Cato are listed here. *Cic.* 23.3 (Cato was "a great help" to Cicero and the state in the aftermath of the conspiracy; also, by praising Cicero's consulate in a public speech (δημηγόρησας) he made Cicero 'father of the fatherland', *pater patriae*); 34 (Cicero wants to annul all Clodius' laws, but Cato opposes him in the senate; after this altercation, their mutual respect for each other was less visible); 39.1–2 (Cato wants Cicero, who is his senior, to take command over Pompey's troops, but Cicero refuses. Sextus Pompey and his friends call him a traitor and attack him, which Cato prevents by stepping in and sending Cicero away). *Cato Min.* 19.3 (Cicero thanks Cato for driving Clodius away from the city, but Cato corrects him, saying that he should thank the city, since he was acting on her behalf); 21.5 (Murena trial, Cato laughing about Cicero's wittiness); 32.4–6 (Cicero (ὁ ῥήτωρ) persuades Cato to take an oath concerning Caesar's agrarian law, by arguing εἰ μὴ Κάτων τῆς Ῥώμης, ἀλλ᾽ ἡ Ῥώμη δεῖται Κάτωνος, δέονται δὲ καὶ οἱ φίλοι πάντες); 35 (passage in the main text); 40 (altercation about Clodian laws, cf. *Cic.* 34); 55.3 (debate about leadership Pompeian troops; Cato "calmed Cicero down in private" (ἐνουθέτησεν ἰδίᾳ), and "clearly saved Cicero from death", cf. *Cic.* 39.1–2).

[264] *Cic.* 38.2.

Seneca is similarly critical of Cicero's composure.[265] The following passage from *On Shortness of Life* is worth quoting in its entirety, for it offers an interestingly complex characterization of Cicero's political reputation.

> *M. Cicero inter Catilinas, Clodios iactatus Pompeiosque et Crassos, partim manifestos inimicos, partim dubios amicos, dum fluctuatur cum re publica et illam pessum euntem tenet, novissime abductus, nec secundis rebus quietus nec adversarum patiens, quotiens illum ipsum consulatum suum non sine causa sed sine fine laudatum detestatur! Quam flebiles voces exprimit in quadam ad Atticum epistula iam victo patre Pompeio, adhuc filio in Hispania fracta arma refovente! "Quid agam", inquit, "hic, quaeris? Moror in Tusculano meo semiliber". Alia deinceps adicit, quibus et priorem aetatem complorat et de praesenti queritur et de futura desperat. Semiliberum se dixit Cicero: at me hercules numquam sapiens in tam humile nomen procedet, numquam semiliber erit, integrae semper libertatis et solidae, solutus et sui iuris et altior ceteris. Quid enim supra eum potest esse qui supra fortunam est?*[266]
>
> M. Cicero, thrown about between the Catilines, Clodii, Pompeii and Crassi, who were on some occasions open enemies, on others dubious friends, while he was driven hither and thither with the Republic he held on to her while she was sinking, eventually swept away, neither calm in prosperity nor tolerant of adversity—how many times was that consulship of his, praised not without reason but without end, cursed by him? How lamentably did he speak in one of the letters to Atticus, in that period when Pompey the father was already vanquished, but the son [Sextus] was still reviving the fractured army in Spain? 'What do I do,' he said, 'here, you ask? I linger in my Tusculan villa, half-free.' Then he added some other things, bemoaning the past and complaining about the present, and despairing about the future. Cicero said he was half-free. But, by Hercules, no *sapiens* will ever resort to such a low term, he shall never be half-free, being always of complete and sound freedom, independent and his own master, and above everybody else. For what can stand above him who stands above fortune?

[265] This is not surprising considering Seneca's moral programme. Star 2012: 23–61 explains that within Seneca's view of exemplarity, the ultimate quality of examples of virtue should be their 'command of the self' and his self-control: "the new key for ascribing glory and virtue lies in the agent's psychological state at the time of action, not simply in the result" (27). Also interesting, with regard to my comparison of Cicero and Cato, are Star's observations about Cato as an exemplar within Seneca's writings. According to him, Cato and the example of his steadfastness in taking his life, "is the paradigmatic image of the rhetoric of self-command" (50).

[266] *Dial.* 10.5.1–3.

The context of the passage is the desire, held by men in high office, for otium. Seneca illustrates this with three (originally) republican *exempla*: Augustus, Cicero, and Livius Drusus. Importantly, while we have seen that in the *exempla* tradition recorded by Valerius Maximus Ciceronian *exempla* are mainly categorized in the field of social relationships and oratory, this passage is good evidence that Cicero was definitely classified as a man of high—the highest—office.

The example of Cicero's lack of *otium* is introduced in a highly rhetorical fashion which smacks of the declamation school.[267] The names of Catiline, Clodius, Pompey, and Crassus, together with the reference to the Republic situate Cicero in a civic context, emphasizing his public (not literary or philosophical) persona. The opening sentence itself is "a complex, not un-Ciceronian sentence", as one of the commentators remarks,[268] featuring a staccato syntax, multiple qualifying clauses which break the flow of the sentence, and stylistic figures such as chiasmus and hyperbaton (*consulatum … laudatum*), all nicely exemplifying the chaotic state of Cicero's mind. The succeeding exclamations made by Seneca (*quam … exprimit*; *at me Hercules… ; quotiens… ?*) give the passage a dramatic flavour, which is still intensified by the insertion of Cicero's own plaintive words from the period between 48–45 BC.[269] The climax comes in Seneca's indignant remark about Cicero's lack of a Stoic attitude: a *sapiens* is never half-free, but always enjoys complete freedom and independence. Seneca here has twisted Cicero's conception of *liber*. Based on the historical context given by Seneca himself (*iam victo … arma refovente*), Cicero's words appear to mean that he regrets not being free as a citizen, awaiting the result of the civil war between Caesar and the Pompeians. The contents of *Att.* 13.31, the supposed source for the 'quotation', confirm that Cicero feels hemmed in by Caesar's machinations, and tries to keep at least some of his independence (*semiliberi saltem simus*).[270] In the letter, Cicero's attempt to

[267] For further discussion of this passage, see especially GRIMAL 1984: 660–662; SETAIOLI 2003: 58–60.

[268] WILLIAMS 2003 *ad loc.*

[269] I subscribe to the argument, set forth in WILLIAMS 2003: 146, that Seneca quoted, whether freely or (erroneously) from memory (see GRIMAL 1959 *ad loc.*), from *Att.* 13.31, dating to May 45, the only place in the letters where Cicero employs the word semiliber, and in the context of the civil war. Cf. SETAIOLI 2003: 59.

[270] *Att.* 13.31.3.

remain semiliber highlights the essence of late republican strife and the difficulty of keeping one's head above the water in a storm of political factions. Seneca, however, uses it in order to introduce a philosophical discussion, namely on the freedom of the Stoic wise man (*sapiens*).

The public persona of Cicero who fights against rebels like Catiline and Clodius, the persona of the rescuer of the Republic, who appears at the start of this *exemplum*, is carefully deconstructed by Seneca. This Cicero is not a political agent, but a prey to the actions of others: *iactatus, fluctuatur, abductus* all indicate a lack of self-regulation. He does not possess *constantia* (*nec … quietus nec … patiens*), and even his consulate, the crown of his political career, is not approached with any steadfastness. Rather, he praises it endlessly (sine fine), which again suggests lack of self-control, while at the same time cursing it, showing no mental stability at all. By resorting to the private letters Seneca gives evidence of this emotional instability. The final remark, then, that a *sapiens* will never use the word *semiliber* can be read in two ways—either as an expression of disappointment in Cicero's philosophical abilities, which he is then confirmed to have but insufficiently; or, more commonly, one can read them as a negation of Cicero's philosophical knowledge. If he would have been a Stoic *sapiens*, *libertas* would have meant something wholly different to him, but he could not reach this comprehension due to his personal lack of *constantia* and his continuous engagement in civic life.[271]

I think we should opt for the first explanation. Seneca's disappointment in Cicero gains more clarity from a comparison with Plutarch's image of Cicero as (non-)ethical leader. Rather than using Cicero as a foil for the perfect Stoic *sapiens*, Seneca comments upon his conduct as a public persona; the main thrust of all three exempla in *On Shortness of Life* consists in the high extent of their public engagement, not their philosophical qualities. Again, as in Plutarch's biography, there appears to be something wrong with Cicero's personal reflection on his political career. It is emotional instead of rational and destructive instead of productive. We have seen in § 3.1.3 that for Seneca, the mastery of emotions and unity of action are crucial for a moral exemplar (*Ep*. 120.11).

[271] Williams 2003: 145; Grimal 1959: 27–28; Gambet 1970: 181–182; Setaioli 2003: 59–60; Fedeli 2006: 218.

More importantly, the terminology employed in the passage from *On Shortness of Life* in fact recalls the language of the letters. In *Ep*. 120, Seneca describes the life of the moral exemplar as being completely his own, *vita sui arbitrii tota*, which is similar in meaning as *sui iuris* in the passage above. In *Ep*. 120 Seneca further specifies that the opposite type, the uneducated mind (*mala mens*), is following all kinds of external impulses in a constant vacillation (*fluctuatio*) and a moving to and fro (*iactatio*) between vice and virtue. Political commanders in particular, like Alexander or Caesar, can become unhinged by all kinds of desires which control *them* instead of the other way round, Seneca explains in *Ep*. 94.61–67. The passage in On *Shortness of Life* features a Cicero who acts similarly to these men. Yet at the same time, Seneca was well aware of Cicero's important contribution to the Latin philosophical tradition;[272] moreover, his inclusion of Cicero on other occasions in the group of Roman *boni* makes it clear that Cicero's excellence in general was undisputed. I believe that the reason why Seneca suddenly goes 'off-topic'[273] with his remark about the freedom of the Stoic sapiens, is that there is an expectation of high-level moral thinking on Cicero's part which does not manifest itself in his public conduct. In other words, Seneca's transition from Cicero's public career to the topic of the freedom of the wise man is evoked by Cicero's failure to become the kind of ethical leader he *could have been* on the basis of education and standing. As in Plutarch and Dio, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, Cicero is not able to put his ethical training to good use. This might not affect his excellence as a man, but it does harm his political reputation, given that he is not capable of setting the exemplary standards expected of Roman leaders.

3.2.3 Cicero walking the talk of moral virtue

The crux to becoming an ethical leader, someone who fulfils all ethical competencies, is to succesfully embody the principles of their moral

[272] E.g. *Ep*. 17.2, 100.9, 108.30 (where he refers to Cicero's Republic). On Seneca's awareness of Cicero's philosophical achievements, see Keeline 2018: 203–207, who concludes however that "Cicero is damned by sustained silence" (at 204). For Cicero as a philosophical model within Seneca's work, see e.g. *Ep*. 58.12, with Lavery 1965: 104, 112.

training for the benefit of the public. Ironically, in one aspect of his career, Cicero is actually able to exercise his sensibility for moral virtue publicly—in his oratory. The image of Cicero as benefactor of the people through his eloquence is actually less common in the historical tradition than we might expect. Seneca the Elder records at least one instance in the declaimers.[274] In his excerpts from the Augustan and Tiberian historiographers, who all discuss Cicero's important position in the state, only the poet Cornelius Severus is seen to connect Cicero's eloquence with the exercise of law and justice.[275] The idea that Cicero's public performance was ethically instructive is never articulated in the writings of Seneca the Younger, but Plutarch is rather elaborate in explaining both Cicero's potential for being a moral paragon and the reasons why he eventually failed to become one.

Plutarch asserts in his biography that it is through his oratory that Cicero is able to teach others a sense of justice. As we have seen above, this form of ethical leadership is located in the period of the consulship.

> Μάλιστα γὰρ οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐπέδειξε Ῥωμαίοις ὅσον ἡδονῆς λόγος τῷ καλῷ προστίθησι, καὶ ὅτι τὸ δίκαιον ἀήττητόν ἐστιν ἂν ὀρθῶς λέγηται, καὶ δεῖ τὸν ἐμμελῶς πολιτευόμενον ἀεὶ τῷ μὲν ἔργῳ τὸ καλὸν ἀντὶ τοῦ κολακεύοντος αἱρεῖσθαι, τῷ δὲ λόγῳ τὸ λυποῦν ἀφαιρεῖν τοῦ συμφέροντος.[276]
>
> For this man showed the Romans in exceptional fashion how much pleasure speech can add to what is right, and that justice is invincible if it is clothed in the right words; and that it is essential that the harmonious politician in his acts always prefers what is good over what is flattering, and in his speech removes all harm from what is useful.

This passage proves that Cicero, for Plutarch, did personify the virtue of justice, and was very well able to transfer his ethical qualities in his interaction with other Roman citizens. This is a quality of Cicero's conduct not often recognized in modern studies of the imperial accounts; Cicero's philosophical proficiency is generally regarded as being more

[273] See Williams 2003 *ad loc.*

[274] Sen. *Suas.* 6.7 (Cornelius Hispanus).

[275] *Ibid.* 6.26: *egregium semper patriae caput ille senatus / vindex, ille fori, legum iurisque togaeque / publica vox …* Cf. Sillett 2015: 179–180. *Suas.* 6.23 has some examples where Cicero's oratory is hinted to be his instrument for protecting the state: Cremutius Cordus speaks of *simultates publicae* fought by Cicero, but without mentioning the means, and Aufidius Bassus, who refers to the orator as having been "born for the Republic", which he "defended and governed" in old age.

[276] *Cic.* 13.1.

or less absent.[277] Giving perhaps the wrong impression are the long lists of witticisms recorded by Plutarch in *Cicero* and *Sayings of the Romans*, all praised for their mental acuity but not for their appropriateness.[278] Such *exempla* inscribe Cicero in the historical records as a rhetor more than anything else.[279]

Nevertheless, the orator is also consistently evaluated for his *potential* of being an ethical model or leader. In the passage just quoted, Cicero is emphatically presented as a morally good man—not just a man with rhetorical skills—who could offer ethical instruction to others (ἐπέδειξε Ῥωμαίοις).[280] The image concurs with Cicero's own ideal of the *doctus orator* who combines philosophical wisdom with the study of rhetoric to the mutual success of both disciplines.[281] The passage above reminds us of the opening of *On Invention*, where Cicero sets out that according to him "wisdom without eloquence does little good to cities, but eloquence without wisdom is for the most part very harmful, and is never useful" (*sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus, eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse numquam*). At least, in the particular chapter of Plutarch's Cicero quoted above, Cicero is seen to embody his own intellectual ideal.

Moreover, in terms of ethical instruction, Plutarch emphasizes Cicero's position as adviser of Octavian. In *On the Fortune of the Romans*, which discusses the reasons for Rome's greatness, in a passage which is usually overlooked, Cicero receives part of the credit for Augustus' rise to government, and not only as an adviser. Plutarch recalls an anecdote in which Augustus, sending his grandson off to war, prayed that his

[277] The traditional argument is that Cicero must yield this position to Cato the Younger. E.g. Swain 1990: 197 on Plutarch; Gambet 1970: 175–181, Griffin 1976: 184–185, and Keeline 2018: 199–200 on Seneca.

[278] *Sayings of the Romans* 204e–205f includes 21 quotations (with a bit of historical context) from Cicero translated to the Greek; *exempla* 14 to 20 all date to the civil war between Caesar and Pompey; there is no *exemplum* related to the 'Philippic' period. At *Cic.* 7.4, Plutarch calls such sayings χαρίεντα, to be translated as either 'witty' or 'elegantly spoken'; cf. *Cic.* 25, where it is said that Cicero often lost sense of appropriateness, τὸ πρέπον, as a result of the force of his eloquence, and the lists of witticisms in *Cic.* 25–27 (causing hatred), 38.2–6 (raising positive laughter).

[279] Swain 1990: 195.

[280] Though we should also note that Plutarch does not use teaching terminology here as he does elsewhere. This passage expresses the same idea as *Comp. Dem. et Cic.* 3.4 and *Dion* 1.3, which we have discussed above.

[281] Cf. *Rep.* 1.12, *Orat.* 3.142–143, *Or.* 12–13, *Tusc.* 1.7–8, with Gildenhard 2007 on Cicero's ideal of *paideia romana*, according to which education is the key to a successful political system.

offspring would have the courage of Scipio, the popularity of Pompey and the fortune that accompanied himself,

> Καθάπερ ἔργῳ μεγάλῳ δημιουργὸν ἐπιγράψας ἑαυτῷ τὴν Τύχην, ἥτις αὐτὸν ἐπιθεῖσα Κικέρωνι καὶ Λεπίδῳ καὶ Πάνσᾳ καὶ Ἱρτίῳ καὶ Μάρκῳ Ἀντωνίῳ, ταῖς ἐκείνων ἀριστείαις καὶ χερσὶ καὶ νίκαις καὶ στόλοις καὶ πολέμοις καὶ στρατοπέδοις γενόμενον πρῶτον εἰς ὕψος ἄρασα καὶ καταβαλοῦσα τούτους, δι᾽ ὧν ἀνέβη, μόνον κατέλιπεν. ἐκείνῳ γὰρ ἐπολιτεύετο Κικέρων καὶ Λέπιδος ἐστρατήγει καὶ Πάνσας ἐνίκα καὶ Ἵρτιος ἔπιπτε καὶ Ἀντώνιος ὕβριζεν.[282]
>
> And as one would carve out the maker's name on a great monument, he recorded Fortune as his own maker, who has thrust him upon the lives of Cicero, Lepidus, Pansa, Hirtius, and Mark Antony, and raised him up high, having become first citizen by way of their deeds of valour, their deeds, their victories, their expeditions and wars and legions; and Fortune threw these men down, through whom he climbed up, and left him standing alone. For him now Cicero governed the state, Lepidus led an army, Pansa conquered in war and Hirtius fell, and Antony caused outrage.

In this passage it is presented as if Cicero governed the state (ἐπολιτεύετο) as part of Augustus' destiny; (the end of) Cicero's political career is thus connected with the rise of Octavian-Augustus. This remark is a reference to the cooperation between Cicero and Augustus in 44–43 BC, a 'pact' which is described in full at *Cic.* 44–45.[283] There, Cicero is presented as the tutor of the νεανίσκος Octavian on the basis of his power (δύναμις) with the people and senate; he is even said to have been called father by Octavian.[284]

The treatise *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Politics*, which I have discussed briefly above (§ 3.1.2), is crucial for understanding Plutarch's portrayal of the relationship between Cicero and Octavian and its negative outcome for Cicero personally. In the first place, Cicero's fatherly connection with Octavian is in correspondence with Plutarch's ideal of the citizen leader who can supervise and educate younger as-

[282] *On the Fortune of the Romans* 319e.

[283] On the pact, SWAIN 1996: 159–160; MOLES 1988: 197.

[284] *Cic.* 45.1. Plutarch initially emphasizes the difference in age and status between Cicero and Octavian by calling the latter a 'boy' in varying terms (νεανίσκος, 44.1; παῖς, 44.5; μειράκιον, 45.1). Octavian's boyhood is made undone by his first military successes, after which he suddenly is called a "young man" (νέος ἀνήρ, 45.4); it is the young man who betrays Cicero in 46.1.

piring politicians. A political veteran himself in 43 BC, Cicero was well suited for this role of experienced adviser of the young. Yet Cicero fails to become an ethical leader of others on multiple counts. The passage quoted above illuminates one of these: Octavian merely *used* the deeds of Cicero and others in order to climb up to the position of *primus inter pares*. Although the biography acknowledges that initially there was a kind of didactic relationship, this relationship did not survive the push of Octavian's desire for power; Cicero was merely a servant to his needs.

The primary reason, however, why Cicero could not live up to the standard of the exemplary leader seems to have been Plutarch's belief that in his dealings with Octavian he was blinded by ambition. Cicero's behaviour is well comparable with the list of pitfalls for elder politicians that Plutarch provides in *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Politics*. One of these pitfalls is feelings of envy as a result of the political game, which in younger men can be positively termed as competition, zeal, or ambition, but in senior statesmen is definitely very inappropriate.[285] The old man should be "beyond envy",[286] advising and supporting the younger man unstintingly. Another pitfall for elder men is excessive mingling in city affairs, attending to every little point of contention, and overestimating their importance in the city. The senior citizen should take action only when it concerns a matter of national safety or when honour and propriety are at stake.[287] Moreover, at 795a Plutarch adds that the senior should be present in silence at assembly meetings, acting as an arbiter in the political conflict (βραβεύων φιλοτιμίας πολιτικῆς ἅμιλλαν), correcting and instructing his younger colleagues where needed without censuring them (ἄνευ ψόγου) and without envy (ἀφθόνως),[288] removing strife (φιλονεικία), slander (βλασφημία), and anger (ὀργαί) from the debate.

This analysis provides the theoretical background to the account of Cicero's 'Philippic' period in the biography, explaining on the ethical level why, according to Plutarch, Cicero's relationship with Octavian

[285] *Old Man* 796a.

[286] *Ibid.*: δεῖ πορρωτάτω τοῦ φθονεῖν ὄντα τὸν πολιτικὸν γέροντα.

[287] *Ibid.* 794d.

[288] I follow the conjecture made by REISKE; the manuscripts have ἀφόβως. Within the language of competition and contention used in this passage, however, ἀφθόνως is the better option.

did not turn out in his favour. As the biographer notes, it was hatred for Antony (μῖσος), and his natural weakness for honour (ἡ φύσις ἥττων οὖσα τιμῆς) that made Cicero attach himself to the young Augustus; moreover, he believed that it would gain him more power in the state (νομίζοντα προσλαμβάνειν τῇ πολιτείᾳ τὴν ἐκείνου δύναμιν).[289] This stands in contrast to the teachings of *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Politics* which prescribes that elderly politicians should be free from zealousness and envy. Plutarch's evaluation of Cicero's attitude towards Octavian is of great significance within the narrative tradition: it portrays a man who has lost sight of ethical concerns and acts from egocentric reasons. Cicero would not have assisted Octavian out of concern for the public welfare;[290] he would have acted on a desire for power, which the pact with Octavian in fact delivered to him, as Plutarch emphasizes. Cicero's power in the city reached its greatest height in that period (τοῦ δὲ Κικέρωνος ἀκμὴν ἔσχεν ἡ δύναμις ἐν τῇ πόλει τότε μεγίστην) and ruling like this, he could do whatever he wanted (καὶ κρατῶν ὅσον ἐβούλετο…)—to fight Antony, send the consuls out to war, and make the senate vote for a proposal that Octavian receive the status of praetor.[291]

It is difficult to see whether, in his depiction of Cicero's lust for power, Plutarch is responding to a common theme cultivated by the declamation schools (Cicero *transfuga*) and, for example, by the historiographer Asinius Pollio who wrote an account of the fall of the Republic unfavourable to Cicero.[292] It might also be a personal judgment based on the post-consulate speeches, which Plutarch disliked for their boastful nature and continuous repetition of the *acta consulis*.[293] At any rate, part of this evaluation of Cicero appears to have been inspired

[289] *Cic.* 45.1.

[290] But see *Ant.* 19.1, where Plutarch notes that Octavian broke the friendship with Cicero because he realized the latter was striving to restore the old republican constitution! Though conspicuous, it is the only place I have found where this sentiment is attested; here, for once, Cicero's political conduct aligns with that of Cato the Younger.

[291] *Cic.* 45.3; cf. *Ant.* 17.1. On the promise of political power, see also Cass. Dio 46.42.2–3. On the general disastrous effects of this relationship for Cicero, App. *B. Civ.* 3.12.82, 3.14.92–92; Cass. Dio 46.43.4–5.

[292] On the influence of Asinius Pollio on the Greek imperial historiographers, see Drummond 2015: 439–440, 444 (with bibliography) and Hose 1994: 259–264; cf. Gabba 1956 on Appian; Pelling 1988: 27 and Pelling 2002: 12–13 on Plutarch. For the theme of Cicero *transfuga*, see [Sall.] *Inv. in Cic.* 7.

[293] *Cic.* 24.1–2.

by Augustus' autobiography: Plutarch remarks (without mentioning a source) that Augustus admitted that he used Cicero's love of power to his own advantage (χρήσαιτο τῇ Κικέρωνος ἐν δέοντι φιλαρχίᾳ).[294]

Although the historical Cicero contended in his philosophical works that philosophy and eloquence could not (should not) exist without each other, the historiographical Cicero of the empire is not able to walk his own talk. Highly trained in philosophy, he lacks the philosophical strength needed to restrain his ambitions and stay away from party politics. Moreover, he is no suitable ethical teacher of others, as his failed relationship with Octavian illustrates. Finally, Cicero's love of power makes his behaviour not only morally questionable, it makes him extremely vulnerable as well.

3.3 PHILISCUS AND CICERO: THE WOULD-BE PHILOSOPHER

We started this chapter with Dio's scathing judgment about Cicero's political performance and the exile in 58 BC, and it is to Dio's account that I would finally like to return. In § 2 of this chapter we already looked at Cicero's incompetency in using frank speech for the benefit of the state. At this point, it is worthwhile to have a last look at the portrayal of Cicero's political choices and his particular lack of philosophical skills in exile. We can understand Dio's account more clearly when we consider it from the perspective of the imperial ideals about leadership, as they have been described above. Within the narrative of book 38, Dio emphasizes two elements of Cicero's political action: his involvement in faction strife and his irrational behaviour.

As related in the beginning of § 2 above, Cicero's deeds in the year 58 definitely fall into the category of political scheming (the plot against Caesar and Pompey, his public abuse of Caesar). Unfortunately, as a result of Cicero's exaggerated belief in his own cunning (φρόνησις)[295] he is greatly deceived by his fellow senators, especially by Pompey whom he considers to be his friend.[296] The historiographer frames Cicero as

[294] *Cic.* 45.5. Cf. MOLES 1988: 197; LINTOTT 2013: 204.
[295] Cass. Dio 38.14.3; cf. 16.1.

a man who acts solely out of concern for himself. He narrates how Cicero chooses to stay quiet in the senate about the laws favouring Caesar's position which Clodius wants to propose, in exchange for personal safety; and how he places trust in men like Pompey and Piso in the belief that such pacts will make him victorious in the matter of the Clodian laws.[297] Furthermore, Cicero risks causing serious civil conflict. When he realizes that neither Crassus nor Pompey will defend him from Clodius' attacks he becomes frightened and tries to take up arms—again, the historiographer notes (φοβηθεὶς αὖθις ἐπεχείρησε μὲν ὅπλα ἄρασθαι), αὖθις creating the suggestion that Cicero's desire for arms was symptomatic.[298] Among other things, he was openly abusing (προεπηλάκιζε) Pompey. Cato and Hortensius restrain him, lest his conduct would unleash a civil war (μὴ καὶ ἐμφύλιος ἐκ τούτου πόλεμος γένηται).[299] In shame and with a bad name (μετὰ κακοδοξίας), Cicero feigns a voluntary departure from Rome.[300]

These events, then, precede the digression about Cicero's sojourn in Macedonia, which appears to be inspired by Plutarch on more than one level. As we have seen in § 3.2.2, Plutarch relates in the biography that Cicero could not enjoy his visits from many gentlemen ambassadors who came from all over Greece, "and became petty and weak as a result of his misfortune, and downcast, in a way you would not expect from a man who has such an extensive ethical knowledge" (καὶ τῷ φρονήματι μικρὸς ἄγαν καὶ ταπεινὸς ὑπὸ τῆς συμφορᾶς γεγονὼς καὶ συνεσταλμένος, ὡς οὐκ ἄν τις ἄνδρα παιδείᾳ συμβεβιωκότα τοσαύτῃ προσεδόκησε). Although Cicero often asked his friends to call him a philosopher instead of an orator, he does not act like one; public opinion (δόξα) made him incapable of emotionally detaching himself from the situation.[301] As I believe, it is this analysis by Plutarch—which might have been more topical in the imperial period than we can gather from the extant sources—which Dio works out into the long diatribe between Cicero and

[296] *Ibid.* 38.14.3 (ἠπατήθη), 15.1 (ἐπὶ τὸν Κικέρωνα ἀπάτην), 16.2 (ἀπατηθείς); cf. 29.3 where Cicero is warned μὴ σε ἐξαπατάτω τούθ' ὅτι καὶ φίλους τινὰς τῶν δυνατῶν ἔχεις.

[297] *Ibid.* 38.13–14 and 16.1–2, respectively.

[298] In the context of book 38 it logically refers back to Cicero's plans to assassinate Pompey and Caesar (38.9.2).

[299] *Ibid.* 38.17.4. Cf. Plut. *Cato min.* 35.1.

[300] Cass. Dio 38.17.4.

[301] Plut. *Cic.* 32.4–5.

a certain Greek philosopher called Philiscus.[302] Certainly not without an important dose of humour, Dio presents Cicero as a helpless man who is weeping and behaving like a woman (θρηνῶν καὶ γυναικείως διακείμενος).[303] Just as Plutarch does in the biography, Dio's Philiscus expresses wonder over his lack of emotional control, despite his "extensive and multifaceted education" and his experience as an advocate (πολλῆς μὲν παιδείας καὶ παντοδαπῆς μετεσχηκότα, πολλοῖς δὲ καὶ συνηγορηκότα).[304] Moreover, he is not self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης) in his present situation—a thought that derives from Platonic philosophy but is also part of Plutarch's ideal of the statesman.[305] Cicero himself admits that he is in need of proper philosophical advice from Philiscus:

[302] The format of the diatribe corresponds with the literary tradition of consolation. On the diatribe, see Claassen 1999: 86 who defines it as the genre in which a speaker carries the intellectual burden of the argument, but involves a second person as the motor behind his speech. Others, such as Gowing 1998 or Montecalvo 2010, refer to it as (a Platonic type of) dialogue in accordance with Philiscus' own words (38.18.4, καὶ γὰρ ἄν τι ὠφελήσαιμί σε διαλεξάμενος); it is also often simply categorized as 'speech', e.g. Whitmarsh 2001: 137 n. 13, Millar 1961. Keeline 2018: 171–176 proposes we should see the interaction between Cicero and Philiscus as representing two *suasoriae* or a *controversia*; cf. Burden-Strevens 2018: 113 on other Ciceronian speeches in Dio's work. See also Kemezis 2014: 289–290 who argues that the 'dialogue' was a later addition to the book since it contradicts the narrative on some points (for example, Philiscus confirms Cicero's wisdom and courage (38.18.3, 22.1–4) in contradiction of the narrator's judgment in 38.14.3, 16.1, 17.4). In my view, these contradictions may just as well be intentional, for they support the dramatic irony surrounding the Dionean figure of Cicero, who fails as a statesman despite all his intellectual talents. More pointedly, Cicero ignores Philiscus' advice to withdraw to a life of leisure and philosophy and his subsequent prediction of his downfall (38.29) only to end up dead and on display on the rostra (in 47.8), Philiscus' prophecy having been fulfilled. For the figure of Philiscus, see now the overview in Montecalvo 2014: 278–282.

[303] Cass. Dio 38.18.1.

[304] *Ibid*.

[305] Cass. Dio 38.18.5, 19.3. The allusion is probably to Pl. *Rep*. 3.387d, in which context the matter of crying is also addressed; see Gowing 1998: 386 (also next note). In *Rep*. 3.387c–388a it is argued that leaders of state should not cry (as part of a bigger argument that all passages from Homer in which men or gods are crying should be abolished); in 387d, Socrates asserts that the Guardians should be αὐτάρκεις πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν καὶ διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων ἥκιστα ἑτέρου προσδεῖται, "self-sufficient for living a good life, and surpassing others in having least need of others". Cf. *Menex*. 248a for the same ideal of self-sufficiency in the good man who is σώφρων, ἀνδρεῖος, and φρόνιμος. For αὐτάρκεια as a quality of the perfect Plutarchan statesman, see e.g. *Alex*. 53.1 (Callisthenes), *Numa* 1.2 (αὐτάρκη γενέσθαι πρὸς ἀρετήν), *Dem*. 1.2. See Raaflaub 2004: 184–187 on *autarkeia* as essential part of the Athenian concept of freedom, with further references; Coolsaet 1993: 209–310 on *autarkeia* as moral (aristocratic) ideal in classical and imperial philosophy. While Philiscus' framework for evaluating Cicero's political behaviour is clearly Platonic, he mixes in many *topoi* from Stoic treatises on exile as well, most conspicuously Musonius Rufus; compare e.g. Mus. *De ex*. 10–11 p. 50 Hense on the possibility for a man in exile to possess ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη and φρόνησις, the same values that Philiscus says still reside in Cicero. To use Gowing's words (1998: 378), the dialogue is "a hodgepodge of philosophical commonplaces". Claassen 1999 compares the narrative of Cicero's exile in Plutarch and Dio.

> Ὥσπερ γὰρ τῶν φαρμάκων, οὕτω δὴ καὶ τῶν λόγων καὶ διαφοραὶ πολλαὶ καὶ δυνάμεις ποικίλαι εἰσίν, ὥστ᾽ οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν εἰ καὶ ἐμὲ τὸν λαμπρὸν ἔν τε τῇ γερουσίᾳ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τοῖς τε δικαστηρίοις σοφίᾳ τινὶ καταιονήσειας.[306]
>
> For as with drugs, so there are many different kinds of words, with various powers; it will not be surprising, then, if you can steep me, brilliant though I am in the senate and the assemblies and the courthouse, in some wisdom.

Right before speaking these words, Cicero asked Philiscus to take away the mist (of sadness) from his soul, and to bring him back to the "light of old" (τὸ ἀρχαῖον φῶς). Contrary to what the educated reader might expect, Cicero is not referring here to some sort of Platonic light of true wisdom, the light of philosophy, but to his political reputation.[307] Despite Philiscus' admonitions to resort to a leisurely life and follow the example of Xenophon and Thucydides, who both took up a life of writing in the country,[308] Cicero will in the end ignore every bit of advice Philiscus offers to him. He rushes back to the Forum as soon as his honour is restored, which in the narrative happens immediately after their conversation.[309] In the passage cited above, it is already implied that Cicero is not interested in sharing Philiscus' kind of wisdom: the term λαμπρός, with which Cicero describes his political reputation, picks up his earlier metaphor of the light of old, and suggests that the only light Cicero is concerned about is the public spotlight.[310] His ambitions, as they frequently do in Plutarch's biography, again get the better of him.

Within the dialogue, there is a marked contrast between Cicero's irrational behaviour on the one hand, and his ethical excellence on the other. Philiscus admires him as a man who has reached the highest lev-

[306] Cass. Dio 38.19.1.

[307] Gowing 1998: 386 notes that this passage is modelled on *Alc.* II, 150d-e. There, Alcibiades expresses his readiness to learn how to behave towards gods and men on the basis of true knowledge of right and wrong. However, the metaphor of removing a "mist" from someone's eyes goes as far back as Homer *Il.* 5.127–128, later becoming especially popular in magical texts. I thank Bert van den Berg for this observation.

[308] Cass. Dio 38.28.1–2.

[309] Cass. Dio 38.30.1.

[310] Burden-Strevens 2020: 53–60 posits that the focus in the entire conversation actually lies on oratory. In this way, the exchange between Philiscus and Cicero moralizes and explains the orator's downfall as a result of his eloquence in the narrative.

els of wisdom (see φρονιμώτατος in 22.1) and justice (δικαιότατος in 22.2).[311] In fact, he possesses all four of the cardinal virtues laid out by Plato in the *State*: courage (ἀνδρεία), temperance (σωφροσύνη), a sense of justice (δικαιοσύνη), and wisdom (φρόνησις).[312] The contrast is intensified by Philiscus' use of the tropes of consolation which Cicero himself applies to exile in the *Tusculan Disputations*—while not every reader might notice the specific allusions, certainly most educated Romans (Greeks included) knew that Cicero produced his fair share of consolatory literature, and also wrote on the topic of banishment.[313]

One explanation for this inherent tension centres on Dio's main source for Cicero's attitude in exile: the letters to Atticus.[314] Jo-Marie Claassen is convinced that the exchange between Philiscus and Cicero is a "point-by-point refutation" of *Att.* 3.15, written at the place of exile; this letter is remarkable for the desperation and mad grief Cicero expresses about his banishment. Within the Ciceronian tradition of the Empire, the letters are frequently employed as evidence for Cicero's personal comportment in situations of political conflict.[315] Another explanation for Dio's ambiguous portrayal of Cicero revolves around the narrative structure of the *Roman History*: most commentators agree that the behaviour in exile is meant to accentuate the (negative) characterization in the narrative.[316] Dio, then, would have actively tried to show up Cicero's faults in this dialogue. However, this latter interpretation wholly ignores Philiscus' positive evaluation of Cicero's ethical qualities.

Philiscus' mixed appraisal of Cicero as a statesman serves, above all, to show the limits of his ethical competence. The surrounding narrative

[311] Cass. Dio 38.22.1.

[312] Montecalvo 2010: 64, on 38.22.1–4. For the cardinal civic virtues being wisdom (here presented as σοφία), courage, temperance, and justice, see Pl. *Rep.* 4.427e and further. On the "four virtues template", which underlies many of Dio's portraits of Roman politicians, Welch 2019.

[313] Compare Cass. Dio 38.23 (disfranchisement and banishment are only evil by convention (νόμος) and popular opinion (δοκήσις), and harm neither body nor soul) with Cic. *Tusc.* 3.80; 5.106; and 24 (displacement is not an evil) with *Tusc.* 5.108–109. More in Millar 1961: 16 n.60 (with other parallels in exile literature generally); Gowing 1998: 383–384.

[314] *Pace* Gowing 1998: 384 n.32, who "remains skeptical" that Dio had read the letters.

[315] Sen. *Dial.* 10.5.2 and Plut. *Cic.* 37.2 were discussed above. The practice extended well beyond antiquity: e.g. Petrarca *Ep.* 24.3, and Bruni *Cicero novus* p. 462 ed. Viti 1996.

[316] Burden-Strevens 2020: 58–60; Montecalvo 2010: 70 ("Cassius Dio's final judgment of Cicero"); Gowing 1998: 383. Negative views in Lintott 1997: 2514–2515, Van Stekelenburg 1971: 25 and Millar 1961; in the same vein, Welch 2019: 105–106. See n. 18 above.

and the dialogue work together to demonstrate Cicero's philosophical and ethical potential and his inability to meet that potential. The narrative invites the reader to see Cicero as a factionalist, and therefore a bad statesman, who creates discord rather than harmony in the state, and who cannot separate his personal ambitions from his public function. On the other hand, the dialogue, especially Philiscus' discourse parts, invites the reader to see what Cicero could *also* have been, had he been able to make the connection between his cognitive abilities, which provided him with all the cardinal virtues, and his practical conduct in public life. The fact that Philiscus converses with Cicero at length in the language of philosophy is already a remarkable acknowledgement of his abilities in this discipline. The Cicero of Cassius Dio's *Roman History* is ethically competent to the extent that he has virtue, and due to his extensive education knows how to be wise; but he fails in the competencies of practicing ethical rules himself and instructing others about the correct moral behaviour. What is worse, he is not just unable to bring his ethical excellence into practice, but he cannot even instruct *himself* to behave rationally and according to the standards expected of a Roman intellectual.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

Without trying to forge any interdependence between Plutarch and Dio, it is clear that Dio's Cicero is evaluated along the same moral standards as political leaders in Plutarch's work. Self-control and reason, justice, and education are important qualifications for a political leader in Philiscus' dialogue with Cicero and also elsewhere in the narrative.[317] The Platonic scheme, moreover, of the philosopher-leader is key to understanding Philiscus' analysis of Cicero's behaviour; similarly to Plutarch's view that Cicero actualized Plato's prophecy about ideal leadership, Philiscus states that Cicero has all the prerequisites for being a Platonic leader, but he fails to be that type of leader in the public space. Just as Cicero in Plutarch's account loses the capacity to

[317] As Welch 2019 has argued for multiple historical figures, including Cicero, in the Roman history.

reflect on the ethical implications of his actions after the Catilinarian conspiracy, the Dionean Cicero is indeed too concerned with his own reputation to protect the common good adequately—or himself for that matter. One of the worst results of his ethical incompetence is that he risks stirring up civil war, as Dio relates at the beginning of book 38.[318]

In Dio's history as a whole, the dominant influence of φιλοτιμία is indicated as being one of the main deficits of the republican political system.[319] The charge of ambition against Cicero is therefore symptomatic, a part of Dio's historiographical programme. However, that does not prevent it from being a conspicuous element in the narrative of Cicero's life, and a particular moral criticism he has in common with Plutarch. Furthermore, far from being an exclusive aspect of the 'Greek' tradition, the judgment is shared by Latin writers. Seneca complains, too, about Cicero's lack of composure and his excessive ambition in *On Shortness of Life*, especially in the light of his general moral excellence as a Roman citizen.

In one of the few articles addressing Cicero's lack of philosophy in Plutarch's biography, Simon Swain argues that because, in Plutarch's eyes, Cicero lacked *paideia* he was unable to make it as a statesman. Swain also notes that the key concept for defining the strengths and weaknesses of Cicero, Cato, and Brutus in their eponymous *Lives* is, indeed, philosophy. I agree with the latter remark but not with the former. I hope to have shown that according to Seneca, Plutarch, and Dio there was in principle nothing wrong with Cicero's ethical training; more than that, his intellectualism, and—for the Greek writers—especially his Greek studies, promised great success in his political career. Plutarch and Dio-Philiscus even believe that around the time of the consulship, Cicero fulfilled the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-leader they so cherished.

The imperial historiographers envisage a Cicero who meets several ethical competencies: he is a well-educated man, who read Greek philosophy and had many contacts among Greek intellectuals in Rome and the province; he also excelled as a state leader during his consul-

[318] Cass. Dio 38.17.4.

[319] Kuhn-Chen 2002: 168–169; Burden-Strevens 2020: 215–227. See also the introduction to chapter 4, §§1.1–2.

ship, when he demonstrated great cognitive abilities in solving the conspiracy of Catiline and became a model of patriotism by protecting Rome from war. From that point on, however, Cicero symbolizes the leader who loses his sensitivity for the Roman ethics code, and fails to meet the criteria required to become an ethical model for others.

As we have seen, successful statesmanship for Plutarch and Seneca consists in a virtuous disposition, a thorough education, the ability to act in response to one's cognitive reflection on ethical problems, and the instructive effect of this ability on other people. Especially for Plutarch, teaching ethical norms and values to others is a vital quality of the (morally) accomplished citizen. The continuation of certain moral standards through the leadership of individual citizens is part and parcel of the Roman culture of exemplarity. This culture puts high demands on its members, demands of moral excellence and consistency which were difficult to meet, and apparently only available to a select group of men, among whom Cato the Younger is one of the most conspicuous figures. He fulfills the cycle of ethical competencies with few missteps—and the missteps he did make, like drinking too much or dressing inappropriately, as tradition tells,[320] were easily forgiven since these did not affect his public leadership. One of the clearest, tangible results of his ethical proficiency is his collection of followers who continued to promote his moral programme, from Favonius to Thrasea Paetus and Seneca himself.[321]

I have made an attempt to uncover the deeper reasons behind the criticism of Cicero's political comportment, which depend upon imperial ideals about ethical competence. As I have shown in the pages above the problem of Cicero's behaviour, as it is identified in the imperial sources, should be localized in his inability to apply his high command of philosophical tenets and his moral excellence to his political action. This is, in a sense, a charge of hypocrisy, and that is indeed an important theme in the declamatory and historical tradition. But the ancient debate revolves around more than signalling a lack of constancy or inconsistent behaviour on Cicero's part. The imperial narrative of Cicero's life is informed by a specific view of exemplary leadership. The

[320] Mart. *Ep*. 2.89; Val. Max. 3.6.7.

[321] For Cato's moral exemplarity in Seneca's writings, see, briefly, chapter 2, § 1.3.

qualities assessed in a moral exemplar are socially oriented: ambition, feelings of competition (envy), conflict-solving, and patriotism were the criteria according to which citizen- and statesmanship were judged. This particular framework of social values is important to keep in mind when analyzing the portrayal of Roman leaders; ultimately, their image was not defined by personal character traits, but by the way in which they managed to translate their personal skills into acts of public benefit. In the literary texts we have discussed, political figures are selected to demonstrate the proper application of the Roman ethics code to public action. This is where Cicero fails, at least in the second half of his public life. Moreover, within the narrative of the fall of the Republic, imperial authors include Cicero's actions as part of the explanation for the dysfunctionality of the republican institution. Instead of morally improving the state by demonstrating essential Roman virtues, Cicero acts upon the kind of desires that were already the death of a city state, like ambition and contentiousness. Indeed, the main point made by the authors discussed in this chapter concerns the necessity of ethical leadership in times of civic crisis (*stasis*).

In sum, what is at stake in the portrayal of Cicero's exemplary leadership is the imperial belief in a type of intellectual government that is able to place the public good above personal benefits, which is the only way a state may prosper. Ethical education and personal virtue are envisaged to be the ultimate foundation for all political action and the fountainhead of harmony and concord among the Roman people. Within this cultural ideal, Cicero has an important role to play, being the archetype of the intellectual statesman. However, his career path eventually demonstrates the fallibility of the civic leader: having once attained the highest form of leadership possible, Cicero's desire for recognition eventually exceeds his ability for ethical reflection.