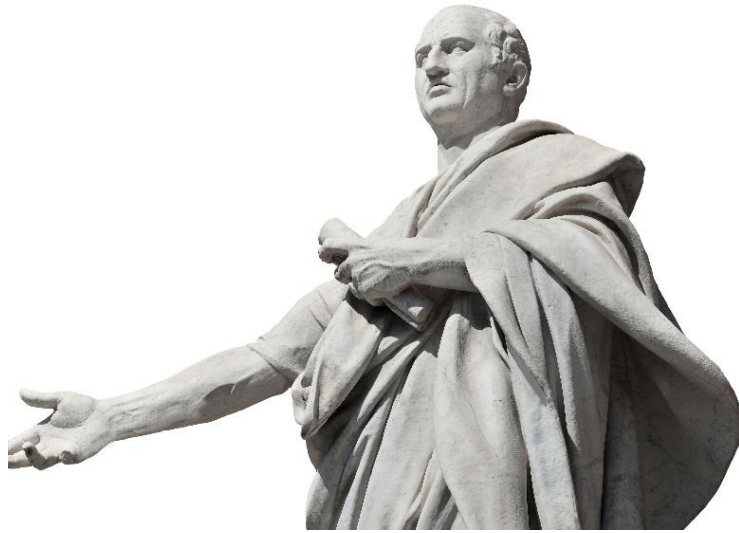


# BELLARIA LXXVII



## CICERO'S PHILOSOPHY

### Introduction

*Note: my very best thanks to Catherine Steel (Glasgow) and Malcom Schofield (St John's College, Cambridge) for their help in suggesting passages from Cicero's vast philosophical output.*

Cicero said he was a sceptic (σκέπτομαι, 'I observe, consider, enquire') i.e. he did not think one could be certain about anything in this world, and he spent most of the time knocking down arguments. Two splendid quotations on this theme:

'There is an ancient, well-known saying of Cato: he said he was surprised that one inspector of entrails did not laugh out loud when he saw another.'  
*uetus autem illud Catonis admodum scitum est, qui mirari se aiebat quod non rideret haruspex haruspicem cum uidisset (de diuinatione, 2.119)*

'Nothing so absurd can be said that some philosopher had not said it.'  
*nihil tam absurde dici potest quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum (de diuinatione, 2.51)*

That said, when it came to politics, he adopted a broadly Stoic position, i.e. that gods existed, loved humans, had constructed a rationally-based world of nature for them to live in and provided them with the gift of reason.

That being so, life lived in accordance with nature and reason was likely to be the best (most virtuous). This applied to all human communities, across which the laws of nature in accordance with reason applied, and was the key to successful government.

At the same time, as a sceptic he did not feel obliged to stick to any position that he did not agree with and e.g. attacked the Stoic view that Fate ruled the world.

Like most ancient thinkers, Cicero greatly admired the ancient Greeks. Indeed, Cicero's philosophy is derived entirely from them. So one can see why European thinkers became so excited when, from the 12<sup>th</sup> C onwards, classical Greek

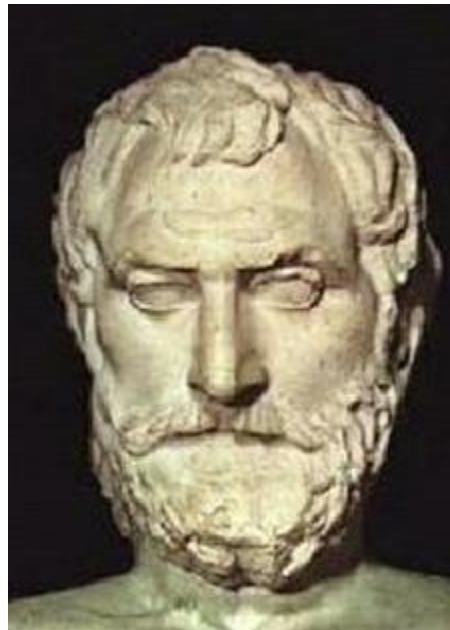
manuscripts from libraries in Greece began to flow back into the West from which they had long disappeared.

It will also be noted just how much philosophy Cicero wrote in the last four embattled years of his life—a man who truly found comfort in his books and ideas, but perhaps most of all in the lessons of the past. As he said of it:

‘History, the witness of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the educator of life, the herald of antiquity’.

*historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis.*

*de oratore* 2.36



Lucretius

§§ The first work of Roman philosophy was Lucretius’ stupendous *de rerum natura*, which argued that the universe was best explained by atomic theory. But Cicero was the first Roman to supply the Latin language with what it needed to talk about philosophy on a much broader scale. Here from his *Tusculan Disputations* (c. 45 BC, named after its location in his favourite villa in Tusculum, in five books on various topics), he discusses the problem of turning philosophical Greek into Latin:

### Defining temperance

3.16 There is a probable definition of the temperate man, whom the Greeks call σώφρων, and they call that virtue σωφροσύνην, which I at one time call *temperantia*, at another time *moderatio*, and sometimes even *modestia*; but I do not know whether that virtue may not be properly called *frugalitas*, which has a more confined meaning with the Greeks; for they call *frugi* men χρησίμους, which implies only that they are useful.

3.16 *ueri etiam simile illud est, qui sit temperans, quem Graeci σώφρονα appellant, eamque uirtutem σωφροσύνην uocant, quam soleo equidem tum temperantiam, tum moderationem appellare, non numquam etiam modestiam; sed haud scio an recte ea uirtus frugalitas appellari possit, quod angustius apud Graecos ualet qui frugi homines χρησίμους appellant, id est tantum modo utilis;*

## Frugality?

**3.16** But our name has a more extensive meaning; for all *abstinentia*, all *innocentia* (which the Greeks have no ordinary name for, though they might use the word ἀβλάβεια, for *innocentia* is that disposition of mind which would offend no one,) and several other virtues, are comprehended under *frugalitas*.

*at illud est latius; omnis enim abstinentia, omnis innocentia (quae apud Graecos usitatum nomen nullum habet, sed habere potest ἀβλάβειαν; nam est innocentia adfectio talis animi quae noceat nemini)—reliquas etiam uirtutes frugalitas continet.*

As a result of Cicero's and others' efforts, the following technical terms (and many others) came from Greek via Latin into English:

Greek *êthikos* (ἠθικός), 'to do with ethics', became in Latin *moralis*, our 'morals';  
Greek *philanthrôpia* (φιλανθρωπία), 'love of mankind' became *humanitas*;  
Greek *epistêmê* (ἐπιστήμη) 'knowledge' (cf. epistemology) became *scientia*, our 'science';

Greek *ousia* (οὐσία) 'unchanging reality' became *essentia*, our 'essence';  
Greek *poiôtês* (ποιότης) 'what-sort-of-ness' became *qualitas*, our 'quality';  
Greek *idiôma* (ιδίωμα) 'special character, unique feature' became *proprietas*, our 'property' in a philosophical sense ('what is the property of electricity?').

§§ In his *de diuinatione* (44 BC, two books), Cicero devoted a whole section to arguing against the absurdity of the notion of fate:

### The chickens that refused to eat



**2.20** So what is the good of divination? Or what is it that lots, entrails, or any other means of prophecy warn me to avoid? For, if it was the will of Fate that the Roman fleets in the First Punic War should perish—the one by shipwreck and the other at the hands of the Carthaginians—they would have perished just the same even if the sacred chickens had made a *tripudium solistimum* ['satisfactory feeding-ritual'] in the consulship of Lucius Junius and Publius Claudius [249 BC, Battle of Drepana]! On the other hand, if obedience to the auspices would have prevented the destruction of the fleets, then they did not perish in accordance with Fate. But you insist that all things happen by Fate; therefore there is no such thing as divination.

2.20 *quid ergo adiuuat diuinatio, aut quid est quod me moneant aut sortes aut exta aut ulla praedictio? si enim fatum fuit classes populi Romani bello Punico primo alteram naufragio, alteram a Poenis depressam interire, etiamsi tripudium solistumum pulli fecissent L. Iunio et P. Claudio consulibus, classes tamen interissent. sin, cum auspiciis obtemperatum esset, interiturae classes non fuerunt, non interierunt fato; uultis autem omnia fato; nulla igitur est diuinatio.*

### Auspices at Trasimene



2.21 Again, if it was the will of Fate that the Roman army should perish at Lake Trasimene in the Second Punic War [217 BC], could that result have been avoided if the consul Flaminius had obeyed the signs and the auspices which forbade his joining battle? Assuredly not. Therefore, either the army did not perish by the will of Fate, or, if it did (and you are certainly bound as a Stoic to say that it did), the same result would have happened even if the auspices had been obeyed; for the decrees of Fate are unchangeable.

2.21 *quodsi fatum fuit bello Punico secundo exercitum populi Romani ad lacum Trasumennum interire num id uitari potuit, si Flaminius consul iis signis iisque auspiciis quibus pugnare prohibebatur paruisset? certe non potuit. aut igitur non fato interiit exercitus (mutari enim fata non possunt) aut, si fato (quod certe uobis ita dicendum est), etiamsi obtemperasset auspiciis, idem euenturum fuisset.*

### Fatal fallacy

2.21 Then what becomes of that vaunted divination of you Stoics? For if all things happen by Fate, it does us no good to be warned to be on our guard, since that which is to happen, will happen regardless of what we do. But if that which is to be can be turned aside, there is no such thing as Fate; so, too, there is no such thing as divination—since divination deals with things that are going to happen. But nothing is ‘certain to happen’ which there is some means of dealing with so as to prevent its happening.

2.21 *ubi est igitur ista diuinitio Stoicorum? quae, si fato omnia fiunt, nihil nos admonere potest ut cautiore simus; quoquo enim modo nos gesserimus, fiet tamen illud quod futurum est; sin autem id potest flecti, nullum est fatum; ita ne diuinitio quidem, quoniam ea rerum futurarum est; nihil autem est pro certo futurum, quod potest aliqua procuratione accidere ne fiat.*

### No benefit for Crassus in knowing the future ...

2.22 And further, for my part, I think that a knowledge of the future would be a disadvantage ... Passing by men of earlier day, let us take Marcus Crassus. What advantage, pray, do you think it would have been to him, when he was at the very summit of power and wealth, to know that he was destined to perish beyond the Euphrates in shame and dishonour [53 BC], after his son had been killed and his own army had been destroyed?

2.22 *atque ego ne utilem quidem arbitror esse nobis futurarum rerum scientiam. ... ut omittamus superiores, Marcone Crasso putas utile fuisse tum, cum maximis opibus fortunisque florebat, scire sibi interfecto Publio filio exercituque deleto trans Euphratem cum ignominia et dedecore esse pereundum?*

### ... nor for Pompey



2.22 Or do you think that Gnaeus Pompey would have found joy in his three consulships, in his three triumphs, and in the fame of his transcendent deeds, if he had known that he would be slain in an Egyptian desert [48 BC], after he had lost his army, and that following his death those grave events would occur of which I cannot speak without tears?

2.22 *an Cn. Pompeium censes tribus suis consulatibus, tribus triumphis, maximarum rerum gloria laetaturum fuisse, si sciret se in solitudine Aegyptiorum trucidatum iri amisso exercitu, post mortem uero ea consecutura, quae sine lacrimis non possumus dicere?*

## ... let alone for Caesar

**2.23** Or what do we think of Caesar? Had he foreseen that in the Senate, chosen in most part by himself, in Pompey's hall, indeed before Pompey's very statue, and in the presence of many of his own centurions, he would be put to death by most noble citizens, some of whom owed all that they had to him, and that he would fall to so low an estate that no friend—no, not even a slave—would approach his dead body, in what agony of soul would he have spent his life!...

**2.23** *quid uero Caesarem putamus, si diuinasset fore ut in eo senatu quem maiore ex parte ipse cooptasset, in curia Pompeia, ante ipsius Pompei simulacrum, tot centurionibus suis inspectantibus, a nobilissimis ciuibus, partim etiam a se omnibus rebus ornatis, trucidatus ita iaceret, ut ad eius corpus non modo amicorum, sed ne seruorum quidem quisquam accederet, quo cruciatu animi uitam acturum fuisse?...*

### Fatuous Fate

**2.25** The whole idea of fate in every detail is justly, as I think, the subject of derision even in Atellan farces, but in a discussion as serious as ours joking is out of place.

So then let us sum up our argument: if it is impossible to foresee things that happen by chance because they are uncertain, there is no such thing as divination; if, on the contrary, they can be foreseen because they are preordained by Fate, still there is no such thing as divination, which, by your definition, deals with 'things that happen by chance.'

**2.25** *totum omnino fatum etiam Atellanio uersu iure mihi esse inrisum uidetur; sed in rebus tam seueris non est iocandi locus.*

*concludatur igitur ratio: si enim prouideri nihil potest futurum esse eorum quae casu fiunt, quia esse certa non possunt, diuination nulla est; sin autem idcirco possunt prouideri, quia certa sunt et fatalia, rursus diuination nulla est; eam enim tu fortuitarum rerum esse dicebas.*

§§ Cicero's *de officiis* 'On duties' (composed in October-November 44 BC) deals with what has been called the ideals of public behaviour, very broadly understood. Conversation being the medium through which he philosophizes, Cicero here offers sound advice on how it should be handled.

## Everyone partakes



**1.134** Thus, therefore, let conversation, in which the Socratics are the best models, be easy and not in the least dogmatic; it should have the spice of wit. Nor indeed, as if he were entering upon a private monopoly, should the one who engages in conversation debar others, but, as in other things, so in a general conversation he should think it not unfair for each to have his turn.

**1.134** *sit ergo hic sermo, in quo Socratici maxime excellunt, lenis minimeque pertinax, insit in eo lepos. nec uero, tamquam in possessionem suam uenerit, excludat alios, sed cum reliquis in rebus, tum in sermone communi, uicissitudinem non iniquam putet.*

### Treat different topics differently and beware malice

**1.134** And let him observe, first and foremost, what the subject of conversation is. If it is grave, he should treat it with seriousness; if humorous, with wit. And above all, let him be on the watch that his conversation shall not betray some defect in his character. This is most likely to occur, when intentionally about absent people, to injure their reputations, in jest or in earnest, malicious and slanderous statements are made.

**1.134** *ac uideat in primis, quibus de rebus loquatur, si seriis, seueritatem adhibeat, si iocosis leporem. in primisque prouideat, ne sermo uitium aliquod indicet inesse in moribus; quod maxime tum solet euenire, cum studiose de absentibus detrahendi causa aut per ridiculum aut seuerè, maledice contumelioseque dicitur.*

### Guide the conversation thoughtfully

**1.135** The subjects of conversation are usually affairs of the home or politics or the practice of the professions and learning. Accordingly, if the talk begins to drift off to other channels, pains should be taken to bring it back again to the matter in hand—but with due consideration to the company present; for we are not all interested in the same things at all times or in the same degree. We must observe, too, how far the conversation is agreeable and, as it had a reason for its beginning, so there should be a point at which to close it tactfully.

**1.135** *habentur autem plerumque sermones aut de domesticis negotiis aut de re publica aut de artium studiis atque doctrina. danda igitur opera est, ut, etiamsi aberrare ad alia coeperit, ad haec reuocetur oratio, sed utcumque aderunt; neque enim isdem de rebus nec omni tempore nec similiter delectamur. animaduertendum est etiam, quatenus sermo delectationem habeat, et ut incipiendi ratio fuerit, ita sit desinendi modus.*

### Control the emotions



**1.136** But as we have a most excellent rule for every phase of life, to avoid exhibitions of passion, that is, mental excitement that is excessive and uncontrolled by reason; so our conversation ought to be free from such emotions: let there be no exhibition of anger or inordinate passion, of indolence or indifference, or anything of the kind. We must also take the greatest care to show courtesy and consideration toward those with whom we converse.

**1.136** *sed quomodo in omni uita rectissime praecipitur, ut perturbationes fugiamus, id est motus animi nimios rationi non obtemperantes, sic eiusmodi motibus sermo debet uacare, ne aut ira existat aut cupiditas aliqua aut pigritia aut ignauia aut tale aliquid appareat, maximeque curandum est, ut eos, quibuscum sermonem conferemus, et uereri et diligere uideamur...*

### Maintain one's dignity

**1.137** The right course, moreover, even in our differences with our bitterest enemies, even though we are treated outrageously, is to maintain our dignity and to repress our anger. For what is done under some degree of excitement cannot be done with perfect self-respect or the approval of those present.

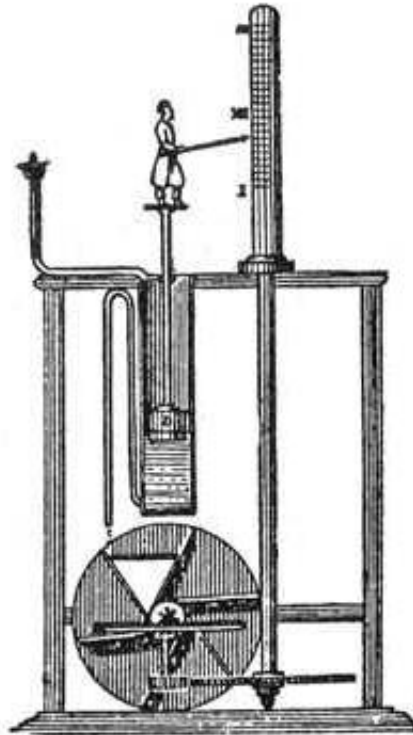
It is bad taste also to talk about oneself—especially if what one says is not true—and, amid the derision of one's hearers, to play 'The Braggart Soldier'.

**1.137** *rectum est autem etiam in illis contentionibus, quae cum inimicissimis fiunt, etiam si nobis indigna audiamus, tamen grauitatem retinere, iracundiam pellere. quae enim cum aliqua perturbatione fiunt, ea nec constanter fieri possunt neque is, qui adsunt, probari. deforme etiam est de se ipsum praedicare, falsa praesertim, et cum inrisione audientium imitari militem gloriosum.*



§§ A wonderful passage from Cicero's *de natura deorum* (45 BC, in three books) goes into ecstasies over the nature and beauty of the world, arguing that a design implies a designer:

### The world must be a product of reason



Roman water-clock

2.97 What would say that man is a man who, when he sees the constant motion of the heavens, the regular courses of the stars, the agreeable proportion and connection of all things, denies that there is any rational explanation of it and that it all happens by chance, created with such wisdom as we in our wisdom cannot comprehend? When we see machines move artificially, as a sphere, a water-clock, or the like, do we doubt whether they are the productions of reason?

2.97 *quis enim hunc hominem dixerit, qui, cum tam certos caeli motus tam ratos astrorum ordines tamque inter se omnia conexa et apta uiderit, neget in his ullam inesse rationem eaque casu fieri dicat, quae quanto consilio gerantur nullo consilio adsequi possumus. an, cum machinatione quadam moueri aliquid uidemus, ut sphaeram ut horas ut alia permulta, non dubitamus quin illa opera sint rationis?*

### It must be divinely directed

2.97 And when we behold the heavens moving with a prodigious speed, and causing an annual succession of the different seasons of the year, which preserve all things in perfect safety, can we doubt that this world is directed, not only by reason, but by reason most excellent and divine?

*cum autem impetum caeli cum admirabili celeritate moueri uertique uideamus constantissime conficientem uicissitudines anniuersarias cum summa salute et conseruatione rerum omnium, dubitamus quin ea non solum ratione fiant sed etiam excellenti diuinaque ratione?*

## Observe the earth's beauty...

**2.98** For it is possible, abandoning refinements of argument, for us to use our eyes to contemplate the beauty of those things which we assert have been arranged by divine providence. First, let us examine the earth, whose situation is in the middle of the universe, solid, round, and conglobular by its natural tendency; clothed with flowers, herbs, trees, and fruits; the whole in multitudes incredible, and with a variety suitable to every taste:

**2.98** *licet enim iam, remota subtilitate disputandi, oculis quodam modo contemplari pulchritudinem rerum earum, quas diuina prouidentia dicimus constitutas. ac principio terra uniuersa cernatur, locata in media sede mundi, solida et globosa et undique ipsa in sese nutibus suis conglobata, uestita floribus, herbis, arboribus, frugibus, quorum omnium incredibilis multitudo insatiabili uarietate distinguitur.*

... its waters, plains and rocks



**2.98** Add the ever-cool and running springs, the clear waters of the rivers, the verdure of their banks, the hollow depths of caves, the craginess of rocks, the heights of impending mountains, and the boundless extent of plains; add further the hidden veins of gold and silver, and the infinite quarries of marble.

**2.98** *adde huc fontum gelidas perennitates, liquores perlucidos amnium, riparum uestitus uiridissimos, speluncarum concauas altitudines, saxorum asperitates, independentium montium altitudines inmensitatesque camporum; adde etiam reconditas auri argentique uenas infinitamque uim marmoris.*

...its animals, birds and men

**2.99** What and how various are the kinds of animals, tame or wild? What the flights and notes of birds? What the pastures for cattle, and the life of those live in the forests?

What shall I say of the race of men, who, being appointed, as we may say, to cultivate the earth, do not allow the ferocity of beasts to make it desolate or its fertility to be choked with weeds, by whose efforts the houses and cities which they build adorn the fields, the isles, and coastlines? If we could view these objects with the naked eye, as we can by the contemplation of the mind, nobody, at such a sight, would doubt there was a divine intelligence.

2.99 *quae vero et quam varia genera bestiarum vel cicurum vel ferarum, qui volucrum lapsus atque cantus, qui pecudum pastus, quae vita silvestrium?*

*quid iam de hominum genere dicam, qui quasi cultores terrae constituti non patiuntur eam nec inmanitate beluarum efferari nec stirpium asperitate vastari, quorumque operibus agri, insulae litoraue collucent distincta tectis et urbibus. quae si, ut animis, sic oculis videre possemus, nemo cunctam intuens terram de divina ratione dubitaret.*

... its seas and coasts



2.100 But how beautiful is the sea, how pleasant in its entirety, what a multitude and variety of islands! How delightful are the coasts and shores! What numbers and what diversity of inhabitants does it contain; some party under water, some floating on the surface, and others by their shells cleaving to the rocks! While the sea itself, approaching to the land, sports so closely to its shores that those two elements appear to be but one.

2.100 *at vero quanta maris est pulchritudo, quae species universi, quae multitudo et varietas insularum, quae amoenitates orarum ac litorum, quot genera quamque disparia partim submersarum, partim fluitantium et innantium beluarum, partim ad saxa nativis testis inhaerentium. ipsum autem mare sic terram adpetens litoribus eludit, ut una ex duabus naturis conflata videatur.*

§§ In his *Tusculan Disputations* Cicero spends some time describing how wretched the life of Dionysius, the famous tyrant of Syracuse, really was. By contrast, he turns to Archimedes, whose tomb he claims to have discovered when he was financial adviser to the provincial governor in Sicily, and reflects how much more satisfactory the life of the mind is:

## I discovered the tomb of Archimedes



**5.64** I will present you with a humble and obscure mathematician of the same city, called Archimedes, who lived many years after; whose tomb, overgrown with shrubs and briars, I in my quaestorship [75 BC] discovered, when the Syracusans knew nothing of it, and even denied that there was any such thing remaining: for I remembered some verses, which I had been informed were engraved on his monument, and these set forth that on the top of the tomb there was placed a sphere with a cylinder.

**5.64** *ex eadem urbe humilem homunculum a pulvere et radio excitabo, qui multis annis post fuit, Archimedem. cuius ego quaestor ignoratum ab Syracusanis, cum esse omnino negarent, saeptum undique et uestitum uepribus et dumetis indagavi sepulcrum. tenebam enim quosdam senariolos, quos in eius monumento esse inscriptos acceperam, qui declarabant in summo sepulcro sphaeram esse positam cum cylindro.*

### I found a significant monument

**5.65** When I had carefully examined all the monuments (for there are a great many tombs at the Agragentine gate), I observed a small column standing out a little above the briars, with the figure of a sphere and a cylinder upon it; whereupon I immediately said to the Syracusans, for there were some of their principal men with me there, that I imagined that was what I was looking for. Several men, sent in with scythes, cleared the way, and opened up the place.

**5.65** *ego autem cum omnia conlustrarem oculis—est enim ad portas Agragentinas magna frequentia sepulcrorum—animum aduerti columellam non multum e dumis eminentem, in qua inerat sphaerae figura et cylindri. atque ego statim Syracusanis—erant autem principes mecum—dixi me illud ipsum arbitrari esse, quod quaererem. inmissi cum falcibus multi purgarunt et aperuerunt locum.*

## It was cleared and that was it!

5.66 When we could get at it, we came to the front of the pedestal. The inscription came into view, though the latter parts of all the verses were effaced almost half away. Thus one of the noblest cities of Greece, and one which at one time likewise had been very celebrated for learning, had known nothing of the monument of its greatest genius, if it had not been discovered to them by a man from Arpinum.

But to return to the subject from which I have been digressing. Who is there in the least degree acquainted with the Muses, that is, with liberal knowledge, or that deals at all in learning, who would not choose to be this mathematician rather than that tyrant?

5.66 *quo cum patefactus esset aditus, ad aduersam basim accessimus. apparebat epigramma exesis posterioribus partibus uersicolorum dimidiatum fere. ita nobilissima Graeciae ciuitas, quondam uero etiam doctissima, sui ciuis unius acutissimi monumentum ignorasset, nisi ab homine Arpinate didicisset.*

*sed redeat, unde aberrauit oratio: quis est omnium, qui modo cum Musis, id est cum humanitate et cum doctrina, habeat aliquod commercium, qui se non hunc mathematicum malit quam illum tyrannum?*

### How preferable are such people's mental efforts!



Democritus, an inventor of atomism: a merry soul

5.66 If we look into their methods of living and their employments, we shall find the mind of the one strengthened and improved with tracing the deductions of reason, amused with his own ingenuity, which is the one most delicious food of the mind; the thoughts of the other engaged in continual murders and injuries, in constant fears by night and by day. Now imagine a Democritus, a Pythagoras and an Anaxagoras; what kingdom, what riches would you prefer to their studies and amusements?

5.66 *si uitae modum actionemque quaerimus, alterius mens rationibus agitandis exquirendisque alebatur cum oblectatione sollertiae, qui est unus suauissimus pastus animorum, alterius in caede et iniuriis cum et diurno et nocturno metu. Age confer Democritum Pythagoram, Anaxagoram: quae regna, quas opes studiis eorum et delectationibus antepones?*

§§ Cicero devotes the final book of his *de officiis* to teasing out solutions to problems in which virtue clashed with self-advantage:

### Should one keep promises?



Bronze and gold imperial coins

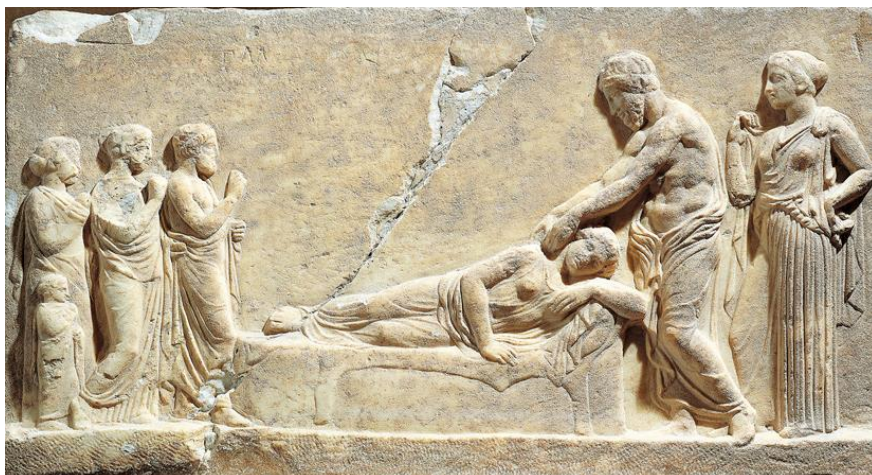
3.92 If a man thinks that he is selling brass, when he is actually selling gold, should an upright man inform him that his stuff is gold, or go on buying for one *denarius* what is worth a thousand? It is clear enough by this time what my views are on these questions, and what are the grounds of dispute between the above-named philosophers.

The question arises also whether agreements and promises must always be kept, when, in the language of the praetors' edicts, they have not been secured through force or criminal fraud.

3.92 *si quis aurum uendens orichalcum se putet uendere, indicetne ei uir bonus aurum illud esse, an emat denario, quod sit mille denarium? perspicuum est iam et quid mihi uideatur et quae sit inter eos philosophos, quos nominaui, controuersia.*

*pacta et promissa semperne seruanda sint, quae nec ui nec dolo malo, ut praetores solent, facta sint.*

### The use of medicine



3.92 If one man gives another a remedy for the dropsy, with the stipulation that, if he is cured by it, he shall never make use of it again; suppose the patient's health is restored by the use of it, but some years later he contracts the same disease once

more; and suppose he cannot secure from the man with whom he made the agreement permission to use the remedy again, what should he do?

That is the question.

Since the man is unfeeling in refusing the request, and since no harm could be done to him [by his friend's using the remedy], the sick man is justified in looking after his own life and health.

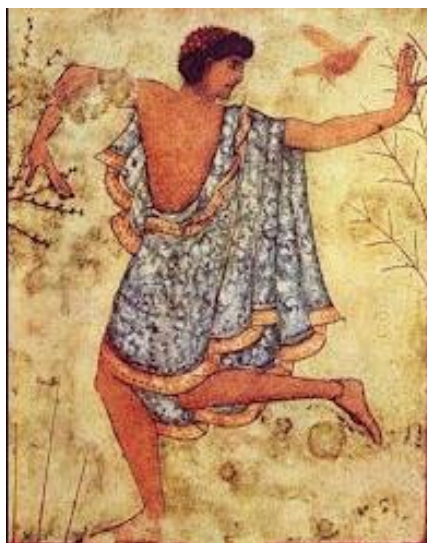
**3.92** *si quis medicamentum cuiquam dederit ad aquam intercutem pepigeritque, si eo medicamento sanus factus esset, ne illo medicamento umquam postea uteretur, si eo medicamento sanus factus sit et annis aliquot post inciderit in eundem morbum nec ab eo, quicum pepigerat, impetret, ut iterum eo liceat uti, quid faciendum sit.*

*cum sit is inhumanus, qui non concedat, nec ei quicquam fiat iniuriae, uitae et saluti consulendum.*

### Inheritance at a price

**3.93** Again, suppose that some wise man were asked, by a man making him his heir, after he had been left a hundred million sesterces in his will, that before he enters upon his inheritance, he dance publicly in broad daylight in the forum; and suppose that the wise man has given his promise to do so, because the rich man would not leave him his fortune on any other condition; should he keep his promise or not? I wish he had made no such promise; that, I think, would have been in keeping with his dignity.

**3.93** *quid? si qui sapiens rogatus sit ab eo, qui eum heredem faciat, cum ei testamento sestertium milies relinquatur, ut antequam hereditatem adeat luce palam in foro saltet; idque se facturum promiserit, quod aliter heredem eum scripturus ille non esset; faciat quod promiserit necne? promisisse nollem et id arbitror fuisse grauitatis;*



**3.93** But, seeing that he has made it, if he believes it morally wrong to dance in the forum, it will be morally better for him to break his promise if he takes nothing from his inheritance rather than accepting it—unless, perhaps, he contributes the money to the state to meet some grave crisis, so that even to dance, in order promote thereby the interests of one's country, would not be a disgrace.

**3.93** *quoniam promisit, si saltare in foro turpe ducet, honestius mentietur, si ex hereditate nihil ceperit, quam si ceperit, nisi forte eam pecuniam in rei publicae magnum aliquod tempus contulerit, ut uel saltare, cum patriae consulturus sit, turpe non sit.*

§§ Cicero's *de republica* [54-51 BC] in six fragmentary books and *de legibus* in three books (probably out of six, unfinished at his death in 43 BC) have been very influential, the former acting as the key text to Christians' understanding of pagan politics, the latter influential on renaissance and subsequent theories of natural law.

Here from *de republica* 1-2 and 39-40 Cicero argues that politicians must turn philosophers' lectures into rules of governance, and discusses the importance of communal living and the three different constitutions.

### Turn words into virtuous actions

**1.2** But it is not enough to possess virtue, as if it were an art of some sort, unless you make use of it. Though it is true that an art, even if you never use it, can still remain in your possession by the very fact of your knowledge of it, yet the existence of virtue depends entirely upon its use, and its noblest use is the government of the state, and the realisation in fact, not in words, of those very things that the philosophers, in their corners, are continually dinning in our ears.

For there is no principle enunciated by the philosophers—at least none that is just and honourable—that has not been discovered and established by those who have drawn up codes of law for states.

**1.2** *nec uero habere uirtutem satis est quasi artem aliquam nisi utare; etsi ars quidem cum ea non utare scientia tamen ipsa teneri potest, uirtus in usu sui tota posita est; usus autem eius est maximus ciuitatis gubernatio, et earum ipsarum rerum quas isti in angulis personant, reapse non oratione perfectio.*

*nihil enim dicitur a philosophis, quod quidem recte honesteque dicatur, quod non ab iis partum confirmatumque sit, a quibus ciuitatibus iura discripta sunt.*



Decree of Tiberius relating to financing of soldiers and veterans after the death of Augustus



## Virtues derive from education, custom and law

1.2 For whence comes our sense of duty? From whom do we obtain the principles of religion? Whence comes the law of nations, or even that law of ours which is called civil? Whence justice, honour, fair-dealing? Whence decency, self-restraint, fear of disgrace, eagerness for praise and honour? Whence comes endurance amid toils and dangers? I say, from those men who, when these things had been inculcated by a system of training, either confirmed them by custom or else enforced them by statutes.

1.2 *unde enim pietas, aut a quibus religio? unde ius aut gentium aut hoc ipsum civile quod dicitur? unde iustitia fides aequitas? unde pudor continentia fuga turpitudinis adpetentia laudis et honestatis? unde in laboribus et periculis fortitudo? nempe ab iis qui haec disciplinis informata alia moribus confirmarunt, sanxerunt autem alia legibus.*

### The virtuous citizen



Phryne seducing Xenocrates

1.3 Indeed Xenocrates, one of the most eminent of philosophers, when asked what his disciples learned, is said to have replied, 'To do of their own accord what they are compelled to do by the law.' Therefore the citizen who compels all men, by the authority of magistrates and the penalties imposed by law, to follow rules of whose validity philosophers find it hard to convince even a few by their admonitions, must be considered superior even to the teachers who enunciate these principles.

1.3 *quin etiam Xenocraten ferunt, nobilem in primis philosophum, cum quaereretur ex eo quid adsequerentur eius discipuli, respondisse ut id sua sponte facerent quod cogentur facere legibus. ergo ille, cuius qui id cogit omnis imperio legumque poena, quod uix paucis persuadere oratione philosophi possunt, etiam iis qui illa disputant ipsis est praefendus doctoribus.*

## Politicians are superior to lecturers

1.3 For what lecture of theirs is excellent enough to be preferred to a state well-provided with law and custom? Indeed, just as I think that ‘cities great and dominant’, as Ennius calls them, are to be ranked above small villages and strongholds, so I believe that those who rule such cities by wise counsel and authority are to be deemed far superior, even in wisdom, to those who take no part at all in the business of government.

1.3 *quae est enim istorum oratio tam exquisita, quae sit anteponenda bene constitutae ciuitati publico iure et moribus? equidem quem ad modum ‘urbes magnas atque imperiosas’, ut appellat Ennius, uiculis et castellis praeferendas puto, sic eos qui his urbibus consilio atque auctoritate praesunt, iis qui omnis negotii publici expertes sint, longe duco sapientia ipsa esse anteponendos.*

### A politician’s priorities

1.3 And since we feel a mighty urge to increase the resources of mankind, since we desire to make human life safer and richer by our thought and effort, and are goaded on to the fulfilment of this desire by Nature herself, let us hold to the course which has ever been that of all excellent men, turning deaf ears to those who, in the hope of even recalling those who have already gone ahead, are sounding the retreat.

1.3 *et quoniam maxime rapimur ad opes augendas generis humani, studemusque nostris consiliis et laboribus tutiorem et opulentiorem uitam hominum reddere, et ad hanc uoluptatem ipsius naturae stimulis incitamus, teneamus eum cursum qui semper fuit optimi cuiusque, neque ea signa audiamus quae receptui canunt, ut eos etiam reuocent qui iam processerint.*

### Communal living



1.39 *Scipio*: Well, then, a republic is the property of a people. But a people is not any collection of human beings brought together in any sort of way, but an assemblage of people in large numbers associated by legal consent and a partnership of common interest. The primary reason for such an association is not so much the weakness of the individual as a certain desire for communal living which nature has implanted in man. For man is not a solitary or unsocial creature, but born with such a nature that not even under conditions of great prosperity of every sort [is he willing to be isolated from his fellow men] . . .

1.39 *est igitur, inquit Africanus, res publica res populi, populus autem non omnis hominum coetus quoquo modo congregatus, sed coetus multitudinis iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatus. eius autem prima causa coeundi est non tam inbecillitas quam naturalis quaedam hominum quasi congregatio; non est enim singulare nec solivagum genus hoc, sed ita generatum ut ne in omnium quidem rerum affluentia [ ]*

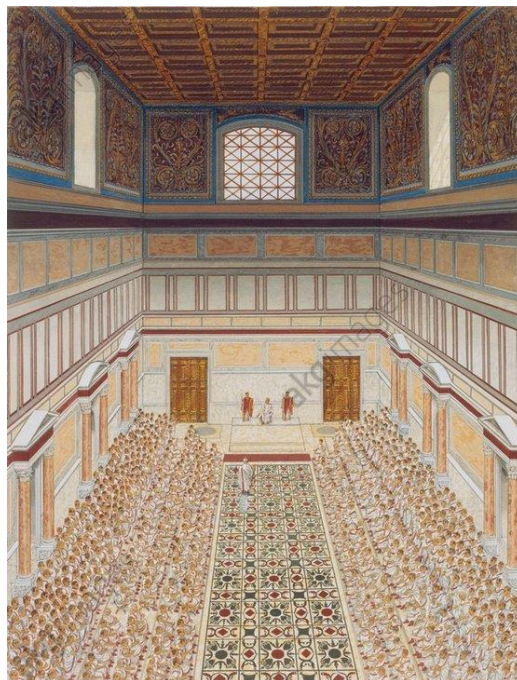
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## Towns and cities

1.41 *Scipio*: [without] certain seeds, as we may call them, for [otherwise] no source for the other virtues nor for the State itself could be discovered. Such an assemblage of men, therefore, originating for the reason I have mentioned, established itself in a definite place, at first in order to provide dwellings; and this place being fortified by its natural situation and by their labours, they called such a collection of dwellings a town or city, and provided it with shrines and gathering places which were common property.

1.41 *Scipio*: ... [ ] *quaedam quasi semina, neque reliquarum uirtutum nec ipsius rei publicae reperiatur ulla institutio. hi coetus igitur, hac de qua eui causa instituti, sedem primum certo loco domiciliorum causa constituerunt; quam cum locis manuque saepsissent, eius modi coniunctionem tectorum oppidum, uel urbem appellauerunt delubris distinctam spatiisque communibus.*

## Need for deliberative bodies



1.41 *Scipio*: Therefore every people, which is such a gathering of large numbers as I have described, every city, which is an orderly settlement of a people, every republic, which, as I said, is 'the property of a people,' must be governed by some deliberative body if it is to be permanent. And this deliberative body must, in the first place, always owe its beginning to the same cause as that which produced the State itself.

1.41 *Scipio: omnis ergo populus, qui est talis coetus multitudinis qualem eui, omnis ciuitas, quae est constitutio populi, omnis res publica, quae ut dixi populi res est, consilio quodam regenda est, ut diuturna sit. id autem consilium primum semper ad eam causam referendum est quae causa genuit ciuitatem.*

### Monarchy, aristocracy ...

1.42 *Scipio:* In second place, this function must either be granted to one man, or to certain selected citizens, or must be assumed by the whole body of citizens. And so when the supreme authority is in the hands of one man, we call him a king, and the form of this State a monarchy. When selected citizens hold this power, we say that the State is ruled by an aristocracy. But a popular [i.e. democratic] government (for so it is called) exists when all the power is in the hands of the people.

1.42 *Scipio: deinde aut uni tribuendum est, aut delectis quibusdam, aut suscipiendum est multitudini atque omnibus. quare cum penes unum est omnium summa rerum, regem illum unum uocamus, et regnum eius rei publicae statum. cum autem est penes delectos, tum illa ciuitas optimatum arbitrio regi dicitur. illa autem est ciuitas popularis—sic enim appellant—in qua in populo sunt omnia.*

### ...democracy

1.42 *Scipio:* And any one of these three forms of government (if only the bond which originally joined the citizens together in the partnership of the State holds fast), though not perfect or in my opinion the best, is tolerable, though one of them may be superior to another. For either a just and wise king, or a select number of leading citizens, or even the people itself, though this is the least commendable type, can nevertheless, as it seems, form a government that is not unstable, provided that no elements of injustice or greed are mingled with it.

1.42 *Scipio: atque horum trium generum quoduis, si teneat illud uinculum quod primum homines inter se rei publicae societate deuinxit, non perfectum illud quidem neque mea sententia optimum, sed tolerabile tamen, et aliud ut alio possit esse praestantius. nam uel rex aequus ac sapiens, uel delecti ac principes ciues, uel ipse populus, quamquam id est minime probandum, tamen nullis interiectis iniquitatibus aut cupiditatibus posse uidetur aliquo esse non incerto statu.*

§§ *de legibus*, following the pattern of Plato's Νόμοι (*Laws*), lays out a complete legal system for governing the state. Its resemblance to the Roman system is remarkable ... Here from *de legibus* 3.30-32 Cicero argues that the influence of leaders upon the led is of primary importance. It begins with one of the proposed laws for the governance of the state:

## The influence of leaders



Lucullus

**3.30 Marcus:** 'Let the senator set an example to the rest'. If we observe this, we hold everything together. For as a whole city is infected by the desires and vices of its leaders, so it is often reformed and put right by their self-restraint.

L. Lucullus, a great man, friend to us all, is said to have replied very neatly when criticised for the magnificence of his villa at Tusculum, that he had two neighbours, a Roman knight up the hill, and a freedman down the hill: since they both had magnificent villas, there ought to be conceded to him [a consul] what was permitted to those of inferior rank.

Do you not see, Lucullus, that the very thing that those men desired was bred by you? Did you not do it, it would not have been permitted them.

**3.30 Marcus:** *'ceteris specimen esto.' quod si tenemus, seruamus omnia. ut enim cupiditatibus principum et uitii infici solet tota ciuitas, sic emendari et corrigi continentia.*

*uir magnus et nobis omnibus amicus L. Lucullus ferebatur quasi commodissime respondisset, cum esset obiecta magnificentia uillae Tusculanae, duo se habere uicinos, superiorem equitem Romanum, inferiorem libertinum: quorum cum essent magnificae uillae, concedi sibi oportere quod iis qui inferioris ordinis essent liceret.*

*non uides, Luculle, a te id ipsum natum ut illi cuperent? quibus, id si tu non faceres, non liceret.*

## As our leaders, so the people



**3.31** Who could bear people of this sort when he sees their villas crowded with statues and pictures, relating either to public, or what is more, to sacred and religious subjects? Who would not join in demolishing the monuments to their desires, if those who ought to demolish them were not guilty of the same extravagance?

For the vices of our leaders (though that in itself is bad enough) are not so great as is the extent of it among the imitators of those leaders. For it is possible to see, if you go into the history of former ages, that the character of the people were always regulated by that of their leaders; whatever change took place in the leaders was replicated in the people.

**3.31** *quis enim ferret istos, cum uideret eorum uillas signis et tabulis refertas, partim publicis, partim etiam sacris et religiosis? quis non frangeret eorum libidines, nisi illi ipsi qui eas frangere deberent cupiditatis eiusdem tenerentur?*

*nec enim tantum mali est peccare principes (quamquam est magnum hoc per se ipsum malum) quantum illud quod permulti imitatores principum existunt. Nam licet uidere, si uelis replicare memoriam temporum, qualescumque summi ciuitatis uiri fuerint, talem ciuitatem fuisse; quaecumque mutatio morum in principibus extiterit, eandem in populo secutam.*

### **Their example is worse than their crimes**

**3.32** Now this observation is much truer than that which appealed to our Plato. He says that by changes in the vocal style of musicians are changed the morals of a nation: but I hold that by the manners and life-style of their superiors are men's morals changed. Hence, all the more pernicious to the state is the service of corrupt leaders not only because they are guilty of immoral practices themselves, but because they spread them among their fellow-citizens; nor is it only that they are debauched themselves, but also because they debauch others and do more harm by their example than by their crimes.

**3.32** *idque haud paulo est uerius, quam quod Platoni nostro placet. qui musicorum cantibus ait mutatis mutari ciuitatum status: ego autem nobilium uita uictuque mutato mores mutari ciuitatum puto. quo perniciosius de re publica merentur uitiosi principes, quod non solum uitia concipiunt ipsi, sed ea infundunt in ciuitatem, neque solum obsunt quod ipsi corrumpuntur, sed etiam quod corrumpunt plusque exemplo quam peccato nocent.*

**Next Bellaria (missing a week):** Thursday December 9 – St Matthew's Christmas story