

---

# Roman Amoralism Reconsidered

---

The Political Culture of the Roman Republic  
and Historians in an Era of Disillusionment

Michael C. Alexander

---

---

# Roman Amoralism Reconsidered

---

The Political Culture of the Roman Republic  
and Historians in an Era of Disillusionment

Michael C. Alexander

---

Roman amoralism reconsidered : the political culture of the Roman Republic and historians in an era of disillusionment / Michael C. Alexander

Copyright © 2018 by Michael C. Alexander.

This book is made available under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND license. It can be freely duplicated and shared, in whole or in part, without altering the work, as long as the title of the work and the name of the author of the work are stated. Duplication and sharing are permitted only for non-commercial uses.

Please consult the blog to obtain a printable file of this book, and for information on ordering a soft-cover bound copy.

<http://romanamoralmreconsidered.com/>

First edition, 2018

Online ISBN 978-0-692-06643-0

Print ISBN 978-0-692-06642-3

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

FORWARD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
Introduction: “It’s politics” .....	1
<i>Précis</i> .....	1
<i>Definition of amoralism</i> .....	3
<i>Examples of political cultures characterized by amoralism</i> .....	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
Ancient evidence for amoralism .....	12
<i>Historical sources</i> .....	14
<i>Philosophical and rhetorical treatises</i> .....	29
<i>The Commentariolum Petitionis</i> .....	53
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
Amoralism and the historiography on Roman Republican politics ....	57
<i>Prosopographical historiography: from Gelzer to Gruen</i> .....	58
<i>Roman Republic vs. Roman Empire</i> .....	82
<i>Amoralism in the Commentariolum Petitionis</i> .....	84
<i>The effect of amoralism on the historical interpretation of the</i> <i>Commentariolum Petitionis</i> .....	94
<i>The fading of amoralism in the historiography of the Roman Republic</i> ....	95
<i>Etic versus emic</i> .....	97
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
Amoralism and the writing of history in an era of disillusionment ..	108
<i>From etic to emic, and debunking as an etic approach</i> .....	111
<i>The influence of disillusionment on twentieth-century thought</i> .....	125
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
Conclusion .....	136
<i>One theme and two sub-themes</i> .....	136
<i>Amoralism: is it dead?</i> .....	139
<b>APPENDIX ONE</b>	
Scholarly reaction to the Ironic Interpretation of the <i>Commentariolum</i> <i>Petitionis</i> .....	142
<b>APPENDIX TWO</b>	
The philosophical basis of <i>Alterum est tamen boni viri, alterum boni</i> <i>petitoris</i> .....	149

### APPENDIX THREE

The importance of asking whether Roman Republican political culture  
was amoral..... 157

WORKS CITED..... 165

INDEX ..... 184

INDEX LOCORUM ..... 188

## Forward and Acknowledgments

---

I presented aspects of this book in talks before the Illinois Classical Conference (October 2006), the Association of Ancient Historians (April 2010), the University of Pisa (November 2014), and the Classical Association of the Midwest and South (April 2017). This book has also benefitted from assistance given to me by Greg Anderson, Asha Bhandary, Kai Brodersen, John D’Emilio, Arthur Eckstein, Richard Fried, Richard John, Constance Meinwald, D. Mark Possanza, and John Ramsey. I particularly wish to thank Jed Atkins for reading my section on Latin philosophical sources and offering me guidance that helped me avoid significant errors. My acknowledgment of the help provided by these scholars should not be interpreted as implying their agreement with the views that I express here, or even that they have read all or part of the manuscript.

I wish to express my gratitude for the benefits that I received as a member of the Department of History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I also wish to express my gratitude for the advice and services offered to me by Sandra De Groote, Scholarly Communications Librarian of the University Library of the University of Illinois at Chicago. I am also grateful to the Department of Classics of the University of Pittsburgh for having provided me with access to the libraries of the University of Pittsburgh. Finally, it is a pleasure to express my gratitude to Stefanie Kletke for her work in copy-editing the manuscript and formatting it into a book.

For those who are interested, I have established a monitored blog where comments related to this book can be posted, at:  
*RomanAmoralismReconsidered.com*.

Michael C. Alexander  
Pittsburgh, PA, United States, August 2017

## Introduction: “It’s politics”

### Précis

In this book, I will challenge a commonly held modern belief about the Roman attitude toward their own political system during the Republic, namely that the Romans thought their own morality did not apply to politicians when those politicians were engaged in political activity within the domestic Roman political system. Herein, I refer to this attitude as “amoralism.”

In the three central chapters (Chapters Two through Four), I present three propositions:

1. *Chapter Two.* No extant ancient evidence exists for amoralism in the political culture of the Roman Republic either from:  
a) contemporary historical sources, or b) contemporary philosophical or rhetorical treatises composed by Marcus Tullius Cicero. In fact, these treatises counter amoralism. The lack of ancient evidence for Roman Republican amoralism is the core contention of this book. (This book treats Roman political culture solely insofar as it relates to amoralism.)
2. *Chapter Three.* An unstated belief in Roman amoralism permeated much of the historical scholarship about Roman Republican politics that was written from roughly the early 1900s to the mid-1980s; this belief coincided with a commonly held negative view of ancient Rome. Though many Roman historians have since abandoned amoralism in general, in part because of a change in the way Roman history was/is written from an “etic” approach (i.e., as an outside observer) to an “emic” approach (i.e., as a subject), its presence in Roman Republican political culture has heretofore never been refuted. In appendices to Chapter Three (Appendices One and Two), I further argue that: a) belief in Roman amoralism is revealed by most historians’ willingness to treat the *Commentariolum Petitionis* (herein abbreviated as *Comm. Pet.*) as a straightforward account of how to run an election campaign, and b) amoralism better explains the philosophical basis on which this work ostensibly recommends

that candidates for office violate traditional morality than an “accommodation of circumstantial necessity.”

3. *Chapter Four.* In the absence of ancient evidence, historians’ assumption of amoralism in the political culture of the Roman Republican is primarily a reflection of the kind of political history that was frequently written during what I refer to as an “era of disillusionment,” roughly from the early 1900s to the 1980s, during which the quest for, and perpetuation of, power, along with money, were assumed to be key components of politics. Contemporary disillusionment with politics and government left a mark on the writing of history, leading historians to explain human conduct in terms of low motives (power and wealth) rather than high motives (such as displaying good character or promoting the common good through beneficial public policies). Historians at this time were therefore inclined to accept as plausible those explanations of political conduct that were based on the premise that politicians were granted a dispensation from the morality which otherwise applied within a society. Events of this era encouraged these attitudes among historians.

I wish to stress each of the three central chapters combine to make one basic point, even though Chapter Four travels far from the history of Rome, either in terms of what happened in ancient Rome, or how the history of what happened at Rome has been written. While in Chapter Two I attempt to present and discuss all relevant ancient sources, and in Chapter Three I provide representative samples from books and articles about Roman Republican history to show that they were imbued with amoralism, in Chapter Four I do not try to “cover” a subject, in the sense of presenting an exhaustive account of either historical writing about the Republic during the era of disillusionment or historical events during that era, but rather to illustrate a salient historiographical trend that helps us understand why many Roman historians of the twentieth century wrote the way that they did, and why toward the end of the century they turned to a new approach. I explain the amoralist tendency of much twentieth-century historiography by tying it to some historical events and developments of the era of disillusionment. Chapter Four describes important events and developments that help explain amoralist assumptions that held for much of the twentieth century and subsequent historical factors



that shed light on a change in outlook over approximately the last thirty years. Throughout I try to clarify along the way exactly what I am claiming and not claiming, and I deal with objections to the steps in the argument that I am making, either objections that I anticipate or those that I have in fact encountered.

In my conclusion (Chapter Five), I show what this book has accomplished by looking for amoralism in the history-writing on Roman Republican politics, as practiced in the twentieth century. In an appendix to this conclusion (Appendix Three), I survey the trajectory of political thought during my lifetime in order to apply to my thinking the same sort of scrutiny about the relationship between intellectual environment and historiography that I have applied to previous Roman historians.

## Definition of amoralism

For the purposes of this discussion, “morality” means ethics in any of the various ways that right and wrong were conceptualized by the Romans, whether in terms of a principle, a set of principles, a code of rules, or a kind of personal character, that is, virtue; a statement or belief can be considered as “moral” if it makes any kind of moral claim, even if it is not necessarily a moral claim that any ancient Roman thought was valid, including the person making the claim. Morality is seen as whatever the Romans thought it was, not necessarily what we think morality is today, either in general terms (“What does ‘moral’ mean?”) or in terms of specific principles or rules; of course, “Roman morality” need not connote one single entity, as individual Romans likely held different ideas about morality.

“Amoralism” is then the belief that, under certain circumstances, no obligation exists to obey morality, even though morality does exist.<sup>1</sup> Since this discussion is on amoralism in political culture, the term is here used to signify the belief that, although morality should be followed in general, morality does not need to be obeyed specifically within political life. Therefore, if we say that Roman Republican political culture was characterized by amoralism as I have defined it,

---

<sup>1</sup> Shafer-Landau (2015) 166, 317. Amoralism is different from moral skepticism, which is the denial that moral standards exist (Shafer-Landau [2015] 291).

we mean that the Romans of that period did not disapprove of the conduct of Roman politicians and voters even when those politicians or voters violated some aspects of ethics that applied to Romans in areas of life other than domestic politics. In other words, under this definition, if the Romans accepted political amoralism, they believed “all is fair in politics.” Finally, for Roman political culture to be characterized as amoral in historical terms, amorality needs to be a *distinctive* feature of that political culture, and not just a manifestation of a universal rule.<sup>2</sup>

Amoralism could include a disregard for legal rules against corruption (e.g., the purchase of votes) to the extent that these rules possess a moral as well as legal force, but it is not limited to this sphere since it could also cover disregard for the violation of social strictures (e.g., strictures against flattery or making insincere promises in the process of campaigning). As this discussion is about internal politics, however, I will be discussing a disregard for morality only within the domestic politics of the Roman Republic, meaning the actions of politicians when they function solely *as politicians* (e.g., campaigning for office, helping other politicians in their campaigns, and promoting or opposing legislation before the Roman People and in the Senate). I will *not* be examining moral/immoral conduct of politicians outside of domestic political activity (e.g., within the *domus*, in military campaigns, or in provincial government), nor Roman attitudes toward the treatment of females, slaves, or foreigners who lived in their midst, or toward the treatment of the empire they had created, the non-Roman inhabitants of that empire, or Roman citizens living outside of Italy. Finally, as no one would claim that Roman amoralism was so complete that Roman political culture permitted politicians to do absolutely anything, I am not considering a blanket amoralism within domestic politics, but a *partial* amoralism — that is, a dispensation from some, but not all, contraventions of morality, not, for example, from rules against assassination or systemic bribery.

The specific question that I am raising is: What *attitude* did Roman citizens, politicians, and ordinary voters alike hold toward

---

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 56, 139.

morality within politics? That is, this discussion of Roman amorality will be limited not only in terms of the scope of moral standards that could have been waived, but also by confining itself to beliefs, to the exclusion of behavior. We know enough about what happened during the Roman Republic, especially during the Late Republic, to be sure that Roman politicians sometimes and perhaps often acted in ways that, by their own standards, were immoral. A finding that some Roman politicians sometimes committed immoral acts would be obvious and trivial, because, in any complex political system that endures for hundreds of years, some political leaders will commit an act or acts that violate standards of morality that are in force during their lifetimes. This book does not maintain that the Romans of the Republic acted morally, nor does it make a claim that they *strove* to act morally, but only that the extant ancient evidence from the Roman Republic fails to suggest that Romans exempted their politicians from adhering to morality.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, my thesis by no means constitutes a claim that the Romans actually acted nobly, only that they did not assume that, when it came to morality, a special exception should be carved out for politics. Thus the purpose of this book is not to make the Romans more sympathetic to us today by whitewashing their conduct, nor conversely to render their political system more congenial or familiar to us today by claiming that the Roman Republican politicians were in some way similar to modern politicians because of their peccadillos and "dirty tricks." Rather, my main goal is to show that no extant ancient evidence supports the belief that the Romans of the Republic embraced the attitude toward politics that I call amorality.

I have encountered an objection to this concept of amorality to the effect that a distinction must be made between amorality when it comes to electoral campaigns and other political operations, and amorality when it comes to larger political goals. I will engage with this distinction when I discuss Cicero's championing of a *concordia ordinum*,<sup>4</sup> the presentation of Roman politics by many twentieth-

---

<sup>3</sup> If Flower (2010) is right that we should think in terms of six Roman republics, then we should also consider potentially six political cultures. It is still my contention that we have no evidence that any of those political cultures accepted amorality.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 14.

century historians,<sup>5</sup> and the *Comm. Pet.*<sup>6</sup> For now, I will simply make the point that if anyone, ancient or modern, justifies political “dirty tricks” by the goal(s) that these questionable tactics are meant to help achieve, that person is making a moral argument, as the word “justifies” implies. For example, if a Roman politician justified his use of electoral corruption, improper use of electoral combinations (*sodalicia*), or insincere flattery in order to be elected consul, with the argument that the harm that these tactics did was outweighed by the good that he could achieve if he was elected, that position would be one that makes a moral claim, though quite possibly, of course, one that we think is false.

I have also encountered along the way many instances where my thesis has been misinterpreted, in a way that bears out the military maxim that, if anything can be misunderstood, it will be misunderstood. Particularly, although the central thesis of this book is narrow and specific, I have found that it is possible to misunderstand it in a much more expansive way, with the result that it appears to be wrong. Therefore, I have been, and will be throughout this book, at pains to specify exactly what I want to show, in contrast to what I am not trying to demonstrate, and by these distinctions to forestall various misapprehensions and resulting objections. This mode of argument should not be seen to be motivated by any defensive lack of confidence, but rather by a positive conviction that my use of the concept amoralism and my presentation of its absence in Roman Republican political culture can advance our understanding not just of that culture, but also of the portrayal of it in modern works of history.

### Examples of political cultures characterized by amoralism

In this book, I will examine passages from Roman texts that are generally interpreted to be, or could be interpreted to as, expressions of what I call an amoralist attitude toward politics that characterized the Roman Republic, and will argue instead that these passages, in fact, do not provide evidence for such a political culture. Since I know that my analysis may very well appear at first glance to define

---

<sup>5</sup> See below, pp. 77-78.

<sup>6</sup> See below, p. 149.

amoralism so narrowly that no passage could possibly provide evidence for its presence, I will begin with three examples from my own political culture, that of the United States, to show what relevant evidence of amorality would look like. I introduce these modern examples for this serious purpose, not merely to lighten my argument with humorous local color. Furthermore, I am not arguing that these U.S. examples provide a persuasive analogy about the similarities or differences between Romans and Americans.

On Wednesday, June 21, 1972, U.S. President Richard Nixon discussed with his advisors the arrest of five burglars at the office of the Democratic National Committee, which was located in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. This arrest had taken place four days before, on Saturday, June 17. Nixon’s analysis of likely public reaction, as recorded on tapes operating within the White House’s Oval Office, was as follows:

I think the country doesn’t give much of a shit about it. You see, everybody around here is all mortified by it. It’s a horrible thing to rebut. And the answer, of course, is that most people around the country probably think this is routine, that everybody’s trying to bug everybody else, it’s politics. Now, the purists probably won’t agree with that, but I don’t think they’re going to see a great uproar in the country about the Republicans’ committee trying to bug the Democratic headquarters. At least, that’s my view.<sup>7</sup>

“It’s politics.” This phrase expresses the attitude that I have defined as amorality, the attitude that, specifically within one sphere of life (in this case, the political sphere), an activity that is generally considered to be immoral (in this case, eavesdropping through the use of electronic listening devices or “bugs” placed within private property by surreptitious entry) is considered to be acceptable. While Nixon acknowledged that the revelation of this burglary had caused a great stir in Washington, he ascribed to U.S. voters outside of the national capital an acceptance of a political culture that was in his view, at least in part, amoral. Although Nixon’s overwhelming victory in the

---

<sup>7</sup> This conversation is transcribed in Dean (2014) 39. The original newspaper account of the Watergate break-in can be found in the *Washington Post*, June 18, 1972 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2002/05/31/AR200511001227.html>).

subsequent presidential election held in November 1972 seemed to have furnished powerful evidence that his characterization of U.S. political culture was accurate, the eventual outrage that forced him to the unparalleled step of resigning his presidential office suggests that, under some circumstances, the American voter did not accept moral violations as breezily as Nixon had assumed.

In the states of Louisiana and Illinois, there is a double standard that is widely accepted and even cherished, like a peculiar local accent, which further illustrates my definition of amoralism. The attitudes of both states can be seen in a surprisingly informative account of how presidential campaigns are actually run, written by Mary Matalin (from Illinois) and James Carville (from Louisiana), a seemingly odd married couple on the basis of their participation on opposite sides of the 1992 (George H.W.) Bush/Clinton campaign.<sup>8</sup> It is not surprising that these two authors would admit to a blithe acceptance of political shenanigans, because of the attitude to political corruption found in their home states. The attitude in Louisiana, at least in the past, can be illustrated with the slogan from a bumper sticker put out by supporters of its four-time governor, Edwin Edwards, in 1991, when he was running against white supremacist David Duke: "Vote for the Crook. It's Important."<sup>9</sup> This was after Edwards had been acquitted in a corruption trial in 1986, and before he was actually convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison for extortion in 2001.<sup>10</sup>

In Illinois, the tradition of political dirty tricks is remarkable (in the twenty-first century, both a governor of one party and his successor of the other party were convicted and sent to prison for acts committed in office, thanks to the indefatigable efforts of a federal prosecutor from outside the state), but even more noteworthy is the

---

<sup>8</sup> Matalin and Carville (1995).

<sup>9</sup> Riley and Winbush (1991).

<sup>10</sup> Jacinda LeJeune reflected this attitude when she said of Edwards, "we all knew he was going to steal. But he told us he was going to do it." Louisianans may now be less forgiving; C.B. Forgotston Jr. is quoted as saying, "I don't think we're back to the days when people don't want good government, they want good entertainment. It's just too expensive." *New York Times*, October 23, 2011 ([http://travel.nytimes.com/2011/10/24/us/politics/edwin-edwards-is-still-famous-but-louisiana-politics-has-moved-on.html?\\_r=0](http://travel.nytimes.com/2011/10/24/us/politics/edwin-edwards-is-still-famous-but-louisiana-politics-has-moved-on.html?_r=0)).

perverse pride that people in Illinois take in their political tradition.<sup>11</sup> And in Chicago specifically, politics is often referred to as a "contact sport," as in the following quote from the communications director for Barack Obama, then the U.S. Senator from Illinois and candidate for his party's nomination in the presidential election of 2008: "As Barack says, Chicago politics is a contact sport, and he understands how to play that. It's incumbent on us to demonstrate an ability to tangle."<sup>12</sup> One Chicago alderman in 1989, speaking in opposition to granting power to investigate aldermen to a newly created Office of the Inspector General, exclaimed, "Members of the City Council are not the only crooks in town."<sup>13</sup>

In Chicago, candidates for office legally and openly change their names to mislead the voters about the candidates' ethnicities. Illinois judges are elected by the voters, who must also vote on a regular basis to retain sitting judges. It is accepted political wisdom that voters in Chicago favor in judicial races candidates with Irish names, although there is no agreement as to exactly why this is the case.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, candidates who are not lucky enough to possess an Irish name go to court to have their name legally changed to one that is Hibernian enough to attract votes. Thus, Bonnie McGrath, in spite of possessing a passably Irish name acquired through marriage, became "Bonnie Fitzgerald McGrath" when she ran for circuit-court judge. "I appeared before the honorable Aaron Jaffe. He said, 'What is the reason for the change?' I said, 'Political reasons.' He laughed."<sup>15</sup> McGrath defended

---

<sup>11</sup> The head of the Better Government Association, which promotes reform in Illinois, wrote of "those who take a perverse pride in our state's fondness for bending rules until they break." Shaw (2015). For a fine description of this political culture in Illinois, see the chapter entitled "a Tradition of Corruption," pp. 13-31, in Brackett (2009), a study of former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in the *New York Observer*, March 26, 2007 ([http://bi.galegroup.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/global/article/GALE|A160929831/d633a6047ffb1851ca7c77314df83fbd?u=upitt\\_main](http://bi.galegroup.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/global/article/GALE|A160929831/d633a6047ffb1851ca7c77314df83fbd?u=upitt_main); accessed August 11, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in the *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 1989 ([http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1989-06-24/news/8902120167\\_1\\_subpoena-power-william-beavers-full-council](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1989-06-24/news/8902120167_1_subpoena-power-william-beavers-full-council)).

<sup>14</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 1988 ([http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1988-03-17/news/8803010300\\_1\\_fair-judge-assistant-state-irish](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1988-03-17/news/8803010300_1_fair-judge-assistant-state-irish)).

<sup>15</sup> *Chicago Reader*, February 26, 1998 (<http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-game-of-the-name-holy-cow-hes-gone/Content?oid=895655>).

her conduct in a letter to Chicago's major daily newspaper<sup>16</sup> and won the Republican primary, although in heavily Democratic Cook County she then lost the general election to her Democratic opponent, who also had an Irish name.<sup>17</sup> My emphasis here is not on the fact that politicians engage in this deceptive behavior, but that this name change is a public act, since it cannot be effected in private but must be done in a court of law. In ordinary life, people who change their names to deceive other people would attract scorn, but, in political life, a judge only laughs at this maneuver when performed by those who wish to join him on the bench, and the voters, instead of turning against a candidate for an office that ought to require a high degree of personal probity, accept this name-changing practice, or at least do not respond negatively to it.<sup>18</sup>

To take another example from the Chicago area, when incumbent U.S. Representative Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. ran for the nomination of his party (Democratic) in 2002 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District, he was challenged by three other candidates, one of whom, a retired truck driver, was listed as "Jesse L. Jackson."<sup>19</sup> This is an example of an established ploy in Chicago politics, to attempt to confuse voters and thereby split the vote for the sitting congressman, enabling another competitor to win. In such a case, it was obvious that it was not the other Jesse Jackson who had formed a wish to serve in Congress, but

---

<sup>16</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, January 26, 1998 ([http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1998-01-26/news/9801260042\\_1\\_judicial-candidates-judicial-election-process-voters](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1998-01-26/news/9801260042_1_judicial-candidates-judicial-election-process-voters)).

<sup>17</sup> P. 30, <http://www.cookcountyclerk.com/elections/results/Documents/March1998.pdf>; p. 12, <http://results.cookcountyclerk.com/electionresults/110398/1998NovemberCombinedSUMMARY.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Lately, some restriction has been placed on the practice. In 2007, a law went into effect that required candidates to list on the ballot old names under "formerly known as" if they had changed their name within the last three years. Sec. 7-10.2, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?DocName=001000050HArt.+7&ActID=170&ChapterID=3&SeqStart=307000000&SeqEnd=390000000>; P. 13, <http://www.elections.il.gov/Downloads/electioninformation/pdf/2013canguide.pdf>. Chicago's long-standing amoral political culture may be changing. The perception of delay in prosecuting a police officer who fatally shot a seventeen-year-old (and in releasing a video of the incident) has stirred widespread indignation that has damaged the standing of the mayor of Chicago, and has led to a stunning electoral defeat of the chief prosecutor for Cook County, in which Chicago is located. *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 2016 (<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/politics/ct-cook-county-states-attorney-anita-alvarez-kim-foxx-met-0316-20160315-story.html>).

<sup>19</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 2, 2002 ([http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2002-02-02/news/0202020268\\_1\\_jesse-l-jackson-eisenhower-high-school-robbins](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2002-02-02/news/0202020268_1_jesse-l-jackson-eisenhower-high-school-robbins)).



rather that one of Jackson's competitors (one Yvonne Christian-Williams), or her backers, had persuaded the retiree to get his name on the ballot. Again, my emphasis is not on the fact that someone resorted to deception for political advantage, but that the competitor or her backers who did so could be so easily identified, and yet thought that this stratagem would make it more likely for her to gain the nomination, rather than condemning her in the eyes of the voters as a duplicitous person.

These examples show that it is possible for a political culture to embrace (or at least accept as a fact of life) "dirty tricks" when it comes to campaigns for office or politics more generally, because some political cultures do allow at least some normal aspects of morality to be suspended. The question then follows: Was this the case in the time of the Roman Republic?

### Ancient evidence for amorality

In order to challenge the belief that Romans during that period generally accepted amorality in their politics, I now turn to the search for sources from the Roman Republic that could potentially be read as supporting such a contention. I must concede at the outset that the range of statements that could possibly substantiate Roman amorality is limited. A type of statement very likely to touch on Roman amorality would be one that castigates the Romans, or some Romans, for turning a blind eye to some outrage or moral failure committed by a politician; however, such a statement would, in fact, count against the belief that the Romans were amorality when it came to politics, since the author of the statement would be exhibiting a moral judgment in this condemnation of fellow Romans — a judgment that the author would expect to resonate with his readers.<sup>20</sup> In spite of these limitations, it is possible to imagine that some statements in our sources could be read as supporting the thesis that the Romans granted their politicians broad leeway to defy the morality that applied to everyone else. The obvious example would be the apparently explicit expressions of amorality in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*,<sup>21</sup> particularly the statement that a good person does one thing, a good candidate another (*Comm. Pet.* 45). As my discussion of these statements, however, will make clear, I do not believe that they should in fact be interpreted as furnishing evidence for Roman amorality.

As I do not wish to neglect any potentially relevant evidence, I will cast my net as widely as possible, including items that, it might be argued, do not pertain directly to the question. Therefore, the passages examined here will not necessarily share anything in common, other than that someone might read them as providing evidence that the political culture of the Roman Republic was amoral. I will consider almost entirely contemporary evidence (i.e., evidence dating from the Roman Republic), although imperial sources will not be totally excluded insofar as they might possibly transmit an

---

<sup>20</sup> See below, pp. 18-22.

<sup>21</sup> See below, pp. 88-92.

earlier tradition. As well as examining passages in ancient works that might seem to support Roman amorality, and showing why they should not be interpreted in this manner, I will also discuss passages that, in my view, point to a rejection of amorality, particularly in considering the philosophical and rhetorical literatures, which in fact often explicitly reject amorality.

My decision to include passages regarding the rejection of amorality first requires a justification. Let us suppose that I wished to refute the viewpoint that the Duke of X was the real author of the works of William Shakespeare. My main argument would be that, having examined everything I can that relates to the Duke of X, I found no evidence that convincingly demonstrates that he was the author of Shakespeare's works. I pay special attention to the evidence that some scholars have adduced in their effort to show that the Duke of X was the author, and present analysis that, in my view, shows that this evidence in fact fails to establish that link. At this point, I could conclude that there is no evidence that the Duke of X wrote the works of Shakespeare, and therefore that I have demonstrated to the satisfaction of reasonable scholars that there is no reason to believe that he did. However, let us suppose that, in the course of my research into the writings and life of the Duke of X, I have found evidence that positively weighs against the thesis that he might have written any of the works attributed to Shakespeare, such as statements from him that he finds the theater boring, statements by others that he was partly illiterate, or irrefutable evidence that he was on a ship in the South Pacific and had no contact with England during the entire time that, say, *Macbeth* was written and produced. Surely this evidence that the Duke of X did *not* write the works attributed to Shakespeare should be presented to readers, along with the dearth of evidence to the effect that he did write these works. Similarly, since my research convinces me that there is a large body of evidence that counters the proposition that the Romans held an amoralist view of their politics, this evidence should be presented. Admittedly, the value of this evidence is somewhat diminished by the fact that it emanates so overwhelmingly from the pen of one person, and for that reason it cannot be considered probative. That is, in and of itself, this evidence does not

necessarily *prove* that the Roman political culture was not amoralist, but it certainly adds weight in favor of that proposition.<sup>22</sup>

### Historical sources

In a letter to Atticus written in the year 60 B.C.E., Marcus Cicero criticizes Cato the Younger for having introduced a measure that would make equestrian jurors liable for taking bribes:

*Att. 2.1.8: Nam Catonem nostrum non tu amas plus quam ego; sed tamen ille optimo animo utens et summa fide nocet interdum rei publicae; dicit enim tamquam in Platonis πολιτεία, non tamquam in Romuli faece, sententiam. Quid verius quam in iudicium venire qui ob rem iudicandam pecuniam acceperit? Censuit hoc Cato et adsensit senatus: equites curiae bellum — non mihi, nam ego dissensi.*

For I like our friend Cato as much as you; but although he has the best intentions and the highest loyalty, now and then he harms the state. He delivers his opinion as if in Plato's *Republic* rather than in the dregs of Romulus. What could be more proper than that those people go to trial who have taken bribes as jurors? That was Cato's opinion, and the Senate agreed: the knights declare war on the Senate, though not on me, for I disagreed.<sup>23</sup>

Although Cicero admits that such a provision would be reasonable, he objects to it because it threatens to alienate the knights, and thus break apart the *concordia ordinum* that he has created.

In my view, this passage should not be interpreted as reflecting a belief that morality has to be thrown out of the window when dealing with real politics, but rather as an argument for a more subtle moral calculus than Cato can employ, since Cato as a Stoic holds that all

---

<sup>22</sup> See below, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Shackleton Bailey's translation, with modifications. Although Shackleton Bailey translates *Romuli faece* as "Romulus' cesspool," it is better translated as "in the dregs of Romulus," referring to the sediment that sinks to the bottom of a vat during the manufacture of wine (cf. Cic. *Att.* 1.16.11, *apud sordem urbis et faecem*; Cic. *Q. fr.* 2.5.3, *apud perditissimam illam atque infimam faecem populi*). Thus, it refers to a lower layer, in this case of Rome, rather than the whole, all of Rome. The reference is to the low-life people that Romulus was said to have allowed into Rome to boost its population (Liv. 1.8, Dion. Hal. 2.15.4, Florus 1.1.9, Plut. *Rom.* 9.3). See Wiseman (2009) 77. I wish to thank Mark Possanza for pointing out to me the historical reference to the policy of Romulus.

ethical mistakes are equal (*omnia peccata esse paria*) and that every misdeed is a serious crime (Cic. *Mur.* 61).<sup>24</sup> Cicero is proposing a calculus that weighs the justice of punishing bribe-taking equestrian jurors against the value of a united state. We are not operating up high in Plato's *Republic*, Cicero is saying, but down in the dregs of the wine vat.<sup>25</sup> Employing a similar calculus, and again contrary to the opinion of Cato, Cicero argues that we should grant the *publicani* their admittedly outrageous request to be allowed to lower their bid on Asian taxes, because the financial loss is worth the maintenance of harmony (*Att.* 1.17.9). This balancing of potential outcomes to determine which produces the morally best outcome overall embodies a procedure that intrinsically constitutes no less a moral judgment, whether it be a correct judgment or a flawed judgment, than Cato's moral absolutism, by which a course of action that is morally imperfect according to one criterion can never be justified, even if that course of action leads to a different outcome that some people would judge to be morally better overall.

Cicero made a similar argument when in 63 B.C.E. he defended Murena, the successful candidate for the consulate of 62 B.C.E., against a charge of *ambitus* initiated by Cato:

*Mur.* 70-71: *Homines tenues unum habent in nostrum ordinem aut promerendi aut referendi benefici locum, hanc in nostris petitionibus operam atque adsestationem. Neque enim fieri potest neque postulandum est a nobis aut ab equitibus Romanis ut suos necessarios candidatos adsectentur totos dies; a quibus si domus nostra celebratur, si interdum ad forum deducimur, si uno basilicae spatio honestamur, diligentur observari videmur et coli; tenuiorum amicorum et non occupatorum est ista adsiduitas, quorum copia bonis viris et beneficis deesse non solet. Noli igitur eripere hunc inferiori*

---

<sup>24</sup> It does not matter for my argument whether Cicero is accurately conveying either Stoic teaching or Cato's actual belief. Cicero puts this doctrine into the mouth of Cato elsewhere (*Fin.* 4.55), and it was commonly attributed to the Stoics (Diog. *Laert.* 7.120, Cic. *Parad.* 3.2.22, Cic. *Ac.* 2.133, and Hor. *S.* 1.3.96).

<sup>25</sup> Asmis (2001) 110 n. 6 also translates *faex* in this way, and citing this passage and Cic. *Mur.* 55-66, explains that Cicero is reprimanding Cato "for being too intransigent in his political dealings..." On the use of the phrase "Plato's *Republic*" for "unrealistic and utopian expectations," see Reydam-Schils (2005) 86-87.

*generi hominum fructum officii, Cato; sine eos qui omnia a nobis sperant habere ipsos quoque aliquid quod nobis tribuere possint. Si nihil erit praeter ipsorum suffragium, tenues, etsi suffragantur, nil valent gratia. Ipsi denique, ut solent loqui, non dicere pro nobis, non spondere, non vocare domum suam possunt. Atque haec a nobis petunt omnia neque ulla re alia quae a nobis consequuntur nisi opera sua compensari putant posse.*

The lowly people have this one opportunity in relation to our order of either deserving or paying back a favor, and that is this attention and escorting in our campaigns. For it cannot happen nor should it be expected of us [senators] or Roman knights that we escort for whole days the candidates who are our friends; if our house is crowded by these people, if sometimes they take us down to the forum, if we are honored by a turn around a public hall, we consider ourselves to be respected and courted in a thorough way; that constant attendance [that you have talked about] is of our lowlier friends who are not busy, and a supply of these is not usually absent from good and generous men. Do not therefore take this product of duty from the lower order of men, Cato, allow those who hope for all things from us to have themselves something too that they can offer us. If they have nothing but their vote, the lowly, though they vote, have no power in terms of favor. They then, as they are accustomed to say, cannot speak for us, cannot act as a guarantor for us, or invite us home. And so they seek all these things from us, and they think that the things that they get from us cannot be balanced in any other way than by their effort.

Cicero is not making an argument that, although it would normally be immoral and illegal for crowds to follow candidates around and attend banquets at their invitation, it should be allowed because these activities occur in a political context and therefore can escape the normal moral scrutiny. Cicero has already made a vigorous claim that Murena never violated the *ambitus* law that bears his (Cicero's) own name (67), as Murena's two other *patroni*, Crassus and Hortensius, had also already done (54). But as is his practice, Cicero marshals every possible argument for his client, and, having insisted that Murena was innocent of the charge, he also makes the case that

humble people need to have something to offer the powerful in exchange for what they obtain from the powerful, in keeping with the Roman idea of an exchange of favors. Their warm bodies, we might say today, is all they have to offer. Therefore, he argues, the throngs and banquets that marked Murena's campaign were not only permissible, but desirable because they supported social harmony. As with the issue of knights and judicial bribery, Cicero is arguing that the blinkers that Cato's Stoicism has put on him renders his moral reasoning deficient, since he makes moral judgments by measuring only one item against one moral standard, rather than, as Cicero claims to be doing, considering the whole situation and gauging what course of action produces the morally best result.<sup>26</sup> Of course, Cicero's critics, then as now, might have challenged Cicero's moral reasoning as defective in some way, and there were those who believed that only Cato acted consistently from pure motives,<sup>27</sup> but Cicero's point is still a moral kind of reasoning rather than an expression of amorality.

These three examples, Cicero's opposition to making *equites* liable to prosecution for judicial corruption, his support for the request of the *publicani* to be allowed to renegotiate their tax-collection contract, and his defense of Murena's campaign tactics, call to mind the distinction made before<sup>28</sup> between shady political tactics and a larger political goal. Cicero does indeed justify such tactics with the argument that to oppose them would undermine the *concordia ordinum*, which he sees as a bulwark of stability; that argument must be classified as moral, that is, as one that makes a moral claim. Therefore, these three examples do not counter my argument that no ancient evidence exists that supports an amoral political culture in the Roman Republic.

I will try to clarify the distinction that I am making between Cato's moral calculus (as described by Cicero) and Cicero with a hypothetical modern analogy. Let us suppose that three people are arguing about whether their country should go to war against another country. Person A says that the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" by itself

---

<sup>26</sup> See Nadig (1997) 85-94 on Cato and *ambitus*.

<sup>27</sup> Dio (37.57.3) makes this claim for Cato after the formation of the grand coalition between Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar in 60 B.C.E.

<sup>28</sup> See above, pp. 5-6.

decides the matter because warfare results in the taking of human life, which is always wrong, and therefore the proposed war would be wrong. Person B, while agreeing with Person A that it would be wrong for the country to take up arms in the war, balances a number of factors to make her case while making a moral case against going to war — such as the harm that the war would create, the good that it would accomplish if the right side won the war, and the propensity that it would create in the future for people to go to war — and determining that it would be morally wrong for the country to get involved in the war. Person C also argues against war but, being a “realist,” dismisses moral considerations entirely, and recommends that the country should stay out of the war solely because the war is not in its national interest.<sup>29</sup>

All three individuals are against entry into the war, but only Person C adopts an amoralist stance on the issue of war and peace. Person A is like Cato, believing that one rule can trump all other moral considerations. Person B, like Cicero, believes that a variety of factors need to be balanced in order to reach a sound moral conclusion. Her stance is just as founded on morality as Person A’s, although it requires a more complex process of moral decision-making. Person C, however, is like no one in the extant evidence from the Roman Republic when it comes to judging actions that relate to the *internal* politics of the Republic; to my knowledge, no Roman suggested that morality had no proper place in Roman politics.

Sallust’s works contain passages that might seem at first glance to adopt the viewpoint that the Romans had an amoral attitude toward politics, but closer reading of them supports an opposite point of view.<sup>30</sup> When he raises the growth of *partes* and *factiones* at Rome, Sallust laments:

---

<sup>29</sup> In this example, Person C is convinced that this recommendation is based on no moral considerations. Although the philosophical objection might be made that it is not possible to recommend a course of action without engaging with morality, from the point of view of characterizing a political culture it is enough to say that Person C believes that this recommendation has no moral basis. On “realism,” see below, p. 114.

<sup>30</sup> I treat Sallust as a contemporary source for Roman Republican politics because he was both an observer and participant, although he wrote his historical works after the Republic that he had once known had for the most part ceased to exist. To be sure, it would not have been obvious to everyone at the time when he wrote that Republican politics were never to return.



*Jug. 41.5: Namque coepere nobilitas dignitatem,  
populus libertatem in lubidinem vortere, sibi quisque  
ducere, trahere, rapere.*

For the nobility began to turn their rank to their own  
fancy, and the People their liberty, and each took,  
robbed, and plundered for himself.

*Ambitio* and *avaritia* seized the Roman mind, and, although the former is a *vitium propius virtutem* (“vice closer to virtue”) (*Cat.* 11.1), both corrupted Rome, the latter accompanied by *potentia* (*Jug.* 41.9; see also *Hist.* I fr. 11). As Ferrary remarks, Sallust’s attitude that the struggle for power in a corrupt Republic is not worth the effort is a forerunner of the choice that many Romans would make during the principate to give up political freedom in favor of a peace consistent with personal freedom.<sup>31</sup>

In his history of the war against Jugurtha, Sallust makes the charge that at Rome everything was for sale (*Romae omnia venalia*) into a *leitmotiv* (*Jug.* 8.1, 20.1, 28.1, 31.12, 31.25, 35.10).<sup>32</sup> The *profunda avaritia* that Jugurtha detects in the Romans was hardly accepted by them as a normal fact of life, as in 109 B.C.E. they established a special *quaestio* to try those in official positions who had accepted bribes from Jugurtha (*Jug.* 40.1). The jurors convicted a priest and four consulars (*Cic. Brut.* 128), who went into exile, and it is clear that Sallust regards their failings with contempt. Although he has C. Memmius (tr. pl. 111) say that the crimes of *peculatus* and *repetundae* had now been accepted as a matter of course, this constitutes more reliable evidence that Sallust decried the evils of Roman politics than that Memmius complacently accepted them, since Sallust clearly wants to put Memmius, and indeed the political culture of the late second century B.C.E., in a bad light. Since Sallust’s explanation suggests that he expects his readers to have the same negative reaction as he does, to the extent that it offers an insight into generally held beliefs about politics, it constitutes evidence against the amorality of political culture. In any case, these two crimes, which Memmius says have *not* occurred, are used as a rhetorical contrast to a

---

<sup>31</sup> Sal. *Jug.* 3.4; Ferrary (1982) 795.

<sup>32</sup> See also Liv. *Per.* 64, Florus 1.36.18, App. *Num.* 1, and Orosius 5.15.5.

far worse crime, a betrayal of the Senate's *auctoritas* and of the People's *imperium* to a foreign foe (*Jug.* 31.25).<sup>33</sup>

Sallust rends what he sees as the veil of hypocrisy from Roman politics in a similar way when characterizing politics after 70 B.C.E.:

*Cat.* 38.1-3: *Nam, postquam Cn. Pompeio et M. Crasso consulibus tribunicia potestas restituta est, homines adulescentes summam potestatem nacti, quibus aetas animusque ferox erat, coepere senatum criminando plebem exagitare, dein largiundo atque pollicitando magis incendere, ita ipsi clari potentesque fieri. Contra eos summa ope nitebatur pleraque nobilitas senatus specie pro sua magnitudine. Namque, uti paucis verum absolvam, post illa tempora quicumque rem publicam agitavere honestis nominibus, alii sicuti populi iura defenderent, pars quo senatus auctoritas maxuma foret, bonum publicum simulantes pro sua quisque potentia certabant.*

After the power of the tribunes had been restored when Pompey and Crassus were consuls [70 B.C.E.], and young men whose age and spirit was violent had obtained the highest power, they began to stir up the people by denouncing the Senate, and then to inflame them further with bribes and promises, and so they became famous and powerful. Most of the nobility opposed them with all their might, under the pretense of supporting senatorial power, but really for their own aggrandizement. For, to be brief, after these times whoever stirred up the state for honorable reasons, some as defenders of the People's rights, and others to strengthen the power of the Senate as much as possible, each person, while pretending to act in the public interest, fought on behalf of his own power.

Here again we see a contrast between what people say they are doing and what people do, voiced in an indignant manner:

*Cat.* 10.5: *Ambitio multos mortalis falsos fieri subegit, aliud clausum in pectore, aliud in lingua promptum habere, amicitias inimicitiasque non ex re, sed ex commodo aestumare; magisque voltum quam ingenium bonum habere.*

---

<sup>33</sup> Ramsey (2013) 240 n. 110 aptly notes a similar rhetorical device at *Sal. Cat.* 52. 6.

A desire for advancement has forced many mortals to become deceitful, to have one thing hidden in the heart and another thing ready on the tongue, and to assess friendships and enmities not on the basis of reality but of self-interest, and to consider appearance to be better than character.

Sallust goes on to write (11) that *ambitio* is morally neutral, and can be directed at good aims by good men, who follow the right path, as it is directed at bad aims by bad men, who lack *bonae artes* (“good methods”) and employ *dola* and *fallacia* (“tricks” and “falsehoods”); *avaritia* (“greed”), which came to crowd out *ambitio*, is, by contrast, inherently bad.<sup>34</sup>

There are three reasons why Sallust’s accusation of general hypocrisy, with both of the opposing sides directing their energies to their own benefit rather than the state’s, should not be interpreted as justifying or excusing an amoral attitude. First, Sallust explicitly dates this attitude to after the destruction of Carthage. It did not constitute the Roman norm but rather a departure from a previous virtuous outlook, and it does not matter for our purposes whether Sallust has selected the correct chronological turning point (see Diod. Sic. 34.33.3-5).<sup>35</sup> Second, the attitude he expresses is indignation rather than acceptance (*Jug.* 4.9): *dum me civitatis morum piget taedetque* (“as the ways of the state irk and make me sick”). Sallust was certainly no amoralist, and he makes it clear that he is writing from the point of view of someone who had previously striven for success (and had been successful) in Republican politics but, at the time of his writing (after the assassination of Caesar), eschewed politics in favor of history (*Cat.* 3.3-5, *Jug.* 4.3).<sup>36</sup> Lastly, both of these passages speak of pretense and hiding one’s true motives; the need for hypocrisy to mask crass self-interest implies that patent self-interest would not have been accepted by the public, and therefore these passages count against Roman amorality as a widespread phenomenon. Sallust’s sentiment is not an acceptance of hypocrisy as natural and normal in politics, but is rather a condemnation of self-interest hypocritically veiled as the public

---

<sup>34</sup> Robb (2010) 168-70 discusses Sallust’s general statements on the causes of discord in the Late Republic.

<sup>35</sup> Lintott (1972) 628.

<sup>36</sup> Earl (1961) 9, Syme (1964) 43.

good. In an amoral culture, politicians would have no need for hypocrisy.

Sallust puts forward a moral standard for politics in his *Histories* as well, where he has C. Aurelius Cotta (cos. 75) tell the Roman People that, while he has been very ambitious (*avidissimus privatae gratiae*), he has not applied his eloquence and talent to evil-doing (2.47.4: *...neque ego callidam facundiam neque ingenium ad male faciendum exercui...*). Thus, although the *Comm. Pet.* employs Cotta as an exemplar of the sly tactics that he propounds (47), Sallust has Cotta defensively deny that his ambition leads him in that direction.<sup>37</sup>

A passage in Dio (33 [108.2]) illustrates the way in which the exchange of favors interacted with morality. Although his history dates from the early third century C.E., it may have roots in contemporary or near-contemporary sources, and therefore it deserves to be considered within this chapter. Dio says that Sulla, after his return from Greece in 82 B.C.E., turned to people through whom he could rule who were neither of good breeding nor good reputation. Sulla, writes Dio, preferred to deal with bad people who were grateful for any favors received from him and who took no credit away from Sulla for what they had done on his behalf, unlike good people, who expected to be rewarded for following Sulla's wishes and considered any boon they received from Sulla as their due. According to Dio's account, good men as well as bad expected to receive rewards from Sulla in return for their political loyalty. Like Sallust, Dio condemns the behavior that he describes; it is clear that Dio is portraying Sulla in a negative light for his new preference for bad men as his followers over good men. The reason Dio provides for why Sulla came to rely on bad men was not because more competent men would never have done his (Sulla's) bidding, but rather that they would pick and choose what they would or would not do, chiding him for any improper requests, *and* they would demand to be rewarded in exchange for anything they did for him, considering any rewards they received as owed to them and taking the credit for what they had done. Moreover, when we look at the attitude that Dio ascribes to others, we see

---

<sup>37</sup> From my point of view (Alexander [2009a] 53-57), this portrayal of Cotta provides an important clue that the *Comm. Pet.* should be interpreted as having been written tongue-in-cheek.

conventional morality at work. If we look at the conduct of good men who might have followed Sulla, we see that Dio's point is that good men believed they had both an obligation and the power to defy Sulla if he commanded them to engage in evildoing, and they would expect Sulla to reciprocate for any benefits that (from their point of view) they had conferred upon Sulla. In Dio's account, Sulla wrongly preferred slavish followers who were willing to commit evil acts to moral followers who regarded themselves as independent moral actors.

Another kind of argument that could potentially be made to support the proposition that Romans were willing to suspend normal aspects of morality in the political environment might be based on statutes, specifically on the succession of laws against bribery and other kinds of electoral misconduct during the Roman Republic. For one could argue that the succession of about a dozen such laws or other kinds of enactments, dating from a law in 358 B.C.E. to Pompey's law of 52 B.C.E. or later, reveals an inability to regulate elections and therefore a lack of real interest in controlling the electoral process.<sup>38</sup> Such an argument would therefore attempt to extract social values from legal provisions. In particular, it could be argued that the slow development of legislation against campaign abuses reveals an uncertainty as to whether electoral bribery and related activities are serious crimes. Similarly, it could be argued that, whereas most major criminal laws imposed the harsh capital penalty (even if this amounted in fact only to exile), the *ambitus* laws threatened much less draconian punishments with successive statutes only gradually increasing in severity over the years (such as disqualification from office-holding for ten years to perpetual disqualification, and ten-year exile possibly to permanent exile, and only later statutes punishing agents of candidates in addition to the candidates themselves), thus signifying a different attitude towards crimes in the electoral sphere.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Tacitus expresses the principle that an abundance of laws can testify to their ineffectiveness with the phrase *corruptissima re publica plurimae leges* (*Ann.* 3.27.5). See Gildenhard (2011) 170.

<sup>39</sup> On *ambitus* legislation see Linderski (1985), Cloud (1994) 515-17, Nadig (1997) 117-20, Ferrary (2001), and Alexander (2002) 119-20.

While it is fair to detect a general inability to control election tactics and some uncertainty about how severely campaign violations should be punished, it would be wrong to conclude from this that Romans in general were half-hearted in their attempts to deter these crimes.<sup>40</sup> In fact, Polybius claims that the Romans were particularly scandalized by political bribery (6.56).<sup>41</sup> There is an inherent tension between the right of citizens to select the government that they want, and the right of the government to regulate the citizens in that process.<sup>42</sup> While it is quite possible that those individuals who had the most influence in passing legislation must have had mixed feelings about restricting a political process whereby they had acquired their own status and influence, as we see in a reflection of Cicero about elections put in the mouth of Crassus (cos. 95), the model orator,<sup>43</sup> most influential Romans also had a real desire to maintain a level playing field in which every high-born person got his turn at office, and to prevent those of their number who won enormous glory and money in Rome's successful wars from getting an unfair advantage over their more plodding peers. Moreover, Cicero in *De legibus* (*Laws*) provides a justification for violations of campaign laws being treated differently from crimes of violence and greed, in terms of the punishment fitting the crime: whereas violence is punished by loss of *caput* and greed by a financial penalty, excessive desire for office is punished with disgrace.<sup>44</sup> Finally, bribery was not the only form of

---

<sup>40</sup> On the effectiveness of *ambitus* statutes, see Nadig (1997) 129.

<sup>41</sup> I am grateful to Prof. Guido Clemente for having shared with me an article on the censors and the Senate, and on Roman *mores* and the law (*Athenaeum*, 2016). Clemente shows that, through the censorship, senators were made subject to morality in a concrete and enforceable way.

<sup>42</sup> This is a tension that U.S. law also has difficulty resolving, as the controversial Citizens United ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court shows. *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 130 S. Ct. 876 (2010).

<sup>43</sup> Cic. *de Orat.* 1.112: *Equidem cum peterem magistratum, solebam in prensando dimittere a me Scaevolam, cum ita ei dicerem, me velle esse ineptum, id erat, petere blandius, quod nisi inepte fieret, bene non posset fieri...* ("Indeed, when I ran for office, I was accustomed to send Scaevola away from me when I was pressing the flesh, since I said to him that I wanted to be a fool, that is, to campaign in a flattering way, which could not be done well unless one made a fool of oneself..."). See Tatum (2007) 114.

<sup>44</sup> Cic. *Leg.* 3.46: *...ut in suo vitio quisque plectatur, vis capite, avaritia multa, honoris cupiditas ignominia sanciantur* ("...so that each person is punished in terms of his failing, violence is sanctioned with loss of civic status, greed with a fine, and lust for office with loss of good name").

electoral abuse that Roman statutes attempted to deter, as the *lex Licinia de sodaliciis* constitutes an example of a Roman effort to curb electoral malpractices. Cicero's complaint that the prosecutor of Plancius under the *lex Licinia de sodaliciis* was more appropriate to a prosecution *de ambitu* than *de sodaliciis* suggests that these were two separate crimes, and that the statute under which Cicero's client was being prosecuted had a different target than an *ambitus* law (Cic. *Planc.* 47).<sup>45</sup>

To ensure that I am considering any passage that might be interpreted as supporting the presence of Roman amorality, the list below includes other possible examples of a supposed "anything goes" attitude:

1. Cicero was embarrassed in 65 B.C.E. because Atticus' uncle, Caecilius, was suing Caninius Satyrus (who was closely allied to L. Domitius Ahenobarbus [cos. 54], a key supporter of Cicero), and Caecilius wanted Cicero to appear for him. Cicero makes the point to Atticus that the plaintiff has a group of powerful creditors on his side and does not need Cicero's help (*Att.* 1.1.3-4).<sup>46</sup> Since the plaintiff does not require his help, Cicero believes that the plaintiff ought to accept his demurrals on the grounds that he (Cicero) cannot afford to alienate a key political supporter. Although Caecilius is not persuaded by this argument, Cicero cannot be fairly accused of committing an act of injustice by leaving an innocent man to suffer an unjust outcome in a trial, because, he believes, the plaintiff has the resources to make his case adequately without Cicero's help.
2. In 65 B.C.E., Cicero was apparently willing to defend Catiline (*Att.* 1.2.1), who, if acquitted, Cicero expected to be a valuable ally in his campaign for the consulate.<sup>47</sup> The fact that Cicero was willing to defend a client whom he may have had some reason to believe was guilty, and expresses this willingness in a letter to a friend, does

---

<sup>45</sup> I have suggested that at least one type of offense targeted by the *lex Licinia de sodaliciis* was the use of *coitiones* between candidates to subvert the electoral process (Alexander [2009b] 344-45). These *coitiones* would not necessarily involve the exchange of money. See Venturini (1984) 795.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander (1990) trial #208.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander (1990) trial #212.

not suggest a casual or dismissive attitude toward morality; rather, it suggests that Cicero was ready to fulfil vigorously the duty of an advocate as he conceived it.<sup>48</sup> Since there is no indication that Cicero at this time thought that Catiline was a scoundrel, and there is some evidence (albeit from a self-serving passage in a forensic oration) that he did not (Cic. *Cael.* 14), this is not a case of choosing expediency over justice.

3. Cicero chides Antonius for not repaying him for the good turns he (Cicero) has done for his colleague in the consulate of 63 B.C.E. (*Fam.* 5.5.2). This passage with its *quid pro quo* logic does not imply a lack of political morality on Cicero's part, but rather illustrates the important role that gratitude played in Roman political morality.
4. In his letter to his brother Quintus advising him on governing Asia (end of 60 or beginning of 59 B.C.E.), Marcus Cicero tells him to avoid excessive scrupulousness with regard to the conduct of those who are assisting him in the administration of Asia (*Q. fr.* 1.1.11):  
*...cum hi mores tantum iam ad nimiam lenitatem et ad ambitionem incubuerint...* ("...since current ways have inclined so much toward excessive mildness and corruption..."). Cicero argues that, if leniency is admired in magistrates at Rome, it will be all the more admired in provincial governors, who have almost no checks on their power:

*Q. fr.* 1.1.22: *Quod si haec lenitas grata Romae est, ubi tanta adrogantia est, tam immoderata libertas, tam infinita hominum licentia, denique tot magistratus, tot auxilia, tanta vis <populi>, tanta senatus auctoritas, quam iucunda tandem praetoris comitas in Asia potest esse! in qua tanta multitudo civium, tanta sociorum, tot urbes, tot civitates unius hominis nutum intuentur, ubi nullum auxilium est, nulla conquestio, nullus senatus, nulla contio.*

But if this mildness is appreciated at Rome, where there is such great boldness, such uncontrolled liberty, such boundless wantonness of men, and then so many offices, so many remedies, such great power of the People, such great prestige of the Senate, how

---

<sup>48</sup> Cic. *Off.* 2.51; Frier (1985) 131-33, Crook (1995) 139.



agreeable can the considerateness of the praetor in Asia be! Here such a mass of citizens and of allies, so many cities, so many states watch the nod of one man, in a place where there is no intercession, no appeal, no senate, no assembly.

While it is true that Cicero is counseling a lenient moral attitude, he is doing so not because he believes that this is typical of Roman political culture, but because he believes that Roman political culture has been too weakened at this time for any one person to hold back the tide. It is also noteworthy that this passage deals not with political life at Rome, involving solely Roman citizens, but with the process of governing the inhabitants of a province, who were, of course, primarily non-Roman. Moreover, in the same letter, he advises strongly against leniency when it comes either to the giving or the taking of bribes (1.1.13). Both the logic of giving detailed advice and the particular advice given by Cicero suggest not an “anything goes” attitude, but rather that the governor must walk a fine line between leniency and severity.

5. Cicero writes in 54 B.C.E that he is willing to make use of the *potentium benevolentia* (“good-will of powerful men”), specifically Caesar’s (*Fam.* 1.9.21). However, lest this statement should be adduced as evidence that Cicero admits to having sold his political soul, he says that he expresses views that are consistent with both his own welfare and the welfare of the state.<sup>49</sup>
6. Cicero gloats over his successful prosecution in the late 50s B.C.E. of T. Munatius Plancus Bursa, whom he claims to have hated more than Clodius (*Fam.* 7.2.2-3).<sup>50</sup> Clearly Cicero believed that *inimicitia* morally justified this level of hatred under certain circumstances, especially what he perceives as Bursa’s ingratitude to his erstwhile defender. He thereby expresses an element of his political morality, rather than departing from morality.
7. Caelius complains in 50 B.C.E. of the ingratitude shown to him by Appius Claudius Pulcher (cos. 54), who turned on Caelius and

---

<sup>49</sup> *Fam.* 1.9.21: ...*facile patior ea me de re publica sentire ac dicere quae maxime cum meis tum etiam rei publicae rationibus putem conducere* (“...I easily allow myself to believe and say those things about the state that I think are most conducive both to my interests and the state’s interests”).

<sup>50</sup> Alexander (1990) trial #327.

arranged for him to be prosecuted under the *lex Scantinia* after Caelius had assisted him when he (Appius) was being prosecuted earlier that year (Cael. *apud* Cic. *Fam.* 8.6.1).<sup>51</sup> Although this betrayal might be used as evidence that Roman politicians acted immorally, it counts against the notion that the Romans had no expectation of moral conduct from politicians; from Caelius' point of view, this is an outrageous violation of the Roman code of political morality regarding gratitude.

8. Caelius urges Cicero in April of 49 B.C.E. to abandon any opposition to Caesar for the sake of himself and his family, for, he writes, Caesar is intent on severity to his enemies (Cael. *apud* Cic. *Att.* 10.9A.2): *Vide ne, dum pudet te parum optimate esse, parum diligenter quid optimum sit eligas* ("Don't be so much ashamed of failing the 'right' side as to think too little about making the right choice").<sup>52</sup> This advice is certainly less high-minded than Cicero's moralizing as he waivers between Caesar, Pompey, and neutrality, and obsesses about service to the commonwealth (Cic. *Att.* 8.11.2, 9.4.2). However, it would be hypercritical to suggest that advice to give more weight to one's own interests than the state's is an example of the Romans' cavalier attitude toward morality, given that a civil war had begun during which the force of arms rather than political institutions and the law reigned supreme, and thus the consequence of disregard for self could be not the loss of an election, but the loss of life.

At this point, readers may be wondering why what would seem to be the most telling body of historical evidence for Roman amoralism has not been analyzed in any detail, namely the *Commentariolum Petitionis*. Since in my view the premise of Roman political amoralism has constituted a key component in the outlook of some of the greatest Roman historians of the twentieth century — a premise apparently supported by the *Comm. Pet.* —, I will deal with that source when I

---

<sup>51</sup> Alexander (1990) trial #s 344, 345, 348.

<sup>52</sup> Translation by Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus*, vol. 4, p. 261.

discuss the impact of belief in Roman amorality on the way those historians wrote about Roman political history.<sup>53</sup>

### Philosophical and rhetorical treatises

Another possible Republic-era source for the idea that politicians receive a dispensation from normal morality is the Ciceronian corpus of Roman philosophical works, in which I am including his works on rhetoric that contain a strong philosophical component. It might be objected that these works should be left out of consideration as being “just” philosophy, in effect technical treatises originating in (or translations from) a Greek tradition that were imbued with a moral approach to the extent that they were divorced from (Roman or even Greek) reality. Certainly, as Baraz shows, philosophy was “far from an easy sell” to Cicero’s contemporaries.<sup>54</sup> If that objection were valid, then the divorce of philosophy from real life would imply that Cicero’s philosophical works should automatically be excluded as providing any indication about Roman attitudes toward political morality, and thus could not provide support for the presence of amorality in Roman political culture.

However, the main points made by Cicero in his philosophical works deal directly with Roman political culture, and while many Roman historians mine these works for matters of detail such as historical exempla and the workings of the Roman constitution (as mirrored in Cicero’s *De re publica* [*Republic*]), nevertheless they often fail to take seriously his messages about political behavior. Modern scholarship in ancient philosophy, on the other hand, encourages us to view Cicero’s philosophical works as situated in, and arising from, his experiences. This approach thus opens up the possibility that these works might provide evidence as to whether Cicero and/or other Romans embraced amorality in the political context.

---

<sup>53</sup> See below, pp. 84-95.

<sup>54</sup> Baraz (2012) 3. Alston (2015) p. x conveys a dismissive attitude toward philosophy as a source for Roman thinking when he urges us to think afresh about Roman politics and society, “starting not from the speeches and philosophical discourses of Cicero and his friends.” Since he urges us to see politics from the point of view of the soldier and the urban and rural poor man, the implication is that Cicero and his friends express a too narrowly elite point of view.

Since this chapter attempts to give amoralism every possible opportunity to find support in some ancient evidence, it will survey the philosophical and rhetorical works of the Republic, and of course that category is almost exactly the same as Cicero's works on philosophy and rhetoric, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* being the one exception, as a work not written by Cicero. The willingness of philosophical scholarship to take Cicero's philosophical treatises as based on his own experience opens up the possibility that these works might provide evidence that Cicero and/or other Romans embraced amoralism in the political context.<sup>55</sup> One does not have to assume that Cicero's philosophical works influenced Roman political practice to think that those writings may reflect his own political experience; as Corbeill writes:

One can hardly expect prescriptive works such as *On Moral Duties* to have much influence on the reality of the forum. But the converse is not true: Cicero's philosophical notions do not arise in a political vacuum.<sup>56</sup>

Long writes of the relationship in the *De officiis* (*On Obligations*) between Stoicism and Cicero's own views and concerns:

Stoicism gave him [Cicero] the concepts to ground *officia* in precepts systematically deduced from theory about the excellences natural to civic life. But Cicero applied that theory to his contemporaries and himself. The result was a work which uses Greek philosophy for purposes that are probably unique in their complexity and urgency — a combination of political and ethical theory, paternalism, self-apologia, advice

---

<sup>55</sup> On the close relationship between philosophy and contemporary politics, for example, Steel (2005) 137 writes, "The political treatises themselves confirm the view that Cicero sees their composition as an aspect of, and not a substitute for, political activity." Long (1995) 240 concludes that, in the *De officiis*, Cicero attempted to show that improper lusts for wealth and for money had ruined the Republic. Gotter (1996) grounds Cicero's philosophical concept of *amicitia* in Roman social practice. Baraz (2012) 216 approvingly summarizes Long (1995) as showing that "Cicero uses the tools of Greek philosophy to lend stability to Roman ideology...." Brunt (2013a) tracks the relationship between the teachings of Panaetius' and other Stoic works with Roman social conventions, such as personal care and hygiene, clothing, houses and their furnishings, and social intercourse. On what Cicero himself wrote about the role of experience in political philosophy, see below, pp. 33-34.

<sup>56</sup> Corbeill (1996) 4.

to statesmen, reform of ideology, conservative propaganda, and patriotism.<sup>57</sup>

Even if this viewpoint did not persuade us that there was a connection between Cicero's philosophical works and the life and politics of his time, it would be necessary to survey those works for evidence of amorality, particularly those that deal directly with the state and political life, as well as other relevant works of philosophy and the more philosophical of works on rhetoric.

The result of this search can be summarized very briefly: none of Cicero's philosophical and rhetorical treatises, and nothing in what we know about the rest of the philosophy of the time and related intellectual endeavors, reveal any evidence of amorality. It would perhaps be sufficient at this point simply to move away from philosophy, but given that the philosophical evidence points dramatically in the opposite direction, I believe that it is appropriate to show how Roman philosophy not only failed to espouse amorality, but positively rejected it.<sup>58</sup>

This survey will first look very briefly at the Greek philosophic schools that constituted the background to Roman philosophy, and then move to the Roman Republican works of political philosophy (which are almost entirely from the pen of Cicero), to see whether they contain any expressions of the idea that normal morality does not apply to politicians, since one might expect to find in them some expression of the sort of amorality that could be applied to the political sphere, if that point of view was prevalent. It will also investigate whether the sophistic tradition allows at least a basis for the kind of amoral thinking that is the object of our search, and whether sophistry offered an entry point for amorality into Roman thought, because, even though the sophists did not constitute a philosophic movement, or indeed a unified movement of any kind, they nevertheless possessed the skills to persuade others of a variety of beliefs regarding politics, one of which might conceivably have been amorality.

It should be reiterated that the term "morality" is being used here to cover ethics as based on any foundation, whether it be a set of

---

<sup>57</sup> Long (1995) 240.

<sup>58</sup> See above, pp. 13-14.

ethical rules, a set of principles that are broader than rules, the Reason that guides the conduct of the Stoic sage, *mos maiorum*, or simply conduct that emanates from good character. It is necessary to add this caveat because it is debated whether Stoicism, which clearly was a very influential philosophic school for the Romans, maintained throughout its history a consistent account of morality or not, or whether a distinction should be made between early Stoicism and late Stoicism,<sup>59</sup> and whether Cicero's ethical doctrine embraced rules and/or principles, or whether he was inclined to particularism, which challenged a rules-based ethics.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, for the purposes of this discussion, it does not matter whether that morality encompasses attempts at ethical reasoning that are philosophically sound or not. What is in question is morality as it was formulated by the Romans, and quite possibly formulated differently by different Romans, not what is acceptable to us today. Finally, to the extent that any kind of argument from necessity caused by special circumstances is allowed to carve out an exception to normal virtuous conduct, a distinction will be drawn between, on the one hand, some kind of refinement introduced to deal with a particular issue in ethical reasoning, and, on the other, a suspension of ethical reasoning until circumstances return in which ethical reasoning is appropriate.<sup>61</sup>

Greek philosophy, both classical and Hellenistic, did not provide fertile ground for amoralism. As Sellars remarks, Greek philosophers were mostly "eudaimonists," that is, they thought that the goal of life was to live well, where "well" had an ethical dimension.<sup>62</sup> Almost all of the major Greek philosophic traditions embraced the ideal of the citizen and the ruler who behave morally within their state: the Academy of Plato (with Socrates either included in it or treated separately), the Aristotelian Peripatetics, the Stoics, and even the Cynics, who urged good citizenship within the city of the world, though their relationship to the actual *poleis* in which they resided was limited to physical occupation of public space. Of course, how "good

---

<sup>59</sup> Mitsis (1994), Vander Waerdt (1994).

<sup>60</sup> Woolf (2007).

<sup>61</sup> See Appendix Two.

<sup>62</sup> Sellars (2006) 123: "The Stoics, like the vast majority of ancient philosophers, are 'eudaimonists'."

citizenship” and *eudaimonia* were defined, and how many people could attain an acceptable moral level, were handled differently by different schools.

In spite of their disputes, the similarities between these schools were at least as great as their differences. All of them posited some kind of inner harmony and stability as a self-evident goal of a good person, and public participation, both as ruled and ruler, was justified only insofar as it was consistent with this personal integrity.<sup>63</sup> In a passage approvingly cited by Cicero (*Off.* 1.87), Plato compares politics devoid of philosophy to a struggle between sailors over who is to control the helm (*Resp.* 488 1-b).<sup>64</sup> Even for the Epicureans, who were the most alienated from the life of the *polis* and certainly from office-holding, with *lathe biôsas* (“live unnoticed”) as a central maxim, a stable state was justified in the name of personal security.<sup>65</sup>

Given the intellectual background of Greek philosophy, it is not surprising that the many philosophical works of Cicero fail to support any notion that politicians were exempt from normal morality (whether expressed as rules, principles, Stoic Reason, *mos maiorum*, or attributes of a virtuous person), and in fact incline in the opposite direction of insisting that anyone acting in a civic capacity exhibit a high standard of morality.

On the one hand, the philosophical works of Cicero reflect his own experience in, and understanding of, the political actual realm more than is typical of Greek philosophical works.<sup>66</sup> Practical experience is

---

<sup>63</sup> Moles (2000) 423-32.

<sup>64</sup> Dyck (1996) 222-23 points out that, whereas Plato employs the comparison to recommend monarchy over democracy, Cicero uses it to decry political squabbling — presumably among members of the Roman oligarchy.

<sup>65</sup> Schofield (2000) 437. McConnell (2012) 101 emphasizes the traditional Epicurean support for political stability and disapproval of civil strife: “It is often overlooked that the Epicureans were very community-conscious despite advocating abstention from positions of political authority and responsibility.” In support of this position, he cites (pp. 105-106) Torquatus’ remarks in the *De finibus*.

<sup>66</sup> Gabba (1979) 119 describes the *De officiis* as “la ricapitolazione del suo credo politico” (“the recapitulation of his political credo”). Of that work of Cicero, Ferrary (1982) 791 writes: “Nella sua ultima opera filosofica destinata alla rigenerazione della classe dirigente, Cicerone riprende e fa proprio il pensiero del filosofo stoico amico de Scipione Emiliano e ne riafferma così l’attualità: per quanto tutto impregnato di polemica contro la dittatura cesariana, il *De officiis* è anche un atto di fede in una continuità ritrovata” (“In his last philosophic work, which was intended for the regeneration of the ruling class, Cicero takes up again and makes his own the thought of the Stoic philosopher

necessary for political wisdom (Cic. *Rep.* 1.10-12 Ziegler = 1.10-12 Powell).<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, Cicero insists on very high moral standards for anyone involved in government, whether citizen or office-holder. Cicero's *De officiis*, written in late 44 B.C.E. as advice to his son, provides his central treatment of this subject. The work is devoted to understanding the relationship between what is honorable (*honestas* or *honestum*, to *kalon* in Greek) and what is beneficial (*utile*, to *sumpheron* in Greek). The fact that one of the main issues discussed by Cicero is whether *honestum* is the *highest* good, as the Peripatetics argued, or the *only* good, as the Stoics maintained, makes it clear that Cicero is not likely to use this debate to justify moral laxness. Indeed, he takes the position that one should avoid wrongdoing even if by some magical device one could be sure of evading detection, and Cicero has no patience with those who make what he regards as a quibble rather than a sound philosophical objection, namely that no such device exists (3.37-39). Overall, and not surprisingly given Cicero's conservative outlook, Cicero expresses the *officia* of magistrates and private citizens in such a way that their behavior is consistent with tranquil good government:

1.124: *Est igitur proprium munus magistratus intellegere se gerere personam civitatis debereque eius dignitatem et decus sustinere, servare leges, iura describere, ea fidei suae commissa meminisse. Privatum autem oportet aequo et pari cum civibus iure vivere neque submissum et abiectum neque se efferentem, tum in republica ea velle quae tranquilla et honesta sint; talem enim solemus et sentire bonum civem et dicere.*

It is therefore the particular function of a magistrate to understand that he personifies the state and should uphold its honor and glory, preserve its laws, render justice, and remember that these functions have been entrusted to his trust. The private citizen should live with his fellow citizens on the basis of fairness and equality, neither groveling or subservient, nor exaggerating his own importance, and moreover in

---

friend of Scipio Aemilianus, and reaffirms in this way its topicality; however much it is all filled with polemic against the Caesarian dictatorship, the *De officiis* is also an act of faith in a rediscovered continuum").

<sup>67</sup> Atkins (2013) 28-29.



politics want those things that are peaceful and honorable; for we generally regard and call such a person a good citizen.

Those who possess a talent for governing should take on public offices; only in this way can the state be best ruled and the greatness of spirit be displayed (1.72). While wisdom (*sapientia*) is the greatest virtue, the greatest duty (*officium*) is drawn from social relationships (*communitas*) (1.153).<sup>68</sup>

In this work, Cicero does refer to ethical limitations on the candidate for office, and he does so in such a way as to imply that they are generally accepted. This happens in the context of his discussion of the concept of a just war, and he makes the distinction between wars that are fought for survival, such as against the Celtiberi and the Cimbri, and those that are fought to expand the empire, such as wars against some of Rome's neighbors within Italy (e.g., the Latins, Sabines, and Samnites), against Pyrrhus, and even against Carthage (though, perhaps, not including the Hannibalic War). The former kind of war must be fought to the bitter end, whereas the latter should be fought less harshly (*minus acerbe*, 1.38; cf. 1.35, where Cicero notes that many of Rome's defeated Italian enemies were granted Roman citizenship). In order to support this distinction, he compares it with a distinction within the civilian realm, between someone fighting for his existence, which can be best interpreted as the defendant fighting against a prosecution, and the candidate trying to defeat a competitor for office:

1.38: *Ut enim cum cive aliter contendimus si est inimicus, aliter si competitor (cum altero certamen honoris et dignitatis est, cum altero capitis et famae)....*

For as when we fight with a citizen in one way if he is an enemy, in another way a rival candidate (with the latter is a struggle for office and renown, with the former a struggle for life and reputation)....

This comparison counts against the "anything goes" (or, more correctly, "almost anything goes")<sup>69</sup> approach to election campaigns. Moreover, the implication of making elections and prosecutions the

---

<sup>68</sup> Brunt (2013b) 201-203.

<sup>69</sup> See above, p. 4.

comparanda for war is that the reader can be expected to accept the distinction being made in the civil sphere. Cicero later recommends what we today would call “civility” toward our enemies (*inimici*), and says that we should avoid getting angry with those who importune the politician with unreasonable requests, while still showing sternness when necessary for the sake of the state (1.88).

It should be noted that Cicero posits two possible approaches to those asking for favors, namely either a mild response or anger, not the complaisant willingness to say “yes” that is apparently recommended in the *Comm. Pet.* (45-46).<sup>70</sup> Also, it should be conceded that Cicero implies that there are those who offer contrary advice to his on the subject of civility:

*Off.* 1.88: *Nec vero audiendi qui graviter inimicis irascendum putabunt idque magnanimi et fortis viri esse censebunt...*

Nor should we listen to those who think we should get very angry with personal enemies and consider that to be characteristic of a brave, strong man...

Although it is true that Cicero’s phrasing implies that some Romans do recommend a different code of conduct than the one recommended by him, it should be noted that even these people recommend this uncompromising behavior toward *inimici*, not toward *competitores*, to recall the distinction made at *De officiis* 1.38.

Much of the second book of *De officiis* is devoted to the concept of *gloria*, about which Cicero had already written a work in the summer of 44 B.C.E.,<sup>71</sup> although he did not want it to be widely circulated, presumably because followers of Caesar such as Antony and maybe also Octavian might have taken offense at it.<sup>72</sup> Cicero implies some connection between his discussion of the concept in the *De officiis* and his previous *De gloria*.<sup>73</sup> The subject had been introduced already in the first book of the *De officiis* (65), where Cicero acknowledges and accepts that, although desire for glory easily leads to injustice, anyone

---

<sup>70</sup> See below, p. 88.

<sup>71</sup> Completed by July of 44 (Cic. *Att.* 16.2.6).

<sup>72</sup> Cic. *Att.* 16.2.6, 16.3.1; Long (1995) 223-24; Atkins (2000) 505.

<sup>73</sup> Dyck (1996) 412. For extant fragments, see Plasberg’s Teubner edition (Cicero 1917), pp. 87-90. See also Schanz (1927) Part 1, p. 525, Coleman-Norton (1939) 223, and Sullivan (1941) 389.

who has accomplished great deeds and undertaken risks, he states, desires glory as a reward for his efforts.<sup>74</sup>

Before dealing with glory more extensively in the second book, Cicero gives six reasons why one person may support the advancement of another: good will (*benivolentia*), esteem (*honor*), trust (*fides*), fear (*metus*), expected personal benefit (*aliquid expectant*), and direct payment (*pretium, merces*) (*Off.* 2.21). Then, after weighing the merits of good will and fear as reliable sources of support, he focuses on good will. Cicero next turns his attention to friendship and glory, with a reference to the *De amicitia*. Glory specifically depends on three factors: the likes of the masses (*si diligit multitudo*), their trust (*si fidem habet*), and their support (*si cum admiratione quadam honore dignos putat*, “if they believe with a certain veneration that they are worthy of office”) (2.31).<sup>75</sup> Cicero goes on to list the reasons why people feel affection (*diligere*) for others: favors granted (*beneficia*), a benevolent temperament (even if it does not lead to a result), and a reputation for virtue (characterized by words that suggest that others derive a concrete benefit from virtue, such as *liberalitas, beneficentia, iustitia, and fides* [“generosity,” “kindness,” “justice,” and “trust”]), all of which lead to *mansuetudo* and *facilitas* (“mildness” and “good nature”) (2.32). Cicero then returns to the theme of *honore dignos* with further analysis: they venerate some men because of their virtues, and attribute little value to others. This latter group is divided into two parts, those whom people think poorly of (i.e., the *improbi, maledici, fraudulent*, and *ad faciendam iniuriam instructos* [“rascals,” “slandering,” “deceitful,” and “prone to commit injustice”]), and those whom they scorn as being of little use to themselves or anyone else (i.e., lacking *labor, industria, and cura* [“effort,” “application,” and “conscientiousness”]) (2.36). Cicero employs the argument that most men are weak, easily attracted to pleasure, and terrified of pain, to suggest that anyone who does not exhibit these weaknesses will be especially admired as possessing

---

<sup>74</sup> A few years before, Cicero had denied to the righteous Cato that he sought glory, even as consul (*Fam.* 15.4.13), though to Dolabella, D. Brutus, and Atticus he admits to this fault (*Fam.* 9.14.2, 11.14.1, *Att.* 2.17.2).

<sup>75</sup> In the context of *gloria*, the phrase *honore dignos* must refer at least in part to being judged worthy of political office.

*iustitia*, the virtue that is the sole source of men being called “good,” *ex qua una virtute viri boni appellantur* (2.38). After a *discursus* on the theme of “honor among thieves,” Cicero concludes that anyone who wishes to achieve true glory must perform the obligations of justice (2.43). He divides those who obtain glory into two groups, those who do so either by heredity (and here he names his son, to whom the book is dedicated) or by some chance, and those who, lacking this advantage, must achieve notice through great deeds such as warfare, attendance upon illustrious elders, or public speaking, particularly in the courts (2.44-50). Within forensic speaking, defense is to be favored over prosecution, which should be entered into only rarely (2.50).<sup>76</sup>

Cicero finishes the book with an equally high-minded description of the roles of kindness and generosity to complement his discussion of glory (2.52-90). His acceptance of the practical realities of Roman life is evident here: for example, money must be spent on aedilician games, distributions of food, and public works, but all within moderation. Legal assistance, particularly public speaking, is an acceptable form of kindness. When it comes to public measures involving money and property, they must be implemented with enough moderation so as not to harm the state or individuals unjustly, with particular deference to private property (2.78). While Cicero’s conservative biases are quite clear with his selection of positive examples (Scipio Aemilianus and Aemilius Paullus [2.76], as opposed to Gaius Gracchus and L. Marcius Philippus as tribune [104?, 2.72, 73]), the philosophical point is that Cicero recommends the virtue of justice as opening the path to success.

The theme of the third book is that the *honestum* and the *utile* are not in conflict. On this point, Cicero sides most openly with the Stoics over other philosophic schools. It is not enough to rate the honorable above the useful; the truth is, according to Cicero, that whatever is honorable is useful, and there is nothing useful that is not honorable (3.20, cf. 33, 75). Cicero minimizes the importance of the debate between the Stoic view that the honorable is the only good, and that of the Peripatetics that it is the highest good (3.11), and it is clear that his

---

<sup>76</sup> On *gloria* as a key concept in the *De officiis*, see Long (1995).

reasoning precludes the argument that, because something is useful, it must be honorable; rather, only that which is honorable is useful. In fact, Cicero specifically denies the validity of the argument: *Quamvis hoc turpe sit, tamen, quoniam expedit, faciam* (“Although this is shameful, I will nevertheless do it because it is advantageous”) (3.53).<sup>77</sup> Wicked men who seize upon what they perceive as useful to the exclusion of what is honorable commit crimes (killing by sword and poison, forging wills, embezzling, and despoiling of both citizens and allies [3.36]) that bring punishment to themselves beyond legal penalties (3.37).

Before leaving the *De officiis*, we need to examine whether Cicero acknowledges a necessity to create an exception to normal morality, and, if so, whether this exception constitutes a refinement on morality, or a suspension of it. For, in a section on the role of *beneficentia* and *liberalitas* in acquiring glory (2.52-89), Cicero admits a consideration that is *genere vitiosa, temporibus necessaria* (“defective in essence, but necessary according to circumstances”) (2.60). Is this, however, a suspension of morality?

Cicero makes a distinction between doing something for someone in need and giving money to someone in need, and indicates a general preference for the former (although that is more difficult), partly because a gift of money reduces one’s ability to aid someone else in the same way (2.52). When it comes to financial generosity, Cicero warns against squandering one’s patrimony through excessive gifts (2.54) — a warning that has a particular point because the book is ostensibly addressed to his son, who appears to have been somewhat irresponsible with money at this time, when he was just turning twenty-one years of age.<sup>78</sup> In July of 44 B.C.E., shortly before Cicero began to compose this work, Cicero expresses satisfaction about arrangements whereby his son received his allowance in small

---

<sup>77</sup> For an explanation of the problem under discussion here (i.e., whether a seller is obligated to disclose all defects to a buyer), see Schofield (1999a), who interprets the passage (3.50-53) as making the case that an “invisible hand” (p. 175) here brings private interest in harmony with long-term public benefit. If the pursuit of private interest is indeed being justified by its conformity to the common good, this reasoning in no way constitutes an exception to the ethical and high-minded stance that I am arguing characterizes Roman political thought.

<sup>78</sup> For the date of his birth, see *Cic. Att.* 1.2.1.

amounts (Cic. Att. 16.1.5), and, at about the same time, the son writes to Tiro in penitent terms (*errata aetatis meae*, Cic. fil. Fam. 16.21.2). Cicero in the *De officiis* distinguishes between the spendthrift person and the generous person, the former favoring displays of wealth, the latter helping friends with ransoms, debts, dowries, and real estate purchases (2.55). He then discusses a subject directly relevant to this study, outlays for public entertainment when campaigning for the aedileship (2.57-58), and holds up his own conduct as a model:

2.58: *Quare et si postulatur a populo, bonis viris non desiderantibus at tamen approbantibus, faciendum est, modo pro facultatibus, nos ipsi ut fecimus....*

Therefore, if it is desired by the People, this should be done by good men, providing their endorsement if not enthusiastically, in accordance with their means, as we ourselves did....

He has already mentioned the splendid games put on by Pompey as consul in 55 B.C.E. (2.57), and at 2.60 he returns to this subject by bringing up Pompey's public works, which included Rome's first permanent theater, dedicated in 55 B.C.E. (2.60). He has just described approvingly building projects that leave a lasting benefit to the state, such as walls, docks, ports, and aqueducts, and then writes:

2:60: *Theatra, porticus, nova templa verecundius repleo propter Pompeium, sed doctissimi non probant, ut et hic ipse Panaetius quem multum his libris secutus sum non interpretatus, et Phalerus Demetrius, qui Periclem, principem Graeciae, vituperat quod tantam pecuniam in praeclara illa propylaea coniecerit.*

For Pompey's sake it is with restraint that I chastise theaters, colonnades, and new temples, but very learned men do not approve of them, as both Panaetius whom I have followed in these books though not translated, and Demetrius of Phaleron, who faults Pericles, the leader of Greece, because he poured so much money into the famous Propylaea.

He refers to his discussion in the *Republic*, but this is almost entirely lost (possibly at 4.7 Ziegler = test. gen. 16 p. 369 Powell<sup>79</sup>). He then writes:

---

<sup>79</sup> Dyck (1996) 449.

2.60: *Tota igitur ratio talium largitionum genere vitiosa est, temporibus necessaria, et tum ipsum et ad facultates accommodanda et mediocritate moderanda est.*

Therefore the whole principle of such acts of largesse is faulty in kind, and unavoidable because of circumstances, and then should be both suited to our resources and controlled with restraint.

Cicero is saying that something that is bad in quality can be justified by its limited quantity. Whether or not we accept Cicero's reasoning, he seems to be arguing that largesse is justifiable as long as the benefactor is able to control it strictly. Therefore, I see this as an analysis of one aspect of morality, rather than a suspension of morality.

Cicero's *Republic* offers guidance on the best citizen as well as the best design of the state, for, as Ferrary has pointed out, the author describes its subject as *de optimo statu civitatis et de optimo cive* (Cic. *Q. fr.* 3.5.1).<sup>80</sup> Therefore, as in the *De officiis*, Cicero offers advice on political conduct. When it comes to military, commands and consulates (*imperia consulatusque*) are necessary but not desirable things, and should be sought not for the sake of rewards and or glory,<sup>81</sup> but for the sake of performing a duty (*muneris fungendi gratia subeundos, non praemiorum aut gloriae causa appetendos*, Cic. *Rep.* 1.27 Ziegler = 1.27 Powell). As Cicero writes to Atticus, quoting himself (*Rep.* 5.8 Ziegler = 5.2 Powell, in *Att.* 8.11.1), the statesman is like a pilot, physician, or general, in that his goal is not his own advantage but the welfare for someone else, in this case his fellow citizens. This selfless view of public office is in keeping with Cicero's view of the state, which belongs to no one person:<sup>82</sup>

*Rep.* 1.39 Ziegler = 1.39 Powell: *Est igitur, inquit Africanus, res publica res populi, populus autem non omnis hominum coetus quoquo modo congregatus,*

---

<sup>80</sup> Ferrary (1982) 775, (1995) 48-51.

<sup>81</sup> In a fragment of the work, Cicero makes some allowance for glory and honor being given to a leader (*Rep.* 5.9 Ziegler = fr. incertae sedis 13 p. 150 Powell).

<sup>82</sup> Thus, since under Dionysius Syracuse was not the property of the people but of one man, it was not a bad commonwealth (*res publica*) but rather no commonwealth at all (*Rep.* 3.43 Ziegler = 3.35 Powell).

*sed coetus multitudinis iuris consensu et utilitatis  
communione sociatus.*

Africanus said that the state is the property of the people, and the people, moreover, are not every gathering of people that has come together in any way, but a gathering united by agreement on law and in mutual participation of interests.

According to Cicero, mankind has an innate propensity to unite with others, a propensity not based simply on the motive of overcoming the weak position of each individual on his or her own. The interlocutor Laelius says that citizens must learn those skills that render them useful to the state (1.33 Ziegler = 1.33 Powell); the implication is that the wise citizen does not use the state for his own advantage. Although the influence of Stoicism is clearly strong here (Laelius refers to Scipio's conversations with the Stoic Panaetius, in which Scipio had held up the traditional Roman state as the best; 1.34 Ziegler = 1.34 Powell), Scipio in response makes it clear that he is not offering up Greek philosophy, but something intrinsically Roman, and that his aim is not to present a completely systematic account of the state, as a *magister* ("teacher") would offer (1.36, 38 Ziegler = 1.36, 38 Powell).<sup>83</sup> Whichever of the three types of government is involved, monarchy, oligarchy, or democracy, it must be free from any *iniquitas* ("unfairness") or *cupiditas* ("greed") (1.42 Ziegler = 1.42 Powell). A free people should choose as its leaders the best people, with "best" defined by *virtus* ("excellence of character") rather than wealth or noble birth (1.51-52 Ziegler = 1.51-52 Powell). The statesman requires both *doctrina* ("formal learning") and knowledge of his own country's political institutions; the resulting quality that can best lead the state is *incredibilis quaedam et divina virtus* ("a certain incredible and divine virtue") (3.4 Ziegler = 3.5 Powell). To the extent that we can generalize about a fragmentary work, in his *Republic*, Cicero seems to tell the statesman to take the high moral route and to eschew any political tactics that are in any way morally dubious. In fact, he condemns corrupting the voters not only by money but also by

---

<sup>83</sup> Compare the rejection by L. Furius Philus of what he regards as an excessively word-based, rather than fact-based, Stoic logic of Chrysippus (*Rep.* 3.12 Ziegler = 3.8 Powell).



eloquence (5.11 Ziegler = fr. dubia 8 Powell).<sup>84</sup> In Book Three, Laelius refutes the defense of injustice that L. Furius Philus recapitulates from the words of Carneades (3.8 Ziegler = 3.7 Powell), and, in Book Five, Cicero has Scipio speak of a moderator of the state who provides for the happiness of the citizens (5.8 Ziegler = 5.2 Powell).<sup>85</sup>

With specific reference to Plato's pair of political works, the *Republic* and the *Laws*, Cicero locates his *Laws* in the same relationship to his *Republic* (*Leg.* 1.15, 2.14), both works dating from the late 50s B.C.E. Cicero makes it clear that this work is about the *fons legum et iuris* ("source of the laws and of justice"), which is not praetor's edict or the Twelve Tables or anything involved in the day-to-day work of a jurisconsult, and that he will present a teaching drawn from profound philosophy (*ex intima philosophia hauriendam iuris disciplinam*) (1.17). It is clear from the outset that this is not to be a "how-to" book, and therefore it is not surprising that this high philosophical level precludes any moral shortcuts. On the other hand, it is also the case that, just as Plato's *Laws* provides the best practicable regime (in contrast to his *Republic*'s ideal regime), Cicero in his *Laws* attempts to define the best practicable regime, whose best exemplification is the Roman constitution. Politics is the art of the possible, and the feasible may outweigh the best.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, compared to the *Republic*, the more pragmatic nature of the *Laws* should not lead to the conclusion that Cicero has jettisoned a moral framework.

In the *Laws*, Cicero defines "law" as the highest reason, planted in nature, which commands what should be done and forbids the opposite. The origin of *iūs* ("justice") is to be found in *lex* ("law") (1.18-19), and there is one *iūs*, which applies to all, established by *lex* (1.42). He later refers to the disagreements between the Academy and the Stoa as to whether the honorable (*honestum*) is the only good (as

---

<sup>84</sup> See Ferrary (1982) 776 on *Rep.* 3.38, 5.6, and 5.8 Ziegler = test. gen. 11 (p. 368), 3.3, and 5.2 Powell, and 788 on Cicero's use of the Roman state as the concrete realization of the universal truths of Greek philosophy.

<sup>85</sup> Ferrary (1982) 776, 778.

<sup>86</sup> Atkins (2013): (Plato) 64, (Cicero) 159, (art of possible) 213, (best/practicable distinction) 231.

the latter school believed), or is the highest good (as the former school believed), but, while siding with the Academy, he minimizes the importance of this controversy (1.55-56). Law is as old as the god that rules heaven and earth (2.10); it is the criterion that divides the just from the unjust (*ergo est lex iustorum iniustorumque distinctio*), and must not be confused with the multitude of bad statutes passed by various peoples (2.13). To the extent that law is coterminous with the laws of any society, it is with the Rome of the distant past (2.23). The power of government (*imperium*) exists in the context of *ius*, *natura*, and *lex*, as he has defined them (3.3). The best state, as described in the *Republic*, requires magistrates, whose status is only temporary between periods of being an ordinary citizen (3.5). In the extant text, only the phrase *creatio magistratum* points to elections to office (3.10, elucidated further at 3.33-39).<sup>87</sup> Again, this philosophical work is too high-minded to admit into itself any approval of sharp political dealing.

Cicero's *De oratore* (*On the Orator*), which dates from 55 B.C.E., deals with the orator rather than the statesman or the citizen.<sup>88</sup> However, because the orator L. Licinius Crassus (cos. 95, cens. 92) is the central character in the dialogue and is portrayed in such glowing terms (1.76, 3.14) as a statesman whose death in 91 was a disaster to the state (3.1), and because Cicero presents oratory as central to the statesman's function, it is natural to interpret his role in the dialogue as an example to be followed, not just by C. Aurelius Cotta and P. Sulpicius Rufus, the younger men who are present, but by all Roman leaders. The *dicendi ratio* ("art of oratory"), Cicero writes, should not be seen as an abstruse scholarly discipline, but as a practical matter to be compared with the skill of a general or a good senator (1.8), thus establishing a triad of political roles — general, statesman, and orator. Negative *exempla* of orators are mostly absent in this work; Q. Varius, *vastum hominem atque foedum* ("an ungainly and vile person"), is an exception (1.117). When Antonius taxes Crassus for a statement he

---

<sup>87</sup> On this use of *creatio*, see Dyck (2004) 469-70.

<sup>88</sup> Ferrary (1982) 774 describes it as forming a trilogy with the *Republic* and the *Laws*, analogous to Plato's *Republic*, *Laws*, and *Phaedrus*. However, Fantham (2004) 311 points out that one cannot assume that when Cicero composed the *De oratore*, he already had in mind another dialogue on the state.

made to a *contio* of the Roman People (that senators should be slaves to the People and to them alone) on the ground that *virtus* should never be a slave, the logical implication is that *virtus* is an essential quality of the orator (1.225-26). Nevertheless, he relates the conviction of the virtuous Stoic Rutilius, who, along with his *patroni*, eschewed the emotional side of oratory, demonstrating that it is a mistake to conduct public business *ut si in illa commenticia Platonis civitate res ageretur* (“as if the matter were being conducted in that imaginary state of Plato”), rather than in the forceful way in which Crassus could have obtained an acquittal (1.230). In the context of this dialogue, Cicero’s point is not that a virtuous man should make some moral concessions to political expediency, but that a man who is imbued with real *virtus*, like Crassus, can prevail without compromising his morality. The *De oratore* attempts to undermine the traditional conflict between virtuous reason and emotional rhetoric by making the orator the quintessential virtuous person. Putting the dichotomy and its Ciceronian resolution into a modern context, Connolly writes:

It has long been a criticism of liberalism that because it defined the individual as rights-bearer and proprietor, it avoided matters of personality, emotion, and character. By contrast, Ciceronian rhetorical republicanism defines the self as a virtuous agent on whose virtuous corporeality the republic and its well-being are balanced.<sup>89</sup>

According to Cicero, the absolutist approach of the Stoic Rutilius, like Cato the Younger’s, is simplistic.<sup>90</sup>

Although the oratory of Crassus is stressed above all other aspects of politics, a parallel with the life of Cicero is introduced that underlines the leading political role that Crassus played. Although his life was occupied with campaigning (*ambitionis labore*), during his period of progress through the *cursus honorum*, he advanced more because of his talent and work as an advocate than from benefit derived from his prestige or political standing:

3.7: *Nam quam diu Crassi fuit ambitionis labore vita districta, tamdiu privatis magis officiis et ingenii*

---

<sup>89</sup> Connolly (2007) 152.

<sup>90</sup> See above, pp. 14-18.

*laude floruit quam fructu amplitudinis aut rei publicae dignitate....*

For as long as Crassus' life was pulled by the work of campaigning, for that period he prospered more through his personal services and esteem for his talent than through profit from his prestige or from his public eminence....

This description of Crassus at the beginning of Book Three closely parallels the way Cicero describes his own career at the beginning of Book One, marked by the work of an advocate and of a candidate (*infinitus forensium rerum labor et ambitionis occupatio*, 1.1). The difference is that, whereas Crassus was deprived by death of the *otium* that he had a right to expect, Cicero was deprived of this *otium* because of the attacks that befell him after his consulate (1.2). The similarities between the career paths of Crassus and Cicero underscore the exemplarity that should characterize each man in the eyes of the Romans.<sup>91</sup>

Cicero's *De finibus* (45 B.C.E.) provides him with a platform to expound his views on ethics, as he attempts to define what the highest moral end(s) and evil(s) are (*de finibus bonorum et malorum*, 1.12).<sup>92</sup> The work consists of three dialogues, between an Epicurean and Cicero, between a Stoic and Cicero, and finally between a representative of the Old Academy and Cicero. The work is marked by vigorous, albeit amicable, disagreement about the first principles of ethics. Yet, for the purposes of this discussion, it is notable that it offers no support for amoralism, and even the Epicurean point of view of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain is defined in a way that vehemently rejects a life of sensuality, whether crude or sophisticated (2.23-24), and argues for the virtues of wisdom, moderation, courage, and justice (as conducive to pleasure); the disagreement is whether or not the rejection of a sensual life is consistent with the Epicurean doctrine about pleasure. Epicurus, explains his spokesperson, was not, as many people think, devoted to sensual pleasures (*voluptates*),

---

<sup>91</sup> Connolly (2007) 151 points out that, in his use of the dialogue, as well as his use of epistolary and dedicatory forms in other works, Cicero models the civility that a *vir bonus* displays within the context of Republican politics.

<sup>92</sup> Cicero also summarizes the view of the various philosophic schools on the subject of *fines* in *Lucullus* (*Ac. Prior.* 2.129-31).

but rather believed that the only way to live wisely (*sapienter*) was to live honorably and justly (*honeste iusteque*), and that no one could live wisely, honorably, and justly except by living pleasantly (*iucunde*) (1.57). Similarly, although both the Stoic and Peripatetic moral analyses begin with infants seeking to satisfy their own needs (3.16, 5.24), both also lead to a high-minded ethical goal, either virtue alone (*honestum*, 3.58), in the case of the Stoics, or both virtue and some bodily and external things that are good (2.68, 5.18), in the case of the Peripatetics. Thus, the interlocutors in this set of dialogues are not really disagreeing about what an ethical life is, because all of them assume that it is what we would consider a prudent and high-minded life, but rather about how to provide a rigorous philosophical justification for that life. The exception to this consensus is the school of Aristippus, the Cyrenaics, who are described as promoting the animal pleasures of food and sex as the highest good, even omitting freedom from pain (2.18, 2.39-41). Cicero questions whether the Epicureans make a philosophically valid distinction between their kind of pleasure and that of the Cyrenaics, but agrees that their recommended style of life is more modest and seemly (*verecundius*, 2.114).

Cicero describes the *honestum* as something sought for its own account, without any rewards or profits (*sine ullis praemiis fructibusve*), something that men aim at even though they do not foresee that they will obtain an advantage (*etsi nullum consecuturum emolumentum vident*, 2.45). This statement is as close as he comes to discussing the striving involved in political life, and clearly he is rejecting it. He challenges the Epicurean belief that the pains associated with a guilty conscience and fear of punishment will actually be sufficient to deter a shameless and wily (*versutus*) politician, citing Q. Pompeius (cos. 141 B.C.E.) as an example (2.54). On the subject of friendship (*amicitia*), a concept fraught with political significance, as we see in the *Comm. Pet.*, Cicero attacks the Epicurean analysis of it as a product of enlightened self-interest (*Prodest, inquit, mihi eo esse animo*, 2.78), arguing that the *amor* in *amicitia* does not depend upon a calculation of expediency. He describes the division in the Stoic camp over the value of *gloria* or *bona fama* (*eudoxia*), some Stoics dismissing it as worthless and others as desirable but not for any practical purpose (3.57), and therefore, it can be added, of no

political value. Stoics are willing to engage in politics and government as being consistent with human nature (3.68).<sup>93</sup> As for friendship, some Stoics believe that a friend's interests should be held as dear as one's own, whereas others think that one must necessarily put oneself first, but none believe that we use either justice or friendship for our own advantage or take advantage from the loss sustained by others (3.70). The Peripatetic philosophers, Aristotle and Theophrastus, wrote about what sort of person should be the ruler and what the best form of government was, but even they recommended a contemplative life (5.11).

This overview of Cicero's thought about politics and the politician accords with the thesis of Asmis that Cicero "proposed a new concept of the political leader as a public servant," one who is even "closest to god."<sup>94</sup> This is a far cry from the politician as self-seeking careerist. Of course, Cicero is not claiming that many Roman politicians lived up to this extremely high standard, but his is one voice from the Roman Republic that expresses, at the very least, the wish that this standard should be embodied in Roman political culture, and thus speaks against a conception that any dispensation from morality was granted to this political culture.

One more philosophical strand that might have had the potential to justify amoralism needs to be examined: the skepticism of the New Academy. This could be used to justify almost any conduct, or at least negate an ethical attack on that conduct, and for that reason it could perhaps be marshaled to defend an exemption for politics from normal moral strictures. The issue was vividly brought to light in 156/155 B.C.E., when an embassy of three Greek philosophers, the Academic Carneades, the Peripatetic Critolaus, and the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon, came to Rome to plead that a fine that had been imposed on Athens for an incursion into Oropus should be waived. That they did quite brilliantly. Carneades, a very persuasive speaker, argued for the validity of the concept of justice on one day, and for the opposite on

---

<sup>93</sup> *Cum autem ad tuendos conservandosque homines hominem natum esse videamus, consentaneum est huic naturae ut sapiens velit gerere et administrare rem publicam...* ("Since we see that people are born to protect and preserve other people, it is consistent with this nature that the wise person wants to engage in and manage the state...").

<sup>94</sup> Asmis (2001) 109, 128.

the next day (Cic. *de Orat.* 2.161).<sup>95</sup> Cato the Elder was appalled by the embassy, and urged the Senate to decide the matter and send the philosophers back to Greece to avoid any further contamination of Roman youth (Gel. 6.14.8-10).<sup>96</sup> As Plutarch tells the story, Cato's objection was against the effects of philosophy in general on Rome's youth, not against the ability to argue both sides of an issue (*Cat. mai.* 22), and the reaction of Antonius in the *De oratore* to a mention of the embassy — that he keeps philosophizing to a minimum in his speeches — confirms that philosophy itself was an issue (2.156). Cicero has Crassus, his most authoritative interlocutor in the *De oratore*, praise those who can, like Aristotle, speak on either side of a case, or like Arcesilaus and Carneades, oppose any proposition that is put forward (3.80).

Unfortunately, much of Cicero's reprise of Carneades' second argument is missing from the fragmentary section that has survived from his *Republic* (3.4-18 Ziegler<sup>97</sup>), but some of it is reflected by Lactantius (*Inst.* 5.14.1-7, 5.16; *Epit.* 55, 56). Carneades, rebutting his argument of the previous day, argued that, in the public sphere, either justice does not exist because laws vary according to situations and people do what is useful to themselves, or otherwise justice, if it does exist, would lead people into self-destructive activity, helping others while hurting themselves; and in the private sphere, he argued that engaging in full disclosure in business transactions would be folly. According to Lactantius, Carneades stated in the second day's argument that if Rome, ruler of the whole world, decided to be just, it would return to a primitive life of poverty, thus implying that Athens had acted no differently from Rome.<sup>98</sup> Cicero's rejection of the Carneadean viewpoint is suggested by the fact that he has Laelius refute it (Cic. *Rep.* 3.33 Ziegler = 3.27 Powell), the notable from the past with whom he probably identified most of all, and Laelius' words

---

<sup>95</sup> Sedley (1983) 17.

<sup>96</sup> Sources for this incident and for Carneades in general can be found in Mette (1985). See also Ferrary (1982) 734, and Straumann (2016) 176-78, 251.

<sup>97</sup> For Powell, see his concordance, pp. lxxii-lxxiii.

<sup>98</sup> See Atkins (2000) 494.

receive a glowing review from Scipio (3.41 Ziegler = 3.34 Powell).<sup>99</sup> The comment preserved by Nonius (507L) that young men should not listen to Carneades, and that it is preferable for Carneades' reputation to think that he himself did not believe what he said, makes Cicero's disapproval of Carneades' presentation clear (*Rep.* 3.32 Ziegler = 3.19 Powell).

A reflection of this embassy is found in a speech delivered by C. Gracchus against the *lex Aufeia* for the settlement of the province of Asia.<sup>100</sup> This speech is known to us from a passage in Gellius (11.10.1), and, since this repeats a witticism found in the previous section that is attributed to Critolaus, we can suspect an influence from that philosopher in this speech. Gracchus says that everyone who speaks in public has a motive for speaking, and that he too expects to gain something (*non gratis prodeō*, "it is not for nothing that I come forward"). However, he then goes on to contrast his motive, the good opinion and esteem of his audience (*bonam existimationem atque honorem*), with the payment of money that motivates the other speakers on both sides, as well as others who take money to remain silent. With mild rhetorical self-deprecation, Gracchus is clearly making use of the philosophical viewpoint that everyone acts from self-interest to put himself into a good light, as someone who sees his self-interest in making a favorable impression on his audience as opposed to making a financial profit.

The straightforward interpretation of the embassy of the three philosophers, and the reception that it received at Rome, is that Romans had no use for the philosophers, either because they abhorred the viewpoint that Carneades expressed on the second day, or because they were shocked by the rhetorical ability to argue both sides of an argument. Of course, when someone strongly rejects something, it is always possible to argue that this person is actually strongly attracted

---

<sup>99</sup> Atkins (2013) 42 argues that it may be wrong to assume that Laelius is here serving as a mouthpiece of Cicero, since his refutation of the position taken by Carneades on the second day presents problems from a philosophical point of view. However, it is hard to believe that Cicero would have put in the mouth of Laelius an important viewpoint with which he (Cicero) fundamentally disagreed.

<sup>100</sup> On this legislation, see Gruen (1984) vol. 2, p. 608, n. 147. Hill (1948) argues that *Aufeia* is a textual corruption for *Aquila*, and that this *lex Aquilia* is a *lex provinciae* for Asia.



to it like the puritan with regard to sex, and certainly it would be rash to conclude that the Romans thereafter eschewed the Carneadean refutation of an established ethical concept such as justice. Nevertheless, as far as the accounts of the embassy go, it is evidence that Romans did not publicly embrace the amorality exhibited by Carneades on the second day.

Besides this skeptical position, which could (or thought it could) defend amorality as well as almost any other proposition, there was a tradition that propounded as a positive assertion that justice was the interest of the more powerful, as the sophist and rhetorician Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, as portrayed by Plato, argues (Pl. *Resp.* 1.338c-354b).<sup>101</sup> His claim reflects the sophistic outlook that we also see expressed or reflected in the works of Thucydides and Euripides, not as a matter of philosophy but as rhetorical arguments that could be drawn upon.<sup>102</sup> For the purposes of this work, it does not matter whether the sophists should be classified as philosophical or rhetorical, for they constitute part of the intellectual tradition upon which Romans could have drawn. Some insight into official Roman attitudes towards rhetoric is provided by an edict of the censors of 92 B.C.E. that denounced *Latini magistri* as violating *mos maiorum* (Cic. *de Orat.* 3.94; Sen. *Controv.* 2 *praef.* 5; Quint. *Inst.* 2.4.42; Tac. *Dial.* 35.1; Suet. *Rhet.* 25.2; Gel. *NA* 15.11.1-2). These teachers probably can be considered sophists in the terms of the fifth-century B.C.E. Greek definition of those who taught rhetoric and argumentation, and did so for a fee.<sup>103</sup> It would probably be stretching the evidence too far to use this edict as support for the notion that the Romans condemned all instruction in rhetoric and thus sophistry, but it provides evidence that there was some feeling that only those Romans of high enough status to learn Greek should have access to this discipline, and that it was dangerous to make it available to Romans who were not well educated,

---

<sup>101</sup> See Barney (2011). The argument that Glaucon presents in Plato's *Republic* — that the thoroughly unjust man is happier than the thoroughly just man — implies a moral political culture, because the completely unjust man will be reputed to be just, although he is not (361a).

<sup>102</sup> On Euripides, see Conacher (1998), including nn. 13 and 14, pp. 118-19, for a bibliography on previous discussions, and especially Chap. III, "The Relativity of Virtue," pp. 42-49. On Thucydides, see Ostwald (1986) 307-10, on the Melian Dialogue.

<sup>103</sup> Ostwald (1986) 242.

in the sense that they did not know Greek. As well, the censors may have believed that the use of schools (*ludi*) to teach the art of public speaking threatened *tirocinium fori* as an apprenticeship restricted to young aristocrats. This restriction on rhetoric weighs against Roman acceptance of sophistry, though it certainly does not exclude the possibility that some Romans were attracted to sophists and their teachings.<sup>104</sup>

This overview of Cicero's philosophical works that directly bear on political morality has not been included to demonstrate how Romans in general thought about politics. Indeed, there are several reasons why the overview cannot serve this function. First, most Romans were not philosophers, and therefore were not intellectually or emotionally involved in the controversies that involved philosophers, controversies that generally were imported from Greek philosophy. Second, Roman philosophy in the Republican period is represented almost entirely by one person, namely Cicero. Third, it is always possible that even someone as clearly competent in philosophy as Cicero created a division in his mind between philosophy and practical politics. Therefore, it is conceivable that someone who, like Cicero, preached a high-minded view of human conduct could believe in a hypocritical and inconsistent manner that, as a practical politician, he was permitted to engage in various kinds of skullduggery or machinations in order to win elections, pass legislation, and manipulate the outcome of criminal trials. Nevertheless, what this survey of Ciceronian philosophy has shown is an absence of amoralism or of doctrines that support amoralism in that corpus. In fact, one can say that Cicero, at least as far as we know from his written works, did not make the distinction, highlighted by Tatum in his discussion of the *Comm. Pet.*, between the actions of a good man and the actions of a good candidate: *...alterum est tamen boni viri, alterum boni petitoris*.<sup>105</sup>

Indeed, in the case of Cicero's philosophical writing, it is difficult to draw a line between life in general and the political life, because ethical standards are so often illustrated by examples of good and bad behavior either of actual politicians, or of the politician/statesman as

---

<sup>104</sup> Schmidt (1975) 215-16, Kaster (1995) 273-74, and Alexander (2007) 106-107.

<sup>105</sup> Tatum (2007) 126.

the quintessential moral actor. This is in part an inheritance from Greek philosophy, most notably from Plato's *Republic*, where the *polis* is used to illustrate the essence of life and reality, and in part a reflection of Cicero's ethical concerns drawn from his life as an engaged politician. Moreover, although for our purposes it would certainly be desirable to be able to draw upon a philosophical corpus that does not come from the pen of one person, nevertheless, through the format of the dialogue, Cicero's philosophical works present not just his own viewpoint but many other viewpoints with which he in fact disagrees. Therefore, while it would be rash to suppose that his philosophical works present us with a complete conspectus of philosophy during his lifetime, they do provide a far wider spectrum of philosophical opinions than just his own. It might also be objected that Cicero, after all, lived only at the end of the Republican period, and that he cannot represent previous Roman philosophy, but this objection can be countered by the observation that prior to Cicero there was no Roman philosophy as such, only such Greek philosophy as some Romans would have acquired through their very Hellenized education and cultural life.

This survey of Cicero's philosophical works has revealed an absence of amorality, and thus shows that they provide no evidence that political amorality can be found in extant sources from the Republic. This absence is not at all surprising. MacMullen finds, on the basis of Polybius and some Roman sources, that there was an assumption "that the behaviour of a group of leaders acting in their public capacity will not differ in quality from their behaviour as private individuals."<sup>106</sup> This premise renders it unlikely that the Romans applied totally different standards to political behavior as opposed to life outside the political sphere.

### *The Commentariolum Petitionis*

One ancient work remains to be discussed that, on the surface, provides ample evidence of Roman amorality: the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, whose real or dramatic author was Quintus Tullius Cicero, the younger brother of Marcus Tullius Cicero. I have previously made

---

<sup>106</sup> MacMullen (1980) 7-8.

the case that it should be read ironically (hence why I refer to my reading as “the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*”, as discussed below),<sup>107</sup> and therefore that its ostensible message is not its real message. I stand by that view, and take it as a given in this book. Even though I realize that my view can by no means be considered to have been widely accepted, it has also not been refuted in print — and, indeed, hardly challenged.<sup>108</sup> On the basis of the *Comm. Pet.*, all we can safely conclude from its presentation of Roman political campaigns in relation to the amoralism of political culture is that the author, whenever that author lived and whoever that person was, ridiculed the Romans of the Republican period on the grounds that they allowed election campaigns to be conducted with a disregard for normal morality. It is impossible to say whether that author employed that characteristic as the basis for ridicule because he believed it to be historically factual or considered it merely as an effective way to mock Roman Republican election campaigns.<sup>109</sup> The primary relevance of the *Comm. Pet.* here lies in the fact that many Roman historians, whether they believe that the work was written by Quintus or not, have accepted this work as a reliable guide to the Roman elections. Their reliance on this work reveals their belief in Roman amoralism, and confirms the central contention of the next chapter — that my thesis that the extant ancient evidence fails to support Roman Republican political amoralism challenges a fundamental assumption of many previous Roman historians.<sup>110</sup>

Given that the *Comm. Pet.* must constitute Exhibit A in any discussion of Roman Republican amoralism, whether one considers it a credible witness, or whether, like me, one wishes to discredit it as serious and straightforward evidence about Roman political strategy, the reader may wonder why I have held back my discussion of it until I had surveyed all the other evidence. The reason is that I know that many, probably most, scholars remain unconvinced by my arguments.<sup>111</sup> This cool reception is to be expected, because my

---

<sup>107</sup> Alexander (2009a).

<sup>108</sup> See Appendix One.

<sup>109</sup> Alexander (2009a) 388.

<sup>110</sup> Alexander (2009a), and below, pp. 94-95.

<sup>111</sup> See Appendix One.

reading of the work requires people who have relied on it as a reliable source for everything from undergraduate lectures to scholarly books and articles on Roman political institutions and history, to jettison what they had believed and read the work in a matter that is 180 degrees different from the way they have read it since their earliest exposure to Roman history. Had I presented my reading of it here at the beginning of the book, it would have seemed to form the initial premise for my argument, and therefore many readers would have found it difficult to give serious consideration to what followed. At this point, I hope, even those readers who cannot accept my thesis about the *Comm. Pet.* will see that, when it comes to the issue of amorality, it must be considered at best an outlier among our sources.

A critic might object that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence; that is, the fact that there is no evidence that the Romans thought about politics in an amoralistic way does not prove that they did not think about politics in this way. This would be a valid objection if my thesis were that we know that the Romans were not political amorality. However, my thesis is much more cautious — that there is no ancient evidence that the Romans were political amorality — and thus the absence of evidence is enough to support it.

The objection might be made to my emphasis on the lack of evidence for amorality that this absence can be explained, even if Roman political culture was amoral. It might be argued, for example, that Roman politicians would hardly have been likely to take the trouble to write a treatise that argued that normal Roman morality did not apply in the domestic political sphere. But, as the examples of signs of political amorality provided in my introduction illustrate, it takes nothing more than an offhand comment to signal that morality goes out the door when politics walks in. Or, it might be argued that politicians would have been careful to hide their amorality. However, if an amoral political culture existed in a society, it would not be necessary to cloak amorality; that is the essential feature of an amoral political culture. In any case, explaining away the absence of evidence for a particular historical proposition only leaves open the *possibility* that that proposition is true. Thus, if a Roman historian wishes to claim that Roman political culture *could* have been amoral, this book does not stand in the way. It points out only that there is *no* evidence that Roman political culture was amoral.

One might also make the argument for Roman political amoralism on general grounds, for example, a universal rule about human nature. Political science, social psychology, sociology, or another social science might suggest a rule applying to all humans or to all political systems that allows us to posit that the Romans must have conformed to that general rule. In Chapter Four, I make a case that, for much of the twentieth century, many historians assumed a low view of all human nature, and specifically of the motives of politicians, or at least thought that a jaundiced view of human nature provided a safe basis for their analysis. If a belief in Roman amorality rests on such a universal rule, then that rule needs to be explicitly expressed and defended in general terms. In any case, if belief in Roman political amorality rests on a universal rule of politics, then amorality is not a *distinctive* feature of Roman political culture.

Until it is demonstrated that amorality is a constant in political cultures, I assert that, if the Roman evidence fails to support a historical belief about the Romans, historical analysis on its own cannot legitimately assert or assume that point of view. The burden of proof lies with any historian who might want to assert the presence of amoralism in Roman Republican political culture, and this burden requires the presentation of ancient evidence or a universal rule that supports the presence of amoralism.<sup>112</sup> Such evidence, I contend, does not exist, and the universal role that all political cultures are amoral has yet to be substantiated.

---

<sup>112</sup> For example, Ridley (1986b) showed that no ancient evidence exists that supports the notion that the Romans sowed the soil of Carthage with salt after destroying it. Thereafter, historians were obliged to stop repeating this notion — with the proviso that newly found evidence might provide grounds to reassert that belief, a proviso that is logically possible but highly unlikely to be sustained.

## Amoralism and the historiography on Roman Republican politics

Even if no ancient source supports the proposition that the Romans of the Republic had an amoralistic attitude toward their politics, it is necessary to show that the viewpoint I am challenging is actually one that some modern scholars have held — in other words, that it is not a so-called “straw man.” Strictly speaking, only one such scholar is needed to illustrate this, but, if my argument is to have any importance, it has to challenge a point of view that is itself important within the body of modern scholarship on the Roman Republic.<sup>113</sup>

As far as I know, a doctrine of Roman amoralism with regard to politics (e.g., “All is fair in politics,” or at least “Some things that are not considered fair in ordinary life are considered fair in politics”) or specifically with regard to election campaigns (e.g., “All is fair when you are running for office,” or at least “Some things that are not considered fair in ordinary life are considered fair when you are running for office”) is not expressly enunciated in any modern book or article. However, in this chapter I will argue that amoralism (strictly speaking, *partial* amoralism<sup>114</sup>) is a premise or assumption that lay at the heart of some of the most important twentieth-century works on Roman Republican politics. A survey of some major historians of the twentieth century and also the history of the reception of the *Comm. Pet.* show that amoralism was deeply imbedded in much of the modern historical literature dealing with Roman politics that was written during that century, particularly literature written in the German and English languages. To defend my thesis against the straw man criticism, I will point first to trends in Roman scholarship in the twentieth century, primarily between the appearance of Gelzer’s *Nobility of the Roman Republic* (1912) and Brunt’s chapter on *clientela* (1988),<sup>115</sup> and then deal with the scholarship on the *Comm.*

---

<sup>113</sup> By “modern” I mean since the development of scientific scholarship in the second half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>114</sup> See above, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> See below, p. 97.

*Pet.* My primary point in this chapter is not that my treatment of Roman amoralism tells us something about the writing of Roman history in the twentieth century, although it does so, but rather that the way Roman history was often written in the twentieth century has made the evidence for amoralism a worthwhile object of investigation.

### Prosopographical historiography: from Gelzer to Gruen

The way Roman Republican political history was written by many historians through most of the twentieth century displayed an acceptance of Roman amoralism, even though it was an implicit rather than explicit doctrine in the historiography. The first feature of this tradition was to describe history in terms of the quest for and maintenance of power, which was the central concept in the study of Roman history for the majority of the twentieth century. The quest was often viewed primarily as a drive for power for its own sake, not power as a means to accomplish some other goal such as a necessary reform or beneficial program. The second feature of this historiography was to view groups, and the competition between groups, as the key to the understanding of politics. Because our Roman sources do not, for the most part (and with important exceptions), perform their own explicit political analysis of the Roman citizen body in terms of groups, it was not obvious what kinds of groups these would be. (I am not referring here to formal divisions that were integral to Roman governmental institutions, such as *curiae*, tribes, and centuries.) Therefore, it was accepted that the job of the political historian was to define and identify these groups, both in terms of their nature — whether they were parties or factions, lasting or temporary, based on legal or social status, and evident or not to the Romans themselves — and in terms of the membership of individuals in the groups that had been identified.<sup>116</sup> In fact, Syme, when explaining why Cicero, though possessing a program of *concordia ordinum*, could not be a leader because he lacked family connections

---

<sup>116</sup> Ferrary (1982), Lintott (1994a) 10-15, and Lintott (1994b) 50-53 provide excellent overviews of the development of a factional, or at least group-oriented, analysis of Roman Republican politics.



and a *clientela*, says, “The Roman politician had to be the leader of a faction.”<sup>117</sup>

The study of groups in Roman Republican politics was closely bound to prosopography, the study of individual careers with an orientation toward using that information to identify groups. While it may seem counterintuitive that an approach that involves the study of individual careers would strive to identify groups, the urge to link individual careers to groups of individuals was pronounced in the scholarship of much of the twentieth century, as part of an intellectual phenomenon that will be elucidated.<sup>118</sup> Thus, in his survey of the history of the term “prosopography,” while Barnes has shown that the word extends back to the sixteenth century and that prosopography, in the sense of a systematic analysis of the details of the lives of a number of individuals, played an important role in the scholarship on Greek and Roman history in the nineteenth century, he also explains that it was in the twentieth century that the term came to be used for a particular method by which these accounts of individual lives were amalgamated to create a narrative.<sup>119</sup> Of course, to say that these characterizations of Rome’s political culture corresponded to ideas about writing history that were current when some historians advanced them is not to say that those characterizations must have been wrong or misguided.

The interpretations of seven notable Roman historians from the last century (namely, Gelzer, Münzer, Syme, Scullard, Taylor, Badian, and Gruen) reveal their amoralist underpinnings.<sup>120</sup> If the works of

---

<sup>117</sup> Syme (1939) 16.

<sup>118</sup> See below, p. 122. For an overview of prosopography, see Hornblower and Spawforth (2012a), and Heil (n.d.). A description of the work of prosopographers from Gelzer to Badian can be found in Jehne (2006) 65–67. Bowersock (1980), in discussing seven books written by Syme, provides a sketch of prosopography, which he defines as “the cumulative study of the careers of individual people as a means of escaping from a more abstract, impressionistic, and doctrinaire historiography.” On prosopography, see also Galsterer (1990) 4–12, and on its roots, below, pp. 118–22. Carney (1973) 156 distinguishes between two kinds of prosopography, one of which focuses on elites (“the genealogies, business interests, and political activities of the power élites”) and the other on the masses, studied through “ideal types.” The former, he writes, is far more common in ancient history.

<sup>119</sup> Barnes (2007a).

<sup>120</sup> Through her analysis of differing interpretations of the conflict between *optimates* and *populares* from Mommsen to Morstein-Marx, Robb (2010) 15–33 provides a

historians of this eminence and, one can even say, of this towering importance in the field of Roman Republican history, contained the amorality of Roman political culture as a premise, then it would certainly be significant if this premise lacked support in the extant ancient evidence.

Gelzer's *Die Nobilität der römischen Republik* (1912) constitutes a major break from the legal and constitutional approach of Theodor Mommsen that dominated the first stage of scholarly academic writing of Roman history that appeared as *Wissenschaft* was developing and was institutionalized in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Gelzer asked what accounted for the predominance of the nobility, as seen in the results of popular elections, and argued that this predominance must have been due not to the constitution but to the "peculiar nature of Roman society."<sup>121</sup> Starting with a summary of the *Comm. Pet.* and its advice ostensibly provided to Marcus Cicero in his campaign for the consulate, *Nobilität* identified six factors that "determined the distribution of political power."<sup>122</sup> Gelzer's stress on personal relationships, many of them asymmetrical in terms of power, opened the door to explaining politics in terms of individuals and their personal relationships. Since Gelzer is being presented here as the first of a series of historians who employed this power principle, it should be acknowledged that *Nobilität* is quite different in nature from the works of Münzer, Syme, Scullard, Taylor, Badian, and Gruen that I will also be discussing. Because it is focused on defining Roman concepts, and concerned to discover a deeply imbedded structure and something like Weber's "ideal types,"<sup>123</sup> Gelzer's work is much more analytical than the works of the six other authors, who provide a chronologically- or group-structured catalogue or narrative.<sup>124</sup>

---

comprehensive overview of modern approaches to the political history of the Roman Republic.

<sup>121</sup> Gelzer (1912) 43, trans. Seager (1969) 54.

<sup>122</sup> Gelzer (1912) 134, trans. Seager (1969) 139.

<sup>123</sup> Hölkeskamp (2010) 127.

<sup>124</sup> For a description of the "prosopographical" approach, and its decline, see Alexander (2007) 102-103, in Dominik and Hall (2007). For the structural nature of Gelzer's *Nobilität*, see Géza Alföldy (1983) 14, cited by Linderski (1990) 45. Alföldy points out that Syme does not name Gelzer as an influence, because *Nobilität* is structural rather than prosopographical.

Eight years after the publication of *Nobilität*, Münzer opened his landmark book, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* (1920), with this sentence: “Jede politische Partei strebt nach der Macht und der Herrschaft im Staate, mag ihr Ziel die Erhaltung oder die Veränderung der Bestehenden sein” (“Every political party strives for power and dominion in the state, whether its aim be to preserve or change the existing order”).<sup>125</sup> The quest for power required no explanation for Münzer; it was a self-evident goal.<sup>126</sup> However, Münzer was much less explicit than Gelzer about the means whereby power was acquired, referring to the *arcana imperii* that lay hidden behind the superficial phenomena, and the political groups that Gelzer had described were more fluid than those projected by Münzer.<sup>127</sup> Münzer’s greatness is, of course, also due to his many entries for Roman individuals found in the Pauly-Wissowa *Realencyclopädie*.

In *The Roman Revolution* (1939), a work that acknowledges its debt to Münzer,<sup>128</sup> Syme, whose operative historical principles are often as implicit as Münzer’s in spite of his very different style, also placed power at the center of his analysis, to the exclusion of lofty ideals and sentiments:

It is an entertaining pursuit to speculate upon the subtleties of legal theory, or to trace from age to age the transmission of perennial maxims of political wisdom; it is more instructive to discover, *in any time and under any system of government*, the identity of the agents and ministers of power. This task has all too often been ignored or evaded.<sup>129</sup>

The words I have italicized above indicate that his approach is based, at least in part, on a conviction about how all governments operate. He describes the period discussed in his book (60 B.C.E.-14 C.E.) as one that “witnessed a violent transference of power and of property....”<sup>130</sup> Syme dismisses explanations that are based on

---

<sup>125</sup> Münzer (1920) 1 = trans. Ridley (1999) 5.

<sup>126</sup> Accepted by Lintott (1994b) 52, with the caution that one should not assume that a Roman political group possessed the characteristics of a modern party.

<sup>127</sup> Münzer (1920) 133, 317, 427 = trans. Ridley (1999) 127, 291, 363. Ferrary (1997) 222-23 analyzes the similarities and differences between the views of Gelzer and Münzer.

<sup>128</sup> Syme (1939) viii.

<sup>129</sup> Syme (1939) 325 (my emphasis added).

<sup>130</sup> Syme (1939) vii.

analogies with modern institutional, ideological, or class-based conflicts:

The political life of the Roman Republic was stamped and swayed, not by parties and programmes of a modern and parliamentary character, not by the ostensible opposition between Senate and People, *Optimates* and *Populares*, *nobiles* and *novi homines*, but by the strife for power, wealth and glory.<sup>131</sup>

He dismisses the values expressed in Cicero's speeches (*libertas populi, auctoritas senatus, concordia ordinum, and consensus Italiae*) as "ideals", to which lip-service was inevitably rendered."<sup>132</sup> He approvingly cites Sallust's damning analysis of Roman political life after 70 B.C.E. (Sal. Cat. 38).<sup>133</sup> In Syme's words:

There is a melancholy truth in the judgement of the historian Sallustius. After Pompeius and Crassus had restored the power of the tribunate, Roman politicians, whether they asserted the People's rights or the Senate's, were acting a pretence: *they strove for power only*.<sup>134</sup>

With a reference to Münzer, Syme claimed that the *nobiles* employed *arcana imperii* that are both "concealed by craft or convention" and detectable by himself: the family, money, and the political alliance.<sup>135</sup> He dismisses the constitutionalism of Mommsen in a footnote on Caesar's legal position in 49 B.C.E., in favor of power politics: "What is commonly called the 'Rechtsfrage', and interminably discussed, depends upon a 'Machtfrage'."<sup>136</sup>

Syme's dismissal of invective<sup>137</sup> as an activity that historians should take seriously reveals the extent to which he ignores ancient discussion of morality and immorality. In his view, the vile insults hurled at opponents in election campaigns and trials were said in jest, and recognized as such:

---

<sup>131</sup> Syme (1939) 11.

<sup>132</sup> Syme (1939) 153.

<sup>133</sup> See above, pp. 20-21.

<sup>134</sup> Syme (1939) 154 (my emphasis added), quoted by MacMullen (2003) 48-49.

<sup>135</sup> Syme (1939) 12.

<sup>136</sup> Syme (1939) 48 n. 1. Linderski (1990) compares and contrasts Mommsen and Syme.

<sup>137</sup> See also below, p. 104.

From the grosser forms of abuse and misrepresentation the hardy tribe of Roman politicians soon acquired immunity. They were protected by long familiarity, by a sense of humour, or by skill at retaliation. Certain charges, believed or not, became standard jests, treasured by friends as well as enemies.<sup>138</sup>

Defeated candidates and convicted defendants might have taken issue with this characterization of the oratory that had the potential to dash their political aspirations or to send them into exile. Subsequent historians followed Syme's lead. Austin writes, "But lurid personalities were a feature of Roman life, and were often neither intended seriously nor taken so...."<sup>139</sup> Gruen dismisses Cicero's invective in the *In Toga Candida*: "Political invective was commonplace, and hyperbole would be recognized for what it was."<sup>140</sup> Hammar cogently highlights the inclination to dismiss invective as unimportant (whether or not any of it was true is another question).<sup>141</sup>

This spirit of puncturing the pretensions of ancient Romans helps explain Syme's self-described "pessimistic and truculent tone" in *The Roman Revolution*, as he decries, in particular, the "panegyric" that characterized much scholarship about Augustus.<sup>142</sup> The oft-noted similarities between Syme's use of prosopography to that in Namier's book on eighteenth-century England that had appeared ten years before are all the more indicative of the way history was being written

---

<sup>138</sup> Syme (1939) 151.

<sup>139</sup> Austin (1960) 52.

<sup>140</sup> Gruen (1974) 137. He points out that Antonius, though attacked by Cicero, was elected to serve as consul alongside Cicero (but of course a second consul was bound to be elected), and that Catiline had obtained office before — but not in the election for the consulate of 63 B.C.E., the occasion for the *In Toga Candida*, and his hopes of being elected for the consulates of 65 and 64 had been dashed, and he was defeated again in 63 for the consulate of 62. See Broughton (1991) 16-17, 29-30.

<sup>141</sup> Hammar (2013) 59, within a section on invective (pp. 57-65). Perhaps Hammar is wrong to include Crook (1967) 255 among the historians who followed Syme's lead with respect to invective when he writes, "Similarly, Crook maintained that invective was part of a political and judicial 'game' that had its own rules and did not directly relate to other contexts." Crook is discussing here why this invective could not furnish grounds for a defamation lawsuit, and is using "game" to indicate an activity with its own rules rather than one of little importance.

<sup>142</sup> Syme (1939) viii.

if Syme indeed had not read this work.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, the fact, noted by Barnes, that Namier used prosopography to analyze a stable period (Britain in the mid-eighteenth century) while Syme used it to write about a political system that was in the process of disintegrating and re-forming, suggests the strong attraction that the method exerted upon historians, even though they were writing about fundamentally different situations.<sup>144</sup> In case there is any doubt that Syme could have been aware of, and influenced by, ideas outside Roman history, his restatement of Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy ("In all ages, whatever the form and name of government, be it monarchy, republic, or democracy, an oligarchy lurks behind the façade...") strongly suggests that external ideas did reach him and did affect his analytical perspective.<sup>145</sup>

Scullard presented a view of Roman politics that became standard in the mid-twentieth century, although it did not enjoy universal acceptance: Roman politicians coalesced into groups, based on a nexus of personal and family relationship, and noble clans and families dominated the state (generally to the exclusion of new men) using different kinds of patronage — social, legal (i.e., protection against and during litigation), oratorical, and political patronage (i.e., patronage over client politicians, patronage over a municipality, colony, or province). By controlling elections, the Senate, and the religious machinery of the state, these noble groups competed with other noble groups. Scullard is atypical among these seven historians in that he tries to align factions with policy goals.<sup>146</sup> Yet "standard view" should

---

<sup>143</sup> Momigliano (1962) 730 = (1966) vol. ii, 730 = 'Introduction to R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution*', trans. Cornell, in Bowersock and Cornell (1994) 7; Namier (1929); Bowersock (1980) 8-13. In his juxtaposition of Syme and Namier, Elliott (2012) 102-103 remarks, "It is hardly a coincidence that the analysis of ruling elites came into fashion at a time when both the present and the past were being interpreted in terms of class conflict and class interest." To this description of the intellectual atmosphere, I would add the caveat that the groups (in Bentley's [1908] sense; see below, p. 121), that were studied were not necessarily limited to class, though they might have seemed to constitute classes to the eyes of mid-twentieth-century intellectuals.

<sup>144</sup> Barnes (2007b) 89.

<sup>145</sup> Syme (1939) 7. See Michels (1911).

<sup>146</sup> E.g., Scullard (1973) 55: "Thus the evidence points in one direction and suggests that the Aemilian-Scipionic group was a liberal progressive section of the Senate which was more ready than the conservatives under Fabius to listen to the demands of the People, and that it was more tolerant of, and even co-operated with, the leaders whom the People put forward."

not imply that this was a consensus view. Already in the first edition of *Roman Politics, 220-150 B.C.* (1951), Scullard acknowledged scholarly debate about the extent to which factions controlled public policy,<sup>147</sup> and, in a forward contained in the second edition (1973), he responded to many criticisms that had been leveled against the book.<sup>148</sup> In fact, part of this forward comprises a measured and respectful response that he had made as early as 1955 to a variety of criticisms that followed the publication of the first edition, many of which related to the permanence or transitory nature of the political groupings.<sup>149</sup>

In *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (1949), Taylor presents the liveliest and most accessible version of this approach to Roman Republican politics. After summarizing the advice of the author of the *Comm. Pet.* to Marcus Cicero, the ostensible recipient, she compares a Roman election campaign to U.S. presidential conventions, emphasizing competing groups of friends and a lack of program.<sup>150</sup> At the time of this book's publication, primary elections played much less of a role in the process of nominating U.S. presidential candidates than they do in the twenty-first century, and the delegates to a nominating convention quite possibly had a free hand to choose the party's candidate.

In a work dedicated to the memory of Münzer, Badian expressed a similar view of politicians as the German historian's, but with more emphasis on the enlightened aspect of self-interest. For example, in his characterization of Marius, Badian emphasizes the difficulty of effectively serving one's self-interest:

Eager for power, yet also — like many another *novus homo* — for acceptance by the *nobilitas*, which he faced with the ambivalent attitude of fascinated admiration and proclaimed contempt, he exercised power with discretion, making it — through *beneficia*, which he found were eagerly sought for — a means for securing acceptance and respectability. In the process

---

<sup>147</sup> Scullard (1973) 5-7.

<sup>148</sup> Scullard (1973) xvii-xxxiii.

<sup>149</sup> Scullard (1955) 15-21.

<sup>150</sup> Taylor (1949) 8.

he decisively split his own following and undermined the foundations of his power.<sup>151</sup>

In his portrait of Julius Caesar, “the greatest brigand of them all,” Badian reveals self-interest behind the propaganda:

The sweet reasonableness of the *Commentaries* cannot disguise the fact that Caesar started a major foreign war and then a civil one — for a variety of reasons, as we all know, but chiefly (as he at times comes close to admitting) for his personal glory and profit.<sup>152</sup>

The last leading historian of the Roman Republic to be examined here as an exemplar of the power-oriented school of thought is Gruen, whose *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (1974) covers the period between Sulla and Caesar.<sup>153</sup> According to him, the political system of the Republic was governed by two principles: government should be in the hands of a traditional elite, and members of that elite struggled with each other for power and prestige.<sup>154</sup> Of the 70s B.C.E. Gruen writes, “Individuals calculated their moves in terms of personal advancement, family ties, and traditional rivalries.”<sup>155</sup> Again stressing that personal power, not convictions about good policy, determined the stances adopted by individual politicians, he states that “divisions on principle played little role.”<sup>156</sup> Gruen recognizes the scholarly controversy around the concept of faction when applied to the Late Republic:

How does one analyze the politics of the period? It can be argued that they were very much as they had always been. The great families continued to maintain control through interlocking marriages and adoptions, a whole network of relationships and *amicitiae* which formed the principal branches of the oligarchy.

---

<sup>151</sup> Badian (1957) 342-43 = Badian (1964) 57.

<sup>152</sup> Badian (1968) 89.

<sup>153</sup> I include Gruen (1974) in this tradition because of the similarity with its predecessors with respect to power, in spite of the attack on a historical orthodoxy mounted by this work in other respects. See Hölkeskamp (2009a) 1-2, in Hölkeskamp with Müller-Luckner (2009). My description of Gruen’s viewpoint encompasses only his works on Roman political history written up to and including *Last Generation*.

<sup>154</sup> Gruen (1974) 121.

<sup>155</sup> Gruen (1974) 42.

<sup>156</sup> Gruen (1974) 250.



Behind the more publicized activities of military conquerors and demagogic tribunes lay the subtle manipulations of senatorial factions.<sup>157</sup>

But he notes that others, specifically Meier,<sup>158</sup> have maintained that traditional links broke down in this period:

By contrast, however, one can point to numerous instances in the 60s and 50s where reconstruction along customary lines breaks down. Marriage connections between noble houses no longer guarantee political cooperation; members of the same family are found with conflicting interests and policies. Individuals appear to shift public stance indiscriminately. So, it has been said, political arrangements, when they exist, are makeshift and ad hoc. No factional or familial basis is discernible.<sup>159</sup>

Gruen concludes that there is no need to choose between these two alternatives. Links among noble families, he concedes, are insufficient to explain the course of politics, and those links were not permanent. Social, political, and personal elements are also important. Nevertheless, he writes:

The alternative view, however, would appear to deny all structure to Roman politics. Aristocratic families continued to form marriage connections, to adopt relatives and friends, to flaunt their *amici*, and to feud with their *inimici*. It would be foolish to imagine that these maneuvers possessed no political connotations.<sup>160</sup>

This conviction that in the absence of groups Roman politics would lack all structure is significant, and should be recalled later in connection with the political science of Bentley.<sup>161</sup> For Gruen, groups were clearly collections of people bound by ties such as marriage, adoption, friendship, and enmity. Yet, even if we concede that we need to place a large number of individuals into groups of some kind

---

<sup>157</sup> Gruen (1974) 48.

<sup>158</sup> Meier (1966).

<sup>159</sup> Gruen (1974) 49.

<sup>160</sup> Gruen (1974) 49. In his chapter, "The Exercise of Power in the Roman Republic," in Molho, Raaflaub, and Emlen (1991), Gruen downplays competition within the Roman aristocracy, and emphasizes the "solidarity," "collective purpose," and "political ascendancy" of the *nobiles* (p. 254).

<sup>161</sup> See below, pp. 120-22.

in order to find order within society, it should be pointed out that groups can also be collections of individuals with similar characteristics who might well have no mutual ties or even be aware of each other's existence, and who do not act in concert. Groups in that sense could have had a political significance during the Roman Republic, and furnish a basis for later scholars' analyses that would still provide structure to accounts of Roman politics.

In order to provide concrete examples of the generalized amoralist attitude expressed in citations that I have taken from these seven historians, I will now attempt to exemplify this attitude in their treatment of three notable incidents in the history of the Late Republic: the agrarian reform program of Tiberius Gracchus (tr. pl. 133 B.C.E.), Cicero's prosecution of Verres, and the Bona Dea affair. Nothing in this section should be taken as an attack on the historical accuracy of these historians' accounts of these three famous crises, but rather as a way to highlight what kind of questions these historians asked, and did not ask, about these events. Most of these citations are taken from the same work that supplied the general statements that I have quoted above, but where I have found none readily available in those works, I have used other works by the same author. In a few instances, I was not able to find a statement about each of these three historical events from all seven historians.

*The agrarian legislation of Tiberius Gracchus (133 B.C.E.)*

In a chapter entitled "Factions," having explained that the commission in charge of assigning public land under the *lex Sempronia* was Tiberius' brother Gaius and the fathers-in-law of the two brothers, Ap. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 143) and P. Licinius Crassus Dives Mucianus (cos. 131), **Gelzer** writes:

The Gracchan upheaval, although it certainly did not have its origin in purely personal motives, contained elements of faction enough. In 132 Ti. Gracchus wanted to get himself re-elected to the tribunate with his brother, whilst his father-in-law Appius was to become consul.<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> Gelzer (1912, trans. 1969) 130.

As one would expect in a biographical entry in a reference work (*RE*), **Münzer** primarily provides information about the life of Tiberius Gracchus, and little about his agrarian law.<sup>163</sup>

**Syme** writes, “A small party, zealous for reform — or rather, perhaps, from hostility to Scipio Aemilianus — put up the tribune Ti. Sempronius Gracchus.”<sup>164</sup>

In his main discussion, **Scullard** devotes more space to the political consequences of the bill, particularly the procedural issue of bypassing the Senate, than to the provisions and purposes of the bill, though the latter receive additional coverage in the footnotes.<sup>165</sup>

**Taylor** writes:

Tiberius, son of a distinguished plebeian father and of a mother from the great patrician house of the Scipios, was supported for the tribunate by a group of relatives and friends in the high nobility who had been blocked in the senate. After his election, Tiberius, knowing that the senate would not approve his measure, submitted directly to the people, without senatorial approval, a land bill designed to relieve the economic misery of Rome and Italy. The senatorial *optimates* found a tribune to veto the bill, and Tiberius, by action that was assailed as a violation of popular sovereignty, had this tribune deposed from office, and then obtained the passage of the land bill. Bitter strife developed, and Tiberius, in seeking reelection to the tribunate, was slain.<sup>166</sup>

**Badian** writes:

...Tiberius Gracchus, in 133, proposed his law to enforce the legal limits on the holding of public land and to redistribute the surplus that would become available to the Roman poor. The idea was not his alone: he was supported by some of the leading senators of the day. Both his motives and theirs have been discussed innumerable times, and though the

---

<sup>163</sup> Münzer (1924). A central contention of his relating to Ti. Gracchus is that, ten years before his tribunate, the enemies of Scipio created a coalition, to which the family of Gracchus was joined through marriages (Münzer [1920] trans. Ridley, p. 247).

<sup>164</sup> Syme (1939) 12.

<sup>165</sup> Scullard (1982) 23-25, and note 7-11, pp. 378-81.

<sup>166</sup> Taylor (1949) 15-16.

story has a perennial interest — from the historiographic no less than from the strictly historical point of view — it is not my task to tell it here. What does concern us is that it was the unintended effect of this law to call into question the whole aristocratic Roman conception of the state, based as it was on the postulate that landed property made a governing class peculiarly suited for governing and unprejudiced in its approach to public problems.<sup>167</sup>

After explaining the rationale for the agrarian law in terms of the ills that its supporters expected it to cure, **Gruen** writes, “But there is more to it than that. The affair can take its rightful place in the context of factional politics,” and goes on to explain the conflict between a Scipionic *factio* and its opponents.<sup>168</sup>

*The prosecution of Verres (70 B.C.E.)*

In *Nobilität*, **Gelzer** argues that it was taken for granted that jurors furthered their private and class interests, accepts Cicero’s account of the defense’s total confidence once Hortensius was elected consul for 69 B.C.E. (1 *Ver.* 18-20), and describes Verres as putting his wealth at the disposal of the Metelli in their election campaigns. In a substantial section of his biography of Cicero, he deals primarily with the tactics of the participants and with the political background and consequences of the trial.<sup>169</sup>

Having outlined the viewpoint of James Otis,<sup>170</sup> who “was condemning the license with which governors of provinces pillaged and mistreated the subject peoples,” **Syme** writes that Verres was “the standard example, and a contemporary catchword.” It is clear from his chapter in *The Roman Revolution* that “catchword” is used by Syme to imply propaganda with little factual value.<sup>171</sup>

**Scullard** describes the trial of Verres as a “grave scandal,” and writes that Verres “had plundered and misgoverned his province of

---

<sup>167</sup> Badian (1972a) 54.

<sup>168</sup> Gruen (1968) 50-51.

<sup>169</sup> Gelzer (1912) trans. Seager: (jurors) 73, (election of Hortensius) 77, (campaign funds) 113; and Gelzer (1969) 36-50.

<sup>170</sup> Otis (1725-1783) was an American revolutionary leader.

<sup>171</sup> Syme (1977) 963. For “catchword,” see Syme (1939) 149-61.

Sicily (73-1) on a shocking scale.”<sup>172</sup> Therefore, on this issue Scullard is inclined to take on face value the trial as it emerges from Cicero’s orations.

**Taylor** writes:

It is tempting for one who likes Cicero to believe that a feeling for Rome’s mission with allied and subject peoples and a sense of responsibility toward the Sicilians were sufficient to make Cicero assume the prosecution of a malefactor like Verres....But this was a crucial time in the career of Cicero, and it must be admitted that he would not have taken the case if he had not been convinced that it would further his career.<sup>173</sup>

**Badian** describes the defense of Verres as “that most respectable *causa*.” In his analysis of the dealings between Verres as governor of Sicily, and the *publicani* and *decumani*, he describes how each attempted to maximize his profits from provincial taxation and government. “The collectors, naturally, took what they could get away with.”<sup>174</sup> Badian avoids indignation in favor of cool analysis of economic interests.

**Gruen** does not deal with the substance of the charges against Verres, and downplays the importance of this trial. “The *Verrines* have misled us in more than one way. The courts, on that view, were a central item in the popular program to wreck the Sullan settlement.” “Cicero magnifies out of all proportion the significance of the Verres case in the agitation for change,” he writes, referring to the issue of the composition of juries.<sup>175</sup>

*Bona Dea trial, 61 B.C.E.*

**Syme** writes, “...a mild scandal touching the religion of the State which his enemies exploited and converted into a political contest.”<sup>176</sup>

**Scullard** does not downplay the affair of the Bona Dea, calling it a “notorious scandal.” His final word on it is political: “The result was a

---

<sup>172</sup> Scullard (1982) 94.

<sup>173</sup> Taylor (1949) 102.

<sup>174</sup> Badian (1962) 50 = (1964) 213; (1972a) 73-81, (“naturally”) 79.

<sup>175</sup> Gruen (1974) 33, 35.

<sup>176</sup> Syme (1939) 33.

shock to the Optimates, many of whom had made too much of the affair, and it seriously weakened the *concordia*.”<sup>177</sup>

**Taylor** describes the trial in her chapter entitled “Manipulating the State Religion.”<sup>178</sup>

**Gruen** writes,

The offense was minor, so it would appear: violation of the sacred rites of the Bona Dea. It might easily have been handled by religious authorities. But the political influence of Clodius and the Claudii turned the affair into a scandal and produced a trial of major proportions.<sup>179</sup>

The result of this emphasis on the struggle for power is what North has called a “frozen waste,” and Wiseman an “ideological vacuum.”<sup>180</sup> Devoid of motivating ideology, outlook, or even issues, politics becomes just a battlefield in which politicians fight for advancement and survival. As Wiseman points out, whereas Sallust wrote of a *certamen libertatis aut gloriae aut dominationis* (“struggle for freedom or glory or rule,” *Hist.* 1.7M), Syme writes of the “strife for power, wealth and glory,” a difference that expresses Syme’s conviction that *libertas* was just a political catchword that constituted a claim to be allowed to do whatever was needed to be successful.<sup>181</sup>

At Rome all men paid homage to *libertas*, holding it to be something roughly equivalent to the spirit and practice of Republican government. Exactly what corresponded to the Republican constitution was, however, a matter not of legal definition but of partisan interpretation. *Libertas* is a vague and negative notion — freedom from the rule of a tyrant or faction. It follows that *libertas*, like *regnum* or *dominatio*, is a convenient term of political fraud. *Libertas* was most commonly invoked in defence of the existing order by individuals or classes in enjoyment of power and wealth. The *libertas* of the

---

<sup>177</sup> Scullard (1982) 112.

<sup>178</sup> Taylor (1949) 87-88.

<sup>179</sup> Gruen (1974) 273-74; see also pp. 248-49.

<sup>180</sup> North (1990) 6-7; Wiseman (2009a), updated version of Wiseman (2002a).

<sup>181</sup> Wiseman, (2009a) 16; Syme (1939) 59. See below, p. 103.

Roman aristocrat meant the rule of a class and the perpetuation of privilege.<sup>182</sup>

Politics was seen primarily from the point of view of the leaders rather than the followers. It is not clear what these leaders had to offer their followers to secure their allegiance:

Concerning the relationship of political issues and social problems to the activity of politicians seeking votes, it has been very forcefully contended that the importance of issues as vote-winners has been almost deliberately concealed by a “bourgeois” preoccupation with the motives of elite members. If you can concentrate your readers’ attention, as so many ancient historians have tried to do, on the motives behind Tiberius Gracchus’ proposing an agrarian bill, you can make them forget to ask the more important question — why did the voters support him?<sup>183</sup>

This question of allegiance had probably been of little interest to these historians because they had assumed that the answer was that the followers were *clientes* who would obey their *patroni*, before Brunt undermined that view of the role of *clientela* in politics.<sup>184</sup>

I am not venturing an opinion as to whether these seven historians were always, or indeed ever, aware how their way of writing history was slanted in terms of the questions that they raised and attempted to answer. This slant was so pervasive among historians of all sorts, not just Roman historians, that it could well have seemed natural, as being just what historians do.<sup>185</sup> Indeed, to the extent that it did not represent a conscious choice, it was likely to pervade their writings all the more, since anyone who is not aware of a tendency cannot subject it to critical examination.

The prosopographical viewpoint was not universally accepted.<sup>186</sup> Wiseman acknowledges “dissenting voices”: Wirszubski, Brunt, de Ste. Croix, and Millar; to whom should be added De Sanctis, who

---

<sup>182</sup> Syme (1939) 155.

<sup>183</sup> North (1990) 9-10.

<sup>184</sup> Brunt (1988a).

<sup>185</sup> See below, pp. 110-15, 118-25.

<sup>186</sup> A sober and sensible analysis of prosopography can be found in Broughton (1972), and a critique of prosopography in Clemente (1990), particularly pp. 237-45, which outlines political factors outside of closed aristocratic groups.

sounded a note of caution as early as 1936 to the effect that political groupings were always in flux,<sup>187</sup> Gruen, who though a prosopographer *par excellence* pointed out its pitfalls,<sup>188</sup> Nicolet, who cites morality as one of the factors that the prosopographical approach ignores,<sup>189</sup> and Ferrary, who in a chapter on “le idee politiche a Roma” argues that there *were* indeed political ideas at Rome, as expressed in the conflict between *optimates* and *populares*, which Ferrary describes primarily in terms of process (the powers of the Senate and the Roman People in the assemblies), rather than in terms of substantive issues such as land reform or cancellation of debts.<sup>190</sup> Astin, looking at the years 200-167 B.C.E., although he defends the view that “family solidarity” was important, concedes that much of the criticism of prosopographical method was justified.<sup>191</sup> However, since the point of this discussion has been to defend against the possible criticism of my thesis that it attacks a view that no one in fact held, it is enough to show just that *some* scholars have advanced a contrary point of view.<sup>192</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> De Sanctis (1936) 194: “ma si trattava in generale di quei raggruppamenti che di formano e si dissolvono del continuo.” Brunt (1965) 190, in a review of Earl (1963), provides a succinct overview of objections to prosopography, with citations of critical reviews of the first (1951) edition of Scullard (1973).

<sup>188</sup> Gruen (1971). See Alföldy (1983) 31.

<sup>189</sup> Nicolet (1976, trans. 1980) 6-7: “The attempt to explain almost everything in the political life of ancient Rome by the effects of kinship, marriages and factions — which were certainly important elements, but not exclusively so — is inevitably frustrated from time to time and leads in any case to a purely empirical and cynical view of events which takes too little account of the personal convictions, laws and morality of those concerned, not to mention their need for political support and the pressure, weak though it may have been, of public opinion.”

<sup>190</sup> Ferrary (1982).

<sup>191</sup> Astin (1968) 8: “Some of the criteria which have been employed to determine relationships are patently unsatisfactory; attempts to distribute leading families among two or three large factions constantly break down; it is demonstrably unsafe to infer political relationships in a particular generation from those which can be identified in a previous generation; any theory must be suspect which supposes that distinguished members of ancient and powerful aristocratic families behaved as mere henchmen and followers of others; as I have pointed out elsewhere, within the relatively small governing class the multiplicity of ties of kinship, marriage, obligation, and former co-operation, must often have led to cross-ties and cross-obligations, making men feel obligations in more than one direction; and there was constant opportunity for powerful nobles, or groups of nobles, to strike bargains over the use of their influence and *clientelae*; hence presumably many many instances of short-term political co-operation and in general a significant degree of fluidity.”

<sup>192</sup> See above, p. 57.



One historian from the end of this period, Earl, presents a partial exception to the amoralist view of the Roman Republic, yet seems to pull back from the consequence of the moralism that he sees in the Republic. On the one hand, he begins his first chapter in *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (1967) by stating, “...they [the Romans] were much obsessed by morality.”<sup>193</sup>

Since politics at Rome were personal and social, the language of politics mirrors this condition. All Romans saw political issues in personal and social terms, that is, in terms of morality. Again the categories are ours, not theirs. The Romans did not distinguish morality sharply from politics or economics but looked at affairs from a point of view which may be termed “social,” reflecting the personal and social nature of political life itself. Thus, where we would see the working of the processes of economic change and sociological and political adjustment, they saw — or appeared to us to have seen — only ethical issues.<sup>194</sup>

The Roman nobility expressed its ideal as *virtus*, which developed into “the tradition of Rome itself.”<sup>195</sup> However, Earl accepts Sallust’s viewpoint that the destruction of Carthage led to the corruption of Roman *virtus*, and therefore in the last century of the Republic morality went by the wayside, and the Republic, according to Earl, was destroyed by “the ruinous lust for power and position” of the nobility.<sup>196</sup>

It may be objected that none of these examples reveal anything distinctive about the attitudes of these seven historians to Roman politics because, after all, it is not surprising that, when historians

---

<sup>193</sup> Earl (1967) 11.

<sup>194</sup> Earl (1967) 17; see also p. 20.

<sup>195</sup> Earl (1967) 21.

<sup>196</sup> Earl (1967): 18-19, (Sallust) 48-58, (“ruinous lust”) 58. Hammar (2013) 25 rightly perceives this tension: “Even Earl’s own laudable effort seemingly treats the Roman preoccupation with morality as misguided.” I would suggest that “corrupted” — shown, for example, by the way that political invective came to be used (Earl [1967] 19) — would be a better way to describe Earl’s view of the development of *virtus* and of the way it was exploited than “misguided” or “erroneous” (Hammar [2013] 66). For a recent discussion of the “Dekadenz” thesis, see Knopf (2013) 54-56. Since we possess the most sources from the last century of the Republic compared to earlier centuries, that final period often overshadows the rest, and typifies the whole Republic in our eyes.

write about politics, they might focus their attention on political matters. Badian makes this argument in his discussion of Brunt's critical review of Earl's book on Tiberius Gracchus, a book that emphasized the military purpose of Tiberius' agrarian law and its positive effect on his political power, and downplayed any humanitarian impulse to help the poor.<sup>197</sup> Having criticized Brunt for "distorting Earl's position into a monomaniacal insistence on politics as the be-all and the end-all," Badian eloquently writes:

Let one to whom exactly the same has happened in other connections be allowed to sympathise, and to wonder once more at the deep emotional involvement with which scholars cling to their personal heroes. To search for political aims and motives in the actions of politicians is neither unfair nor unreasonable, and it should not offend anyone seeking the truth. Politicians necessarily do have political aims; and this is no more discreditable to them than it is to the historian to try to discover these aims. Indeed, he is not doing his duty as a historian if he does not at least make the attempt, where the evidence permits it. That enquiry by no means excludes the search for broader aims — it necessarily complements any such search.<sup>198</sup>

Badian is right that the issue is not whether historians, when they describe and interpret political history, should pay attention to politics, as opposed to the merits and drawbacks of policies and programs. The fact that politicians care about politics, in the narrow sense of obtaining office, assembling coalitions, and augmenting their backing, should not necessarily be interpreted to mean that they push their proposals without any regard to the public good. In fact, it is certainly conceivable that their motive for seeking power was precisely to do good for others and/or for the state.

Nevertheless, when historians focus solely on politics in the narrow sense and disregard the arguments based on the common good for and against policies and laws, they do convey the impression that

---

<sup>197</sup> Earl (1963); Brunt (1965) 190, attacking what he sees as Earl's thesis that the purpose of the agrarian bill of Tiberius Gracchus was to bolster the "Claudian faction" by adding to its *clientela*; and Badian (1972b) 673-74, 681-82.

<sup>198</sup> Badian (1972b) 682. Of course, providing adequate manpower to field a sufficient army is a potentially moral goal, in the sense of furthering the public welfare.

politics is all about personal advancement and not at all about benefitting other members of their society. In that sense, by highlighting the personal considerations and ignoring the general welfare, some historians have at least implied an amoralist view of politics. Astin grapples with the apparent divorce between politicians and policies by stressing the distinction between elected officials and the Senate. The former, he argues, had executive powers and did not constitute a “government,” while the latter, which was not, strictly speaking, an elective body, was the sole deliberative organ of the Roman state, and thus made most of the “decisions of a governmental kind”; therefore, election campaigns saw little discussion of policy.<sup>199</sup> I wish to counter this analysis with two observations. First, the Senate was composed of ex-magistrates, and voters would have known that the men whom they were electing to office would go on to sit in the Senate. Moreover, since the rank and influence of each senator within the Senate would depend on the highest office that he had held, *consulares* were more influential than praetorians, and praetorians than quaestorians. Therefore, Roman voters must have been aware that each step in the *cursus honorum* attained by a politician brought him greater power in senatorial deliberations, and that therefore, although all candidates for the praetorship and consulate were already senators (since quaestorian status was sufficient to allow entrance into the Senate), election to those higher offices rendered the successful candidate more powerful than he had been before, and in a stronger position to influence government policy. Second, a candidate for office at Rome could at times, and undoubtedly did, campaign on the basis of the *virtus* that he would display if elected, for example, by successfully defending Rome against enemy attack, conquering new territory for the Roman People, or standing against a seditious individual or group; therefore, even without promoting a policy or program, a candidate could argue that a vote for him was the morally right choice for the voter.

The works of the seven historians whom I have been discussing do not generally present politics and political power as means to some good end. Perhaps they might have tried to defend the machinations

---

<sup>199</sup> Astin (1968) 10-12.

of Roman politicians to seek power as aimed at some higher goal,<sup>200</sup> but the fact is that, in general, these historians show no interest in making that argument. Their lack of emphasis on, and even silence about, the public good as the goal of politicians, or on the politicians' public spirit — a lack of emphasis or a silence that, obviously, I cannot demonstrate by quotations —, leads to the conclusion that they viewed political power as an end in itself, or at least implies that they did not think that locating public spirit or the public good falls within the scope of historians.

To clarify the amoral aspect of the treatment that the historians whom I have cited as exemplars of an important approach to Roman history in the twentieth century gave to the three topics (Tiberius Gracchus, the trial of Verres, and the Bona Dea affair) that we are using as examples, let us take a look at how a non-amoral account of Roman politics by contrast might appear, seeing how other historians have approached each of these three topics in moral terms.

*The agrarian legislation of Tiberius Gracchus (133 B.C.E.)*

Gabba sees the impulse behind this legislation as well-meaning but misguided:

The political forces behind Ti. Gracchus were clearly well-informed about the situation in Italy, although, as I have said, they considered economic and social factors cold-bloodedly in their relation to a policy of military expansion. And they did not lack courage....The anti-Gracchans were, it is true, dominated by narrow-mindedness, prejudice and egoism, but as happens only too often (by a strange but all too common paradox) they were in a basic sense right....

None the less, the Gracchi had been able to express the very real needs of a large social group whose ideal was still that of the age in which everyone had his little plot of land and was happy. This explains how the theme of the small peasant driven from his land by his rich and powerful neighbour could, even in

---

<sup>200</sup> See above, pp. 5-6.

subsequent ages, have real political and ideological meaning....<sup>201</sup>

*The prosecution of Verres (70 B.C.E.)*

Mitchell casts doubt on the interpretation of this trial as part of a factional struggle between a Metellan *factio* and the followers of Pompey. In his view, when Cicero argued that the trial was a test of the integrity of senatorial juries, he was simply making an argument that he deemed would help him win his case. Mitchell places Cicero's motivations squarely in the realm of Roman *virtus* and *officium*:

Cicero's reasons for taking the case are clear and are clearly stated by Cicero himself. He was pursuing a time-honored practice of Roman politics whereby younger politicians undertook the rigors of an *illustris accusatio* to prove their *virtus* and *industria* and their capacity for political life....It was a means to *laus* and *gloria* for aspiring orators which was fully accepted and indeed commended, perceived as a healthy outlet for the energies and ambition of the rising generation.<sup>202</sup>

The fact that Cicero benefitted in terms of political advancement by following Roman morality in no way detracts from the moral terms in which Mitchell views Cicero's prosecution of Verres; indeed, if Mitchell is right that Cicero was enhancing his political career through championing some of Rome's provincial subjects against an allegedly rapacious governor ("the furtherance of his principal political objective of power-building through the courts"<sup>203</sup>), his motivation would count as an indication of the moral nature of Rome's political culture.<sup>204</sup>

*Bona Dea trial, 61 B.C.E.*

In his biography of Clodius, Tatum devotes a chapter to the Bona Dea scandal, and takes it seriously in both its political and religious dimensions:

Often enough, Clodius's violation of the Bona Dea sacrifice is not taken seriously per se (in

---

<sup>201</sup> Gabba (1968) tr. Cuff (1976) 160-61.

<sup>202</sup> Mitchell (1979) 147.

<sup>203</sup> Mitchell (1979) 149.

<sup>204</sup> For the non-factional interpretation of the trial of Verres, Mitchell (1979) 107-10, 133-49.

contradistinction to the political controversy that soon supervened), as if his presence at the rites were no more than a minor matter whose circumstances made for an entertaining item of gossip. Yet Cicero, in the very letter just referred to [Cic. *Att.* 1.12], evinced sincere concern over the scandal from its very beginning — before the matter was raised in the Senate....

Now it is difficult even for the ever skeptical modern to describe such a situation as trivial or its creation as prankish. The notion that the Romans of the late republic were too jaded or cynical to take their religion seriously is by now thoroughly outdated, the product (as has been pointed out more than once) of the unwarranted imposition of Christianizing assumptions about the essential and necessary conditions of true religion. This is not to say that there were neither skeptics in Rome nor opportunists who knew how to exploit *religio* for their own purposes, as indeed there were, nor is it to deny the extent to which Romans of the higher orders recognized in civic religion a medium of social control. But the former observation, *being applicable to every society*, is merely banal, and the latter actually underscores the significance of religious observance in a culture more than ordinarily concerned with the maintenance of order and whose religion was understood to serve functions different from but no less valuable (to its practitioners) than those of Christianity. Cicero's age displays ample evidence of religious feeling and of interest in religious issues.<sup>205</sup>

Tatum is clearly avoiding the application of modern ideas and expectations to this scandal, and attempting to see it through the eyes of contemporaries.<sup>206</sup>

These portrayals of the agrarian reform of Tiberius Gracchus as an expression of the real needs of a social group, the trial of Verres as a way that Cicero exploited genuine revulsion against a governor whom Cicero successively denounced as rapacious, and the Bona Dea trial as stemming from sincere repugnance against a perceived act of impiety

---

<sup>205</sup> Tatum (1999) 65, 66 (my emphasis added).

<sup>206</sup> For the distinction between etic and emic, see below, pp. 97-107, 112 n. 282, 139-40.

stand in contrast to the way that the seven other historians characterize, explicitly or implicitly, those three historical episodes. Those seven historians emphasize the political machinations engaged in by the leading personages, rather than the sense of right and wrong among the Roman People into which politicians tapped.

It might also be objected that the formal existence of a *cursus honorum* in the late Roman Republic demonstrates that Roman politicians were careerists, since they wanted to progress as far along on the *cursus* as they were able to. Although I would agree that they managed their careers, I do not believe that it would be proper to conclude from that fact that they were *only* careerists. Let me illustrate the distinction with an analogy to a field of endeavor with which most readers of this book will be familiar: academia. Suppose I am asked to talk about the work of a distinguished senior Professor X, and I reply, “She wrote her first book to get tenure, and her second book to get promoted to full professor. She wrote many articles, in order to get a higher merit raise than she would have received otherwise. She gave papers at scholarly conferences, in order to get part of her way paid and also to network with other scholars.” All those statements are likely to contain an element of truth. Professor X did need to manage her career, and publishing books and articles and giving papers at conferences were ways to keep her job and improve her standing. Yet anyone listening to my answer would react by complaining that I was trivializing her scholarly record, because my account omits the ideas that Professor X propounded, ideas that she almost certainly believed to be true, and of whose validity she wanted to persuade others. Similarly, while it is certainly true that a particular Roman politician probably wanted to advance along the *cursus honorum* as far as he possibly could, he did so quite possibly because he believed in his own worth — not necessarily in terms of a program of action, although that was possible, but because he believed that he was doing the right thing by serving the state and thus demonstrating his *virtus*.

This analysis of one aspect of one very important strain in Roman Republican historiography has had as its goal the demonstration that amoralism has often been a central concept inherent in that school of the prosopographical history. This discussion in no way denies the fundamental value of these great works of history, written by seven

scholars whom everyone does regard and should continue to regard as outstanding. The factual foundation that these works have provided for future Roman historians guarantees that they will always be read and consulted. But Barnes' reflection on what prosopography can and cannot do sheds light both on their instrumental value in establishing part of the factual foundation that historians of the Roman Republic need, and at the same time the limitations of these works:

In my own work, I have always employed prosopography as a tool that is potentially useful for investigating any historical problem; indeed, I regard prosopography and accurate chronology as the twin foundations of any serious historical research. But I do not regard these two analytical tools either as necessarily sufficient for solving any historical problem or as guaranteeing historical understanding or insight.<sup>207</sup>

As I stated at the outset of the chapter, in defending my contention that the Roman sources provide no evidence of amoralism in the political culture of the Roman Republic against the objection that I am fighting against a straw man, I have needed to show only that *some* historians *some* of the time at least *implied* that the Romans had an amoral attitude to politics.<sup>208</sup> I believe that I have met that burden of proof, and furthermore that the prominence of the seven historians whose historical approach I have analyzed supports the significance of the concept of amoralism in understanding this historical tradition.

## Roman Republic vs. Roman Empire

Besides the power orientation of twentieth-century historiography, a second reason why an amoralist view of Roman politics in particular became dominant is that the reputation of Rome suffered, in the broadest sense. Wiseman has identified two views of Rome: the first

---

<sup>207</sup> Barnes (2007b) 89.

<sup>208</sup> Crawford (2011) 108 describes a tradition in the twentieth century "which did not believe that Republican politics could be studied without reference to the ideas men held and to the inter-relationship between those ideas and the evolution of politics and institutions." He cites Last, Momigliano, Brunt, Griffin, Adcock, and Earl as practitioners of this tradition. The appearance of a volume devoted to public spirit (*Gemeinsinn*) and the public good (*Gemeinwohl*) in Roman times (Jehne and Lundgreen [2013]), which employs these concepts as developed by other scholars in a general way within the last twenty years, shows a quite different historical approach from that of these seven historians.



as the bastion of Republican virtue, the second as a destructive and tyrannical empire. The first inspired the American Revolution and the French Revolution, the second Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*, Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur*, and Howard Fast's *Spartacus*, the last two achieving great success on the screen.<sup>209</sup> This characterization of the two epochs perhaps reflects a post-colonial mentality. When the nations of Western and Central Europe were previously engaged in their own colonial ventures, they took the Roman Empire as a model to follow that justified their own imperial ventures in different ways;<sup>210</sup> later, as the European empires crumbled and disappeared, they ceased to seek an imperial model for themselves. A particular and late case of imperial justification is Fascist Italy, in which Mussolini portrayed himself as a latter-day Augustus who rescued Italy from torpor like the predecessor whom he claimed, Augustus from the disintegrating Republic and Mussolini from post-unification Italy dominated by liberal individualism and corruption, both to launch a Roman Empire.<sup>211</sup> After European empires had not only disintegrated but became an embarrassing memory, Rome's imperial role was no longer an attractive feature.

A shift in the British attitude specifically toward the Roman Republic occurred in the late eighteenth century as a result of the French Revolution. For most of that century, the Roman Republic was viewed in Britain as a positive example of a mixed constitution to be imitated, though out-of-power Tories and the dominant Whigs used the Roman example in different ways. The emergence of actual republics in North America and France overturned this analogy, and the Roman Republic became a cautionary example to which the

---

<sup>209</sup> Wiseman (1995) 151-54. Wiseman identifies Johann Gottfried von Herder's *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1787) as the probable turning point from one view to the other. Malamud (2009) brings out this change in American attitudes toward Rome from a positive to cautionary exemplar. Adler (2008b) shows that the negative view of Rome prevails in recent comparisons between Rome and the United States, which, as he writes (p. 597) of the work of a professor of Japanese history, "...aim at tainting the latter by equating it with the former." On the novel and the film *Spartacus*, see Malamud (2009) 213-25.

<sup>210</sup> See Linderski (1984).

<sup>211</sup> See below, p. 117 and n. 299.

ancestral English constitution was to be opposed.<sup>212</sup> Since the Greeks and the Romans have often been competing alternatives in the field of Classics, idealization of ancient Greece came to supplant admiration for the Romans to some extent during the nineteenth century, especially as the Romantic glorification of originality took hold, with the Greeks viewed as original ancients and the Romans as derivative moderns.<sup>213</sup>

### Amoralism in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*

I will now take up the *Comm. Pet.*, not in order to repeat or reinforce the case for the way I read it, but so as to take note of the implication of widespread trust in it that led many Roman historians to assume or conclude that Roman political culture was amoral — an implication that justifies, in part, my attempt to rebut belief in Roman amorality.

The *Comm. Pet.*, a manual on how to campaign for the consulate ostensibly written in 64 B.C.E. by Quintus Cicero as his older brother Marcus was about to run for the consulate of 63 B.C.E., provides the strongest single basis for believing that many Roman historians have posited or assumed amoralism in Roman Republican political culture. For whether historians have accepted the authorship of Quintus Cicero or believed that it was written later by someone else as a pseudepigraphic work that imagines what Quintus might have written as advice to his brother — those issues of date and authorship have produced no consensus for well over a century —,<sup>214</sup> all scholars writing on this disputed work up to my re-interpretation of it that appeared in 2009 have agreed that it presents a useful and well-informed analysis of how Roman election campaigns worked during

---

<sup>212</sup> Turner (1989) 65-70. Sachs (2012) “complicates” (his word, 27) this account by stressing the persistence of reference to Rome in Romantic thought.

<sup>213</sup> On interest in Greece replacing interest in Rome, see Turner (1989), again an account somewhat complicated by Sachs (2012) 29-30. For a problematized view of originality as a concept that worked to increase respect for the ancient Greeks and decrease that for the Romans, see Saunders (2012). In the United States, the Roman Republic served as a model in the early decades of the early (U.S.) Republic, and again in the twentieth century; see Connolly (2007) 8.

<sup>214</sup> For a summary of the opposing points of view, see Alexander (2009a) 33-35. See also Morstein-Marx (1998) 261.

the Republic. The existence of this “hidden consensus”<sup>215</sup> suggests that the Roman historians who used it as a basis for their understanding of Roman political culture, and almost all of them did, must have accepted the work’s persistent (but, in my view, superficial and ironically intended) expression of amoralism as an accurate depiction of Roman attitudes.<sup>216</sup>

The following is a brief summary of my 2009 *Athenaeum* article on the *Comm. Pet.* In spite of vigorous disagreement about whether the work was actually written in the year of its dramatic date (64 B.C.E.) and whether it was actually composed by its ostensible author, Quintus Cicero, scholars have taken it for granted that it constitutes a serious attempt to explain how to win an election during the Roman Republic. I identify three signs of mockery that suggest that the work was written tongue-in-cheek: 1) Marcus Cicero is described as a *nomenclator*, which was a role for a slave or freedman, 2) the author of the work propounds an instrumental view of *amicitia* that certainly would not have appealed to Marcus Cicero, to judge by *De amicitia*, his philosophical treatise on the subject a friendship, and 3) when the author of the work advises its recipient to make commitments to voters that he has no intention of keeping, he cites as a confirmatory example C. Aurelius Cotta (*cos.* 75 B.C.E.), a politician who had a reputation for excessive ambition. I then attempt to show that the work is based on two negative traditions, about elections and about Marcus Cicero. As far as the latter is concerned, Gabba has identified the elements of the anti-Ciceronian tradition, and I argue that all of these are quite specifically reflected in the *Comm. Pet.*, with the exception of those derogatory elements that relate to events that occurred after the dramatic date of the work, and would therefore be anachronistic to include, and also with the exception of those derogatory elements that the ostensible author, Quintus Cicero, would

---

<sup>215</sup> Alexander (2009a) 35-37. An example of this consensus can be found in Lepore (1954) 195 n. 331, referring to *Comm. Pet.* 3: “Se si accetta la tesi della HENDERSON (JRS, 1950, pp. 8-21) questa testimonianza non perde valore, diventando sintomo del pensiero politico del I secolo d.C. sulle relazioni sociali degli *homines novi*” (“If one accepts the thesis of Henderson this evidence does not lose value, becoming a symptom of the political thought of the first century C.E. about the social relations of new men”).

<sup>216</sup> Alexander (2009a) 35-37.

be unlikely to include.<sup>217</sup> The presence of corroborative historical details in the work does not show that it was authentic, because these details were to be found in ancient works that would have been available to an ancient author other than Quintus, especially once Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* had been rediscovered — and, of course, our modern knowledge of the same details can stem from the same sources. Romans of a scholarly bent possessed quite enough knowledge of detailed facts to have written the *Comm. Pet.* Asconius springs to mind as an erudite Roman who amply possessed this detailed grasp of the evidence from the previous century, and Quintilian might have been another — not that it is likely that either of these two in particular had an inclination to compose the *Comm. Pet.*, if it had the purpose that I see in it.<sup>218</sup> I conclude that the *Comm. Pet.* is a pseudepigraphic work, meant to be recognized by its readers as such, that its cleverness lies in its deadpan pedestrian presentation, that Marcus Cicero is used as the fictional recipient because of the negative tradition that was attached to him, and finally that the work was possibly written around the end of the Julio-Claudian era and the beginning of the Flavian era to counter nostalgia for the old Republic that was current in some circles, using the most famous figure from the old Republic as a negative example.

My ironic reading of the *Comm. Pet.* as a tongue-in-cheek attack on Republican elections, which I will call “the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*,” has so far met with varied reaction, from acceptance to attempted refutation, with most comments expressing cautious interest.<sup>219</sup> If the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* is correct, the *Comm. Pet.* does not constitute evidence of an amoral political culture in the Roman Republic; if this interpretation is wrong, then the *Comm. Pet.* provides the only evidence of Roman amoralism, and that distinctive characteristic needs to be taken into account when evaluating the work's authenticity and thus its reliability. I urge any reader who is unconvinced by this summary of my *Athenaeum* article first to read it, and then to compare the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* with its two rivals, neither of which has been able to win

---

<sup>217</sup> Gabba (1957).

<sup>218</sup> Alexander (2009a) 392.

<sup>219</sup> For a summary of its reception, see Appendix One.

the day among historians even after well over a century of debate. The view that the work was actually written by Quintus Cicero in 64 B.C.E. as real advice to his brother on getting elected to the consulate of 63 B.C.E. founders on the echoes of it contained in the *In Toga Candida*. In my opinion, Hendrickson's demonstration that very similar language is used in the *Comm. Pet.* and the extant fragments of Marcus Cicero's *In Toga Candida* dealt a fatal blow to this point of view.<sup>220</sup> Why would Marcus, in one of the most important speeches of his career up to this point, borrow from a manual that everyone agrees is pedestrian? The other rival is the view that it was written at some point thereafter as a historical and literary exercise both to provide a straightforward description of campaign strategy in the now past Republic and to display the (real) author's cleverness, as part of the pseudepigraphic genre that became popular at Rome. To this view, the pedestrian nature of the work presents a considerable obstacle, because the work, if read in a literal way, displays no wit. Compared to these two problematic interpretations, the Ironic Interpretation is superior.

An argument from silence corroborates the existence of a widespread assumption of amoralism among many modern Roman historians, an assumption that required no defense: their failure to highlight the amoralism pervasively expressed in the *Comm. Pet.*, with the exception of Tatum's argument (in 2007) that amoralism (or, rather, something similar but not quite the same) is a central theme in the work.<sup>221</sup> If the *Comm. Pet.* is to be taken at face value, it furnishes powerful evidence that the Romans adopted a double standard when it came to morality, carving out a large exception for politicians, as far as their conduct in domestic political roles (e.g., running for office and legislating) was concerned.<sup>222</sup> Its testimony would be especially powerful if it constituted a source contemporary to the late Roman Republic, but, even if it was written in a later period, it probably would have had access to sources no longer extant to us, and still would need

---

<sup>220</sup> Hendrickson (1892). Tatum (2013) 149-50 argues that the similarity arises not from borrowing from one work to another, but from coordinated "talking points."

<sup>221</sup> Tatum (2007) 126, and highlighted in the title of the article.

<sup>222</sup> Kroll (1933) 136 n. 19 refers to a double standard ("eine doppelte Moral") in connection with the *Comm. Pet.*'s recommendation (42) that candidates engage in flattery, which is generally reprehensible.

to be granted some credence. However, if I am right that it is mocking the recommendations that it ostensibly gives, then it not only does not count as evidence for a double standard, but in fact counts against a double standard.

I should clarify at this point that by distinguishing the amoralism of the *Comm. Pet.* from all other extant sources from the Late Republic, I am *not* introducing a new argument against the authenticity of the *Comm. Pet.*, that is, the argument that we have less reason to place trust in this work if it contains a message not found in our other sources from the period. Indeed, this line of reasoning would be circular, saying that the *Comm. Pet.* cannot be trusted because it is an outlier, and it is an outlier because it cannot be trusted. Rather, I regard my *Athenaeum* article on the work to have made a satisfactory case for the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*, and for that reason in my view the treatise's ostensible endorsement of political amoralism is not to be taken at face value.

Amoralism is indeed persistently expressed in the *Comm. Pet.* Tatum reveals the pervasiveness of passages in the *Comm. Pet.* that state or imply that candidates for political office in Rome were not required to, or even expected to, follow the ethical rules that applied in other areas of life.<sup>223</sup> The distinction between the actions of a good candidate and a good man is clearly drawn in this work, even if difficulties with the text cause some uncertainty as to whether the point in this passage is that politicians should promise favors even whether they do not know if they will be able to perform them:

*Comm. Pet.* 45: ...*illud difficilium et magis ad tempus quam ad naturam accommodatum tuam, quod facere non possis, ut id aut iucunde neget <aut etiam non neget>; quorum alterum est tamen boni viri, alterum boni petitoris.*

...this is harder, and more suited to the situation than to your nature, either decline gracefully to do what you cannot do, or even do not decline; while one is a

---

<sup>223</sup> Tatum (2007) 119-31. In philosophical terms, however, Tatum analyzes this attitude not as "amoralism," but as an "accommodation of circumstantial necessity" (p. 130). For a discussion of which term better describes this ethical stance expressed in the work, see Appendix Two.

characteristic of a good person, the other is a characteristic of a good candidate.

Tatum is right to highlight this distinction between the good man in general and the good candidate specifically as a central and pervasive distinction in this work. It might be thought that the author is possibly distinguishing between two uses of the word *bonus*, with the word applied to *vir* being used as “ethical” and the word applied to *petitor* as “skillful”; as one might say, “It is one thing to be a good person, another to be a good carpenter.”<sup>224</sup> However, other passages in the *Comm. Pet.* make it clear that the point being made is indeed that the word means the same in both cases, but has different implications for the *vir* in distinction to the *petitor*: some actions that are not permitted to a good man are permitted to a good candidate. Flattery, for example, which would normally be obnoxious, is allowed to candidates:<sup>225</sup>

*Comm. Pet. 42: ...blanditia, quae, etiam si vitiosa est et turpis in cetera vita, tamen in petitione necessaria est...*

...flattery, which, even if it is wicked and base in the rest of life, nevertheless is essential in a campaign...

In two passages, the treatise grants candidates the right to make use of the concept of friendship in ways that would normally not be allowed:

*Comm. Pet. 25: ...potes honeste, quod in cetera vita non queas, quoscumque velis adiungere ad amicitiam, quibusque si alio tempore agas ut te utantur, absurde facere videare, in petitione autem nisi id agas et cum multis et diligenter, nullus petitor esse videare.*

...you can honorably join in friendship whomever you wish, with whom if you acted on another occasion so as to make them be on good terms with you, you would seem to be acting ridiculously (and you may not do this in the rest of your life), but if in a campaign if

---

<sup>224</sup> Wisse (2013) 192–94 explains the difference between *bonus* as “morally good” (“referent modifier”) and as being good at doing something (“reference modifier”); when used with an agentive noun like *petitor*, *bonus* often means “a good X-er *qua* someone who does X.” Thus, *bonus petitor* could mean “someone who campaigns (for office) who is good *qua* campaigner.”

<sup>225</sup> At *Att.* 12.3.1 and 12.5c, written in 46 B.C.E., Cicero claims that he is totally averse to using *blanditia*, at least toward Atticus. This self-image does not precisely contradict the *Comm. Pet.*, since he is not a candidate for office.

you *did not* act in this way both with many people and assiduously, you would seem to be no candidate.

*Comm. Pet. 16: Sed hoc nomen amicorum in petitione latius patet quam in cetera vita; quisquis est enim qui ostendat aliquid in te voluntatis, qui colat, qui domum ventitet, is in amicorum numero est habendus.*

But this word “friend” extends more broadly in a campaign than in the rest of life; anyone who shows some goodwill toward you, who cultivates you, who keeps coming to your house should be numbered among your friends.

An example of a flexible useful of *amicitia* is the statement that Marcus Cicero, while he has at times spoken as if he were a *popularis*, did so only to attach Pompey to himself:

*Comm. Pet. 5: ...si quid locuti populariter videamur, id nos eo consilio fecisse ut nobis Cn. Pompeium adiungeremus, ut eum qui plurimum posset aut amicum in nostra petitione haberemus aut certe non adversarium.*

...if we ever seem to have spoken in a manner designed to please the mass of the people, we have done with the intention that we bring Gnaeus Pompeius to our side, so that we have him, who has the most power, either as a friend in our campaign or at least not an opponent.

The author admits that he is blurring somewhat the line between the personal relationship of *amicitia* and mass popular support:

*Comm. Pet. 49: Ac ne videar aberasse a distributione mea, qui haec in hac populari parte petitionis disputem, hoc sequor, haec omnia non tam ad amicorum studia quam ad popularem famam pertinere: etsi inest aliquid ex illo genere, benigne respondere, studiose inservire negotiis ac periculis amicorum, tamen hoc loco ea dico quibus multitudinem capere possis....*

But if I seem to have departed from my organization, since I argue these things in connection with the part of the campaign that relates to the People, I follow the approach that all these things pertain not so much to the support of friends as to reputation among the People; although there is present something from the other part, answering favorably, industriously serving



the business and problems of friends, nevertheless I say in this place those things by which you can attract the masses....

This moral laxity is necessary for success in a city that is characterized as deceitful and treachery.

*Comm. Pet.* 54: “Roma est,” civitas ex nationum conventu constituta, in qua multae insidiae, multa fallacia, multa in omni genere vitia versantur, multorum adrogantia, multorum contumacia, multorum malevolentia, multorum superbia, multorum odium ac molestia perferenda est.

“It’s Rome!” — a community established from the congress of peoples, in which much treachery, many falsehoods, many faults of all kinds are involved, the haughtiness of many, the ill will of many, the arrogance of many, the hatred and annoyances of many must be borne.

The author recognizes that the real or nominal recipient of the letter, Marcus Cicero, candidate for the consulate of 63 B.C.E., will find some of the advice contained in the document unpalatable because he is a “Platonist,” a word that might mean little more than “philosopher” (and thus averse to chicanery), but might refer to Cicero’s credentials as a follower of the New Academy:

*Comm. Pet.* 46: ...illud alterum subdurnum tibi homini Platonico suadere, sed tamen tempori tuo consulam.

...it is hard to persuade a Platonist like you of this other course, but nevertheless I shall pay attention to your situation.<sup>226</sup>

If *bonus petitor* initially struck the Roman reader as meaning “someone skilled at campaigning,” then the *Comm. Pet.* is being witty when it treats *bonus petitor* as actually referring to the morality of the candidate. Wiseman has well summarized the message of the *Comm. Pet.* to the candidate: “offend nobody, make contacts everywhere, flatter, oblige, equivocate.”<sup>227</sup>

---

<sup>226</sup> Cicero refers to himself as a follower of Plato: *Platonem nostrum, Plato, quo ego vehementer auctore moveor* (“our friend Plato, Plato, an authority who carries a lot of weight with me”) (*Cic. Fam.* 1.9.12, 18).

<sup>227</sup> Wiseman (1971) 135.

It is tempting to summarize the message of the *Comm. Pet.* as “All is fair in campaigning for office,” as a parallel to the English proverb, “All is fair in love and war.” This would be an exaggeration, because, as Tatum points out, the work does not remove absolutely all moral strictures from the candidate, admonishing him, for example, to avoid bribery and, to pick an obvious and extreme example, it does not urge candidates to murder their opponents.<sup>228</sup> Yet we need not employ a modern understanding of Roman morality to make a contrast between morality and the recommendations of this work, since it explicitly states that the candidate can and should act under a different and looser moral regime than Romans are allowed to do in their day-to-day lives. While this work does not make the recommendation that all things are fair in a political campaign, it does convey the notion that many acts and behaviors are fair in a political campaign that would not be accepted in ordinary life. Tatum’s highlighting of these passages that contrast standards for the good person and the good candidate constitutes a major advance in our understanding of the *Comm. Pet.*

The trust that many Roman historians have placed in the work, whoever they think wrote it and whenever they think it was written, reveals their acceptance of Roman political amoralism. If scholars had not believed that the Romans exempted their politicians from normal morality, one would have expected that, in the long-standing debate about the *Comm. Pet.*’s authenticity, some skeptical scholar would have exploited the argument that the *Comm. Pet.* expresses an attitude that is found nowhere else in our sources for the Republic, and that therefore it is unlikely to have been written during that period. Conversely, one would expect that, if no scholar thought that Romans granted special moral latitude toward politicians, supporters of the *Comm. Pet.*’s authenticity would have felt it necessary to explain how the unique sentiment *alterum boni viri, alterum boni petitoris* found its way into the thinking of Quintus Cicero in the 60s B.C.E.

On the contrary, both sides of the authenticity argument have read the advice provided in the *Comm. Pet.* as entirely natural within

---

<sup>228</sup> Tatum (2007) 131-32. This article anticipates some of the arguments made by me, and attempts to refute them; for my response, see my addendum, Alexander (2009a) 393-95.

Roman political culture.<sup>229</sup> They certainly must have believed that the work reflects the views of at least one Roman, namely the author, whether he was Quintus Cicero or someone else, and whether he was contemporary to the Republic or a later writer who was well-informed about the *vetus res publica*. And, since the author claims not to be formulating new conclusions but merely to be synthesizing facts and recommendations already known to Marcus Cicero (*Comm. Pet.* 1, 58), modern scholars who have taken the work at face value, at least up to my 2009 article, cannot have thought that the author's outlook and observations were entirely idiosyncratic. Therefore, the absence of modern discussion of the uniqueness of the author's amoral outlook and the fact that no scholar until Tatum found the work's straightforward and unabashed recommendation of some types of political skullduggery to be strikingly distinctive show that the work has in fact been understood in modern times as expressing an attitude that was widely accepted during the Roman Republic. One of these attitudes would be what Tatum calls an "accommodation of circumstantial necessity," and I call "amoralism."<sup>230</sup>

My Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* does not reject any connection at all between the work and the reality that this work (according to this interpretation) mocks. Certainly, mockery always needs to build on some aspect of reality in order to be effective, but the historical credibility of the work has to be evaluated in light of its purpose, and, if its purpose was to ridicule Roman elections, then we need to be cautious about its contention that Roman candidates routinely violated normal morality. According to the Ironic Interpretation, the author of the *Comm. Pet.* thought that Roman candidates generally committed immoral actions in their campaigns, and exaggerates this immorality by having Marcus' imaginary teacher ("Quintus Cicero") advise his brother that it is actually perfectly normal and acceptable for candidates to commit actions that would normally be blameworthy. Therefore, in my view, the author of the work might have sincerely held a belief that immoral actions had been

---

<sup>229</sup> Dymskaia (2015) 103-104, however, says that, because of the unresolved questions about the work's authorship and date, we should not place trust in it as a reliable historical source. This work cites Alexander (2009a).

<sup>230</sup> See Appendix Two.

committed in the course of Roman Republican election campaigns, and he, on the one hand, *might* have believed that candidates had been more likely to commit these actions because of the amoral political culture that he detected in the Republic of old, or, on the other hand, he *might* have added that element just to ridicule Republican elections.<sup>231</sup> In either case, he did not seriously espouse the historical verisimilitude of the conscious and explicitly expressed amorality that he ascribes to the attitudes of the Republican era about those campaigns, and therefore the work does not supply unambiguous evidence for an amoral political culture.

If we grant that the author may have held a low opinion of Roman Republican elections, to what era should we date this opinion? It is highly unlikely that the work is contemporary to the election campaign for the consulate of 63 B.C.E., because the negative slant that the work puts on Marcus Cicero's *novitas* would have applied equally to his brother Quintus, who was also a politician, and the anti-Ciceronian motifs on which the work seems to be partly based are likely to have originated in the triumviral period. A later pseudepigraphic work would have displayed some wit and cleverness, which can be seen in this work if it is read ironically but not if it is read literally.<sup>232</sup>

### The effect of amoralism on the historical interpretation of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*

The concept of political amoralism helps us understand why many Roman historians were so inclined to take the *Comm. Pet.* at face value. Roman historians who wrote during the period from shortly before the First World War to ca. 1980 were so imbued with amoralist assumptions about the writing of history (being similar in this respect to many other historians)<sup>233</sup> that they were predisposed to accept the validity of the advice contained in the *Comm. Pet.*, whether they thought that Quintus Cicero had written it in 64 B.C.E., or that it was written as a pseudepigraphic work much later, since the advice of “Quintus” to “Marcus” — to adopt almost any pose to woo the voter or

---

<sup>231</sup> See above, p. 54.

<sup>232</sup> Alexander (2009a): (ridicule) 387-88; (Quintus and Marcus share *novitas*) 389; (date) 372, 378; (wit) 386, 393.

<sup>233</sup> See below, pp. 113-15, 123-25.

group of voters that he is addressing at the moment — harmonized with assumptions about politics that were widely accepted by historians in this period. The “frozen waste” or “ideological vacuum” school of Roman political history<sup>234</sup> was in fact heavily invested in the reliability of the *Comm. Pet.* as a historical source that provided an accurate picture of the thinking of a Roman candidate for election, whether or not it was written by Quintus Cicero, and whether or not it was written in 64 B.C.E.<sup>235</sup> The central message of the *Comm. Pet.* (“Almost all is fair in politics”) seemed to describe such a natural and normal situation to them that it did not occur to many historians of the Gelzer-to-Gruen era to question whether any Roman would have seriously put that view forward. The work seemed to them to present a plausibly hard-headed, unsentimental, and down-to-earth portrait of Roman electoral politics, because it seemed self-evident to them that politics was like that. In Chapter Four, I will look at the historiography of that period of the twentieth century, and try to show that this approach to the discipline of history was widespread, and that many historians thought that part of their job was to “debunk” society’s high-minded pretensions, as the *Comm. Pet.* seemed to have done approximately two millennia before for the politics of the Late Republic.<sup>236</sup>

### The fading of amoralism in the historiography of the Roman Republic

I hope to have now convinced readers that my attack on amoralism as a way to characterize the political morality of the Roman Republic constitutes a critique of a pervasive strand within some of the greatest works of Roman Republican history written in the twentieth century. It remains to be asked whether this assumption still prevails today. Although readers might at this point expect me to claim that it does still reign in order to promote the salience of the thesis of this book, I concede that, in fact, it has faded away and is no longer

---

<sup>234</sup> See above, p. 72.

<sup>235</sup> That is not to say that later historians who reject the “frozen waste” or “ideological vacuum” approach have discarded the *Comm. Pet.* as a historical source, for they have also found support within it for their approaches. See Alexander (2009a) 39.

<sup>236</sup> See below, pp. 137-38.

common, at least in published books and articles, though it may linger in the classroom.

I will now attempt to show that belief in Roman amorality retreated not because it had been refuted but rather because it simply came to be ignored, and that it has fallen from favor not because historians have come up with a new answer to questions that had previously been posed but because they are now asking new and different questions. Nevertheless, while we can say that the kind of prosopographical analysis that marked the Gelzer-to-Gruen era has almost disappeared from scholarly publications, it is difficult to gauge how much it still resonates in the thought of Roman historians. It is possible that this kind of historical approach still coexists with the kind of more modern scholarship that I am about to describe. I can, in fact, point to a recent book that shows a definite kinship with Syme's *The Roman Revolution*, Alston's *Rome's Revolution* (2015), which like Syme's work covers the transition from the Late Republic to the Augustan regime. Though it is not prosopographical in the sense of relying on the concept of faction, it argues that the elite was bound together in networks, that social and political hierarchies were inseparable, that fundamental issues were scarcely dealt with by the political system, and that the Romans relied on informal networks, bound partly by marriage, to get anything done. In Alston's view, modern historians mistakenly try to explain the rise of the Augustan order by culture politics rather than power politics.<sup>237</sup>

The most significant single proximate causes of the decline of prosopography (i.e., the historical method that was dominant though not universally accepted during most of the twentieth century in the

---

<sup>237</sup> Alston (2015): (elite networks: "...networks bound members of the elite more closely to each other than to those people lower down the social hierarchy") 55; (the congruence of social and political hierarchies: "Social hierarchies and political hierarchies were integrated to the extent that they were inseparable") 5; (lack of policy issues: "The fundamental problems that modern historians can detect underlying the history of violence in the late Roman Republic...were hardly touched on in Roman political debate") 8; (marriage) 55-56; (focus on power: "But what would happen to our histories if we thought of the Roman state not as a liberal consensual state, the basis of Western political thinking, but as a predatory state, its power resting in violence and in the poverty and dependence of its people?") p. x; (power politics rather than culture politics: "For Rome's modern interpreters, culture politics has replaced power politics...") 9. In a review Wiseman (2016) 29 criticizes Alston for his "refusal to see ideology even when it stares him in the face."

study of Roman political history) as the way to understand Roman Republican politics were Meier's *Res Publica Amissa* and a chapter by Brunt that undermined *clientela* as the concept that allowed us to understand how the weak were linked to the mighty.<sup>238</sup> Meier argued that Roman society was marked by a plurality of relationships that rendered impossible lasting blocks of leaders and followers which strove to accomplish definite political objectives. Brunt's thesis that *clientela* was not so pervasive as to allow the Roman elite to compel the mass of the people to do its bidding was complemented by Millar's roughly contemporaneous presentation of the argument, relying on Polybius (6.14) and developed in a series of articles and a book, that the government of the Roman Republic can be regarded as a democracy.<sup>239</sup> Although Millar's thesis has not prevailed, it did have the effect of encouraging scholars to consider the possibility that the Roman political elite needed to persuade the Roman People to support it, rather than ordering it about.

An even deeper cause of the decline of prosopography as the way to understand Roman Republican politics, as I will discuss below, was a shift in how Roman history was studied.

### Etic versus emic

An "etic" approach is one that applies a concept that is external to what is being studied (a language, a culture, or some other human activity) in order to analyze and understand that object of study. An "emic" approach is one that uses concepts that are entirely internal to the language, culture, or other human activity under study in order to analyze and understand it.<sup>240</sup> Since I am going to rely on these two terms to explain a fundamental shift in the discipline of history that occurred at the end of the period under study (the 1980s), I will elaborate on some examples that show how the terms are used.

---

<sup>238</sup> Meier (1966), Brunt (1988a). On Meier, see Jehne (2006) 8-9 and Hölkeskamp (2010) 37-39.

<sup>239</sup> Millar (1984), Millar (1986), Millar (1989), Millar (1995), and Millar (1998).

<sup>240</sup> This pair of terms originated in linguistics, and has since been applied to the social sciences. For an introduction to, and debate about, these two terms, see Headland, Pike, and Harris (1990). Elliott (2012) 32 describes the emic nature of Geertzian anthropology (see below, p. 111) and its influence on the discipline of history.

Let's suppose that historians wish to analyze Roman society and the groups that it comprised. If they were doing so in an emic way, they would look at the distinctions that the Romans themselves made: Roman citizen, non-citizen, free, freedman/freedwoman, slave, male, female, assignment to a *classis* for the purposes of the military and of the centuriate assembly, senators, knights, and so on. When historians work in an etic way, they look for underlying concepts or a background story that was really going on behind what the sources talk about. A Marxist, for example, might group Romans into classes according to the criterion of relationship to the means of production. Faced with the objection that this distinction, as far as we know, was not employed by the Romans, the Marxist would respond that the concept of class, defined by relationship to modes of production, is universally valid for the understanding of all societies, and that it does not matter whether the people in each society were or are aware of the distinction; it is the true distinction that allows us to identify the different groups in society. The Marxist is thus employing an etic standard, that is, one that allegedly lies at the heart of all societies, regardless of whether any member of that society is aware of this standard.

Old and new concepts of sex and gender provide a clear example of the emic and the etic. Consider how the so-called "sworn virgins" of northern Albania might be studied. These are females who, having taken a vow to abstain from sexual relations, function entirely as males within their society, in terms of, for example, dress, work, bearing arms, and tobacco use, and are accepted as males by their family members and neighbors. Since this society has very rigid gender roles, according to which males are regarded as very much superior to females, these women often adopt a male role to compensate for a lack of males in their family, and their families obtain distinct advantages from this switch of gender roles. An etic view of this phenomenon might be that we know that all humans must be categorized as either male or female, and that we can apply a physiological standard to divide humans into one or the other on the basis of their genitalia and other sexual characteristics. According to this etic point of view, the sworn virgins would then "really" be females even though they masquerade as males, and whatever these women, their relatives, or their neighbors may think about their gender, we know that these



sworn virgins are actually females, according to our hard-and-fast standard. On the other hand, an emic view, one that prevails today in the study of this group, is that as anthropologists or historians we should study how people construct their identity, including their gender. If these human beings think of themselves as males, and are accepted by the other members of their society as such, it is our job to understand the process whereby their male identity is constructed, regardless of whether we outsiders think of them as males or females.<sup>241</sup>

Finally, I will relate an incident from my own experience, in the context of an academic job search held in my department. In the late 1990s, a candidate for a position in African History presented a lecture to the department about attempts by colonial powers to deal with sleeping fly sickness, a very serious problem in Africa. He contrasted the French approach, which was to control the disease through medical examinations and drug treatments, with the British approach, which was to reconstruct the landscape of the territories controlled by the British by moving large numbers of indigenous people from areas infested with the tsetse fly into new settlements, thereby creating large tracts of uninhabited parks.<sup>242</sup> His emphasis was on how the British and the indigenous population understood what the British were doing, rather than on the effect of these measures on the incidence of sleeping fly sickness. In the question period, a senior scholar expressed some puzzlement that the speaker had failed to tell his audience whether the British or the French approach to disease control had proven to be the more effective. To this query, the candidate responded that he did not consider the question of effectiveness to fall within the scope of his study. In other words, the senior scholar, reflecting the etic approach that had prevailed for most of his career, expected the speaker to apply some external standard,

---

<sup>241</sup> See Young (2000). She estimated the number of these Albanian women at about one hundred, residing in both rural and urban areas. (Number) 123; (rural and urban) 71-90.

<sup>242</sup> Hoppe (2003), the publication that resulted from the candidate's research. (French and British) 12. "The history of British sleeping sickness control in Uganda and Tanganyika is incomplete without the context of how the British and Africans understood relationships between people and environment and what sleeping sickness came to mean in the discourse about African colonialism" (182).

such as the incidence of sleeping fly sickness or mortality rates, to evaluate the British and French approaches and to determine which one was better, whereas the younger scholar, applying an emic approach, was interested in understanding the competing methods of attacking sleeping sickness in terms of what the colonial authorities were thinking, specifically how the British reimagined the landscape of East Africa, and the discourse between rulers and ruled.<sup>243</sup>

The prosopographical approach was based on a contrast between the legal power as granted by the Roman constitution — that is, not a written document, of course, but rather the Romans' ideas about how their government worked — and a reality that the modern historian claimed to have grasped. This approach was therefore etic; while based on the ancient evidence, its primary aim was to uncover a true reality, rather than reality as contemporaries saw it two thousand years ago, by superimposing and privileging external modern constructs as the best way to interpret the data that survive from the place and time being studied. (In spite of its status as the seminal work of Roman prosopography, Gelzer's *Roman Nobility* is an exception, since it focuses on, and builds its argument upon, the definition of Roman concepts, starting with *nobilitas*.<sup>244</sup>) The current approach to Roman Republican politics is interested in understanding Roman politics as it appeared to contemporary Romans; in other words, this approach is emic, based on internal contemporary Roman ideas, perceptions, and constructions. As Morstein-Marx has described,

Those of us who have taken the “cultural turn” have left behind the narrowly elitist perspective characteristic of older models of Republican political life and are inclined to explore how élite and mass were jointly implicated in a “self-spun web of signification” that shaped cognition and action on both sides.<sup>245</sup>

In fact, Earl stood on the threshold of an emic approach when he wrote in the closing sentence of *The Moral and Political Tradition*,

---

<sup>243</sup> The candidate was hired for the position.

<sup>244</sup> This is true even though Gelzer may have been influenced by his deep relationship with the “Bern patriciate” to which he belonged. See Ridley (1986a) 474-75.

<sup>245</sup> Morstein-Marx (2009) 117, in Hölkeskamp (2009b).

“Not infrequently the nature of a society is most clearly revealed in its most cherished clichés.”<sup>246</sup> This observation implies that the beliefs with which a society is most deeply imbued may reveal its true nature, even if we now believe those beliefs do not reflect the reality of the time.

The purpose of the etic/emic distinction is to explain that, for most of the twentieth century, historians thought it was their job to reveal a real truth that lies behind what the sources say, whereas, starting in the 1980s, many (I would even say, most) historians have come to assume that their job is to explain the ways in which their subjects constructed their world. My purpose is *not* to argue that the ancient Romans necessarily had a different viewpoint on a given aspect of their own history than historians studying ancient Rome long afterwards. Rather, it is to argue that the result of an emic inquiry will be incommensurate to the result of an etic inquiry, because the two results constitute answers to different questions: “How can we best understand some aspect of ancient Rome?” versus “How did the Romans understand some aspect of ancient Rome?”

This etic/emic distinction also helps explain why many historians of the Gelzer-to-Gruen era were not troubled by what I hope to have shown was a lack of ancient evidence to support a key element in their understanding of Roman political culture. They were not primarily trying to explain the Roman conception of their own politics, but to see a real truth behind the surface appearances. Whether the Romans understood their politics in that way was not the main concern of these historians, and, furthermore, the Romans’ failure to bring a hidden reality out in the open could be assumed to be natural. What motive did the Romans have to reveal their own base motives?

The contrast between the etic and the emic is well illustrated by two chapters published in the same volume, respectively, one (etic) by Gruen that aims to show how, in his view, the *ambitus* laws, the ballot laws, and trials held in popular assemblies actually served to solidify the power of the ruling nobility, and another (emic) by Hopkins that employs two strategies, “to use empathetic imagination to help think and feel ourselves back into how different Romans themselves

---

<sup>246</sup> Earl (1967) 132.

experienced rituals” and “to consider Roman rituals as a system whose business sit was to constitute and reconstitute a Roman sense of identity.”<sup>247</sup> Further examples of the emic approach include the following. Morstein-Marx attempted to formulate the relative powers of the People and the Roman elite by emphasizing the ability of the latter to influence the former through its oratory.<sup>248</sup> Rosenstein employed the Romans’ concepts of *virtus*, *gloria*, and *fama* to explain the effect of military commands on political success.<sup>249</sup> Hölkeskamp described the consulate neither in terms of constitutional powers as Mommsen’s generation did, nor by searching for its “real” powers (e.g., influence over elections, manipulation of assemblies, and control, or lack thereof, of the Senate) as the prosopographers of the twentieth century did, but as theater, in which the consul enacted his power through certain rituals:

This brings me directly to the sub-system of the republican political culture — by this category, I mean to define the conceptual system of social values and views of the world, of self and other, of mutual and shared expectations of behaviour in public roles and of the semantics of politics in general that underlie the surface of power and interests, politics and political decision-making.<sup>250</sup>

...“government by ritual” in the Roman “republic of processions” was based on a repertoire (or “ensemble”) of civic rituals (themselves “ensembles”) that was intricately interconnected by a rich texture of symbols, images, meanings and messages, revolving around the omnipresence of, and complex correlation between, concepts of power and hierarchy.<sup>251</sup>

Hölkeskamp’s metaphor of a “politische Grammatik,” referring to a concept formulated by Meier,<sup>252</sup> implies that politics can be viewed as

---

<sup>247</sup> Gruen (1991) and Hopkins (1991) 484 in Molho, Raaflaub, and Emlen (editors) (1991).

<sup>248</sup> Morstein-Marx (2004).

<sup>249</sup> Rosenstein (1990) 7: “Contention for office and other marks of honor commonly turned on the contenders’ moral worth: *virtus*, *gloria*, and *fama*, together with a host of similar qualities, had much to do with determining whom the public chose to support.”

<sup>250</sup> Hölkeskamp (2011) 163, in Beck, Duplá, Jehne, and Pina Polo (editors) (2011).

<sup>251</sup> Hölkeskamp (2011) 165, in Beck, Duplá, Jehne, and Pina Polo (editors) (2011).

<sup>252</sup> Meier (1966) 162–200.

a language with its own syntax and terminology — an analogy that by its nature implies that one political culture is immune from evaluation or criticism in terms of another political culture.<sup>253</sup> To her chapter on the role of rhetoric within the Republican “state of speech,” Connolly gives the title of “Republican Theater.”<sup>254</sup> Lastly, Steel employs an internal approach to understand Roman election campaigns, describing how Cicero uses praise and blame to promote his candidacy, and discovering the implicit rules of campaigning, rather than comparing and contrasting Cicero’s statements with the historical record as reconstructed by the modern historian.<sup>255</sup>

In a recent study of *libertas* in the late Roman Republic and its uses in Roman political culture, Arena provides a clear example of the emic approach at work. She contrasts her understanding of *libertas* with those who claim that “*libertas* was a vague word to which politicians paid lip-service in their search for power, adopted to provide *ex post facto* justifications for their behaviour,” citing as an example Syme’s characterization of that term in *The Roman Revolution*: “Liberty and the laws are high-sounding words. They will often be rendered, on a cool estimate, as privilege and vested interests,” and “*Libertas*...is a convenient term of political fraud.” In contrast to this deflation of the concept, she argues that there was a “commonly shared notion of liberty,” although it was used in different ways by two opposing “ideological families,” the *optimates* and the *populares*, to legitimate their differing outlooks. For Arena, then, *libertas* as a concept had meaning, and she attempts to understand what it meant to the Romans of the Late Republic (in her analysis, there were two different meanings for two different groups). Arena’s is an emic approach, searching for the meaning of a concept employed by the people as “language-users” whom she is studying, rather than treating it as a façade for some self-interest that it is the historian’s real purpose to uncover.<sup>256</sup>

---

<sup>253</sup> Hölkeskamp (2009a) 11–21.

<sup>254</sup> Connolly (2007) 198–236.

<sup>255</sup> Steel (2011), in Smith and Covino (editors) (2011).

<sup>256</sup> Arena (2012): (contrasts her understanding) 9; (shared notion of liberty) 8; (ideological families) 7; (language-users) 11–12. Syme (1939) 59, 155 (full quotation, see above, pp. 72–73).

The emic approach has enabled historians over the last thirty years or so to treat Roman discourse about morality and the logically connected opposite, immorality, as a subject of serious study. Consider, for example, the contrast provided by Edwards between two approaches to the study of Roman morality: that of her predecessors, who attempted to locate the real behavior that lay behind Roman moralizing, and her effort to examine how the Romans articulated morality in their own texts.<sup>257</sup> The scholarly approach to vituperative invective, as we see it in Cicero's *Catilinarians*, *in Vatinius*, and *in Pisonem*, with its violent personal attacks on the moral conduct of individuals in their political as well as private lives, provides a good indicator of the shift. Hammar perspicaciously asks why such invective failed to convince scholars during most of the twentieth century that morality played a part in politics.<sup>258</sup> After all, these characteristics of personal morality (e.g., drunkenness, sexual misconduct), which were generally thought to indicate something about their suitability for office and about their guilt or innocence in judicial contexts, played a major role in these invectives (along with low social origin), as did political misconduct (such as aiming at *regnum*), and they were delivered in contexts that were either totally political (such as to the People or to the Senate) or at least partly political, particularly in trials whose verdicts were likely to have important political ramifications.<sup>259</sup> Of course, this invective has been well known to Roman historians,<sup>260</sup> but since in the past they were applying their own, external standard to understanding Roman political culture, they could ignore or dismiss it because the accusations contained in it were judged by them (and probably rightly) to have been false, misleading, and/or exaggerated.<sup>261</sup>

---

<sup>257</sup> Edwards (1993) 6.

<sup>258</sup> Hammar (2013) 59.

<sup>259</sup> For the role of *ethos* in Ciceronian oratory, see May (1988). Gildenhard (2011) 8: "Needless to say, a moral view of politics and politicians had a traditional basis in Rome; adversaries routinely accused each other of conduct perceived to be in conflict with time-honoured moral principles and thus harmful to the commonwealth."

<sup>260</sup> For a basic discussion of the genre, see Nisbet (1961), Appendix VI, "The *In Pisonem* as an Invective," 192-97. See also Syme (1939) 149-50, and for a recent discussion of invective, Arena (2007).

<sup>261</sup> Syme (1939) 149, "the fabrication of skilled literary artists"; Nisbet (1961) 193, "more regard for literary convention than for historical truth."

As Hammar points out, it was Richlin's work on Roman sexuality, first published in 1983, that opened up that area of morality to scholarly consideration.<sup>262</sup> For, if the accuracy of the allegations made in ancient sources, evaluated according to our lights, is not at issue, then we can consider much more seriously the kind of allegations that were made as indications of Roman values, and the effect that they might have made upon their audience,<sup>263</sup> possibly regardless of whether the Roman audience believed in the factual truth of the allegations.<sup>264</sup> Hammar shows in a systematic fashion how the themes of morality and immorality imbue the orations of Cicero.<sup>265</sup> Corbeill implies that Roman politics did have something to do with ethical standards when he writes that the aggressive humor contained in Cicero's orations "helped shape the ethical standards current during the politically convulsive period of the late Republic."<sup>266</sup> Dugan links ethics to aesthetics through the Ciceronian concept of *decorum*: "...in the eyes of ancient theorists all uses of language were permeated with ethical significances."<sup>267</sup> With his emphasis on Cicero's "self-fashioning," Dugan's work is doubly emic, in that the values (such as *decorum*) that it applies are internal not only to Roman society but to Cicero himself. Likewise, Gildenhard makes his interpretation emic in the sense that he carries Cicero's constructive powers to the extent that Cicero in his speeches constructs not just himself, but Roman reality.<sup>268</sup> The fact that he can describe Cicero's speeches as "philosophical," although almost all of them were presented in very specific environments with a practical purpose, suggests how much Gildenhard believes that philosophical concepts, including the ethical concept of justice and *humanitas* (defined as "general human

---

<sup>262</sup> Richlin (1992). For the purposes of this discussion, see in particular her section on rhetorical invective (96-104). See Hammar (2013) 61-62.

<sup>263</sup> Corbeill (1996) 5: "...within each instance of abuse reside values and preconceptions that are essential to the way a Roman of the late Republic defined himself in relation to his community."

<sup>264</sup> Riggsby (1997) 247-48 and Craig (2004) 195-96.

<sup>265</sup> Hammar (2013).

<sup>266</sup> Corbeill (1996) 5.

<sup>267</sup> Dugan (2005) 129.

<sup>268</sup> Gildenhard (2011) 16: "Overall, then, the chapters map the ways in which Cicero construed his world in his orations, moving from the human to society and culture and concluding with the universe and its supernatural inhabitants."

decency”), permeated the speeches of Cicero.<sup>269</sup> Finally, Connolly describes a moral concern expressed by Cicero as lying at the heart of the crisis of the Roman Republic, namely its unfulfillable need for a complete orator/statesman (“eternally absent”) to save the Republic from the vicious forces that threaten it.

Eloquence, Cicero declares, is one of the greatest virtues...by identifying eloquence as the key connection between civic virtue and individual virtue, Cicero locks the future of the republic to the virtue of its speaking citizens....

The virtuous, eloquent man is represented as governing himself, but only under the gaze of the community — a community in which the self itself must ultimately take its place, through the human connection of language, if it is to remain human at all. Yet that connection is fueled by the drama of shared passions, whose power sutures the rifts in the republic but which, Cicero knows from experience, may also rise up to overwhelm it.<sup>270</sup>

Drawing on the work of Morstein-Marx, which shows the reciprocity of relations between Roman leaders and ordinary citizens as asymmetrical (as those relations were in terms of the power of each individual), Connolly argues:

Most important, moralist speech, by remaking the assembly in the forum or the crowd around the jury in the forum into a living microrepublic of virtue, constructs the ostensible equality of liberty in the republic, *by rendering citizens as equal in their capacity as moral judges*.<sup>271</sup>

This characterization of the Roman Republic stands in sharp contrast to Syme’s political “catchwords.”

Nothing in this section about the emic nature of current Roman historiography should be construed as prescribing the emic approach as superior to the etic approach; I am *not* asserting that historians have thrown aside the shackles of the etic approach and have now opened their eyes to the “bright light” of an emic approach. Indeed, it

---

<sup>269</sup> Gildenhard (2011): (“philosophical oratory”) 3-6; (justice) 180; (*humanitas*) 205-208 (definition 205).

<sup>270</sup> Connolly (2007) 14-15, 262-63.

<sup>271</sup> Morstein-Marx (2004) 258-76; Connolly (2007) 59 (Connolly’s emphasis).



would be contradictory of me to disparage etic history, because what I am practicing in this chapter and in the next could be construed as such, where, in trying to understand the historiography of the “era of disillusionment,” I apply amoralism as a key concept in my attempt, regardless of whether historians during that era employed or even understood that concept, or thought that it applied to themselves. It is entirely possible that some Roman historian in the future will propose an etic approach that promises to open up a way to view some aspect of Roman politics. Moreover, the point of this discussion has not been to argue that all (or indeed any) of the specific works that I have described as embodying an emic approach are correct, but rather to show how writing on Roman political culture has changed. Historians engaged in emic history ask different questions of the evidence than historians engaged in etic history. The etic approach encouraged historians to search for a truth hidden beneath hypocritical claims and appeals; the emic approach now encourages them to understand how these claims and appeals represent the construction of reality and the values created by people during the historical era under study.

The shift from etic to emic history means that Roman Republican historians are now much less likely than in the period of 1910 to 1985 to ask who was really running the Roman state behind the scenes and what chicanery and deception they were employing to maintain their control, but are more likely to ask how the Romans themselves conceived of (or “constructed”) their *res publica*.<sup>272</sup>

---

<sup>272</sup> Note that Appendices One and Two relate to this chapter.

## Amoralism and the writing of history in an era of disillusionment

Astin closes his 1968 inaugural lecture on “politics and policies”<sup>273</sup> by acknowledging the influence that the events of the twentieth century exercised on contemporary scholars:

In reaction to the constitutionalist and legalistic emphases of earlier interpretations of Roman history, a generation or more of scholars, with an awareness sharpened by the convulsions and the ideologies of the twentieth century, has very properly devoted much attention to “the realities of power”, to the nature and significance of extra-constitutional forces. We have rightly been made to see political institutions as the instruments and channels of such forces, often manipulated for political advantage, and modified or abandoned in response to changes in these forces. Far be it from me to advocate a return to a strictly constitutional interpretation.<sup>274</sup>

The “convulsions” and “ideologies” that marked most of the twentieth century will be the theme of this chapter, how they discouraged Roman historians from understanding Roman politics as an activity that conformed to anything higher than self-interest — not only failing to conform to legal and constitutional norms, but also more broadly to moral norms of any sort, whether policies, principles, or a model of a virtuous life.

Given that ancient sources do not support the presence of amoralism in the political culture of the Roman Republic (as I attempted to show in Chapter Two), and if belief in Roman amoralism is embedded in the works of many twentieth-century Roman historians including some of the most eminent (as I attempted to show in Chapter Three), why did these historians incorporate into their view of Roman Republican politics an assumption that is unsupported by the ancient sources, when these are highly scrupulous scholars who

---

<sup>273</sup> See above, pp. 74, 77.

<sup>274</sup> Astin (1968) 17.

generally employ their learning to document with great care any historical claim that they make? That is the question that this chapter will attempt to answer, pointing both to historiography (i.e., how history was written) and to history (i.e., what happened), specifically some of the major events and developments of what I call an “era of disillusionment,” roughly between 1910 and 1985. My answer is that the historiography of Roman Republican politics in particular was influenced by the historiography characteristic, in general, of that era of disillusionment, that the historiography of that era was influenced by that era’s history (that is, the events and developments that occurred during it), and that a new way of writing Roman Republican political history came into being as that era of disillusionment came to an end, in keeping with general changes in historiography.

This change in the way Roman Republican political history is practiced today can be linked not only to the works that challenged previously orthodox views about, and attitudes toward, Roman history, such as Meier’s and Brunt’s,<sup>275</sup> but also to two major alterations in how not just Roman history but the discipline of history in general is practiced.<sup>276</sup> I shall sketch the intellectual climate in which Roman Republican history was and is written, influenced both by “history” as what happened, and “historiography” as the way what happened has been conceptualized, analyzed, and communicated by historians. This procedure does not imply that the previously discussed Roman historians were necessarily familiar with any or all of the scholars who shaped this environment, nor that their thought was primarily or totally determined by the intellectual environment in which they found themselves. Nevertheless, this environment does shed light on their way of thinking, particularly on the premises and assumptions on which they operated. To say that the study of Roman history has been influenced by trends in the study of history in general is to imply that it can be expected to change again, as old heresies

---

<sup>275</sup> See above, pp. 96-97.

<sup>276</sup> Meier (1966), Brunt (1988a).

become orthodoxies, and new methodological challenges to these orthodoxies can be expected to arise and gain dominance.<sup>277</sup>

In order to locate the way Roman Republican political history has been written during the twentieth century, I will be talking broadly about the last century's historiography and historical events. This chapter will read like an essay rather than the kind of exhaustive treatment that classicists are used to when discussing ancient Greece and Rome, and virtually all statements of fact will reflect common knowledge, rather than material drawn from specific primary or secondary sources. In it I will cite examples of events and writings from the works of authoritative historians and thinkers of the period to illustrate my points.

My examination in Chapter Three of the way Roman history was written in the twentieth century was designed primarily to provide a context and a justification for my attention to amoralism, rather than examining amoralism to support my interpretation of how Roman history was often written. Similarly, my examination in this chapter of the way history was generally written during much of the twentieth century is designed to provide a context in which Roman historiography can be more clearly understood, rather than examining Roman historiography as a key to understanding historiography in general. In other words, with Chapters Two through Four I am *not* creating a chain of argument starting with the lack of evidence for amoralism, moving on that basis to understanding Roman historiography, and then using that view of Roman historiography to understand historiography in general, whereby my analysis in this chapter would have rested on the previous two chapters. Rather, I began in Chapter Two by establishing the lack of evidence for Roman amoralism (i.e., my core argument), in Chapter Three I explained that this lack of evidence has not been noticed because of assumptions that operated in much of Roman history as it was written in modern times, and now in this chapter I will attempt to bring out general assumptions that prevailed for much of the twentieth century about how history should be written, and to explain how events in turn

---

<sup>277</sup> A forum in the pages of the *American Historical Review* (June 2012) entitled, "AHR Forum: Historiographic 'Turns' in Critical Perspective," suggests an awareness of the impermanence of methodological doctrines.

shaped that way of writing history, thereby providing a context that helps explain why Roman history written during this period was often written in the manner it was written. In other words, as I move from the very specific to the very general, I am not claiming that the specifics support the general, but that the general helps us understand differing ways of interpreting the specifics.

The chronological limits of this “era of disillusionment” are roughly the same for this chapter as for the previous chapter. However, the publication of Bentley’s book in 1908 on the process of government provides a slightly earlier beginning point than Gelzer’s *Roman Nobility* (1912). Of course, I am not asserting that this disillusionment began exactly in 1908 or ended in 1988, but rather that these eight decades were marked by a widespread feeling that closely and fondly held beliefs had been found wanting and foolish. First, I will look for a cause for why this “era of disillusionment” ended, and then, moving backward in time, attempt to understand its origins.

### From etic to emic, and debunking as an etic approach

It is significant that Hölkeskamp cites in his discussion of consular “theater”<sup>278</sup> two works of Clifford Geertz, a cultural anthropologist (1926-2006) who has greatly influenced the writing of history during the last forty years.<sup>279</sup> The central concept that the practices of another society mean something to members of that society as symbolic forms, and that scholars (whether anthropologists or historians) as outsiders need to learn to “read” those practices, is relevant to understanding a foreign political system, not in constitutional terms or in terms of an assertion of power, in which, for example, pomp produces power, but rather as something like a text to be read, in which, for example, power produces pomp.<sup>280</sup> Moreover,

---

<sup>278</sup> Hölkeskamp (2011) 163.

<sup>279</sup> Sewell (2007) 35 produces statistics to show how often Geertz is cited by historians, not only more than historians cite most non-historians, but more than they cite some of the most famous and influential works written by contemporary historians. Geertz is one of the 101 authors of the twentieth century most often cited in the *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*, according to a compilation made by Garfield (1986).

<sup>280</sup> On pomp and power, see Darnton (2007), and also Elliott (2012) 109. On the Geertzian interpretation of culture through its “signs,” see Roller (2010) 238.

the “linguistic turn” introduced by postmodern literary scholars has shaken the faith of historians that they possess the capability to discern a reality separate from the extant data that they study: not only do we know only what our sources tell us, but we can understand it only in the language that they use.<sup>281</sup> In this Geertzian climate, Roman historians now make the difficult effort to understand the Roman political system in its own terms, rather than to seek to uncover a discrepancy between how the Romans viewed their own system and how we know it worked in reality. In other words, in general, Roman historians have responded to a widespread shift in history-writing, from the etic approach to the emic approach.<sup>282</sup>

In retrospect, it is possible to see that, before the rise of Geertz-influenced history, general ideas about the discipline of history also influenced and encouraged the prosopographical school that flourished for most of the twentieth century. Thus, one explanation for the predominance of the prosopographical approach lies in the way historians were generally trained to think. A premise of the prosopographical school was that people sought power for themselves and thus that personal details both revealed their motivations and enabled us to understand how they functioned in their historical contexts. In Stone’s words:

The unstated premise is that an understanding of who the actors were will go far toward explaining the workings of the institution to which they belonged, will reveal the true objectives behind the flow of political rhetoric, and will enable us better to understand their achievement, and more correctly to interpret the documents they produced.<sup>283</sup>

Thus, an intellectual link between prosopography and what I have termed “amoralism” is that prosopography, if it is not mere compilation, by providing detailed information about individuals

---

<sup>281</sup> See Alexander (2013) 508-10.

<sup>282</sup> Anderson (2015) 799 makes the distinction between etic (“God’s-eye”) and emic (“insider”) historical accounts. Using the example of ancient Attica, he shows how radical a truly insider account of a society removed from our own in time and space has to be. Bettini (2010) 255-56 argues that the distinction between emic and etic is somewhat blurred for us when we deal with the Romans, because we identify with them to such a great extent.

<sup>283</sup> Stone (1971) 114.

made some historians think that they could uncover the personal motives that lay behind ostensibly principled and high-minded declarations and conduct.<sup>284</sup> As Carney writes about the prosopographer of elites, “He assumes that history is made by élites and that, by and large, power drives spur élites on. He aims to probe for the unseemly realities behind the façade of political life.”<sup>285</sup>

This confidence that motivation can be discerned from the actions of individuals who had coalesced into groups was intensified by the attraction of prosopographers to the zero-sum game, in which one player’s gain is another’s players loss. Carney points out that an analysis that relies on the zero-sum game is much easier than analyzing variable-sum games, in which both sides gain or where a loss in one game may lead to a gain in another.<sup>286</sup> The calculation of gain and loss lends itself to an amoral interpretation, because an assumption that lies behind this calculation is that all players are intending to secure a gain for themselves and a corresponding loss for the others. While a desire for the welfare of others is not inconceivable in a situation where your gain is my loss (I could be inclined to self-sacrifice), it is much less likely than in a situation where your gain can be consistent with my gain.

This preference for a concrete and material motive as opposed to a lofty and idealistic motive is well described in a comment on the scholarship emanating from Oxford University. Reviewing two books on late antiquity written by authors who attended Oxford as undergraduates, Brown in the 1950s and Sarris in the 1990s, the reviewer, who himself attended Oxford in the 1980s, describes the inclination of Oxford historians to understand the past in terms of low-minded (specifically financial) rather than high-minded motives:

Such shrewdness has real and compelling analytical purchase; the danger is that it reduces human history

---

<sup>284</sup> In analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of prosopography, Verboven, Carlier, and Dumolyn (2007) caution: “Motivation analysis reaches into the historical of historical actors. The biographical data needed to do this are often insufficient.” Carney (1973) 164-65 outlines the difficulty inherent in retrieving individual motivation, especially from the ancient world.

<sup>285</sup> Carney (1973) 156-57. For “unseemly realities,” see the discussion of “debunking” below, pp. 115-25.

<sup>286</sup> Carney (1973) 168.

to the story of a clubbable few, whose monopoly of resources survives more or less intact across the centuries.<sup>287</sup>

This preference for the concrete over the lofty has not been confined to Oxford, and it parallels the dominance of Realism in the study of international relations. Commenting on previous scholarly analyses of the debate over the Peace of Philocrates (346 B.C.E.), Steinbock describes the Realist outlook:

Among historians we find a tendency to treat Aeschines' and his opponents' historical paradigms either as empty rhetorical phrases or as masks for *Realpolitik*. This is not surprising, since many ancient historians seem to adhere to the political theory of Realism, which considers the maximization of self-interest the primary factor in international politics. Political Realism downplays international law, morality, domestic politics and the possibility of interdependence, and views states as rational actors in a hostile anarchic environment, in which they incessantly pursue power and security according to criteria of self-interest.<sup>288</sup>

*Mutatis mutandis*, this serves as a useful description of how many historians (not just ancient historians) for most of the twentieth century interpreted the behavior of politicians on the domestic front.<sup>289</sup>

---

<sup>287</sup> Leyser (2012) 13-14, review of Brown (2012) and Sarris (2011).

Brown: <http://history.princeton.edu/people/peter-brown>.

Sarris: <http://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/directory/pavs2@cam.ac.uk>.

Leyser: <http://people.man.ac.uk/~mfssszcl/>.

<sup>288</sup> Steinbock (2013) 69-70. Also in the context of foreign and military policy, Eckstein (1995) 1 applies the word "amoral" to "Machiavellian" interpretations of Polybius: "...the extent to which Polybius as a historian should be viewed as a 'Machiavellian' — that is, as someone who rendered judgment on human conduct by employing the utterly practical and even amoral standard of success or failure." Eckstein, challenging previous Polybian scholarship, finds a "moral seriousness" in Polybius (see pp. 18 and 282). Jakobson (2009) argues that the Roman People expected to hear ethical arguments from those who urged them to support a particular policy in military and foreign affairs.

<sup>289</sup> MacMullen (2003) p. ii notes that Namier, the renowned historian of England, conceded the importance of the irrational, while placing a higher burden of proof on an explanation based on irrationality than one based on rational calculation. Namier (1953) 1078: "Although we know that men's actions are mostly conditioned by factors other than reason, in practice we have to assume their rational character until the contrary has been specifically established...."



This approach is consistent with a “debunking” impulse that has been characteristic of history writing for much of the twentieth century.<sup>290</sup> An early, path-breaking example of this attitude is a book published in 1918, Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians*, in which he deftly and succinctly portrays Cardinal Manning, the primate of the Catholic Church in England in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Florence Nightingale, the founder of nursing, Dr. Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby who created a model for English public schools, and General Gordon, who died a heroic and quite useless death in the Sudan, not as self-sacrificing saints as Victorians had portrayed them, but as people whose real motives were less admirable than was believed by their contemporaries. Though a set of biographies written by a man of letters, this work constituted a milestone not only in biography, which had previously been characterized by large tomes, and in the understanding of nineteenth-century Britain, but also in the development of the writing of history in general, as it deflated the pretensions of the worthy.<sup>291</sup> *Eminent Victorians* changed not only the way the Victorian past was viewed, but the way the past in general was written about.<sup>292</sup>

It is tempting to see this debunking as a product of the horrors of the First World War (1914-1918), which revealed the emptiness of the pious patriotic platitudes that had been uttered by European leaders, not only because of the enormous casualties suffered on the battlefield, but because the magnitude of these losses came to be intensified and seen to have been rendered pointless by the perceived hidebound ineptitude of military leaders. Doubtless, that war did intensify a cynical attitude toward political morality. As Stone describes:

---

<sup>290</sup> The word “debunk” is an American coinage whose first recorded usage occurs, significantly, in the aftermath of the First World War, meaning “to remove false sentiment from” or “to expose pretensions.” The word was coined by the author William E. Woodward in his novel *Bunk* (1923), by analogy with the word “delouse.” “debunk, v.” OED Online (<http://www.oed.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/view/Entry/47950?redirectedFrom=debunk#eid>; accessed August 11, 2017), and Sullivan (2016) 23.

<sup>291</sup> Strachey (1918); Hynes (1991) 245: “anti-heroic and deflating in its treatment of its subjects.”

<sup>292</sup> Wilson (1932) 148, writing on Strachey’s death: “Something had been punctured for good.” Hynes (1991) 245: “Strachey’s book offered a model for that mocking, denying stance: it was very much a book for the Twenties.”

Much of this cynicism was generated by the political and moral disaster of the First World War, followed by the collapse of hopes of a better world order....The result was the penetration into intellectual circle and into the upper classes of the ancient folklore of the poor, that all politicians are crooks.<sup>293</sup>

One conclusion to draw from the idea that all politicians are crooks is to replace them with other politicians, but another conclusion is that, since the crookedness of politicians implies that the new politicians will be just as bad as the old, we need to resign ourselves to the base nature of politics; in other words, we need to adopt an attitude of political amoralism.

The massive casualties of the First World War,<sup>294</sup> the failure of the Treaty of Versailles to restructure the entire world in a definitive manner as the Congress of Vienna had done for Europe approximately a century before,<sup>295</sup> and the rise of dictatorships, notably in the Soviet Union, Italy, Germany, and Spain, leading to a widespread belief that democracy (still a fairly new development) was an evanescent phenomenon too feeble to last, intensified the spirit of political cynicism in the interwar period. One result was a spate of widely read books that attempted to place what was perceived to be a disintegration of civilization into a larger historical context, such as Spengler's *Decline of the West* and Toynbee's *A Study of History*.<sup>296</sup> Ancient Greece and Rome played various roles in the historical theories that were developed during this time. On the one hand, concern about the collapse of civilization led to increased interest in the world of the Late Roman Empire as a possible parallel to the contemporary situation. On the other, one of Britain's most renowned classicists, Gilbert Murray, translator of Greek tragedies, argued that ancient Hellenic civilization, along with the Christian tradition, offered the best hope for the survival of civilization.<sup>297</sup>

---

<sup>293</sup> Stone (1971) 115. Craig (1971) 356-57 points out that this disillusionment was greater in Germany than in Britain and the United States, where faith in the state had been less pronounced. As we will see (below, pp. 118-22), the way had been prepared for cynicism even before that war began.

<sup>294</sup> For some statistics, see <http://www.worldwar1.com/tlcrates.htm>.

<sup>295</sup> MacMillan (2002).

<sup>296</sup> Spengler (1922), Toynbee (1934-61); on these works, see Overy (2009) 9-49.

<sup>297</sup> Overy (2009) 25-26.

Fascists during this time created a distinctive brand of historiography that attempted to claim aspects of the ancient world, such as the rise to power of Augustus, as models for modern leaders such as Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco; this was the opposite of debunking. Yet both the fascists and debunkers like Syme focused on a common concept: the quest for power. Syme debunked Augustus because of his successful drive for personal power, whereas the fascists, in keeping with their ideology, glorified him for that reason, but both Syme and the fascists understood the rise of Augustus in light of world views in which power was central.<sup>298</sup> The intellectual climate in the aftermath of the First World War in general and the fascist idealization of Augustus in particular — which can be labeled as *Romanità* —<sup>299</sup> form an essential background to understanding Syme's *The Roman Revolution* and the intellectual and political climate to which it was reacting.<sup>300</sup>

The influence of contemporary events on Syme's *The Roman Revolution* is well known and often acknowledged: "Symes 'Roman Revolution' erschien 1939 als eine direkte Reaktion auf die in den pro-faschistischen Kreisen jener Jahre herrschende Augustus-Begeisterung" ("Syme's *Roman Revolution* appeared in 1939 as a direct reaction to the enthusiasm for Augustus that was prevalent in the pro-Fascist circles of those years").<sup>301</sup> In a review of *The Roman Revolution* published during the early period of the Second World War, Giles remarks, "It is a book of great and much more than purely academic significance...,"<sup>302</sup> and, asking whether Augustus needs to be viewed as a gangster, writes, "All history is contemporary history, and

---

<sup>298</sup> MacMullen (2003) 47-50 trenchantly describes the jaundiced tone of Syme. "How is Syme able to reach into the secrets of the man's [Augustus's] mind? Generally, by assuming the worst, after the best has been discounted" (p.49).

<sup>299</sup> Scriba (1995) 73, Stone (1998) 246-47, Nelis (2007), Kallis (2011) 811, and Arthurs (2012) 34, 91-124; and Berezin (1997) 126, on the map of the new Italian Empire. In 1937, Fascist Italy celebrated the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Augustus' birth.

<sup>300</sup> Galsterer (1990) 2-3 and Linderski (1990) 43. On that political and intellectual background in general, see Walter (2002), especially p. 144, Yavetz (1990) 27 describes how during the National Socialist era in Germany Augustus was appropriated to serve as a model for a contemporary "Führer." For the growing competition at the time of the Augustan anniversary between Hitler and Mussolini as heirs to Augustus' mantle, see Kallis (2011) 827-29.

<sup>301</sup> Momigliano (1961) 55, review of Syme (1958) = Momigliano (1966) vol. ii, 739.

<sup>302</sup> Giles (1940) 39, review of Syme (1939); and 41, quoted by Alföldy (1983) 23.

every historian must read it in the light of his own time. And our times sees too much of 'Leaders' to judge them calmly."<sup>303</sup> Momigliano writes in retrospect that *The Roman Revolution* established a relationship between the seizures of power accomplished by Augustus and Mussolini, and possibly also by Hitler, with possible allusions to the Spanish Civil War.<sup>304</sup> Doubtless, the "panegyric" mocked by Syme<sup>305</sup> was, at least in part, that which issued from Italy.

Victorian and Edwardian views of empire had revolved around moral judgments, often involving a comparison between the Roman Empire and contemporary empires, whether or not they were compared to the advantage of the latter, for example, judgments that Britain's motives in India were altruistic, or that a successful state was inevitably "demoralized" (i.e., suffering a corruption of its morals).<sup>306</sup> After the First World War, this moralistic analysis was superseded by a "power politics" approach. However, that war, the developments of the interwar years, the Second World War, and the Cold War did not create but rather intensified the cynicism and disillusionment that appear in much of the history writing of the twentieth century.<sup>307</sup> A look at developments in the discipline of history and, more broadly, in the understanding of the way society functions, helps us understand why many historians in the early twentieth century were receptive to a perception of the Roman Republic as exhibiting amoralism.

As just one example, I will outline the development of the progressive school of history in the United States in the early twentieth

---

<sup>303</sup> Giles (1940) 40-41. Elliott (2012) 25 also expresses the opinion that a historian not only inevitably is, but ought to be, aware of the present as well as the past: "Historians should be as much concerned with the present as with the past...." Examining his first encounter with Spanish history, he states with frank introspection that he was influenced by a comparison between Spain in the 1620s and mid-twentieth-century Britain as imperial powers in decline (11-12). See also Elliott (2012) 117.

<sup>304</sup> Momigliano (1966) vol. ii, 729, 731, = "Introduction to R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution*," trans. Cornell, in Bowersock and Cornell (eds.) (1994) 72, 74.

<sup>305</sup> See above, p. 63.

<sup>306</sup> Adler (2008a): (India) 197; ("demoralization") 206.

<sup>307</sup> May (1959) views the years from 1912 to 1917 (the year when the United States entered the First World War) as a crucial turning point in American thought, as intellectuals turned from a morality-based world view, already previously shaken in the second half of the nineteenth century by the seeming mechanism of the Darwinian universe (p. 10), to a general questioning of "natural morality" as the foundation of society (p. 209).

century, dating from before the First World War, to illustrate how the discipline of history in general was changing, and connect that change to a change in the writing of Roman history specifically. The example is cognate; it is unlikely that, of the seven Roman historians discussed in Chapter Three, even the contemporary historians Gelzer and Münzer were directly influenced by these works from the American side of the Atlantic. However, American thought has belonged to the European intellectual tradition, however much it may define itself in contradistinction to that tradition, and can therefore constitute evidence for a unified intellectual tradition that existed on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>308</sup>

Already in 1913, a year before the First World War began in Europe, Charles A. Beard had published *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, an extremely influential work that argued that the authors of the U.S. Constitution were following not political ideals but their own elite interests. In order to connect the policies advocated by each with his economic interests, he employed techniques of prosopography to describe each person's economic situation.<sup>309</sup> The delegates to the Federal Convention held in Philadelphia in 1787, he found, far from representing a cross-section of the population then being governed under the Articles of Confederation, came from the upper classes — creditors, holders of public securities, and men involved in commerce and manufacturing —, whose economic interests had been damaged by the shaky finances of the American government. Having located Treasury records, Beard was able to show that most of those in attendance possessed public securities, and thus stood to gain from the greater stability that it was hoped that a new constitution would bring.<sup>310</sup> Although, in an introduction to a later edition in 1935, Beard maintained that his point was simply that the Founders understood economic interests on the

---

<sup>308</sup> May (1959) 166–69.

<sup>309</sup> Beard (1913), and Stone (1971) 111. Stone (1971) 113 writes of the “near-exhaustion of the great tradition of Western historical scholarship established in the nineteenth century” already before the war.

<sup>310</sup> Beard (1913) 149: “The overwhelming majority of members, at least five-sixths, were immediately, directly, and personally interested in the outcome of their labors at Philadelphia, and were to a greater or less extent economic beneficiaries from the adoption of the Constitution.”

basis of their own experience, the immediate reaction to the book was that he was claiming that the Founders were protecting their own financial interests.<sup>311</sup>

Beard's intellectual milieu clarifies the connection between power politics and prosopography. Just as Gelzer and Münzer turned away from an abstract intellectual approach in order to understand the ancient world, and from legal formalism in order to understand ancient law in particular, intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic were turning away from abstraction and formal law to a search for some hard core of reality as the key to understanding history, politics, and society.<sup>312</sup> One way to penetrate beneath the fog of ideas to the underlying reality was to examine the details of historical actors — in Beard's case, the economic interests of the Founding Fathers of 1787, and, in the case of the Roman prosopographers, the kinship and marriage ties as well as the career details of the Romans (e.g., the identity of the presiding magistrate at the *comitia* at which they were elected, or the identity of the *patronus* who defended them against criminal charges). From these details, it was thought that historians could arrive at the truth about their interests. The trick was to discover the groups to which they belonged.

An important precursor to Beard was the pragmatist A.F. Bentley's *The Process of Government*, which expresses a group-oriented conception of society: "Pressure, as we shall use it, is always a group phenomenon. It indicates the push and resistance between groups. The balance of the group pressures is the existing state of society."<sup>313</sup> Bentley eschews ideas and personal character as the subject of scientific and scholarly engagement in favor of the more empirical category of activity, pursued for some interest:

---

<sup>311</sup> Hofstadter (1968) 208-209, 214-17. According to Connolly (2007) 7, American intellectual historians and political theorists divided after the publication of *The Economic Interpretation* according to their reactions to Beard's interpretation of U.S. political culture.

<sup>312</sup> Eugen Ehrlich (1913) provides a path-breaking introduction to sociological jurisprudence that broke away from the legal formalism with which Roman historians are familiar from the works of Mommsen.

<sup>313</sup> Bentley (1908) 258-59. On the influence of Bentley on Beard, see Hofstadter (1968) 186-89.

It is first, last, and always activity, action, “something doing,” the shunting by some men of other men’s conduct along changed lines, the gathering of forces to overcome resistance to such alterations, or the dispersal of one grouping of forces by another grouping.<sup>314</sup>

Ideas are to be subordinated to groups: “Indeed the only reality of the ideas is their reflection of the groups, only that and nothing more. The ideas can be stated in terms of the groups; the groups never in terms of the ideas.”<sup>315</sup> Groups have empirically observable interests, that is, “a specific group interest in some definite course of conduct or activity.”<sup>316</sup>

All phenomena of government are phenomena of groups pressing one another, forming one another, and pushing out new groups and group representatives (the origins or agencies of government) to mediate the adjustments.<sup>317</sup>

This analysis was influenced by the group-oriented sociology of the German Georg Simmel and the Austrian Ludwig Gumplowicz, under whose influence Bentley had come when he studied in Europe before obtaining his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1895.<sup>318</sup>

Bentley’s approach had the benefit of the hard-headed realism of Marx’s stress on economics as the foundation of society, without the taint of Hegelianism and reliance on “class struggle,” which Bentley considered to be “a very crude form of group interpretation.”<sup>319</sup> Beard considered Bentley’s use of “group interests” as opposed to Marxian “class interests” to be effective.<sup>320</sup> From this viewpoint, politics was

---

<sup>314</sup> Bentley (1908) 176.

<sup>315</sup> Bentley (1908) 206.

<sup>316</sup> Bentley (1908) 214. As LaVaque-Manty (2006) 9 notes, Bentley’s experience as a journalist in Chicago from 1896 to 1911 may have been relevant to the development of his thought. See Ratner (1958) 574.

<sup>317</sup> Bentley (1908) 269.

<sup>318</sup> Bentley (1908) 468–76; Odegard, Introduction, p. x, in Bentley (1967); LaVaque-Manty (2006) 5–6. It was common for American students in the period between German unification and the First World War who were interested in the social sciences to attend universities in Germany, and to inject new ideas into American academia upon their return; see Rodgers (1998) 76–111 on this pattern in relation to the study of economics.

<sup>319</sup> Bentley (1908) 465–68.

<sup>320</sup> Beard (1908) 740.

seen fundamentally not as a clash of ideas, ideals, or principles, but as a “social process.”<sup>321</sup>

We see in Bentley and Beard the elements of the approach of the Roman prosopographers: 1) eschewing abstractions as genuine human motivations, 2) eschewing legal formalism, and therefore looking outside formal government organs for the “real story,” 3) searching for concrete factors that can be used to define groups (in the case of ancient Rome, more social than economic), and 4) positing the struggle between groups to be the stuff of politics, and therefore of political history. Applied to the Roman Republic and to its collapse, these elements meant getting beneath the superstructure of the flowery phrases of Marcus Cicero to the real structure, consisting of groups of Romans in conflict with each other — groups that can be discerned through detailed study of individuals, whether or not the ancient sources provide explicit information on membership or even allude to these groups.

An inclination toward power-politics analysis was probably not the only factor that fostered the growth of prosopography. Two others come to mind. One is the growing dominance of the natural sciences within academia throughout the twentieth century, a shift that encouraged historians to opt for concretely factual data, as opposed to vaguer concepts such as the ideals embodied in nineteenth-century political thinking. Thus, to some extent, prosopography provided a new alternative to a view of Roman politics as the struggle of *optimates* versus *populares*, a view that was a replacement for finding in Roman history something like the earlier, nineteenth-century pattern of conservatives versus liberals. The scientific model made, for example, the fact that Marcus Cicero held the praetorship in 66 B.C.E. appear like a sounder basis for scholarship than his expressed views on *libertas* or the role of the orator as the ideal statesman. Another factor was the shift in history away from a focus on “great men” to a wider spectrum of historical actors. Granted that Roman prosopographers found it difficult to get away from a political elite of a few hundred senators and perhaps some knights, because of the limited evidence available to them, this ruling group provided a

---

<sup>321</sup> Ross (1991) 342.



broader basis for writing Roman history than just Pompey, Caesar, Crassus, Cicero, and Cato. And the fact that one of these “great men,” Marcus Cicero, so dominates our ancient sources for Roman politics linked these two factors; if historians could jettison political ideals as significant historical data, they were simultaneously detaching themselves both from wooly concepts and the “great man” who espoused them.

In a survey of his own career as a historian of early modern Spain — a study for which the premise is that this career illustrates general truths about the craft of history, and how it has changed — J.H. Elliott (b. 1930) underscores the fascination with power that dominated historical thinking as he embarked on his career. As he describes his own development, he was drawn to the depiction of the “arrogance of power” in a portrait by Velázquez of the Count-Duke of Olivares, principal minister to Philip IV of Spain in the seventeenth century.<sup>322</sup> The first part of Elliott’s career was dominated by the quest for a way to understand and explain this now little-known figure “who ruled Spain and bestrode the European political stage for twenty-two years.”<sup>323</sup> Seeing the struggle between center and periphery as a central theme, Elliott focused on Catalonia and its fragile and developing relationship with the central Castilian government. This conflict fell in line with a dominant power-oriented theme of modern historiography, the formation of the nation-state.<sup>324</sup>

Elliott refers to and critiques an influential analysis of the changing power relationship between king and nobility developed by Norbert Elias, who argued that the institution of the court and its development in early modern Europe increased the power of the king vis-à-vis the nobility by creating an expensive and time-consuming ceremonial life for the nobles, thus allowing the king to acquire a monopoly of the two main sources of power, namely taxation, and military and police power.<sup>325</sup> Power and its shifting balance lie at the

---

<sup>322</sup> Elliott (2012) 81.

<sup>323</sup> Elliott (2012) 81.

<sup>324</sup> Elliott (2012) 51.

<sup>325</sup> Elias (1969) trans. Jephcott 2, Elliot (2012) 151-52. Duindam (1994) provides a summary and critique of Elias’ work. The publication date of Elias’ book on court

heart of Elias' study, not as an accident attached to one person or another, but in a structural sense. The social structure, in this case the court society, remains the same even as individuals that compose it change; only the relationships are constant, "specific forms of mutual dependence between the individuals," which can be dependence created by hostility as well as by friendship.<sup>326</sup> The "mesh of interdependence" must be understood in order to get beyond individual decisions and get access to the aspects of human relationships that provide the framework for human interaction.<sup>327</sup> This mid-twentieth-century approach to early modern European history provides a parallel to the power-oriented Roman history written during that period, because many early modern Europeanists as well as many Roman historians in this era sought to detect the methods of acquiring power, the classification of the types of historical actors involved, and a resulting equilibrium, if one was present.

Finally, to illustrate the way the concept of power permeated the thought of the twentieth century, it must be noted that one of the most important challenges to the type of thinking that was dominant for most of the twentieth century itself also revolved around the concept of power, seen in a new light and coupled with a concept of knowledge. Foucault challenged the assumption made by established academics and intellectuals that knowledge lies outside the nexus of power. Power, he said, was not just the repressive power of the State:

...what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State. In two senses: first of all because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. The State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the

---

society, 1969, is misleading, since it was almost finished as a dissertation in 1933, when Elias was forced to emigrate from Germany.

<sup>326</sup> Elias (1969) trans. Jephcott 142.

<sup>327</sup> Elias (1969) trans. Jephcott 143.

family, kinship, knowledge, technology, and so forth.<sup>328</sup>

By linking knowledge with power, Foucault challenged the assumption of academics and other intellectual figures, including historians, that they were merely observers and analyzers of the operations of power in society, rather than inextricably implicated in those operations.<sup>329</sup> Foucault, of course, operated on a high intellectual level that dealt with intrinsic elements and connections rather than exposés. However, if involvement in power was a reason to debunk an individual or an institution, then, when power and knowledge were bound together, professors and universities stood vulnerable to the debunking that they had inflicted on others.

The widespread acceptance of “debunking” among historians who wrote during most of the twentieth century did not mean that any explanation that revolved around the quest for glory and/or power would be accepted, but many historians were inclined to view such explanations as plausible, provided that they could be adequately substantiated by evidence. One might say that a “debunking” explanation seemed to be inherently plausible, even though it of course still required factual support.

This urge to “debunk” was related to a view of the world and particularly of government that became prevalent in the twentieth century.

The influence of disillusionment on twentieth-century thought

The twentieth century was marked by disillusionment. Disillusionment implies the prior existence of illusions that are subsequently discarded. Before disillusionment set in, the idea of inevitable progress was widely, albeit not universally, accepted; the overall trajectory of human events was thought by many to be inevitably upward, even if following a line that had some valleys as

---

<sup>328</sup> Foucault (1980a) 122, quoted in Harris (2010) 570-71.

<sup>329</sup> Judt (2005) 479 describes his message and its influence in this way: “All behavior, all opinion, all knowledge, precisely because it was socially derived and therefore political instrumental, should be regarded with suspicion. The very idea that judgments or evaluations might stand independent of the person making them came to be treated in certain quarters as itself the expression of representation of a partisan (and implicitly conservative) social position.”

well as peaks. “In the years preceding World War One Europe was an optimistic continent whose statesmen and commentators looked to a confident future.”<sup>330</sup> European civilization (actually the civilization of western and central Europe, for the most part) was assumed by Europeans, and by those who regarded themselves as heirs to European civilization in the United States and dominions that were former colonies within the British Empire, to be superior to what existed in the rest of the world; Europeans may have chosen to be more or less liberal in bestowing the benefits of their civilization among peoples that they viewed as lesser, but Europeans and those affiliated with them provided the standard by which others were judged, including whether they were fit for self-rule.<sup>331</sup> Today, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, it appears obvious that the atrocities committed by Europeans in the previous century were not aberrations, but, in fact, typical. The twentieth century was marked by horrific events and institutionalized brutality, starting with British conduct during the Boer War, the atrocities perpetrated on the Congo by King Leopold II of Belgium (as revealed in Roger Casement’s report of 1904), and the atrocities committed against the Putumayo Indians of the Amazon Basin (as revealed in a report issued in 1913, also based on Casement’s investigation), and going up to the Balkan Wars of the 1990s. (That is not to say that all atrocities were equally horrific, and I hope that no reader will conclude from this section that I am adopting the position of Ernst Nolte in the *Historikerstreit*; some atrocities were even more reprehensible in quantity and quality than others.<sup>332</sup>) Moreover, the perpetrators could not be dismissed as savages outside the pale of civilization, because many of the most prominent atrocities were committed by nations that had been regarded at the beginning of the twentieth century as the most civilized of all, starting with, most

---

<sup>330</sup> Judt (2005) 236.

<sup>331</sup> Judt (2005) 280 notes of the period immediately after the Second World War, “Even liberals and socialists who favored autonomy and eventual independence for Europe’s overseas subjects expected it to be many years before such goals would be realized.”

<sup>332</sup> To give a sense of the scale of violence that caused disillusionment when it became known, I cite Snyder (2010) vii-viii, who states that the Nazi and Soviet regimes together murdered, through execution and deliberate starvation, a total of fourteen million civilian victims between 1933 and 1945 within what he terms the “bloodlands,” stretching from Germany’s eastern border to the western fringes of the Russian part of the Soviet Union.

obviously, Germany. The collapse of colonialism after the Second World War revealed how ineffective any *mission civilisatrice* claimed by European countries as a justification for their imperial adventures had been, and that in many cases the European rule had been much more of a problem than a solution for the people whom they had ruled. The United States, an anti-colonial power by tradition, and to some inconsistent extent still anti-colonial in belief up to the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, took up the mantle of leader of Europe and, in the notable case of Southeast Asia, as the successor to a European colonial power (France). For the peoples of those nations that were located in Europe or that thought of themselves as primarily European in origin, such as the United States, the failure of what they regarded as European civilization to guarantee proper behavior must have been a particular source of disillusionment.

The First World War was the greatest single cause for disillusionment in the twentieth century. It was not just the magnitude of the slaughter but its futility, and the evident emptiness of the claims that had been made to justify war, which made people think that previously accepted beliefs must be wrong.<sup>333</sup> The disillusionment that it engendered lasted long after it was over, and even after those who lived through it had died.

Never again in the history of the world will a war break out as in 1914. At least not within the realm of the western world as we know it. Whatever irrational vibrations, whatever latent potentialities for collective intoxications and enthusiasms exist among the African or Asiatic peoples, lie outside our frames of reference and may be discharged in other ways. But the old nations of Europe as well as their descendants in the New World are now considerably sobered<sup>334</sup> — which is not to say that they have become any more perceptive or prudent. Such a claim could be made only for individuals, not for groups or nations. But people have learned the meaning of fear. Even those born later, who have not themselves gone through any of the disastrous years, seem to have an inherited

---

<sup>333</sup> Britain (1933) expresses this theme very eloquently.

<sup>334</sup> The German word “ernüchtern,” as well as meaning “to sober (someone) up” can mean “to disillusion” or “to disenchant.”

memory, a prenatal trauma, which inclines them to skepticism and rationality rather than naïve enthusiasm. Their unconscious has been politicized, as it were.<sup>335</sup>

These words appear in the memoirs of Carl Zuckmayer (1896-1977), a German playwright who survived four years of military service in the German army during the First World War, and later endured forced emigration from Germany, first to Austria and eventually to the United States, because of his left-wing literary works and his partly Jewish ancestry. I have quoted his analysis at length because his words encapsulate three central themes in this chapter: 1) the mood of European peoples during the First World War changed from enthusiasm to disenchantment, 2) this disenchantment moved people away from emotional enthusiasm toward an attempt at skepticism and rationality,<sup>336</sup> and 3) this “sobered” attitude was held not just by contemporaries to the First World War but by people born after it was over, and thus lasted for much of the rest of the twentieth century.

In the United States, whose involvement in the First World War lasted only a year and a half and initially induced a state of confident belief not only that the Americans had won the war but that they therefore knew how to manage the peace, the following fifteen years saw three major reasons for disillusionment: 1) the failure of Wilsonian democracy to reorder the world in a satisfactory manner, 2) the failure of Prohibition, the banning of the sale of alcoholic drinks that was designed to rid the United States of the problems associated with excessive drinking but instead made those problems worse and

---

<sup>335</sup> Zuckmayer (1966) 185 (= trans. Winston and Winston [1970] 137): “Einen Kriegausbruch wie von 1914 wird es in der Weltgeschichte nicht mehr geben. Wenigstens nicht im Umkreis der uns bekannten, abendländischen Welt. Was in afrikanischen oder asiatischen Völkern an irrationalen Frequenzen, an unverbrauchter Potenz zu kollektivem Rausch und Enthusiasmus vorhanden ist, liegt außerhalb unserer Vorstellung und mag sich auf andere Weise entladen. Die alten Völker Europas, auch ihre Nachkommen in der >Neuen Welt<, sind heute, im sinkenden Zyklus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, ernüchtert — womit nicht gesagt ist, daß sie einsichtiger oder klüger geworden seien. Das ließe sich auch nur von Einzelpersonen, nicht von Gruppen oder Volksverbänden behaupten. Aber die Völker insgesamt haben das Gruseln gelernt. Sogar die späteren Geborenen, die selbst keine Katastrophenjahre mehr mitgemacht haben, tragen eine Art von Erinnerung, ein Vorgeburts-Trauma in sich, das sie eher zu Skepsis und Rationalität als zu naiver Begeisterung anhält: das Unterbewußtsein ist politisiert.”

<sup>336</sup> The First World War also encouraged contrary impulses among some, such as an interest in spiritualism.

helped create organized crime, and 3) the collapse of the stock market and of the whole U.S. economy, which punctured American confidence that the United States had found a way for everyone to get rich. And, while the First World War played an important role in creating a sense of national identity in Great Britain's former colonies, such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, it also created bitterness in those emerging dominions toward the mother country because they believed that they had been sacrificed by British generals as cannon fodder. It is hardly necessary to speculate as to why the crimes of the 1930s and 1940s that were committed in Europe created disillusionment, at least when they were revealed in the 1940s and 1950s, but we should also recall how strongly many people had felt about the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and the failure of the democracies to come to the aid of the Spanish government. Success in the Second World War was followed by disillusionment in Britain at the fact that victory brought severe austerity rather than prosperity, and in the United States that victory in a hot war ushered in not peace but a cold war.

Thirty years on [i.e., from the First World War], after World War Two, people had their eyes firmly and nervously fixed upon the terrible past. Many observers expected more of the same: another post-war depression, a re-run of the politics of extremism, a third world war.<sup>337</sup>

For Marxists, who perhaps had felt themselves to be insulated enough from the ruling powers to be free from opprobrium as oppressors, the disillusionment was only delayed. Eventually, most of them had to come to understand that their sense of moral superiority had been undermined by events, whether that disillusionment set in already in the 1930s with the Stalinist show trials, or only after Khrushchev's speech in 1956 denouncing the cult of Stalin, or after the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Uprising in October of that year, or after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, or after the publication in 1974 of translations of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* into many languages.<sup>338</sup>

---

<sup>337</sup> Judt (2005) 236.

<sup>338</sup> Judt (2005) 559.

This disillusionment was not limited to people living in countries whose regimes came to be regarded as tyrannical and monstrous, such as Nazi Germany, Japan, or the Soviet Union. In those countries, one might at least believe that the problem had been the particular ruler or type of government, and therefore that a change of regime would end the problem. In other countries, the problem often came to be seen not as the person at the top but rather “the system,” which, regardless of the individual ruler, would continue to be an evil or at best flawed system. In the United States, the involvement in Southeast Asia, which resulted in atrocities and military defeat, may have begun as disillusionment with the government among the left wing, especially among military-age males who were called to fight that war, but soon afterwards the collapse of a presidency and resignation of the president, a phenomenon that had no precedent in American history, spread disillusionment throughout the political spectrum.

This effect was heightened by the realization that governments not only often lied, but manufactured lies and distortions in systematic ways through propaganda ministries and other government agencies. For much of the twentieth century, many governments provided specific reasons to distrust appearances. States produced a new product, propaganda, that is not just lies emanating from government, which were nothing new, but lies that were scientifically designed by government bureaus staffed by experts in the science of disinformation.<sup>339</sup> Not only dictatorships but democracies too generated propaganda. For example, after the Second World War, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency funneled funds surreptitiously to a great number of groups around the world, which could be left-wing as well as right-wing, as long as they were anti-Soviet, and eventually

---

<sup>339</sup> It is interesting that the word “propaganda” acquired its current meaning of the systematic dissemination of misleading information only in the 1930s (in Europe), and somewhat earlier in the United States. “propaganda, n.” OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/view/Entry/152605?rskey=V4e2t1&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed August 11, 2017). The earliest use of “disinformation” as cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 1955. “disinformation, n.” OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/view/Entry/54579?redirectedFrom=disinformation#eid> (accessed August 11, 2017). However, the phrase “black propaganda” did occur in the nineteenth century. “black” S5.a., “black, adj. and n.” OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.proxy.cc.uic.edu/view/Entry/19670#eid19401181> (accessed August 11, 2017).



intellectuals and academics were shocked and chagrined to find out that they had been the often unwitting recipients of C.I.A. funds.<sup>340</sup> In an age when the two dominant super powers in the world waged incessant propaganda campaigns that paid lip-service to fine ideals with unabashed hypocrisy, it was natural to interpret fine and uplifting sentiments, such as those expressed in Cicero's oratory and philosophy, as mere "lip-service" to high-minded values. Any state called a "People's Democratic Republic" was controlled by a dictator or small oligarchy, "peace-loving nations" were those that belonged to a particular military alliance, and "foreign subversion" was denounced by those who routinely meddled in the politics of other countries. In this climate, it was easy to assume that the leaders of the Roman superpower had also used lofty language to cloak their devious and self-aggrandizing schemes, though this assumption might require ignoring the absence of competition faced by Rome, unlike the two superpowers of the period after the Second World War. Thus, the Cold War that the United States and the Soviet Union waged almost from the very end of the Second World War up to the collapse of the Soviet Empire in the late 1980s rendered suspect the statements of politicians and governments.

Another source of disillusionment was technology, a broad subject that can only be touched on here. Technology brought enormous benefits to the people of the twentieth century, particularly in the fields of medicine, communication, and transportation, but also brought enormous suffering. The machine gun and poison gas of the First World War seemed to have brought warfare to the acme of horror.<sup>341</sup> Of course, the nuclear weaponry employed at the end of the Second World War showed how much more suffering military technology could create than had previously been imagined or imaginable, and the possibility of mutually assured destruction during the Cold War posed a threat to the entire globe, a threat that was brought home by the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. In the same year,

---

<sup>340</sup> Wilford (2008) 70-98. For example, in 1967 the *New York Times* reported that the left-wing literary journal *Partisan Review* had for many years been in receipt of C.I.A. dollars, although its editors always denied the link till the journal ceased publication in 2003 (Wilford [2008] 103-106).

<sup>341</sup> Jeffery (2015) 55.

the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* started to undermine faith in technology by revealing some of the unintended and unwanted consequences of technology, in the form of pesticides. Although distrust of technology continues till the present, it has partly been countered by the explosive rise of the personal computer and its offspring, starting in 1983, followed soon after by the spread of the Internet in the 1990s (two inventions that brought special benefits to scholars, in particular), the combination of which has for some encouraged a resurrection of faith in technology as a solution to problems.

This disillusionment made gullibility the most embarrassing intellectual fault, excessively sentimental at best, and culpably purblind at worst. It seemed obvious that anyone should be very reluctant to rely on appearances, which were always deceiving. The job of the intellectual, or in fact of any thinking person, was thought to be to find the reality that lay behind appearances. The intellectual roots of this attitude can be seen in the great thinkers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century: for example, Karl Marx, who held that an economic substructure lay behind the superstructure of politics, Max Weber, who found deeply imbedded "ideal types," and Sigmund Freud, who searched for the unconscious underneath conscious thought. The events of the twentieth century moved this conviction that truth lies beneath the surface from erudite theory to "common sense."

This distrust of appearances had its effect on the historical profession, causing many historians to dismiss what was superficial, and search for a hidden truth beneath it. That distrust, I am arguing, changed the way that history was written. Thus, it was natural for a Syme to look for a "Machtfrage," as opposed to a "Rechtsfrage," to understand what was really happening in the middle of the first century B.C.E.<sup>342</sup> This development in historiography is enough to

---

<sup>342</sup> See above, p. 62. Another possible reason for believing that appearances are deceiving may have been the sexual code that prevailed from the end of the First World War till the Sexual Revolution of the late 1960s. While that code was not as restrictive with regard to behavior as the dominant sexual code before 1914, it demanded "discretion" in many aspects of heterosexual relations, and almost complete secrecy in any homosexual relations. Thus, adults would have been somewhat aware of many sexual acts that took place all around them but which could never be mentioned. But being "discreet" was not enough to protect homosexuals when a "lavender scare" about homosexuals in government combined with the McCarthyite "red scare" in the United

account for the inclination to “low” explanations, such as power and money, that marks the works of the seven Roman historians whom I have cited as examples of disillusioned writing; in other words, I am not making a claim that it was the personal political attitudes of these seven historians that were marked by disillusionment, but rather that it was simply their environment.<sup>343</sup> The rise of a new kind of history-writing then in the 1980s, less marked by disillusionment, may have resulted in part from the fact that by that decade most historians, having grown up in an era of disillusionment, had never possessed any illusions, and could therefore no longer be disillusioned.

Having advanced the proposition that events and developments of the twentieth century might have influenced Roman historians of the twentieth century in how they wrote about the history of Rome, I will try to anticipate two objections. The first is that I have rendered the subjects on my study in Chapter Three (Gelzer, Syme, Taylor, etc.) as advocates for some contemporary cause or movement — to use Heldmann’s phrase, “Geschichtsschreibung als Politik mit anderen Mitteln” (“history writing as politics with other means”). Whether that is a correct characterization or not of the works of, for example, Sallust and Tacitus, two of the historians discussed by Heldmann in his section with that title, this is not what I am claiming for the Roman historians of the twentieth century whom I have presented as examples. In general, these scholars were not using history to

---

States in the early 1950s caused the federal government to dismiss many homosexual employees on the grounds of being a “security risk,” the code phrase often used to identify them — a practice that did not cease till a court decision in 1969. In connection with the risk of being deceived by appearances, one of the supposedly sinister features of homosexuals was that they had the ability to spot each other, whereas “normal” people were often unable to identify homosexuals. See Johnson (2004): (“discretion”) 106; (firing of homosexuals) 166-69; (security risk) 7-8; (court decision) 207-208; (recognition of homosexuals) 33-34. A homophobic study of lesbians published in 1965 warned its readers that lesbians often did not conform to the easily recognizable “butch” type, and therefore could not be distinguished from heterosexual women (Corber [2011] 2). An interesting aspect of anti-government sentiment in the United States (see below, pp. 158-62) was that during the “lavender scare,” a connection was created in the mind of the U.S. public between federal bureaucrats and homosexuality (Johnson [2004] 92-98).

<sup>343</sup> Because this explanation rests on the environment in which historians functioned rather than on their own personal experiences or attitudes, my speculation as to the effect of sexual hypocrisy in creating an inclination to finding a “background history” also implies nothing about the personal lives of historians in general or of any specific historian.

promote a contemporary agenda, but rather a contemporary agenda influenced their view of the past.<sup>344</sup>

The second objection that I wish to anticipate is that my assertion of the influence of their times on Gelzer, Syme, Taylor, etc. has stripped them of their intellectual autonomy. The assertion that authors' environments influence their thought should trouble classicists least of all, who are used to viewing and describing the influence of an author's times on the author, for example, the influence of the Peloponnesian Wars on Euripides in his treatment of war in general, or of the reign of Domitian on Tacitus as he analyzed the principate of Tiberius. In fact, the connection between works and the times in which they were written is part of classicists' stock in trade. When they make that connection, they are not implying in any way that ancient authors were helpless corks bobbing on the ocean of the events and ideas that were occurring around them. Rather, they are recognizing that the contemporary scene does influence an author's outlook. This recognition can also be applied to interpreting works written in modern times.

In the case of historians, they are influenced by their own environment — intellectual as well as material — when they examine the past. Though such a statement might be made as part of a historicist thesis about the nature of history, I am offering it simply as a statement of the obvious, and one that ancient historians apply, consciously or not, when they interpret the historians who wrote during classical antiquity. This environment influences, but need not control, the choices they make as historians, particularly the questions they choose to ask (and the answers that they can legitimately provide to those questions are, in my view, limited by the evidence that they can find). Indeed, to anyone who counters that, even if I am right, this influence is a necessary but regrettable departure from strict objectivity, I would respond that historians can exert greater intellectual independence if they are aware of the influences exerted

---

<sup>344</sup> Heldmann (2011) 105-20. Although Heldmann states that ancient historical writing could function like a deliberative speech, and that this is one reason why Roman history writing does not accord with modern conceptions of a work of history, he adds that even the ancient historian did not pursue topical political goals or enter into the political controversies of his own time (108).

on them by their environment, and more able to identify, evaluate, and possibly repress these influences, than if they go forth in the naïve belief that they can divorce themselves from their own lives and environments. If historians rely on beliefs about “the way the world works,” the more aware they are of these beliefs, the less likely they are to be misled or controlled by them. While I myself am no less influenced by the world and ideas around me, or at least the world and ideas that were around me for most of my life, I still want to claim that my assertions have been founded on ancient evidence or, as in this volume, founded on the lack thereof.

## Conclusion

### One theme and two sub-themes

The main theme of this book is that no extant ancient evidence exists that supports the proposition that the political culture of the Roman Republic was amoral, and that substantial evidence in fact exists which points in the opposite direction. Having revealed the lack of evidence for political amoralism, I have attempted to show that many Roman historians had nevertheless assumed that Roman political culture was amoral, and I then explained their mindset by examining the general disciplinary mindset of many historians of the twentieth century, and, in turn, that historical mindset by means of common experiences and assumptions of the general population living in the twentieth century.

A sub-theme of this book is that Roman historians should not dismiss Roman philosophy as unconnected to Roman reality. While many Roman historians typically mine Cicero's philosophical works for the occasional historical anecdote here and there, or treat the *Republic* and perhaps the *Laws* as providing some insight into Roman political institutions, on the assumption that, when Cicero talks about the ideal constitution, he has the Roman political system in mind, they do not take seriously his high-minded themes about the duties of political leaders and citizens. Granted, my presentation of political philosophy has been as shallow as it has been broad, and I am not qualified to develop an original interpretation of ancient philosophical works. Nonetheless, I do hope that this book may lead historians to ask themselves whether they should take Roman philosophy more seriously than they have as a possible key to understanding how the Romans thought about the state, its leaders, its other citizens, and the relationship between the three.

A second sub-theme of this book is an argument for the historical importance of the Ironie Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* that I expounded in *Athenaeum* 2009. That article presented a radical solution to a very difficult source crux for the history of the Roman Republic; this book shows that this interpretation makes a significant difference for Roman Republican political history, because, if the

article's thesis is correct, there is not one (and only one) ancient source that offers support for Roman political amorality, but rather there is actually no such source. However, I know that many Roman historians (probably most), if they are even familiar with that thesis, do not accept it. For that reason, had the book started with the Ironic Interpretation, many readers would have dismissed the book as based on an interpretation that they failed to accept, and therefore as flawed from the outset. I hope that by the time readers of this book reached my discussion of the *Comm. Pet.*, they had come to realize how little evidence exists for Roman amorality, and what an odd-man-out the *Comm. Pet.* has to be, if it is not interpreted as ironic.

The “debunking” inclination of many historians in the twentieth century helps explain the ready acceptance of the *Comm. Pet.* as a reliable historical source, because it appeared to provide an already debunked “true history” of Roman campaign politics. Its apparent unvarnished frankness harmonized very well with the way Roman Republican history and history in general were written for much of the twentieth century. Indeed, it was natural for most historians of this era, from Gelzer's *Roman Nobility* (1912) up to Brunt's essay on *clientela* (1988), to think that the best way to reflect the reality of Roman politics lay in discounting virtue-based statements of morality, and that, behind all the fine speechifying and philosophizing of someone like Marcus Cicero, politicians were not only routinely compromising normal ethical rules in their quest for office, but were doing so with the consent, probably tacit, of their contemporaries. For the politics of any age in almost any political system was seen by many historians of this era as a quest for power or (though less often in the case of the Greeks and the Romans) material wealth, and any historian who took seriously the pious sentiments expressed by politicians ran the risk of appearing naïve to his fellow scholars. The focus on power and analysis into groups not only made the *Comm. Pet.* a very attractive and plausible source for Roman historians, but also inclined them to take its core message for granted and not as one that required explicit substantiation, for three reasons. First, since its ostensible goal is to offer advice about winning an election, and an election to Rome's most important office, it clearly is about the acquisition of power. Moreover, this quest for political power is presented as important enough to the candidate to justify his ignoring of the normal

rules of morality. Second, given its didactic, or, as I would have it, pseudo-didactic mission, the *Comm. Pet.* employs analysis throughout that consists in large part of identifying groups, groups that overlap since different cross-cutting criteria are employed, with advice to Marcus Cicero as to how he can appeal to each of them. Many of these groups were seen by some historians as the product of private social relationships between a politician and his followers, or between politicians, rather than affinities of policies or ideas.<sup>345</sup> Third, the treatise is premised on Cicero's membership in a minority group among Roman politicians, the *novi homines* ("new men"), those whose family had no history of holding high office, and on the need for him to make special efforts and appeals in order to overcome that disadvantage; this feature fits in well with the modern interest in social mobility.

In spite of the still heterodox status of my Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*, and whether or not one accepts this interpretation as valid, I claim that the question about Roman political morality raised by the Ironic Interpretation is important. It not only presents a new solution to a hoary crux of Republican history and literature, but it challenges us to reexamine our assumptions and beliefs about the political culture of the Roman Republic. If one does accept the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*, then one clearly needs to determine what effect the drastically altered position of the *Comm. Pet.* within our body of evidence for Roman Republican politics has on our understanding of the politics of the Late Republic, and possibly of Republican politics in general. For those who do not accept the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*, then the conclusion expressed here is still significant. For, if I am wrong about my reading of the *Comm. Pet.*, then as a consequence we still need to contend with the related issues of the *Comm. Pet.*'s authenticity or lack thereof. The contention that Chapter Two of this volume has put forward — that the attitude toward political morality ostensibly expressed in the *Comm. Pet.* is found nowhere else in our extant sources — is relevant to the authenticity issue, since dissimilarity between what the *Comm. Pet.* and all other contemporary sources say about Roman politics must

---

<sup>345</sup> For a description of the viewpoint held by several important scholars that the *Comm. Pet.* presents a façade cloaking power politics, see Morstein-Marx (1998) 259-60.



count against accepting its authenticity. Admittedly, dissimilarity cannot be probative on this issue, as the *Comm. Pet.* could simply constitute the expression of a unique opinion.

Besides their reading of the *Comm. Pet.*, another factor related to the way history was practiced for much of the twentieth century helps explain why many Roman historians so readily embraced an amoralist view of Roman Republic politics, in spite of the paucity of evidence to support it. There are two possible ways to substantiate a particular characterization of a historical phenomenon: either that characterization is supported by contemporary evidence (i.e., contemporary to the phenomenon) and/or by sources with access to that evidence, or the phenomenon can be seen as a specific manifestation of some general principle of human activity, not limited to one time and/or one place. It is very plausible that many Roman historians during the twentieth century either assumed that amoralism held sway within any political system, or at least within any complex and advanced system like the Roman Republican government, or they had consciously come to that conclusion.<sup>346</sup> That premise would have made it easy to ignore the many contrary indications, particularly from Cicero's philosophical and rhetorical works, that in fact the Romans of his time did not think that way. If the characterization of Roman political culture as amoral is based on this general belief about politics, then that characteristic is not a distinctive feature of Roman political culture, but simply a feature that it shares with many other, possibly all, political cultures. And, of course, that general belief about the amoralism of politics will have to be argued and substantiated as a general theory, if its application to Roman Republican political culture is to be considered valid.

### Amoralism: is it dead?

Though the amoralist view of Roman political culture is not a straw man, can it be considered a dead horse? After all, this chapter has acknowledged that the prosopographical school no longer holds

---

<sup>346</sup> Momigliano (1940) 77 points out that Syme's prosopographical approach involves a presupposition about human motives: "Prosopographical research has the great virtue of reaching individuals or small groups, but does not explain their material or spiritual needs; it simply presupposes them."

sway, and that a new, “emic” way of looking at history has caused Roman historians to turn away from the quest for a hidden key to Roman Republican politics that the Romans themselves failed to grasp and/or articulate, to attempt instead to understand the way the Romans themselves understood their own politics. If that is the case, why bother to flog this horse with the arguments that the amoralist double standard is not supported in the ancient sources, and that belief in it was fostered by an early- and mid-twentieth century *Zeitgeist*?

I offer three answers to this question. First, many of the scholarly works on the Roman Republic that date from the period of “debunking” historiography are masterpieces that will deservedly always be read and consulted for their wealth of information and for their analysis, particularly of specific issues and sources, even if their conclusions and overall approach find less acceptance than in the past. Roman Republican history as presented in these works tells not so much an incorrect story as an incomplete story.<sup>347</sup> Second, modes of thought live on in the classroom long after they have retreated from scholarly monographs and articles, especially in a field like Classics where so much teaching consists in commentary on specific texts rather than in a systematic exposition and defense of premises by which those texts should be interpreted. Third, it would be better to acknowledge the passing of the amoralist viewpoint in an explicit manner than simply to ignore it as yesterday’s fashion. Just as Gelzer, Münzer, and Syme superseded the constitutionalism of Mommsen in favor of an approach keyed more to individuals, and the post-Geertzian wave of history has now pushed that kind of prosopography into the background, we can expect that the current historical sensibility will eventually yield to some new outlook. When that happens, it is possible that the amoralist interpretation of Roman

---

<sup>347</sup> Momigliano (1940) 77, though writing here specifically about the Augustan principate, cogently expresses this limitation: “...we shall reaffirm that prosopographical research cannot give a sufficient interpretation of this period (and, we would add, of any historical period).” It should be noted that he approves in part of Syme’s “debunking”: “With Syme’s realistic description of the interests and ambitions, frequently unscrupulous, which the Roman Revolution disclosed, we can easily agree; it is a return to common sense.”

## Conclusion

Republican political history will resurface unless it has previously been refuted, as this volume has attempted to do.<sup>348</sup>

---

<sup>348</sup> Note that Appendix Three relates to this concluding chapter.

## Scholarly reaction to the Ironic Interpretation of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*

This book does not try to defend or bolster the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* that I presented in print in 2009.<sup>349</sup> Rather, this book takes that reading of the *Comm. Pet.* as a given, and therefore does not construe that vexed work as evidence for amorality in the political culture of the Roman Republic.

It is too early to know what impact the iconoclastic Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* will have on scholarly interpretation of that work or of Roman history. By this time (August 2017), more than six years after the appearance of the *Athenaeum* article, it is significant that only two scholars have attempted in print to advance an argument against it.<sup>350</sup>

I have found several references to my article after its appearance, beyond mere bibliographic listing. One is contained in a book review:

On the other hand, regarding the actual importance of election campaigns and of the political role of common citizens, Cecconi assumes a somewhat detached viewpoint on the debated problem of “democracy” in Rome, observing that even today «i principii costitutivi dell’idea di democrazia sono lungi dall’incontrare un riconoscimento generale» (155; on the theme, now, we must come to terms with M.C. Alexander, *The Commentariolum Petitionis as an Attack on Election Campaigns*, «*Athenaeum*» 97, 2009, 31-57; 369-395).<sup>351</sup>

---

<sup>349</sup> Alexander (2009a).

<sup>350</sup> Readers should be on the lookout for an important as-yet-unpublished (as of August 2017) OUP book that will undoubtedly take a stand on issues raised by my Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*: W. Jeffrey Tatum’s *Quintus Cicero: A Brief Handbook on Canvassing for Office* (*Commentariolum Petitionis*).

<sup>351</sup> Fezzi (2010). A supportive quotation, although unlikely to be derived from a reading of my article, comes from former U.S. Senator Gary Hart, who writes as a blurb to Freeman’s 2012 text and translation of the *Comm. Pet.*, “Freeman has done a masterful job of bringing this delightful text into the modern day — so masterful that one might think it was actually a spoof.”

In a review of a new English translation of the *Comm. Pet.*, Wills expresses agreement with the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*<sup>352</sup> Another reviewer of this translation remarks that some gaps in its bibliography are filled by my article, which is cited by the translator.<sup>353</sup> Kaplow finds my argument convincing.<sup>354</sup> An edition and translation of the *Comm. Pet.*, whose bibliography also lists the article, mentions a satirical view of Roman politics as one approach suggested in the scholarly literature.<sup>355</sup> In an article on Cicero's *Letters*, McCutcheon takes note of my contention that the *Comm. Pet.* is satirical.<sup>356</sup> My article is listed in the bibliography of Fantham's commentary on Cicero's *Pro Murena*.<sup>357</sup> Dench finds my article interesting, and Steel suggests that it supports reducing the importance that we attach to oratory in the Ciceronian era.<sup>358</sup>

Feig Vishnia presents one argument against accepting the Ironic Interpretation. She makes the point that, if the *Comm. Pet.* were a "satire,"<sup>359</sup> then its author would have picked a campaign of a *nobilis*, rather than the campaign of Marcus Cicero, as its subject. Her criticism appears to be based on a premise that the author would have picked a typical candidate as the object of mockery, if mockery were the purpose of the *Comm. Pet.*, and therefore, since *nobiles* were much more prevalent among the ranks of candidates for office than *novi homines* like Marcus Cicero, the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* cannot be correct.<sup>360</sup> However, I anticipated this objection in two ways. First, I argued that Cicero's *novitas* could have been used to criticize the political system in which someone could rise from an unknown status to a position of leadership.<sup>361</sup> Thus, Cicero would be

---

<sup>352</sup> Wills (2012), reviewing Freeman (2012).

<sup>353</sup> Spina (2012).

<sup>354</sup> Kaplow (2013) 234.

<sup>355</sup> Brodersen (2013) 86.

<sup>356</sup> McCutcheon (2016) 58 n. 104.

<sup>357</sup> Cicero (2013) 219.

<sup>358</sup> Dench (2013) 130 n. 30, and Steel (2013a) 161-62 n. 10.

<sup>359</sup> "Satire" is an accurate description of how the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* interprets that work, as long as "satire" is understood, of course, in the modern sense, rather than as a genre of Latin poetry.

<sup>360</sup> Feig Vishnia (2012) 164 n. 7.

<sup>361</sup> Alexander (2009a) 389.

an apt exemplar. Second, if my tentative suggestion that the work was written in the late first century C.E. is correct, then it would have made sense (and even more so if it was written later) to take as an example the person who was by that time the most famous figure from the Republic, and who therefore symbolized the Republic more than anyone else.<sup>362</sup>

In addition, a new comprehensive overview by Peirano of Latin *pseudepigrapha* provides an important new perspective on that genre, a perspective in whose context my previously published thesis should be viewed (even though the author does not cite it), for two reasons.<sup>363</sup> First, Peirano suggests that a pseudepigraphic work such as (in my and Peirano's view) the *Comm. Pet.* may have constituted a fiction evident to the reader, "operating within generic rules similar to those of the rhetorical *prosopopoeiae*."<sup>364</sup> Second, and even more significantly for my thesis, Peirano, at the conclusion of her chapter analyzing the *Consolatio ad Liviam* and the *Elegiae in Maecenatem*, provides a framework for understanding historical recreations that is compatible with the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*:

The scholarship on the chronological fictions that I have examined reveals an interesting disjunction between ancient and modern views of history, authenticity, and fraud. For ancient readers fiction was a widely available mode of interpretation of texts that in essence restaged the past. While some ancient readers may well have been taken in by the masquerade, others could no doubt appreciate the recreation of the Augustan past as a fiction that demanded of them to be conscious participants in a clever game. For modern readers, the signs of the text's historicity — address or allusion to known historical individuals and events — have quite a different meaning: they are *prima facie* taken as true, and in this case [the *Consolatio ad Liviam*] the text is taken to be an authentic Augustan document. Or they are scrutinized for inconsistencies and are perceived to give away the text as the work of a counterfeiter to whom scholars are keen to assign a variety of

---

<sup>362</sup> Alexander (2009a) 393.

<sup>363</sup> Peirano (2012).

<sup>364</sup> Peirano (2012) 26; see also 27 n. 104.

historical motives. In both cases, the text is confined to the realm of documentary *Realien* and deprived of the sophisticated apparatus of fictionality, intertextuality, and ambiguity with which “high literature” is associated.<sup>365</sup>

Her characterization of the scholarship on the *Consolatio ad Liviam* recalls the way the verbal similarities between Cicero’s *In Toga Candida* and *Pro Murena*, on the one hand, and the *Comm. Pet.*, on the other, have been treated since Hendrickson highlighted them well over a century ago:

The usual method of approaching the problem consists in providing a list of parallel passages without, however, much, if any, discussion of the narrative contexts from which they are taken. Instead, these lists of resemblances are assumed to be self-evident and objective, and scholarly disagreement tends to focus on the issue of which of the two texts should be considered the source. What is lacking throughout and on both sides of the authenticity debate is an analysis of the rhetorical and literary *context* in which these noted resemblances occur. The authorially unstable text is a body that is analyzed scientifically and dissected for evidence. Yet, lacking an authorial figure behind it whose intentions can be gauged, it discourages direct engagement with its literary dimension and invited instead a purely reifying type of analysis.<sup>366</sup>

In my 2009 article, I claimed to have found a context in which echoes of Cicero’s works and other works from the first century B.C.E. can be understood, and presented a possible motive of the author: tongue-in-cheek mockery of the elections of the Roman Republic. Other ways in which Peirano opens the way for an interpretation such as the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* (while, it should be stressed, not endorsing it in any way or indeed citing it) include: 1) that she establishes a link between “fakes” and *suasoriae*, or *consilium dare*, the pseudo-didactic element previously posited by me,<sup>367</sup> 2) her statement that, “[i]n their [ancient readers’] eyes, a text that restaged

---

<sup>365</sup> Peirano (2012) 240-41.

<sup>366</sup> Quotation from Peirano (2012) 208-209; Hendrickson (1892).

<sup>367</sup> Peirano (2012) 27 and 231; cf. Alexander (2009a) 385, “pseudo-didactic purpose.”

the past could easily be interpreted as a teasing and playful piece of entertainment,”<sup>368</sup> 3) her characterization of the *Laus Pisonis* as “an ironic commentary on the patron-poet relationship,”<sup>369</sup> and 4) her reference to the fact that Asconius told of *obtretractores* (“critics”) of Cicero who wrote under the names of Catiline and Antonius.<sup>370</sup> Kletke, building on Peirano’s study to question the female identity of the character Sulpicia in the *Corpus Tibullianum*, notes that authors of pseudepigraphic works were

blatantly re-exploring well-known authors and texts by filling in blanks left by the original authors, imagining what the work of a young canonical writer might have looked like, or rewriting canonical texts in a parodic fashion to explore ‘what-if scenarios’.<sup>371</sup>

Although Quintus Cicero, unlike Tibullus, was not a canonical author, the addressee of the *Comm. Pet.*, Marcus Cicero, was one par excellence, and for that reason the idea of a pseudepigraphic work containing a “what-if scenario” might well apply to the *Comm. Pet.* Similarly, Kletke’s statement that, as “historical figures known from texts such as Valerius Maximus’ were often re-imagined in less than a flattering light...for *pseudepigrapha* to re-imagine an iconic Roman...would not be surprising,”<sup>372</sup> fits my interpretation of the presentation of Marcus Cicero in the *Comm. Pet.*

Traversa, who had not yet read the second part of my *Athenaeum* article when his article on the *Comm. Pet.* appeared, expresses doubt about the Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* First, he asks what genre or author known to us could have conceived of an ironic attack

---

<sup>368</sup> Peirano (2012) 31; cf. Alexander (2009a) 379, “deadpan, dry tone, which contributes to the low-key humor of his essay.”

<sup>369</sup> Peirano (2012) 169; cf. Alexander (2009a) 385, “adherence to a consistently ironic premise.”

<sup>370</sup> Peirano (2012) 47; cf. Alexander (2009a) 391. Texts and translation of some *pseudepigrapha* can be found in Shackleton Bailey (2002).

<sup>371</sup> Kletke (2016), 642 (my emphasis added), “what-if scenario” quotation from Peirano (2012) 21, 23 (see also 10-31).

<sup>372</sup> Kletke (2016) 644-45, citing the discussion of Valerius Maximus by Peirano (2012) 233. Kletke posits that the figure of Sulpicia is not an Augustan female poet who wrote the erotic poems she appears in in the *Corpus Tibullianum*, as it is widely assumed, but perhaps a parody of an iconic third-century B.C.E. woman known for her morality (and as mentioned by Valerius Maximus), written in the first or second century C.E. in the style of Augustan love elegy.



on elections, such as I envisage. Peirano's and Kletke's work on the pseudepigraphic tradition helps answer the first part of that question, and, in the second part of my article, I point out that the extremely high level of erudition about the Late Republic evidenced in the works of Asconius and Quintilian would have enabled some writers of their era to compose a work such as the *Comm. Pet.* (not that I was suggesting either Asconius or Quintilian as a possible author), and that Asconius remarks on the *obtretratores Ciceronis* ("disparagers of Cicero," Asc. *Tog. Cand.* 93-94C) who wrote about him after his death.<sup>373</sup> Traversa also questions the three indications of the *Comm. Pet.*'s ironic nature that I detect. 1) He challenges my article's use of C. Aurelius Cotta (cos. 75), a politician known to skirt the rules of proper campaign conduct, as a sign that the *Comm. Pet.*, which cites him as an example to follow, is not to be taken literally. He writes that the work does not present Cotta as a "paradigma etico" ("ethical paradigm"), but rather as an example who knows how to run an electoral campaign.<sup>374</sup> My point, however, was not that Cotta was no ethical paradigm, but that he was in his time regarded as the opposite of a model for political conduct — an ethical cautionary example —, and that therefore advice attributed to him in the area where he was viewed as particularly deficient constitutes a sign to the reader that the whole work is not to be taken at face value. 2) He writes of my discussion about *amicitia* in the work that I approach the subject "forse senza considerare che ci si muove su un piano di condotta alternativo, fatto di sue regole ben precise che fugano ogni sentimento di indignazione" ("perhaps without considering that one is moving on an alternative plan of behavior constructed of its own quite detailed rules that dispel every feeling of indignation"). In fact, my whole article considers precisely the question of whether the Romans of the Republic thought that an "alternative plan of conduct" could exist.<sup>375</sup> 3) Finally, on the issue of *nomenclatores*, he states that I seem not to notice "che nel testo non è mai fatta menzione di essi" ("that in the text no mention of them is ever made"), because it is up to the candidate to remember faces and names, but in fact he quotes the passage (*Comm.*

---

<sup>373</sup> Traversa (2009) 116 n. 4, Alexander (2009a) 391-92.

<sup>374</sup> Traversa (2009) 131 n. 33, and Alexander (2009a) 53-57.

<sup>375</sup> Traversa (2009) 134 n. 42, and Alexander (2009a) 46-53.

*Pet.* 32) in which the author says that “Marcus” should act so that he seems to be not only a *nomenclator* but also a good friend.<sup>376</sup> As *ne...solum* (“non...soltanto” or “not only”) implies, “Marcus” will indeed appear to be a *nomenclator*, although he will also appear to be a good friend. Traversa is right to apply the term “spin doctor” to the model that the author of the *Comm. Pet.* is urging “Marcus” to follow;<sup>377</sup> the question that I raised in my article is whether that advice should be read as straightforward or ironic. In this book, I believe that I have demonstrated that no other relevant ancient work recommends to politicians the model of a “spin doctor.”

---

<sup>376</sup> In Traversa’s translation of *ne nomenclator solum sed amicus etiam bonus esse videare*, “perché tu non appaia soltanto un nomenclature, ma anche un buon amico.” Traversa (2009) 147, and Alexander (2009a) 40-46.

<sup>377</sup> Traversa (2009) 117-18.

## The philosophical basis of *Alterum est tamen boni viri, alterum boni petitoris*

In terms of practical advice to a candidate, Tatum and I are in agreement that the *Comm. Pet.* tells candidates that they are allowed to commit the sorts of actions that normal morality forbids Romans in general to do.<sup>378</sup> The distinction between tactics and goals<sup>379</sup> is not relevant to the *Comm. Pet.*; the author of that work never in any way offers the justification for the shady practices espoused by him that the election of Marcus Cicero to the consulate will constitute such a good as to justify these practices. He might have made that argument, but he does not. Had he made it, then the good candidate (*bonus petitor*) would also be a good (i.e., virtuous) man (*bonus vir*), and, indeed, the *Comm. Pet.* could not then be characterized as amoral. However, the author of the *Comm. Pet.* never proposes any moral justification for his advice. (It is beside the point that others in ancient and modern times, especially with the advantage of hindsight as to what Marcus Cicero accomplished and prevented as consul, might want to offer that justification.) The point of “*Roma est*” as one of the three central thoughts that Marcus Cicero must keep in his mind as a candidate at all times (2) is explained toward the end of the work (54-57), where Rome is described as an amalgam of vices. Although Marcus Cicero is advised to deter and neutralize bribery that might be used against him by instilling a fear of prosecution in his opponents, the work in no way suggests that his job as consul will be to transform Rome through a program of reform. Therefore, whether the *Comm. Pet.* is read literally or, as I propose, ironically, it simply describes effective tactics for Marcus Cicero to use in his campaign for the consulate, without any attempt to justify those tactics by the argument that they will allow him to prevail in the election, and thereby to accomplish as consul a higher good that would outweigh the morally shady tactics that had put him in office.

---

<sup>378</sup> Tatum (2007).

<sup>379</sup> See above, pp. 5-6.

However, as to why candidates can do what is otherwise forbidden, in philosophical terms Tatum sees in the *Comm. Pet.* a very different rationale from that which I perceive, and thus, from a philosophical point of view, Tatum provides a fundamentally different interpretation of the passages that contrast the good person with the good candidate. He sees in the *Comm. Pet.* an expression of a moral “accommodation of circumstantial necessity” rather than for (according to a literal interpretation of the work) amoralism as characteristic of Roman thinking about elections.<sup>380</sup> If correct, his understanding that the recommendations to the candidate conform to a form of morality acceptable under certain circumstances to the Romans, though not to their usual morality, undermines my Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*, since the ironic interpretation depends on understanding the advice ostensibly being offered as patently offensive to most Romans.<sup>381</sup>

Tatum’s interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*, if valid, would actually work to my advantage as far as this book’s thesis is concerned, because it is my contention here that no ancient evidence exists for Roman amoralism, and Tatum excludes the *Comm. Pet.* as a counter-example, since he claims that the *Comm. Pet.* is not advocating political amoralism, but rather advancing an alternative morality when it comes to politics. However, I cannot accept his reading of the *Comm. Pet.*, because it is premised on the idea that, for the Romans, politics was a separate sphere of life that constituted a kind of special emergency; I believe that, for them, politics was the archetypical area of life in which men showed their true colors when it came to morality.

It might seem that the difference between justifying, for example, a candidate’s use of flattery by the amoralist viewpoint (to paraphrase: “Much behavior is acceptable in political campaigns that is not permitted in ordinary life”) or by Tatum’s circumstantialist interpretation (to paraphrase again: “The candidate is in an extreme situation that renders acceptable conduct that would normally be judged improper”) is not significant, since both amoralism and circumstantialism lead to the result that this behavior (e.g., flattery)

---

<sup>380</sup> Tatum (2007) 130.

<sup>381</sup> Alexander (2009a) 32.

will not be condemned. In my view, however, Tatum veers in the wrong direction when he attempts to fit the abnormal conduct recommended by the *Comm. Pet.* within the confines of morality by invoking circumstantial necessity.

This issue relates to a problem referred to within the discipline of philosophy as the “problem of dirty hands”: whether political leaders should violate deeply held moral principles in order to achieve a good (or avoid a disaster) for their community.<sup>382</sup> In a classic treatment of this question, Walzer argued that politicians sometimes have an obligation to perform acts that would be immoral in any other context. Although the issue is sometimes framed in terms of an extreme peril, such as deciding on the right military means to oppose Nazi Germany, one of the examples that he provides very closely parallels the situation of “Marcus Cicero” in the *Comm. Pet.*, for Walzer makes the claim that it might be right for a candidate to make a crooked deal with a ward boss in order to get elected, depending on what is at stake in this election.<sup>383</sup> Tatum is arguing along the same lines, whereas, in my view, even if one accepts the proposition that a “dirty hands” argument might possibly justify an otherwise immoral act, the situation of a candidate is far too low a threshold for resorting to a “dirty hands” justification. The supporting examples cited by Tatum fail to confirm his interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.* as allowing a candidate to justify otherwise immoral actions by circumstantial necessity.<sup>384</sup>

Let us examine the evidence presented by Tatum. To turn first to sources from rhetoric, from Cicero’s rhetorical manual *De inventione* (2.170-76), in Tatum’s view Cicero’s acknowledgment that certain circumstances render acceptable that which would not normally be allowed parallels the exceptions granted by the *Comm. Pet.* to a Roman who is involved in the special circumstances of an election campaign. Cicero posits three considerations, the *honestum* (“honorable”), the *utile* (“advantageous”), and *incolumitas* (“physical safety”), and while he envisages situations where in the short run *incolumitas* does trump the *honestum*, nevertheless he claims that the

---

<sup>382</sup> Coady (2011).

<sup>383</sup> Walzer (1973) 165-66. See Coady (2011) sections 1 and 2.

<sup>384</sup> Tatum (2007) 129-32.

latter must predominate when a calculation is made over the long term (2.174, see also 2.158 and the discussion of the *honestum* and the *utile* in the *De officiis*).<sup>385</sup> Cicero makes a distinction between *necessitudo* (“necessity”) and *affectio* (“changeable aspect”) (2.176). Since election to office cannot be viewed as a necessity, that is, something necessary to survival (after all, a life of *otium* was an acceptable alternative to office-holding), it must be *affectio* that is at issue here, a change in things that puts something in a different light than that in which it is customarily viewed.<sup>386</sup> However, the two examples cited by Cicero, Odysseus’ spy mission into Troy disguised in rags (*Hom. Od.* 4.242–64) and the actions of Aristippus to rid himself of money when finding himself on a pirate ship (*Diog. Laert.* 2.77), imply mortal danger, and therefore do not refer to the same sort of situation as the *Comm. Pet.* means when it says, for example, that the candidate may engage in flattery while ordinarily a good man should not. As a rhetorical manual, the *De inventione* is, after all, designed to handle the standard techniques that any orator needed to master to be effective, and one of them has to be how to justify otherwise questionable conduct by arguments drawn from necessity, as Cicero himself does in his defense of Milo when speaking of a natural right to self-defense (*Pro Milone* 9–11). In this trial, the fact of a homicide is not in question, and the issue is whether his client committed it *iure an iniuria* (“legitimately or wrongfully”) (31). While both the rhetorical work and the oration offer evidence that Romans accepted that laws needed to be applied with some flexibility, they fail to offer evidence that it was morally acceptable to do something that was a violation of the law (properly interpreted) or a violation of morality. The Theophrastian tradition, cited by Tatum, introduces the quantitative aspect that must be taken into account along with the qualitative when making a moral decision, for example, a major benefit to a friend may outweigh a small amount of harm to one’s honor, but this line of argument falls well inside the confines of moral calculation.<sup>387</sup>

From Cicero’s philosophical works, Tatum uses a statement from Cicero’s *De officiis* regarding the *officium* of the advocate as evidence

---

<sup>385</sup> See above, pp. 34, 38–39. On Cicero’s use of *honestus*, see Brunt (2013b) 236–37.

<sup>386</sup> Tatum (2007) 129–30.

<sup>387</sup> Fortenbaugh (1993) 450.

that morality could at times be trumped by necessity. Cicero here claims that, although one should never prosecute an innocent person on a capital charge, it is permissible to defend a guilty person, as long as that person is not wicked:

2.51: *Nec tamen, ut hoc fugiendum est, item est habendum religioni nocentem aliquando, mode ne nefarium impiumque, defendere.*

However, while this [prosecution of an innocent person on a capital charge] is to be avoided, it is not maintained as a matter of principle when it comes to at times defending a guilty person, as long as that person is not wicked and contumacious.

The plausible (*veri simile*), not the true (*verum*), is the standard for the *patronus* (unlike the juror), says Cicero, citing the Stoic Panaetius as an authority.<sup>388</sup> It seems clear that at least part of Cicero's argument is that a flexible standard should be followed when it comes to defending someone, even a guilty person, whereas a strict standard of truth should be applied when the issue is whether to prosecute someone and thereby potentially end that person's *caput*.

Cicero adduces his defense of Sextus Roscius against the regime of Sulla to put his argument in the light of the defense of the underdog against the powerful (2.51). This "justification by situation," as we might call it, seems to Tatum very reminiscent of the language of the *Comm. Pet.*,<sup>389</sup> and his argument is that, if Cicero grants leeway to the *patronus*, someone could grant similar leeway to the candidate. However, Cicero does not claim that the advocate should exempt himself from morality in order to defend a guilty person, and indeed it would be odd if he made such claim in the *De officiis*, in which he lays down the principle that no conflict can ever exist between what is *honestum* and what is *utile*, and that the *honestum* provides an absolute standard.<sup>390</sup> On the contrary, he is stating that part of *officium*, or moral obligation, requires an orator such as himself to defend a guilty person, within limits.

---

<sup>388</sup> For a discussion of the advocate's task and the "principle of partisanship," see Frier (1985) 131-33, Crook (1995) 140, Dyck (1996) 435-36, and particularly the extensive section, "Cicero and the Morality of Advocacy," in Powell and Paterson (2004a) 19-29.

<sup>389</sup> Tatum (2007) 131.

<sup>390</sup> See above, pp. 34, 38-39.

Finally, Tatum's interpretation that departures from normal morality recommended to the candidate in the *Comm. Pet.* constitute a moral concession to an overriding necessity is in my view implausible for another, more fundamental reason. For Cicero, the state provides the central platform for moral decision-making and action, and since his audience is composed of upper-class Roman readers, the political actor is assumed to be, for the most part, the politician who stands for office, rather than the private citizen and voter who never holds office. For example, Cicero, when he discusses the limitations on a magistrate's authority in a republic (*Leg.* 3.5), writes that the obedient citizen must hope one day to rule (*imperaturum*), although in fact, as Harris notes, "for most Romans [this] would have been the wildest delusion."<sup>391</sup>

Therefore, the morality expounded in his philosophical works, especially the *Republic*, *Laws*, *De oratore*, and *De officiis*, applies first and foremost to the political arena, and to the type of people who ran for office, and since elections were an annual event at Rome and politicians typically stood for election several times in their lives, any morality that made an exception for candidates and failed to apply to them would have seemed to be a hollow morality indeed. Elections constituted, in fact, a fundamental test of character for the candidate, even if he was thought likely to prevail. The teaching of Theophrastus, cited by Tatum as contained in Justinian's *Digest* (Pompon. *Dig.* 1.3.3), that laws are created to handle normal circumstances, while there will sometimes be some exceptional situations, does not permit the regular annual elections of the Republic to be treated as exceptional, and the same logic can be applied to morality in general. In other words, to detach the candidate for office from normal morality, and to treat his situation as being exceptional rather than as the proving ground for his moral worth, makes little sense in the context of Cicero's philosophical and rhetorical works.

The "accommodation of circumstantial necessity" is a way of saying that morality (again, however it is conceived, whether as

---

<sup>391</sup> Harris (2010) 566. *Leg.* 3.5: *Itaque oportet et eum, qui paret, sperare se aliquo tempore imperaturum et illum, qui imperat, cogitare brevi tempore sibi esse parendum* ("Thus, he who obeys should hope to rule at some point and he who rules should think that he will soon have to obey").



principles, rules, or character traits) is not absolute. That is, moral standards that apply in general may be waived in dire emergency. A standard example is the prohibition of cannibalism, whether it can be breached when the alternative to eating human flesh is death by starvation, as was the situation, to take a notorious case, for the members of the Donner party, who were stranded in the mountains of California during the winter of 1846-47.<sup>392</sup> This situation is exceptional, whereas for most Romans who engaged in political life, particularly those who ran for office, their political involvement was not exceptional, but rather a normal part of life that they had expected from boyhood to encounter.

Therefore, the distinction frequently made by the *Comm. Pet.* between the standard for a good man and the standard for a candidate, cannot be explained as being grounded in an argument for a special moral standard justified by circumstantial necessity. In conclusion, we need to choose whether to read the *Comm. Pet.* literally, as condoning amorality as far as candidates for office are concerned, or to read it ironically, as I do, deliberately undercutting its own advice by its superficial embrace of an acceptance of amorality that no extant ancient evidence supports. The latter interpretation is simply the more plausible.

All in all, in spite of Tatum's case for "accommodation of circumstantial necessity" as a central theme in the *Comm. Pet.*, I still believe that the ancient evidence offers no suggestion that a candidate was allowed, on the model of a *patronus*, to follow a special morality because of the special circumstance of candidacy.<sup>393</sup> The work ostensibly encourages candidates to ignore conventional morality without recommending an alternative morality, and in reality does so ironically, so as to disparage Republican elections and thereby the old Republic of Cicero's day.

However, for the purpose of evaluating whether any ancient evidence confirms the amorality of Roman political culture, it does not matter who is right, Tatum or I, for we both agree that the *Comm. Pet.* supplies no such evidence. He believes that the work recommends a

---

<sup>392</sup> Shafer-Landau (2015) 129.

<sup>393</sup> Alexander (2009a) 394.

form of morality, albeit an extraordinary morality, to candidates, and I believe that the work recommends amorality to candidates, but only ironically, as a way of poking fun at elections.

## The importance of asking whether Roman Republican political culture was amoral

Since I have made use of their own historical environment to explain the outlook of certain Roman historians, it would be fair to ask whether my historical background — that is, the events and trends of my lifetime — have influenced me in this work of history. My answer is positive; my environment has indeed influenced me to ask the question that I have set out to answer in this book, that is, whether there was any ancient evidence to support the idea that the political culture of the Roman Republic was amoral. I would insist, however, that the ancient evidence rather than my outlook has determined the answer to the question, and that the fact that my interest in the question is grounded in my environment in no way undermines the answer that I have provided to that question.

I will attempt to explain how the world around me caused me to be interested in this issue, with four caveats. First, the answer to that question, as I said, has been based solely on the ancient evidence, or lack thereof. Nothing in what I am about to write about the influence of the world around me on my thought in any way substantiates or corroborates the accuracy of the answer to that question. Second, this account of my environment is true in the sense that it is the environment as I perceive it that influences me. If this account is partly or entirely incorrect, and of course I possess no professional credentials as an expert on the history of my lifetime (1947-present), my error in no way lessens the truth that my own understanding of the world around me, even if mistaken, has influenced me in terms of the question that I am asking. For that reason, my footnoting of this section is less than complete, enough to provide readers with basic citations but not enough to substantiate the accuracy of my statements. Third, this self-examination as to why I care about amorality has no bearing on why the historians whose thinking I have described (Gelzer, Münzer, etc.) wrote history the way they do. While I believe that a certain current in political thought influenced many Roman historians in an eighty-year-long “era of disillusionment,” the political phenomenon that I am about to describe is a development of

that thought specifically in the context of the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore, I am not asserting that this phenomenon influenced historians who lived before that period and/or who lived in countries other than the United States. And, even in the case of Roman historians who lived in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, it cannot be assumed that this phenomenon, while it may have affected the way they wrote Roman history, caused them to adopt the particular political stance that I am about to describe. Indeed, I assert that, in my case, far from causing me to adopt that stance, I reacted against it. Fourth, and finally, while a political phenomenon in my own country partly explains my interest in the topic of Roman amorality, enough to write a short book about it, I am asserting that it is a topic that should be of inherent interest to all historians of the Roman Republic, given that in my view it lies at the heart of how Roman history was often written in the recent past, in spite of the absence of supporting ancient evidence.

My adult lifetime has been characterized by an attack on government at all levels within the federal political system of the United States. Whereas at my birth (1947) the status of government was fairly high, as it was perceived to have defeated both the Great Depression at home and the Axis powers abroad, a reaction soon set in from traditional members of the Republican Party, who revived the cause of small government, particularly a small central government within the U.S. federal system, and who believed that a correct interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, an interpretation that they thought was in line with the original ideas of the authors of that constitution, dictated this minimal role for the federal government. The immediate post-war period saw the rise of what Hofstadter has called “pseudo-conservatives,” who believed that an internal enemy was threatening Americans in some fundamental way.<sup>394</sup> Although a new kind of conservative whom I am about to describe did not exhibit the more extreme manifestations of the “paranoid style” that characterized the attacks of Senator Joseph McCarthy and others whose ideology was anti-Communism, they developed a novel, more

---

<sup>394</sup> Hofstadter (1965) 3-65.

ideological version of small-government American conservatism. The founding of the magazine *National Review* in 1955, the Sharon Statement (1960), and the publication of Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative* (1960) mark the development of a new conservative movement that was very different in temperament from the mainstream Republican party, even though both shared the small-government policy conviction. Although Goldwater was soundly defeated by the incumbent Lyndon Johnson in the 1964 U.S. presidential election, the new conservative movement continued in three more stages: 1) the rise of Ronald Reagan, who achieved election to the presidency in 1980 and reelection in 1984, 2) the takeover of the U.S. House of Representatives, led by Republicans under Newt Gingrich in 1994, and 3) the rise of the Tea Party in response to the Great Recession of 2008 and to the extraordinary level of government intervention in the U.S. economy adopted by both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, especially the bailouts of the automobile and banking industries.<sup>395</sup>

While these four stages of the new conservatism were not uniform — with some adherents wanting a small government for domestic affairs but an expanded military, while others called for a reduced American role in foreign affairs, some wanting to combat what was conceived as rising disorder, particularly crime, with more vigorous policing, while others took a more libertarian line, some in favor of legislation to regulate sexual behavior, particularly with regard to abortion and homosexuality, while others wanted the government to stay out of the bedroom — the overarching principle that has persisted in this movement was succinctly expressed by Reagan in his first Inaugural Address to Congress: “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.”<sup>396</sup> The loss of confidence in the U.S. government that had come to imbue the Left because of American involvement in a war in Vietnam, and the revelations that people connected with the White House had committed crimes that were then covered up by President Richard

---

<sup>395</sup> This book was substantially completed before the U.S. presidential election of November 8, 2016. Therefore, it does not take into account the significantly novel elements that President Donald J. Trump has introduced into U.S. politics.

<sup>396</sup> <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43130>.

Nixon and those close to him, initially strengthened anti-government sentiment in the Left, with the Right attempting not only to defend Nixon, but to demand loyalty to the central government. After Nixon's resignation in 1974, however, disillusionment with government spread to all political persuasions.<sup>397</sup> The first presidential candidate to profit from this disillusionment was Jimmy Carter, a moderate Democrat whose policies as president (1977-81), such as zero-based budgeting and sunset provisions in laws, were designed to inhibit the growth of government, and stood in contrast to the New Deal, Fair Deal, and Great Society of, respectively, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Lyndon Johnson. Nevertheless, it was Carter's successor as president, Reagan, who capitalized on the desire to cut back the scope of government and was able to put conservative Republicans in a position to capture on a consistent basis not only the White House but at least one house of Congress. The Reagan Revolution created a strong conservative movement, whose manifestation in recent years has been the Tea Party.

The difference between traditional Republicans and the Goldwater/Reagan/Gingrich/Tea Party Republicans (leaving aside Republicans who were considered "eastern liberals," such as Nelson Rockefeller, governor of New York State, and Jacob Javits, who represented New York State in the Senate) may not seem evident, since both supported limited domestic government. After all, President Gerald Ford, the quintessential moderate Republican, told Congress in an address:

Whether we like it or not, the American wage earner and the American housewife are a lot better economists than most economists care to admit. They know that a government big enough to give you everything you want is a government big enough to take from you everything you have.<sup>398</sup>

The differences lay in degree and temperament. In terms of degree, traditional Republicans were in fact content to restrain the growth of government, particularly the federal government, whereas the new

---

<sup>397</sup> Jencks (2015) 82: "... the disillusionment with government that has been reshaping American politics since the 1970s."

<sup>398</sup> August 12, 1974. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=4694>.

conservatives wanted to reduce the size of government in absolute terms, at least within the domestic sphere. In terms of temperament, Goldwater set the tone for the new conservatives when he declared, as he accepted the Republican nomination for president in 1964, “I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.”<sup>399</sup> The contemporary Tea Party is characterized by a conviction that pragmatism and compromise are excuses for pusillanimity, and that no concessions should be made to anyone who is not of their persuasion, regardless of party affiliation.

This anti-government stance poses a logical problem for those running for office: if government is bad, why do these people want to be part of the government, and why will they not be affected by the bad influence of government if they are elected to public office? The new-conservative politicians claimed to be different from other politicians and, in fact, claimed that they were themselves not politicians. In the month before the 1964 presidential election, Goldwater asked on national television, “What place does politics have in a campaign for the Presidency?”<sup>400</sup> As a candidate for the U.S. presidency, Reagan projected himself as a “citizen-candidate,” thus converting his inexperience with national politics into a political asset:

Ronald Reagan was very much a Washington outsider in 1980. His campaign managers knew and understood that this was an advantage rather than an obstacle to successful campaigning....Running as a citizen-candidate, Reagan managed to create a sense of togetherness with his audiences.<sup>401</sup>

The promotion of term limits (a restriction on the number of years that representatives and senators could serve in the U.S. Congress)

---

<sup>399</sup> Although Goldwater attributed the sentiment to Cicero, the phrase was in fact written by the political philosopher Harry V. Jaffa, who was working for the Goldwater campaign. Obituary, *New York Times*, Jan. 12, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1yY7CXk>.

<sup>400</sup> Quoted by Hofstadter (1965) 121.

<sup>401</sup> Seifert (2012) 69. On the “citizen-candidate,” see also Wills (1987) 293, who points out the common plot situation in American films in which an ordinary person goes to the seat of government and cleans it up. Ironically, Reagan’s opponent in the 1980 presidential election, the incumbent Carter, had benefitted from the same outsider image four years previously. Seifert (2012) 39: “If Watergate represented the excesses of politics, greed, and the pursuit of power, voters would look to elect an anti-Nixon....Jimmy Carter was well suited to campaign as an anti-politician.”

allowed the Gingrich forces to represent themselves as people who regarded elective office as just a temporary phase in their lives. The Tea Party found its base of organizers among citizens who, in fact, were often new to politics, and who used new social media with considerable skill to create an effective political movement that had no need of, or in fact use for, the two traditional major parties, exerting as much effort to defeat what it regarded as mainstream Republican candidates in primary elections, as Democrats in general elections. So the new conservatives have convinced themselves, at least, that they can take over the government without becoming part of government.

Government is thus seen (albeit inconsistently) by the modern American conservative movement as inherently bad, or at least very suspect, including (with different degrees of emphasis) politicians and government employees.<sup>402</sup> There could be several explanations why government is bad, for example, people get elected or obtain government employment through corruption, or those in government are consciously immoral, but one explanation is that government is marked by amorality, that is, politicians and/or employees think that their conduct is not subject to normal societal morality. As I previously explained,<sup>403</sup> in the state of Illinois and particularly in Chicago, where I worked, that attitude was widely and openly voiced, in a spirit of resignation and acceptance rather than outrage and rejection.

Therefore, since I was a government employee, and because I was and am what in the United States is called a “liberal Democrat” in the national context, and a “reform Democrat” in the Chicago context, I am inclined to challenge the idea that government is necessarily and inherently bad, although I recognize both that government should stay out of certain areas of human life, that many governments at many times have on balance caused more harm than good, and that some governments have been systemically evil.

The ancient Roman experience is salient to this issue of the scope and size of government, because Roman history has what might be

---

<sup>402</sup> Since this section is about my personal perceptions of politics, I should make it clear that, as a faculty member at a state university for almost my entire career, I was a government employee.

<sup>403</sup> See above, pp. 9-11.



called a canonical status. That is to say, the Roman experience is often seen to provide an exemplar that we in the modern world should learn from, either as a model or as a caution. In the minds of many people, Roman history is imbued with the idea of a “fall,” although it is not always clear whether the “fall” is that of the Republic, the Empire in the West, or of the Empire in the East, which occurred approximately one millennium after the “fall” in the West. Thus, Rand Paul, a prominent politician closely identified with the Tea Party, could assert in April 2010 that excessive government spending had caused Rome’s downfall.

The glittering prizes, Paul told the audience outside Ol’ Harvey’s, were the pork-barrel projects that politicians bring home even though there is no money to pay for them. It was like the last days of Rome, he told the audience, where leaders used bread and circuses to placate the mob.<sup>404</sup>

The Roman government distributed benefits that it could not afford, and this bad policy led to Rome’s downfall; therefore, Paul implies, we should avoid the temptation to provide benefits, however attractive, to our citizens, lest we suffer the same fate. This type of reasoning could lead people to believe that a government characterized by an amoral political culture led to Rome’s fall (in terms of the subject of this book, the fall of the Roman Republic). One possible implication of neo-conservative thought is that an amoral political culture explains, at least in part, the evil nature of government, and therefore the Romans’ amorality justifies suspicion of government today: since the Roman Republic “fell,” it provides an example of the bad outcome of politics, and if its political culture was amoral, that amorality would provide at least a partial explanation of why it fell.

That, in my view, is how a belief in the amorality of Rome’s political culture can play out in the context of the United States in the latter part of the twentieth century and continuing into the next century; and, for that reason, the amoral view of Roman politics constitutes a challenge to my own attitude toward government. That challenge was magnified by the consensus view in the Chicago area

---

<sup>404</sup> Zernike (2010) 171. This phrase (*panem et circenses* [“bread and games”], Juv. 10.81) was written when Rome was, in fact, at the height of its power.

that politics is amoral, and by the migration of that scorn from politicians to government employees, such as myself.

The challenge to government provided me with a motivation to ask the question: Does the ancient evidence support the view that during the Republic, were candidates for office, or politicians more generally, granted a dispensation from normal morality? The answer is no. While that challenge has motivated me to ask the question, it in no way justifies my negative answer. That negative answer must rest on the evidence and/or lack of evidence.

On the basis of what I have argued is the absence of ancient evidence for Roman amorality, this book has challenged the premise that the Romans of the Republic granted their leaders and the voters who elected them free rein to ignore morality within the sphere of domestic politics. While Roman leaders and Roman voters may have acted morally or immorally, there is no evidence to show or suggest that Roman politicians or voters shrugged their shoulders when they saw other politicians or, for that matter, voters, act in a way that was morally questionable or reprehensible, and said to themselves, “It’s politics.”

## WORKS CITED

---

- Adler, Eric. 2008a. "Late Victorian and Edwardian Views of Rome and the Nature of 'Defensive Imperialism'," *IJCT* 15: 187-216.
- . 2008b. "Post-9/11 Views of Rome and the Nature of 'Defensive Imperialism'," *IJCT* 15: 587-610.
- Alexander, Michael C. 1990. *Trials in the Late Roman Republic, 149 BC to 50 BC*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- . 2002. *The Case for the Prosecution in the Ciceronian Era*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- . 2007. "Oratory, Rhetoric, and Politics in the Republic," in Dominik and Hall (eds.), 98-108.
- . 2009a. "The *Commentariolum Petitionis* as an Attack on Election Campaigns," *Athenaeum* 97: 31-57, 369-95.
- . 2009b. "Locating the Trial of Plancius between Rules and Persuasion," in Santalucia (ed.), 339-55.
- . 2013. "History and Text: Two Kinds of Roman History," *Arethusa* 46: 499-535.
- Alföldy, Géza. 1983. *Sir Ronald Syme, 'Die römische Revolution' und die deutsche Althistorie*. Heidelberg. Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Ph.-Hist. Kl.
- Alston, Richard. 2015. *Rome's Revolution: Death of the Republic and Birth of the Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, Greg. 2015. "Retrieving the Lost Worlds of the Past: The Case for an Ontological Turn," *American Historical Review* 120: 787-810.
- Arena, Valentina. 2007. "Roman Oratorical Invective," in Dominik and Hall (eds.), 149-60.
- . 2012. *Libertas and the Practice of Politics in the Late Roman Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arthurs, Joshua. 2012. *Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Asmis, Elizabeth. 2001. "The Politician as Public Servant in Cicero's *De re publica*," in Auvray-Assayas and Delattre (eds.), 109-28.
- Astin, A.E. 1968. *Politics and Policies in the Roman Republic*. Belfast: The Queen's University. New Lecture Series No. 41. An Inaugural Lecture delivered before The Queen's University of Belfast on 1 May 1968.
- Atkins, E.M. 2000. "Cicero," in Rowe and Schofield (eds.), 477-516.
- Atkins, Jed W. 2013. *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Austin, R.G. 1960. *M. Tulli Ciceronis pro M. Caelio Oratio*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Auvray-Assayas, Clara, and Daniel Delattre (eds.). 2001. *Cicéron et Philodème: La polémique en philosophie*. Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm. Études de littérature ancienne, 12.
- Badian, E. 1957. "Caepio and Norbanus: Notes on the Decade 100-90 B.C.," *Historia* 6: 318-46 (= Badian [1964]: 34-70).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1962. "Waiting for Sulla," *JRS* 52: 47-61 (= Badian [1964]: 206-34).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1964. *Studies in Greek and Roman History*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1968. *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1972a. *Publicans and Sinners: Private Enterprise in the Service of the Roman Republic*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1972b. "Tiberius Gracchus and the Beginning of the Roman Revolution," in Hildegard Temporini (ed.), *ANRW* 1.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter): 668-731.
- Bailey, Martha J., and Sheldon Danziger (eds.). 2013. *Legacies of the War on Poverty*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Baraz, Yelena. 2012. *A Written Republic: Cicero's Philosophical Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Barchiesi, Alessandro, and Walter Scheidel (eds.). 2010. *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barnes, T.D. 2007a. "Prosopography Modern and Ancient," in Keats-Rohan (ed.). 71-82.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007b. "Prosopography and Roman History," in Keats-Rohan (ed.). 83-93.
- Barney, Rachel. 2011. "Callicles and Thrasymachus," in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2011 Edition. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/callicles-thrasymachus/>.
- Beard, Charles A. 1908. *Political Science Quarterly* 23: 739-41. Review of Bentley (1908).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1913. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*. New York: The Macmillan Company. With new introduction, 1936.
- Beck, Hans, Duplá, Antonio, Jehne, Martin, and Francisco Pina Polo (eds.). 2011. *Consuls and Res Publica: Holding High Office in the Roman Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Bentley, Arthur F. 1908. *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Edited with introduction by Peter H. Odegard. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1967.
- Berezin, Mabel. 1997. *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Bettini, Maurizio. 2010. "Anthropology," in Barchiesi and Scheidel (eds.). 250-65.
- Bowersock, G.W. 1980. "The Emperor of Roman History," *New York Review of Books* 27 (no. 3): 8-13.
- Bowersock, G.W., and T.J. Cornell (eds.). 1994. *A.D. Momigliano: Studies on Modern Scholarship*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Brackett, Elizabeth. 2009. *Pay to Play: How Rod Blagojevich Turned Political Corruption into a National Sideshow*. Chicago, IL: Ivan Dee.
- Brittain, Vera. 1933. *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925*. New York: Macmillan.
- Brodersen, Kai (trans. and ed.). 2013. *Tullius Cicero, Q. Tipps für einen erfolgreichen Wahlkampf*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Broughton, T. Robert S. 1972. "Senate and Senators of the Roman Republic: The Prosopographical Approach," in Hildegard Temporini (ed.), *ANRW* 1.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter): 250-65.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. "Candidates Defeated in Roman Elections: Some Ancient Roman 'Also-Rans'," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 81 (no. 4): i-vi, 1-64.
- Brown, Peter. 2012. *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bruhns, Hinnerk, David, Jean-Michel, and Wilfried Nippel (eds.). 1997. *Die späte Römische Republik, La Fin de la République Romaine: un débat franco-allemand d'histoire et d'historiographie*. Rome: École française de Rome.
- Brunt, P.A. 1965. Review of Earl (1963), *Gnomon* 37: 189-92.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988a. "Clientela," in Brunt (1988b). 382-442.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988b. *The Fall of the Republic and Related Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013a. "Morality and Social Convention in Stoic Thought," in Brunt (2013c). 108-50.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013b. "Panaetius in *De Officiis*," in Brunt (2013c). 180-242.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013c. *Studies in Stoicism*. Edited by Miriam Griffin and Alison Samuels, with assistance from Michael Crawford. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burck, Erich, and Eckard Lefèvre (eds.). 1975. *Monumentum Chiloniense: Studien zur augusteischen Zeit. Kieler Festschrift für Erich Burck zum 70. Geburtstag*. Amsterdam: Hakkert.
- Burnyeat, Myles (ed.). 1983. *The Skeptical Tradition*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Carney, T.F. 1973. "Prosopography: Payoffs and Pitfalls," *Phoenix* 27: 156-79.
- Carson, Rachel. 1962. *Silent Spring*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Cecconi, Giovanni Alberto. 2009. *La città e l'impero: una storia del mondo romano dalle origini a Teodosio il Grande*. Rome: Carocci.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. 1969. *Scripta quae manserunt omnia*. Fasc. 39. Edited by K. Ziegler. Leipzig: Teubner.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1917. *Scripta quae manserunt omnia*. Fasc. 47. *Cato maior, Laelius*. Edited by K. Simbeck. *De Gloria*. Edited by O. Plasberg. Leipzig: Teubner.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. *De Re Publica, De Legibus, Cato Maior de Senectute, Laelius de Amicitia*. Edited by J.G.F. Powell. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013. *Cicero's Pro L. Murena Oratio*. Edited by Elaine Fantham. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Texts and Commentaries Series.
- Clarke, G.W., and J.C. Eade (eds.). 1989. *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clemente, Guido. 1990. "La politica romana nell'età dell'imperialismo," in Momigliano and Schiavone (eds.), Vol. 2. 235-66.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2016. "I censori e il senato: i mores e la legge," *Athenaeum* 104: 446-500.
- Cloud, Duncan. 1994. "The Constitution and Public Criminal Law," in Crook et al. 491-530.
- Coady, C.A.J. 2011. "The Problem of Dirty Hands," in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition). <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/dirty-hands/>.
- Coleman-Norton, P.R. 1939. "The Fragmentary Philosophical Treatises of Cicero," *CJ* 34: 213-28.
- Conacher, D.J. 1998. *Euripides and the Sophists: Some Dramatic Treatments of Philosophical Ideas*. London: Duckworth.

- Connolly, Joy. 2007. *The State of Speech: Rhetoric and Political Thought in Ancient Rome*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Corbeill, Anthony. 1996. *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Corber, Robert J. 2011. *Cold War Femme: Lesbianism, National Identity, and Hollywood Cinema*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Craig, Christopher. 2004. "Audience Expectations, Invective, and Proof," in Powell and Paterson (eds.) (2004b). 187-213.
- Craig, Gordon A. 1971. "Political and Diplomatic History," in Gilbert and Graubard (eds.). 356-71.
- Crawford, Michael. 2011. "Reconstructing What Roman Republic?" *BICS* 54: 105-14.
- Crook, J.A. 1967. *Law and Life of Rome*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. *Legal Advocacy in the Roman World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Crook, J.A., Lintott, Andrew, and Elizabeth Rawson (eds.). 1994. *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 9, The Last Age of the Roman Republic, 146-43 B.C. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Darnton, Robert. 2007. "Anthropology, History, and Clifford Geertz," *Historically Speaking* 8: 33-34.
- Dean, John W. 2014. *The Nixon Defense: What He Knew and When He Knew It*. New York: Viking.
- Dench, Emma. 2013. "Cicero and Roman Identity," in Steel (ed.) (2013b). 112-37.
- De Sanctis, Gaetano. 1936. *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 64: 189-203. Review of Hayward (1933).
- Dominik, William, and Jon Hall (eds.). 2007. *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dugan, John. 2005. *Making a New Man: Ciceronian Self-Fashioning in the Rhetorical Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Duindam, Jeroen. 1994. *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Dymskaia, D.D. 2015. "Ubiistvo i vozmezdie: Protsessy inter sicarios 64 g. do n.e.," *Antichnyi mir i arkheologiiia* 17: 96-107.
- Dyck, Andrew R. 1996. *A Commentary on Cicero, De Officiis*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *A Commentary on Cicero, De Legibus*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Earl, Donald C. 1961. *The Political Thought of Sallust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1963. *Tiberius Gracchus: A Study in Politics*. Brussels: Latomus. Collection Latomus 66.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1967. *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Eckstein, Arthur M. 1995. *Moral Vision in The Histories of Polybius*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Edwards, Catharine. 1993. *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ehrlich, Eugen. 1913. *Grundlegung der Soziologie des Rechts*. Munich: Duncker & Humblot. Translated by Walter Lewis Moll in *Fundamental Principles of the Sociology of Law*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936. Harvard Studies in Jurisprudence, vol. 5.
- Eilers, Claude. (ed.). 2009. *Diplomats and Diplomacy in the Roman World*. Leiden: Brill.
- Elias, Norbert. 1969. *Die höfische Gesellschaft: Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie mit einer Einleitung; Soziologie und Geschichtswissenschaft*. [The Court Society: Investigations in the Sociology of Kingship and the Court Aristocracy with an Introduction: Sociology and the Science of History]. Neuwied: Luchterhand. Translated by Edmund Jephcott in *The Court Society*. New York: Pantheon, 1983.
- Elliott, J.H. 2012. *History in the Making*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Fantham, Elaine. 2004. *The Roman World of Cicero's De Oratore*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feig Vishnia, Rachel. 2012. *Roman Elections in the Age of Cicero: Society, Government, and Voting*. New York: Routledge. Routledge Studies in Ancient History, vol. 3.
- Ferrary, Jean-Louis. 1982. "Le idee politiche a Roma nell'epoca repubblicana" ["The political ideas at Rome in the Republican Period"], in Lucio Firpo (ed.), *Storia delle idee politiche economiche e sociali, L'antichità classica*, Vol. 1. 723-804.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. "The Statesman and the Law in the Political Philosophy of Cicero," in Laks and Schofield (eds.). 48-73.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997. "Optimates et populares: le problème du rôle de l'idéologie dans la politique," in Bruhns et al. (eds.). 221-29.



- \_\_\_\_\_. 2001. "La legislation 'de ambitu', de Sulla à Auguste," in Talamanca (ed.). 161-98.
- Fezzi, Luca. 2010. Review of Cecconi (2009), *BMCR* 2010.12.43.
- Fortenbaugh, William W. 1993. "Theophrastus on Law, Virtue and the Particular Situation," in Rosen and Farrell (eds.). 447-55.
- Foucault, Michel. 1980a. "Truth and Power," in Foucault (1980b). 109-33.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1980b. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Flower, Harriet I. 2010. *Roman Republics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Freeman, Philip (trans.). 2012. Quintus Tullius Cicero, *How to Win an Election: An Ancient Guide for Modern Politicians*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Frier, Bruce W. 1985. *The Rise of the Roman Jurists: Studies in Cicero's pro Caecina*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gabba, Emilio. 1957. "Nota sulla polemica anticiceroniana di Asinio Pollione," *RSI* 69: 317-39.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1968. Review of Toynbee (1965), *RFIC* 96: 68-75 (= [1973] in *Esercito e società nella tarda Repubblica Romana*. Florence: Nuova Italia Editrice. 563-5 = [1976] in *Republican Rome, the Army and the Allies*. Translated by P.J. Cuff, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 154-61).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1979. "Per un'interpretazione politica del *de officiis* di Cicerone," *Rendiconti Series 8*, vol. 34: 117-41. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche.
- Galsterer, H. 1990. "A Man, a Book, and a Method: Sir Ronald Syme's *Roman Revolution* after Fifty Years," in Raaflaub and Toher (eds.). 1-20.
- Garfield, Eugene. 1986. "The 250 Most-Cited Authors in the Arts & Humanities Citation Index, 1976-1983," *Current Comments* 48: 381-88.
- Gehrke, Hans-Joachim, and Astrid Möller (eds.). 1996. *Vergangenheit und Lebenswelt: Soziale Kommunikation, Traditionsbildung und historisches Bewußtsein*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag. ScriptOralia 90.
- Gelzer, Matthias. 1912. *Die Nobilität der römischen Republik*. Leipzig: Teubner. Translated by Robin Seager, *The Roman Nobility*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1969 (= [1962] 1.17-135).

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1962-64. *Kleine Schriften [Minor Writings]*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner. 3 vols.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969. *Cicero, ein biographischer Versuch*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.
- Gilbert, Felix, and Stephen R. Graubard (eds.). 1971. *Historical Studies Today*. New York: Norton.
- Gildenhard, Ingo. 2011. *Creative Eloquence: The Construction of Reality in Cicero's Speeches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giles, A.F. 1940. Review of Syme (1939), *CR* 54: 38-41.
- Gotter, Ulrich. 1996. "Cicero und die Freundschaft: Die Konstruktion sozialer Normen zwischen römischer Politik und griechischer Philosophie," in Gehrke and Möller (eds.). 339-60.
- Gradel, Thomas J., and Dick Simpson. 2015. *Corrupt Illinois: Patronage, Cronyism, and Criminality*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Gruen, Erich S. 1968. *Roman Politics and the Criminal Courts, 149-78 B.C.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1971. "Pompey, Metellus Pius, and the Trials of 70-69 B.C.: The Perils of Schematism," *AJPh* 92: 1-16.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1974. *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. With new introduction, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1984. *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 2 vols.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. "The Exercise of Power in the Roman Republic," in Mohlo et al. (eds.). 251-67.
- Hammar, Isak. 2013. *Making Enemies: The Logic of Immorality in Ciceronian Oratory*. Lund: Lund University Press.
- Harris, William V. (ed.). 1984. *The Imperialism of Mid-Republican Rome: The Proceedings of a Conference Held at the American Academy in Rome, November 5-6, 1982*. Rome: American Academy in Rome.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. "Power," in Barchiesi and Scheidel (eds.). 564-78.
- Hayward, R.M. 1933. *Studies on Scipio Africanus*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, ser. 51, no. 1.
- Headland, Thomas N., Pike, Kenneth L., and Marvin Harris (eds.). 1990. *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*. Frontiers of Anthropology, vol. 7. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Heil, Matthäus. n.d. "Prosopography," in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Classics*. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/>

- document/obo-9780195389661/obo-9780195389661-0077.xml*(last modified 30 Sept 2011).
- Heldmann, Konrad. 2011. *sine ira et studio: Das Subjektivitätsprinzip der römischen Geschichtsschreibung und das Selbstverständnis antiker Historiker*. Munich: Beck. *Zetemata*, vol. 139.
- Henderson, M.I. 1950. "De Commentariolo Petitionis," *JRS* 40: 8-21.
- Hendrickson, George L. 1892. "On the Authenticity of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* of Quintus Cicero," *AJPh* 13: 200-12.
- Hill, H. 1948. "The So-Called *Lex Aufeia* (Gellius xi.10)," *CR* 62: 112-13.
- Hofstadter, Richard. 1965. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. New York: Knopf.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1968. *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington*. New York: Knopf.
- Hölkeskamp, Karl-Joachim. 2009a. "Eine politische Kultur (in) der Krise" ["A political culture in crisis"], in Hölkeskamp (2009b). 1-25.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.), with Elisabeth Müller-Luckner. 2009b. *Eine politische Kultur (in) der Krise?: Die "letzte Generation" der römischen Republik*. Munich: R. Oldenbourg.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. *Reconstructing the Roman Republic: An Ancient Political Culture and Modern Research*. Translated by Henry Heitmann-Gordon, revised, updated, and augmented by the author. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. "The Roman Republic as Theatre of Power: The Consuls as Leading Actors," in Beck et al. (eds.). 161-81.
- Hopkins, Keith. 1991. "From Violence to Blessing: Symbols and Rituals in Ancient Rome," in Mohlo et al. (eds.). 479-98.
- Hoppe, Kirk Arden. 2003. *Lords of the Fly: Sleeping Sickness Control in British East Africa, 1900-1960*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Hornblower, Simon, and Antony Spawforth. 2012a. "Prosopography," in Hornblower and Spawforth (eds.) (2012b). 1225-26.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (eds.). 2012b. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Horowitz, Jason. 2007. "Barack Attack," *New York Observer* 03/26/07. <http://observer.com/2007/03/barack-attack/>.
- Hynes, Samuel. 1991. *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. New York: Atheneum.
- Jeffery, Keith. 2015. *1916: A Global History*. New York: Bloomsbury.

- Jehne, Martin. 2006. "Methods, Models, and Historiography," in Rosenstein and Morstein-Marx (eds.), translated by Robert Morstein-Marx and Benjamin Wolkow. 3-28.
- Jehne, Martin, and Christoph Lundgreen (eds.). 2013. *Gemeinsinn und Gemeinwohl in der römischen Antike*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Jencks, Christopher. 2015. Review of Bailey and Danziger (2013), *New York Review of Books* 62 (no. 6): 82-5.
- Johnson, David K. 2004. *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Judt, Tony. 2005. *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. New York: Penguin.
- Kallis, Aristotle. 2011. "Framing' Romanità: The Celebrations for the Bimillenario Augusteo and the Augusteo-Ara Pacis Project," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46: 809-31.
- Kaplow, Lauren. 2013. "Men of the People: *Popularis* Ideology in Late Republican Rome." Ph.D. diss., The Pennsylvania State University.
- Kaster, Robert A. (ed.). 1995. *C. Suetonius Tranquillus, De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus: Edited with a Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Keats-Rohan, K.S.B. (ed.). 2007. *Prosopography: Approaches and Applications: A Handbook*. Oxford: Prosopographica et Genealogica.
- Kletke, Stefanie. 2016. "Why is Sulpicia a Woman?," *Museion Series* III, 13: 625-53.
- Knopf, Fabian. 2013. "Gemeinsinn und Gemeinwohl in der politischen Rhetorik Ciceros und in den Geschichtswerken Sallusts," in Jehne and Lundgreen (eds.). 51-72.
- Kroll, Wilhelm. 1933. *Die Kultur der Ciceronischen Zeit*. Leipzig: Dieterich'sche. Das Erben der Alten, Schriften über Wesen und Wirkung der Antike. Zweite Reihe, vol. 22.
- Laks, André, and Malcolm Schofield (eds.). 1995. *Justice and Generosity: Studies in Hellenistic Social and Political Philosophy: Proceedings of the Sixth Symposium Hellenisticum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LaVaque-Manty, Mika. 2006. "Bentley, Truman, and the Study of Groups," *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 1-18.
- Lepore, Ettore. 1954. *Il princeps Ciceroniano e gli ideali politici della tarda repubblica*. Napoli: Istituto italiano per gli studi storici.

- Leyser, Conrad. 2012. Review of Brown (2012) and Sarris (2011), *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 5725/5726: 13-14.
- Linderski, Jerzy. 1984. "Si vis pacem, para bellum. Concepts of Defensive Imperialism," in Harris. 133-64. Reprinted in Linderski (1995), 1-31, 632-33.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985: "Buying the Vote: Electoral Corruption in the Late Republic," *Ancient World* 11: 87-94. Reprinted in Linderski (1995), 107-14, 638-39.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1990. "Mommsen and Syme: Law and Power in the Principate of Augustus," in Raaflaub and Toher (eds.). 42-53.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. *Roman Questions: Selected Papers*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner. Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien, vol. 20.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. *Roman Questions II: Selected Papers*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner. Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien, vol. 44.
- Lintott, A.W. 1972. "Imperial Expansion and Moral Decline in the Roman Republic." *Historia* 21: 626-38.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994a. "The Crisis of the Republic: Sources and Source-Problems," *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 9: 1-15.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994b. "Political History, 146-95 B.C.," *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 9: 40-103.
- Long, A.A. 1995. "Cicero's Politics in *De Officiis*," in Laks and Schofield (eds.). 213-40.
- MacMillan, Margaret. 2002. *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*. New York: Random House.
- MacMullen, Ramsay. 1980. "Roman Elite Motivation: Three Questions," *Past and Present* 88: 3-16.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2003. *Feelings in History, Ancient and Modern*. Claremont, CA: Regina Books. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012.
- Malamud, Margaret. 2009. *Ancient Rome and Modern America*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Malkin, I., and Z.W. Rubinsohn (eds.). 1995. *Leaders and Masses in the Roman World: Studies in Honor of Zvi Yavetz*. Leiden: Brill.
- Matalin, Mary, and James Carville. 1995. *All's Fair: Love, War, and Running for President*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- May, Henry F. 1959. *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time 1912-1917*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

- May, James M. 1988. *Trials of Character: The Eloquence of Ciceronian Ethos*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- McConnell, Sean. 2012. "Lucretius and Civil Strife," *Phoenix* 66: 97-121.
- McCutcheon, R.W. 2016. "A Revisionist History of Cicero's *Letters*," *Mouseion* Series III, 13: 35-63.
- Meier, Christian. 1966. *Res Publica Amissa: eine Studie zu Verfassung und Geschichte der späten römischen Republik*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Mette, Hans Joachim. 1985. "Weitere Akademiker heute (Fortsetzung von Lustr. 26, 7-94): Von Lakydes bis zu Kleitomachos," *Lustrum* 27: 39-148.
- Michels, Robert. 1911. *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie; Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* Leipzig: W. Klinkhardt. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracies*, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958.
- Millar, Fergus. 1984. "The Political Character of the Classical Roman Republic, 200-151 B.C.," *JRS* 74: 1-19.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1986. "Politics, Persuasion, and the People before the Social War (150-90 B.C.)," *JRS* 76: 1-11.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. "Political Power in Mid-Republican Rome: *Curia* or *Comitium*?" *JRS* 79: 138-50.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. "Popular Politics at Rome in the Late Republic," in Malkin and Rubinsohn (eds.). 91-114.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Jerome Lectures, 22.
- Mitchell, Thomas N. 1979. *Cicero: the Ascending Years*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Mitsis, Phillip. 1994. "Natural Law and Natural Right in Post-Aristotelian Philosophy. The Stoics and Their Critics," *ANRW* 2.36.7: 4812-50.
- Moles, John. "The Cynics." Pp. 415-434, in Rowe and Schofield (2000).
- Molho, Anthony, Raaflaub, Kurt, and Julia Emlen (eds.). 1991. *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo. 1940. Review of Syme (1939), *JRS* 30: 75-80.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1961. Review of Syme (1958), *Gnomon* 33: 55-58 (= [1966] 2.739-44).

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1962. "Introduzione a Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution*." Torino: Einaudi. Pp. ix-xv (= [1966] 2.729-737. Translated by T.J. Cornell in Bowersock and Cornell [1994], 72-79).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1966. *Terzo contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*. Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura. 2 vols. Storia e letteratura, raccolta di studi e testi, #109.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo, and Aldo Schiavone (eds.). 1988-93. *Storia di Roma*. Torino: Einaudi. 4 vols.
- Morstein-Marx, Robert. 1998. "Publicity, Popularity and Patronage in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*," *ClAnt* 17: 259-88.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Mass Oratory and Political Power in the Late Roman Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. "Dignitas and res publica: Caesar and Republican Legitimacy," in Hölkeskamp (ed.) (2009b). 115-40.
- Münzer, Friedrich. 1920. *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien*. Stuttgart: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung. Translated by Thérèse Ridley, *Roman Aristocratic Parties and Families*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1924. "Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (54)," *RE* Zweite Reihe, vol. 2: col. 1409-26.
- Nadig, Peter. 1997. *Ardet ambitus: Untersuchungen zum Phänomen der Wahlbestechungen in der römischen Republik*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. Prismata, vol. 6.
- Namier, L.B. 1929. *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*. London: Macmillan.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1953. "Human Nature in Politics — IV," *Listener* [London, England]: 1077-79. *The Listener Historical Archive* 29 Dec. 2013.
- Nelis, Jan. 2007. "Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of Romanità," *Classical World* 100: 391-415.
- Nicolet, Claude. 1976. *Le Métier de citoyen dans la Rome républicaine*. Paris: Gallimard. Translated by P.S. Falla, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980.
- Nisbet, R.G.M. (ed.). 1961. *M. Tulli Ciceronis in L. Calpurnium Pisonem Oratio*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- North, J.A. 1990. "Democratic Politics in Republican Rome," *Past and Present* 126: 3-21.
- Ostwald, Martin. 1986. *From Popular Sovereignty to the Sovereignty of Law: Law, Society, and Politics in Fifth-Century Athens*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Overy, Richard. 2009. *The Twilight Years: The Paradox of Britain Between the Wars*. New York: Viking.
- Peirano, Irene. 2012. *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Powell, Jonathan, and Jeremy Paterson. 2004a. "Introduction," in Powell and Paterson (eds.) (2004b). 1-57.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (eds.). 2004b. *Cicero: The Advocate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Raaflaub, Kurt A., and Mark Toher (eds.). 1990. *Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ramsey, John T. (ed.). 2013. *Sallust, The War with Catiline, The War with Jugurtha*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ratner, Sidney. 1958. "Arthur F. Bentley, 1870-1957," *Journal of Philosophy* 55: 573-78.
- Reydams-Schils, Gretchen. 2005. *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Richlin, Amy. 1983. *The Gardens of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Revised edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Ridley, R.T. 1986a. "The Genesis of a Turning-Point: Gelzer's *Nobilität*," *Historia* 35: 474-502.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1986b. "To Be Taken with a Pinch of Salt. The Destruction of Carthage," *CPh* 81: 140-46.
- Riggsby, Andrew M. 1997. "Did the Romans Believe in Their Verdicts?," *Rhetorica* 15: 235-51.
- Riley, M., and D. Winbush. 1991. "The No-Win Election," *Time Magazine* 138, 11/25/1991: 43.
- Robb, M.A. 2010. *Beyond Populares and Optimates: Political Language in the Late Republic*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner. *Historia Einzelschriften* 213.
- Rodgers, Daniel T. 1998. *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Roller, Matthew. 2010. "Culture-Based Approaches," in Barchiesi and Scheidel (eds.). 234-49.
- Rosen, Ralph M., and Joseph Farrell (eds.). 1993. *Nomodeiktes: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.



- Rosenstein, Nathan. 1990. *Imperatores Victi: Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Rosenstein, Nathan, and Robert Morstein-Marx (eds.) 2006. *A Companion to the Roman Republic*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ross, Dorothy. 1991. *The Origins of American Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rowe, Christopher, and Malcolm Schofield (eds.). 2000. *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sachs, Jonathan. 2012. "Republicanism: Ancient Rome and Literary Modernity in British Romanticism," in Saunders et al. (2012). 23-42.
- Sanfilippo, Cesare (ed.). 1984. *Studi in onore de Cesare Sanfilippo*, vol. 5. 1984. Università di Catania, pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza, 96.
- Santalucia, B. (ed.). 2009. *La repressione criminale nella Roma repubblicana fra norma e persuasion*. Pavia: IUSS. Pubblicazioni del CEDANT, no. 5.
- Sarris, Peter. 2011. *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Saunders, Timothy. 2012. "Originality," in Saunders et al. (2012). 65-86.
- Saunders, Timothy, Martindale, Charles, Pite, Ralph, and Mathilde Skoie (eds.). 2012. *Romans and Romantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schanz, Martin. 1927-35. *Geschichte der Römischen Literatur bis zum Gesetzgebungswerk des Kaisers Justinian*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Munich: Beck. 4 vols.
- Schmidt, Peter L. 1975. "Die Anfänge der institutionellen Rhetorik in Rom. Zur Vorgeschichte der augusteischen Rhetorenschulen," in Burck and Lefèvre (eds.). 183-216.
- Schofield, Malcolm. 1999a. "Morality and the Law: The Case of Diogenes of Babylon," in Schofield (1999b). 160-229.  
\_\_\_\_\_. 1999b. *Saving the City: Philosopher-Kings and Other Classical Paradigms*. London: Routledge.  
\_\_\_\_\_. 2000. "Epicurean and Stoic Political Thought," in Rowe and Schofield (eds.). 435-43.
- Scriba, Friedemann. 1995. "Il mito di Roma, l'estetica e gli intellettuali negli anni del consenso: la mostra augustea della Romanità," *Quaderni di storia* 21: 67-84.
- Scullard, H.H. 1955. "Roman Politics," *BICS* 2: 15-21.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1973. *Roman Politics, 220-150 B.C.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Clarendon.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1982. *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 B.C. to A.D. 68.* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Methuen.
- Sedley, David. 1983. "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism," in Burnyeat (ed.). 9-29.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.). 2007. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy XXXIII.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seifert, Erica J. 2012. *The Politics of Authenticity in Presidential Campaigns, 1976-2008.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- Sellars, John. 2006. *Stoicism.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Sewell, William H., Jr. 2007. "Counting Clifford Geertz's Influence," *Historically Speaking* 8: 35.
- Shackleton Bailey, D.R. (ed. and trans.). 1965-70. Cicero, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus.* 7 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed. and trans.). 2002. Cicero, *Letters to Quintus and Brutus; Letter fragments; Letter to Octavian; Invectives; Handbook of electioneering.* Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library edition.
- Shafer-Landau, Russ. 2015. *The Fundamentals of Ethics.* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shaw, Andy. 2015. Review of Gradel and Simpson (2015), *Chicago Sun-Times*, 2/22/15.
- Smith, Christopher, and Ralph Covino. 2011. *Praise and Blame in Roman Republic Rhetoric.* Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales.
- Snyder, Timothy. 2010. *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin.* New York: Basic Books.
- Spengler, Oswald. 1922. *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte.* Munich: Becksche. Translated by Charles Francis Atkinson in *The Decline of the West*, New York: Knopf, 1926-28.
- Spielvogel, Jörg (ed.). 2002. *Res Publica Reperta: Zur Verfassung und Gesellschaft der römischen Republik und des frühen Prinzipats. Festschrift für Jochen Bleicken zum 75. Geburtstag.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.
- Spina, Luigi. 2012. Review of Freeman (2012), *BMCR* 2012.08.12.
- Steel, Catherine. 2005. *Reading Cicero.* London: Duckworth.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. "Cicero's Oratory of Praise and Blame and the Practice of Elections in the Late Roman Republic," in Smith and Covino (eds.). 35-47.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013a. "Cicero, Oratory and Public Life," in Steel (2013b). 160-80.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.). 2013b. *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Steel, Catherine, and Henriette van der Blom (eds.). 2013. *Community and Communication: Oratory and Politics in Republican Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Steinbock, Bernd. 2013. "Contesting the Lessons from the Past: Aeschines' Use of Social Memory," *TAPA* 143: 65-103.
- Stone, Lawrence. 1971. "Prosopography," in Gilbert and Graubard (eds.). 107-40.
- Stone, Marla Susan. 1998. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Strachey, Lytton. 1918. *Eminent Victorians*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Straumann, Benjamin. 2016. *Crisis and Constitutionalism: Roman Political Thought from the Fall of the Republic to the Age of Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sullivan, Francis A. 1941. "Cicero and Gloria," *TAPhA* 72: 382-91.
- Sullivan, Robert. 2016. "The Hamilton Cult: Has the Celebrated Musical Eclipsed the Man Himself?," *Harper's Magazine* 333: 23-31.
- Syme, Ronald. 1939. *The Roman Revolution*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1958. *Tacitus*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1964. *Sallust*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1977. "Liberty in Classical Antiquity," *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society* 118: 8-15 (= [1984] 962-68).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1984. *Roman Papers*. Edited by Anthony R. Birley. Vol. 3. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Talamanca, Mario (ed.). 2001. *Iuris Vincula: studi in onore di Mario Talamanca*. Vol.3. Naples: Jovane.
- Tatum, W. Jeffrey. 1999. *The Patrician Tribune: Publius Clodius Pulcher*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. "Alterum est tamen boni viri, alterum boni petitoris: The Good Man Canvasses," *Phoenix* 61: 109-35.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013. "Campaign Rhetoric," in Steel and van der Blom (eds.). 149-50.
- Taylor, Lily Ross. 1949. *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Vol. 22 of the Sather Classical Lectures.

- Toynbee, Arnold. 1934-61. *A Study of History*. London: Oxford University Press. 12 vols.
- . 1965. *Hannibal's Legacy: The Hannibalic War's Effects on Roman Life*. London: Oxford University Press. 2 vols.
- Traversa, Luciano. 2009. "Comunicazione e partecipazione politica: il Commentariolum Petitionis," *Università degli Studi di Bari, Annali Della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* 52: 115-51.  
<https://philpapers.org/rec/TRACEP-3>.
- Turner, Frank M. 1989. "Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain?," in Clarke and Eade (eds.). 61-81.
- Vander Waerdt, Paul A. 1994. "Philosophical Influence on Roman Jurisprudence? The Case of Stoicism and Natural Law," *ANRW* 2.36.7: 4851-900.
- Venturini, Carlo. 1984. "L'orazione *pro Cn. Plancio* e la *lex Licinia de sodaliciis*," in Sanfilippo (ed.). 789-804.
- Verboven, Koenraad, Carlier, Myriam, and Jan Dumolyn. 2007. "Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography," in Keats-Rohan (ed.). 35-69.
- Walter, Uwe. 2002. "Der Historiker in seiner Zeit: Ronald Syme und die Revolution des Augustus," in Spielvogel (ed.). 137-52.
- Walzer, Michael. 1973. "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2: 160-80.
- Wilford, Hugh. 2008. *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wills, Garry. 1987. *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- . 2012. Review of Freeman (2012), *New York Times Book Review*, July 29, 2012: 15.
- Wilson, Edmund. 1932. "Lytton Strachey," *New Republic*, September 21, 1932: 146-8.
- Wiseman, T.P. 1971. *New Men in the Roman Senate, 139 B.C. – A.D. 14*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1995. *Remus: A Roman Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (ed.). 2002a. "Roman History and the Ideological Vacuum," in Wiseman (2002b). 285-310.
- . 2002b. *Classics in Progress: Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2009a. "Roman History and the Ideological Vacuum," in Wiseman (2009b). 5-32.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009b. *Remembering the Roman People: Essays on Late-Republican Politics and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2016. Review of Alston (2015), *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 5906 (June 10 2016): 28-9.
- Wisse, Jakob. 2013. "The Bad Orator: Between Clumsy Delivery and Political Danger," in Steel and van der Blom (eds.). 163-94.
- Woolf, Raphael. 2007. "Particularism, Promises, and Persons in Cicero's *De officiis*," in Sedley (ed.). 317-46.
- Yakobson, Alexander. 2009. "Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and 'Just War' in the Late Republic," in Eilers (ed.). 45-72.
- Yavetz, Z. 1990. "The Personality of Augustus: Reflections on Syme's *Roman Revolution*," in Raaflaub and Toher (eds.). 21-41.
- Young, Antonia. 2000. *Women Who Become Men: Albanian Sworn Virgins*. Oxford: Berg.
- Zernike, Kate. 2010. *Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America*. New York: Times Books, Henry Holt.
- Zuckmayer, Carl. 1966. *Als wär's ein Stück von mir: Horen der Freundschaft*. Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag (= [1970] *A Part of Myself*. Translated by R. and C. Winston. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

# INDEX

- advocate, 152–53  
 Aemilius Paullus, L., 38  
 Albania, “sworn virgins” of, 98  
 Alston, Richard, 96  
*ambitus*, 15–17, *See* electoral misconduct  
*amicitia*, 85, 89–91  
 amoralism  
     “problem of dirty hands”, 151  
     absence of policy defended, 77  
     as expressed in *Commentariolum Petitionis*, 149–56  
     accommodation of  
         circumstantial necessity, 93, 150–55  
     based on universal rule, 56, 139  
     *Commentariolum Petitionis*, effect on interpretation of, 94–95  
     definition, 3–6, 57  
     examples, 6–11  
         Chicago and Illinois, 8–11  
         Louisiana, 8  
         Nixon, Richard M., and Watergate, 7–8  
     expressed in *Comm. Pet. (?)*, 87–92  
     limitations on  
         attitudes, not behavior, 4  
         distinctive feature, 4, 56, 75–76  
         domestic politics, 4  
         partial dispensation, 4  
     long-term goals vs. short-term tactics, 5, 17, 77, 149  
     rejection in Cicero’s philosophical works, 31  
     reservations about, 75  
     survival of belief in, 96  
 Antonius, C., 26, 63 n140  
 Antonius, M. (Antonius), 44  
 Arena, Valentina, 103  
 Astin, A.E., 77  
 Augustus, 83, 117–18  
 Aurelius Cotta, C., 22, 44, 85, 147  
 autonomy, intellectual, and environment, 134  
 Badian, E., 65–66, 75–76  
 Beard, Charles A., 119–22  
 behavior  
     not indicator of amoralism, 5  
     public and private, compared, 53  
*Ben-Hur*, 83  
 Bentley, Arthur F., 67, 111, 120–22  
*blanditia*, 89  
 Bona Dea trial (61 B.C.E.), 68, 71–72, 79–80  
 Gruen, 72  
 Scullard, 71  
 Syme, 71  
 Tatum, 79–80  
 Taylor, 72  
 Brunt, P.A., 97, 109  
 Bush, George W., 159  
 Caecilius, Q., 25  
 Caelius Rufus, M., 27, 28  
 Carson, Rachel, 132  
 Carter, Jimmy, 160  
 Carthage, 56 n112  
 Carville, James, 8  
 Cassius Dio, 22  
 Catalonia, 123  
 censors’ edict on teaching of rhetoric (92 B.C.E.), 51  
 Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.), 130  
 Claudius Pulcher, Appius, 27  
*clientela*, 73, 97  
 Cold War, 118  
*Commentariolum Petitionis*, 12, 28, 47, 53, 84–94  
     and “debunking”, 137–38  
     date, 94  
     expression of amoralism in, 149–56  
     Ironic Interpretation of the *Comm. Pet.*, 54, 85–86, 93  
         circular argument, avoidance of, 88  
         historical importance of, 136, 138  
         scholarly response to, 86, 142–48  
         arguments against, 143–48  
 Tullius Cicero, M. (Cicero), 84–85  
 Tullius Cicero, Q., 84–86  
*communitas*, 35

- concordia ordinum*, 14, 17, 58  
 Connolly, Joy, 103, 106  
 constitution of the United States,  
     119–20  
 Corbeill, Anthony, 105  
 Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus  
     Africanus, P. (Scipio Aemilianus),  
         38, 41, 50, 69  
 Cornelius Sulla Felix, L. (Sulla), 22  
*cursus honorum*, 81  
 "debunking", 115, 125, 137–38  
 Dionysius I of Syracuse, 41  
 disillusionment, 125–32  
     causes of  
         atrocities in Europe, 126  
         British dominions, in the  
             exploitation as "cannon  
                 fodder", 129  
         colonialism, failure of, 125–27  
         First World War, 127–29  
         Marxism, 129  
         Nixon, Richard M., and  
             Watergate, 130  
         propaganda, 130–31  
         Central Intelligence Agency  
             (U.S.), 130  
         Southeast Asia, U.S. defeat in,  
             130  
         Spanish Civil War, 129  
         technology, 131–32  
         United States, in the  
             economy, failure of, 129  
             Prohibition, failure of, 129  
             Wilsonian democracy,  
                 failure of, 128  
     end of, 133  
     era of  
         chronological limits, 111  
 Dugan, John, 105  
 Duke, David, 8  
 Earl, Donald C., 75–76, 100  
 Edwards, Catharine, 104  
 Edwards, Edwin, 8  
 electoral misconduct, 23–25  
 Elias, Norbert, "mesh of  
     interdependence", 123  
 Elliott, J.H., 123  
 emic, 97–107, 140  
     definition, 97  
*equites*, liability for taking bribes as  
     jurors, 14  
*ethos*, 104 n259  
 etic, 97–107  
     definition, 97  
*fama*, 102  
 fascism, 117–18  
 Fast, Howard, 83  
 First World War, 115–16, 118, 127–  
     29  
 Ford, Gerald R., 160  
 Foucault, Michel, 124–25  
 Franco, Francisco, 117  
 Freud, Sigmund, 132  
 Furius Philus, L., 43  
 Geertz, Clifford, 111  
 Gelzer, Matthias, 60, 100, 111, 119,  
     120, 140  
 "Geschichtsschreibung als Politik  
     mit anderen Mitteln", 133  
 Goldenhard, Ingo, 105  
 Gingrich, Newt, 159, 162  
*gloria*, 36–38, 47, 102  
 Goldwater, Barry, 159, 161  
 Greek embassy regarding Oropus  
     (155 B.C.E.), 48–51  
 Gruen, Erich S., 66–68, 101  
 Gumpowicz, Ludwig, 121  
 Hammar, Isak, 105  
 historicism, 134  
 historiography  
     politics of Roman Republican  
         groups as key concept, 58  
         power as key concept, 58  
 Hitler, Adolf, 117–18  
 Hölkeskamp, Karl-Joachim, 102  
*honestum*, 34, 38, 43, 47, 151  
 Hopkins, Keith, 101  
 Hortensius Hortalus, Q., 70  
*imperium*, 44  
*incolumitas*, 151  
 invective, 104  
 Iulius Caesar, C. (Caesar), 17 n27, 27,  
     28  
*ius*, 43  
 Jackson, Jesse L., Jr., 10  
 Jaffa, Henry V., 161 n400  
 Javits, Jacob K., 160  
 Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 159, 160  
 Laelius, C. (Laelius), 42, 49  
 "lavender scare", 132 n342  
*lex*, 43  
*lex Aufeia*, 50

- lex Licinia de sodaliciis*, 25  
*lex Scantinia*, 28  
*libertas*, 72, 103  
 Licinius Crassus, L. (Crassus),  
     17 n27, 44, 45  
 Licinius Murena, L., *ambitus* charge,  
     15–17  
*ludi*, 52  
 Marcius Philippus, L., 38  
 Marx, Karl, 132  
 Marxism, 129  
 Matalin, Mary, 8  
 McCarthy, Joseph, 158  
 McGrath, Bonnie, 9  
 Meier, Christian, 67, 97, 102, 109  
 Memmius, C., 19  
 Millar, Fergus, 97  
 Mommsen, Theodor, 60, 62, 140  
 morality  
     aesthetics, linked to, 105  
     definition, 3, 31, 33  
     in orations of Cicero, 105, 106  
     Roman, 104  
         politics, 105  
 Morstein-Marx, Robert, 102  
 Munatius Plancus Bursa, T., 27  
 Münzer, Friedrich, 61, 119, 120, 140  
 Murray, Gilbert, 116  
 Mussolini, Benito, 83, 117–18  
 Namier, Lewis, 114 n289  
*National Review*, 159  
 Nixon, Richard M., and Watergate,  
     160  
*nomenclator*, 85  
 Obama, Barack, 9, 159  
 objections, anticipation of, 6  
*officium*, 34–35  
 Olivares, Count Duke of, 123  
*Partisan Review*, 131 n340  
*patronus*, 155  
 Paul, Rand, 163  
*peculatus*, 19  
 Philip IV of Spain, 123  
 philosophical works  
     rationale for inclusion, 13  
 philosophy, Greek  
     Academy, 32  
         Carneades, 48–51  
     Cynics, 32  
     Epicureans, 33  
     eudamonism, 32–33  
     Peripatetics, 32, 48  
         Critolaus, 48–50  
     Stoics, 32  
         Diogenes of Babylon, 48  
         early and late, 32  
 philosophy, Roman  
     Academy, 46  
     as represented by Cicero, 52–53  
     connection to real life, 29–31, 33,  
         38, 52, 136  
     Cyrenaics, 47  
     Epicureans, 46, 47  
     Peripatetics, 47  
     Stoics, 30, 45, 46, 47  
 Plato, 43, 45, 91 n226  
*polis*, 53  
 Polybius, 24  
 Pompeius Magnus, Cn. (Pompey),  
     17 n27, 28, 40, 79, 90  
 Pompeius, Q., 47  
 Pomponius Atticus, T. (Atticus), 25  
 Porcius Cato, M. (Cato the Elder), 49  
 Porcius Cato, M. (Cato the Younger)  
     application of one rule, 14–17,  
         17–18  
 progressive school of history, 118  
 propaganda, 130–31  
 prosopography, 59, 66–68, 81, 112–  
     13, 139  
     comparison with Bentley and  
         Beard, 122  
     decline, causes of, 96  
     dissenting views, 73  
     fostering factors  
         movement from "great men"  
             history, 122  
         natural sciences, 122  
         power-politics analysis, 122  
     foundations in group-oriented  
         social science, 122  
 pseudepigraphy, 86–87, 94, 144–46  
*publicani*, tax collection contract, 15  
*Quo Vadis*, 83  
 Reagan, Ronald, 159, 160, 161  
 realism, international, 114  
 reference modifier, 89 n224  
 referent modifier, 89 n224  
*repetundae*, 19  
 Richlin, Amy, 105  
 Rockefeller, Nelson, 160



- Roman Republic, compared to  
Roman Empire, 82–84  
*Romanità*, 117  
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 160  
Rosenstein, Nathan, 102  
Rutilius Rufus, P., 45  
Sallustius Crispus, C. (Sallust), 18–  
22  
Carthage, destruction of, 21, 75  
hypocrisy, denunciation of, 21  
*sapientia*, 35  
Scullard, H.H., 64  
Second World War, 118, 129  
Sempronius Gracchus, C. (C.  
Gracchus), 38, 50  
Sempronius Gracchus, Ti. (Ti.  
Gracchus), 68  
agrarian reform program, 68–70,  
78  
Badian, 69  
Gabba, 78  
Gelzer, 68  
Gruen, 70  
Münzer, 69  
Scullard, 69  
Syme, 69  
Taylor, 69  
Sergius Catiline, L. (Catiline), 25  
Sexual Revolution, 132 n342  
Sharon Statement, 159  
Sienkewicz, Henryk, 83  
Simmel, Georg, 121  
sleeping fly sickness, 99  
sodalicia. *See* electoral misconduct  
sophism, 51  
Roman attitudes to, 51  
Southeast Asia, U.S. defeat in, 159  
Spanish Civil War, 129  
*Spartacus*, 83  
Spengler, Oswald, 116  
Steel, Catharine, 103  
Stoics. *See* philosophy, Greek, and  
philosophy, Roman  
Strachey, Lytton, 115  
Sulpicius Rufus, P., 44  
Syme, Ronald, 61–64, 96, 106, 132,  
140  
Taylor, Lily Ross, 65  
Tea Party (U.S. political movement),  
159, 160, 161, 162  
technology, 131–32  
computers  
source of hope starting in late  
20<sup>th</sup> century, 132  
Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, 51  
Tiro. *See* Tullius Tiro, M. (Tiro)  
Toynbee, Arnold, 116  
Treaty of Versailles, 116  
Truman, Harry S., 160  
Tullius Cicero, M. (Cicero), 25, 26,  
27, 28, 39, 50, 94, 106  
anti-Ciceronian tradition, 85, 147  
balancing of moral  
considerations, 14–17, 17–18  
*In Toga Candida*, 87  
philosophical works. *See*  
philosophy, Roman  
philosophy. *See* philosophy,  
Roman  
Tullius Cicero, Q., 26, 53, 94  
Tullius Tiro, M. (Tiro), 40  
*utile*, 34, 38, 151  
Velázquez, Diego Rodríguez de  
Silva y, 123  
Verres, C., 68  
extortion trial (70 B.C.E.), 68,  
70–71, 79  
Badian, 71  
Gelzer, 70  
Gruen, 71  
Mitchell, 79  
Scullard, 70  
Syme, 70  
Taylor, 71  
*virtus*, 102  
von Herder, Johann Gottfried,  
83 n209  
Wallace, Lew, 83  
Weber, Max, 132

## INDEX LOCORUM

---

<i>App. Num.</i>	<i>Cic. Fam.</i>	3.33-39, 44
1, 19 n32	1.9.12, 91 n226	3.46, 24 n44
<i>Asc. Tog. Cand.</i>	1.9.18, 91 n226	<i>Cic. Mil.</i>
93-94C, 147	1.9.21, 27 n49	9-11, 152
<i>Cael. apud Cic. Att.</i>	5.5.2, 26	31, 152
10.9A.2, 28	7.2.2-3, 27	<i>Cic. Mur.</i>
<i>Cael. apud Cic. Fam.</i>	9.14.2, 37 n74	54, 16
8.6.1, 28	11.14.1, 37 n74	55-66, 15 n25
<i>Cic. 1 Ver.</i>	15.4.13, 37 n74	61, 15
18-20, 70	<i>Cic. fil. Fam.</i>	67, 16
<i>Cic. Ac.</i>	16.21.2, 40	70-71, 15
2.133, 15 n24	<i>Cic. Fin.</i>	<i>Cic. Off.</i>
<i>Cic. Ac. Prior.</i>	1.12, 46	1.35, 35
2.129-31, 46 n92	1.57, 47	1.38, 35, 36
<i>Cic. Att.</i>	2.18, 47	1.65, 36
1.1.3-4, 25	2.23-24, 46	1.72, 35
1.2.1, 25	2.39-41, 47	1.87, 33
1.12, 80	2.45, 47	1.88, 36
1.16.11, 14 n23	2.54, 47	1.124, 34
1.17.9, 15	2.68, 47	1.153, 35
2.1.8, 14	2.78, 47	2.21, 37
2.17.2, 37 n74	2.114, 47	2.31, 37
8.11.1, 41	3.16, 47	2.32, 37
8.11.2, 28	3.57, 47	2.36, 37
9.4.2, 28	3.58, 47	2.38, 38
12.3.1, 89 n225	3.68, 48	2.43, 38
12.5c, 89 n225	3.70, 48	2.44-50, 38
16.1.5, 40	4.55, 15 n24	2.50, 38
16.2.6, 36 n71	5.11, 48	2.51, 153, 26 n48
<i>Cic. Brut.</i>	5.18, 47	2.52, 39
128, 19	5.24, 47	2.52-89, 39
<i>Cic. Cael.</i>	<i>Cic. Inv.</i>	2.52-90, 38
14, 26	2.158, 152	2.54, 39
<i>Cic. de Orat.</i>	2.170-76, 151	2.55, 40
1.1, 46	2.174, 152	2.57, 40
1.2, 46	2.176, 152	2.57-58, 40
1.8, 44	<i>Cic. Leg.</i>	2.58, 40
1.76, 44	1.15, 43	2.60, 39, 40, 41
1.112, 24 n43	1.17, 43	2.72, 38
1.117, 44	1.18-19, 43	2.73, 38
1.225-26, 45	1.42, 43	2.76, 38
1.230, 45	1.55-56, 44	2.78, 38
2.156, 49	2.10, 44	3.11, 38
2.161, 49	2.13, 44	3.20, 38
3.1, 44	2.14, 43	3.33, 38
3.7, 45	2.23, 44	3.36, 39
3.14, 44	3.3, 44	3.37, 39
3.80, 49	3.5, 44, 154, 154 n391	3.37-39, 34
3.94, 51	3.10, 44	3.50-53, 39 n77

# Index Locorum

- 3.53, 39  
3.75, 38  
Cic. *Parad.*  
3.2.22, 15 n24  
Cic. *Planc.*  
47, 25  
Cic. *Q. fr.*  
1.1.11, 26  
1.1.13, 27  
1.1.22, 26  
2.5.3, 14 n23  
3.5.1, 41  
Cic. *Rep.*  
1.10-12 Ziegler =  
1.10-12 Powell, 34  
1.27 Ziegler = 1.27  
Powell, 41  
1.33 Ziegler = 1.33  
Powell, 42  
1.34 Ziegler = 1.34  
Powell, 42  
1.36, 38 Ziegler =  
1.36, 38 Powell,  
42  
1.39 Ziegler = 1.39  
Powell, 41  
1.42 Ziegler = 1.42  
Powell, 42  
1.51-52 Ziegler =  
1.51-52 Powell, 42  
3.4 Ziegler = 3.5  
Powell, 42  
3.4-18 Ziegler, 49  
3.8 Ziegler = 3.7  
Powell, 43  
3.12 Ziegler = 3.8  
Powell, 42 n83  
3.32 Ziegler = 3.19  
Powell, 50  
3.33 Ziegler = 3.27  
Powell, 49  
3.38 Ziegler = test.  
gen. 11 (p. 368),  
43 n84  
3.41 Ziegler = 3.34  
Powell, 50  
3.43 Ziegler = 3.35  
Powell, 41 n82  
4.7 Ziegler = test.  
gen. 16 p. 369  
Powell, 40  
5.6 Ziegler = 3.3  
Powell, 43 n84  
5.8 Ziegler = 5.2  
Powell, 41, 43,  
43 n84  
5.9 Ziegler = fr.  
incertae sedis 13  
p. 150 Powell,  
41 n81  
5.11 Ziegler = fr.  
dubia 8 Powell, 43  
*Comm. Pet.*  
1, 93  
2, 149  
3, 85 n215  
5, 90  
16, 90  
25, 89  
32, 148  
42, 89, 87 n222  
45, 12, 88  
45-46, 36  
46, 91  
47, 22  
49, 90  
54, 91  
54-57, 149  
58, 93  
Dio  
33 [108.2], 22  
37.57.3, 17 n27  
Diod. Sic.  
34.33.3-5, 21  
Diog. *Laert.*  
2.77, 152  
7.120, 15 n24  
Dion. Hal.  
2.15.4, 14 n23  
Florus  
1.1.9, 14 n23  
1.36.18, 19 n32  
Gel.  
6.14.8-10, 49  
11.10.1, 50  
Gel. *NA*  
15.11.1-2, 51  
Hom. *Od.*  
4.242-64, 152  
Hor. *S.*  
1.3.96, 15 n24  
Lactant. *Epit.*  
55, 49  
56, 49  
Lactant. *Inst.*  
5.14.1-7, 49  
5.16, 49  
Liv.  
1.8, 14 n23  
Liv. *Per.*  
64, 19 n32  
Nonius  
507L, 50  
Orosius  
5.15.5, 19 n32  
Pl. *Resp.*  
1.338c-354b, 51  
361a, 51 n101  
488 1-b, 33  
Plut. *Cat. mai.*  
22, 49  
Plut. *Rom.*  
9.3, 14 n23  
Polyb.  
6.14, 97  
6.56, 24  
Pompon. *Dig.*  
1.3.3, 154  
Quint. *Inst.*  
2.4.42, 51  
Sal. *Cat.*  
3.3-5, 21  
10.5, 20  
11, 21  
11.1, 19  
38, 62  
38.1-3, 20  
52.6, 20 n33  
Sal. *Hist.*  
1.7M, 72  
2.47.4, 22  
Sal. *Hist.* I fr.  
11, 19  
Sal. *Jug.*  
3.4, 19 n31  
4.3, 21  
4.9, 21  
8.1, 19  
20.1, 19  
28.1, 19  
31.12, 19  
31.25, 19, 20

*Roman Amoralism Reconsidered*

35.10, 19	Sen. <i>Controv.</i>	Tac. <i>Ann.</i>
40.1, 19	2 praef. 5, 51	3.27-5, 23 n38
41.5, 19	Suet. <i>Rhet.</i>	Tac. <i>Dial.</i>
41.9, 19	25.2, 51	35.1, 51

Michael C. Alexander is a professor emeritus in the Department of History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His fields of research include Roman Republican history and criminal law in the Roman Republic. He currently resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

