

**UCLA**

**UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations**

**Title**

Time and Experience in Cicero's Ethical Dialogues

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/75m9t1js>

**Author**

Matlock, Andres

**Publication Date**

2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Time and Experience  
in Cicero's Ethical Dialogues

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for  
the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Classics

by

Andres Vicente Matlock

2020

© Copyright by

Andres Vicente Matlock

2020

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Time and Experience  
in Cicero's Ethical Dialogues

by

Andres Vicente Matlock

Doctor of Philosophy in Classics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Francesca Katherine Martelli, Co-Chair

Professor David L. Blank, Co-Chair

My dissertation examines a series of dialogues that the Roman politician and philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero, wrote in the single year between the death of his daughter in February 45 BCE and the assassination of Julius Caesar in March 44 BCE. I argue that as a corpus these texts explore how human experience affects the perception and conceptualization of time. Each chapter addresses a category of experience—solitude, doubt, grief, and failure—with which Cicero grapples in his dialogues. Rather than simply reflecting back the troubled circumstances of its composition, however, Cicero's philosophy interrogates these experiences to produce distinctive ways of understanding how time creates, shapes, and limits human being. Solitude articulates and punctuates the durative structures of human time. Doubt serves as the drive of inquiry, which must confront the uncertainty of linear progression in time. Grief reveals the

rupture between a subjective sense of time and the chronology of nature. Finally, failure demonstrates how the present is tied to heterogenous and indeterminate futures. Through these categories, I identify in Ciceronian philosophy an ethics of the “time of life” (*aetas*) that is a development of, yet distinct from the Hellenistic philosophical “art of the lifetime” (*disciplina vitae*). Building on recent work on Cicero’s place in the history of thought and his skeptical methodology, I seek to draw connections not only between Cicero and his Hellenistic predecessors, but also with later thinkers from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Gaston Bachelard and Emmanuel Levinas. Through this approach, I participate in an ongoing reappraisal of the Ciceronian texts of the year 45-44 and seek to locate them within the *longue durée* of critical thought on time and human nature.

The dissertation of Andres Vicente Matlock is approved.

Kenneth Reinhard

Holly Haynes

David L. Blank, Committee Co-Chair

Francesca Katherine Martelli, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

For my mother, whose dedication to others and to herself will always drive me

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
Vita	viii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. The Specters of Solitude	49
Chapter 2. Doubts' Drives	106
Chapter 3. The Discernment of Grief	173
Chapter 4. The Future of Failure	249
Conclusion	332
Bibliography	334



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the members of my dissertation committee: Holly Haynes and Kenneth Reinhard believed in and supported this project over the course of the last two years. David Blank lent his expertise to help me articulate my ideas more clearly. And, throughout my time at UCLA, Francesca Martelli has always been my mentor and guide. She introduced me to Cicero. Without her, this dissertation certainly would not have been written.

The Department of Classics at UCLA has provided me a home for the last six years. Thanks to the untiring work of Kathryn Morgan and Alex Purves our community was always a vibrant and interesting place to be and think. I have been fortunate to find models of pedagogy and scholarship both at UCLA and Hamilton College in Bob Gurval, Samuel Beckelhymer, Brent Vine, Amy Richlin, Mario Telò, Nancy and Peter Rabinowitz, Barbara Gold, Carl Rubino, Shelley Haley, and James Bradley Wells.

My fellow graduate students at UCLA were a source of constant inspiration both within Classics and in the interdisciplinary fora offered by the program in Experimental Critical Theory and the Medieval and Early Modern Student Association. Many of the ideas I present here originated in conversations with Diana Librandi, Ben Radcliffe, Elliott Piros, Irene Han, John Tennant, Zachary Borst, and Jasmine Akiyama-Kim. Our friendships and communal effort to engage with ancient material in new ways made it all worthwhile.

My deepest gratitude also to my mother, Ester and Raye, and Agustín. And, to Lexi, Moneypenny, and Fuzzy, my companions in life.

Finally, I finished this dissertation in the midst of a global pandemic and suffering in my beloved city of Los Angeles. To whatever future it belongs, I hope that it will be more just, empathetic, and open.

## VITA

Andres Vicente Matlock obtained a BA *summa cum laude* with a double concentration in Classical Languages and Comparative Literature from Hamilton College in 2012. He entered the PhD program in the Department of Classics at UCLA in 2014 and received his MA in Classics there in 2016. He anticipates completing a PhD in Classics from UCLA in June of 2020.

Andres published an article in the journal *Classical Antiquity* in the spring of 2020 entitled “Relationality, Fidelity, and the Event in Sappho.” He has presented papers on early Greek poetry and Cicero at conferences for the Society for Classical Studies and the Classical Association of the Middle West and South. His formative teaching experience has been in the Department of Classics at UCLA between 2015 and 2020.

## Introduction

### I. A Philosophical Problem

Cicero begins his letter to Publius Nigidius Figulus by expressing regret that he can no longer greet his friend in their old familiar manner. Like many things in the early days of Julius Caesar's dictatorship, Cicero laments, "the times have snatched this custom away" (*consuetudinem...tempus eripuerat*).<sup>1</sup> While Cicero voices similar regrets in missives to other exiled Pompeian partisans,<sup>2</sup> what is interesting about this letter is both the particular explanation of the loss of *consuetudo* that it offers, and the particular addressee to whom it is proposed.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, the difference between Nigidius' position as an exile in Athens and Cicero's marginalized, yet secure status in Rome is due to Caesar's *clementia*.<sup>4</sup> Yet for all the "comfort" that Caesar's benevolence may have bestowed upon Cicero in contrast to Nigidius, any individual action or aim seems at present to be dwarfed by the enormity of an impersonal and immensely powerful historical force:

et in qua urbe modo gratia, auctoritate, gloria florui in ea nunc his quidem omnibus caremus. obtinemus ipsius Caesaris summam erga nos humanitatem, sed ea plus non potest quam vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum. itaque orbus iis rebus

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ad Fam.* IV.13(225).1, *unum enim partem et consuetudinem earum epistularum quibus secundis rebus uti solebamus tempus eripuerat*. For Cicero's close relationship with Nigidius, which stretches back at least to his consulship, when the latter served as expert witness against Catiline, see *Cic. Pro Sulla* 42. This letter is the only example of their correspondence preserved in the collection, but for an indication of their intimacy cf., *ad Att.* II.2(22), VII.24(148); *ad Quint. Frat.* I.2(2).

<sup>2</sup> This letter is dated to early fall (September) of 46 BCE; see Shackleton Bailey: ad loc; Marinone 1997: ad loc. For common trends in Cicero's letters to the Pompeians from this period, see esp. Leach 1999. On Nigidius, see Rawson 1985: 93-95, 122-124, 162-184; Sedley 2012a; Garcea 2019; and below.

<sup>3</sup> For Cicero's perspective on Caesar from this period, see esp., the attested series of mutual recommendation letters (cf. Pauli 1958): from Caesar just before the civil war, see *ad Att.* IX.6a(172a); IX.16(185).1-2; X.8b(199b); from Cicero during and after the war, *Att.* VIII.2(152).1; *Fam.* XIII.16(153).

<sup>4</sup> Cicero can even claim, albeit with a biting irony, that "even under present conditions it has not occurred to me to desire anything that Caesar had not thought already to provide for me" (*nec mihi quicquam tali tempore in mentem venit optare quod non ultro mihi Caesar detulerit*, 2).

omnibus quibus et natura me et voluntas et consuetudo adsuefecerat cum ceteris, ut quidem videor, tum mihi ipse displiceo. natus enim ad agendum semper aliquid dignum viro nunc non modo agendi rationem nullam habeo sed ne cogitandi quidem.

And in this city in which I once enjoyed favor, authority, and glory, I am now entirely deprived of all these things. I retain Caesar's greatest courtesy toward myself, but that means nothing in the face of the force and transformation of all affairs and times. Thus bereft of all the things to which nature, will, and habit had accustomed me, I seem to be displeasing not only to others but to myself as well. For, having been born to be always acting toward something worthy of a man, I now no longer possess the means to guide not only my action, but even my thought.<sup>5</sup>

Desuetude extends much further than a lost form of epistolary address. The old currencies of Republican society and politics—*gratia, auctoritas, gloria*—fall before the scythe of “the force and transformation of all affairs and times” (*vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum*).<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Caesar's “greatest courtesy” (*summam erga nos humanitatem*) can only serve as a flimsy and impermanent barrier against the real, brute flux of *res atque tempora*. In recognition of this ineluctable transformation, Cicero confesses to his addressee that he has entirely lost the purpose that he had cobbled together for his life out of his natural ability, will to action, and habituation (*natura...et voluntas et consuetudo*). He has become despised to others and is revealed to himself to be entirely emasculated and deracinated; he is not only unable to perform the actions “worthy of a man” (*dignum viro*) for which he was born, but cannot any longer conceive of the means (*rationem nullam*) by which he *might* act—or even think (*agendi...ne cogitandi*).

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ad Fam.* IV.13.2-3. Translations throughout are my own, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the translation of Shackleton Bailey, “the total revolution of affairs and times”; of Williams, “violence and revolution in every relation of life and in the times themselves.” For this particularly Ciceronian collocation found elsewhere only in philosophical contexts, see, with the variant *commutatio*, *de Orat.* 3.225, *de Rep.* 1.45; with *vicissitudo* in the place of *vis*, see *Tusc. Disp.* 1.68, 5.24; *de Nat. Deor.* 1.52, 1.100 (both of these usages are specifically concerning astronomy). In the letters, Cicero elsewhere prefers the more generic and less philosophically loaded, *perturbatio rerum*, see, e.g., *ad Fam.* IV.4(203).4, V.16(187).3, VI.1(242).1.

We might be inclined to interpret this confession in a cynical light.<sup>7</sup> After all, Cicero is explaining to Nigidius—“by far and away the most learned and revered of men, once most highly favored and certainly my dearest friend” (*uni omnium doctissimo et sanctissimo et maxima quondam gratia et mihi certe amicissimo*, 3)—why he cannot secure for him a pardon from Caesar and an allowance to return to Rome. Furthermore, the consequences of Cicero’s failure or inability to act on Nigidius’ behalf are dire: he will die within a year, still in exile and without regaining the recognition that his more conciliatory counterpart in the Roman intelligentsia, Marcus Varro, came to enjoy.<sup>8</sup> From this perspective, Cicero’s confession begins to appear at best a profession of ennui—or at worst of cowardice. What can be better defense for the failure of a specific action than a general plea that action is impossible?

This cynical interpretation, however persuasive, sacrifices a philosophical perspective for a political one. When Cicero writes to Nigidius about a *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum* that has profoundly upset his ability to act, let alone *think*, he is presenting this interpretation of the situation not simply to a political ally in need of assistance that he cannot provide, but also to a philosopher and religious searcher whose interests, the fragmentary

---

<sup>7</sup> This has often been the perspective of commentators, see e.g., Momigliano 1984: 201, “a rather inept and embarrassed letter.” For a more sophisticated reading that retains a political perspective, see Leach 1999: 162, “In this letter Cicero seems careful not to define his position as one of strength but rather of uncertainty stemming from dispossession. On the one hand, while apologizing that one has not already died with the bravest, he wants to think that death from a misstep would still be possible. On the other hand, there is a kind of symbolic death that comes from marginalization, of putting one’s best skills in desuetude within a world where old customs and procedures that employed these skills are themselves defunct. Caesar’s associates have chosen to cultivate him and Caesar himself shows affability. As Cicero says to Nigidius, however, whatever influence he may in these circumstances wield, it is not that same influence he used to possess as merited by the actions of his past career.”

<sup>8</sup> On the relationship between Nigidius and Varro as the two leading intellectual luminaries of 1st century BCE Rome, see Aul. Gell. *NA* 4.9.1-2, 4.16.1, 17.7.5, 19.14.3; cf. Rawson 1985: 93-95. On the circumstances of Nigidius’ death we have only references from later sources; see, e.g., Jer. *Chron.* 156H.

remains of his oeuvre attest, tended precisely towards questions of change, destiny, and time.<sup>9</sup> In the remnants of his grammatical writings, for instance, we find Nigidius proposing an etymological difference between *perpetuus* and *sempiternus* based on philosophical grounds: “it is proper for immortal things to be ‘sempiternal,’ while human things are ‘durable’; for durability belongs to our nature, which must endure the accidents of experience, while sempiternity is infinite, because it is ‘always’” (*sempiternum immortalium rerum, perpetuum mortalium est; perpetuitas enim in nostra natura est, quae perpeti accidentia potest, sempiternitas infinita est, eo quod semper*, fr. 1 S = GRFF 1).<sup>10</sup> In this etymological division, the difference between mortal and immortal notions of temporal continuity lies in the “accidents” (*accidentia*) which shape human perception and experience.<sup>11</sup> Through human “endurance” (*perpeti*) of this accidental nature comes an understanding of temporal continuity as “durability” (*perpetuitas*), which is counterposed to the truly infinite temporality (*sempiternitas* from *semper*) of the immortality of the gods.<sup>12</sup>

Nigidius’ apparent philosophical interest in time seems relevant to the way in which Cicero writes about their shared political situation. Indeed, following Nigidius’ death in the

---

<sup>9</sup> The scant evidence from the fragmentary corpus is given a lively and colorful depiction in later testimonia, see Cicero’s own depiction at *Tim.* 1-2; cf. Lucan’s incorporation of the figure of Nigidius as an astrologer and prophet of destruction, e.g., *Bel. Civ.* 1.650-51, *Extremi multorum tempus in unum / Convenere dies*.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of this fragment in a grammatical context, see Garcea 2019: 94; for the philosophical background, see Legrand 1931: 36.

<sup>11</sup> On the “accidental” nature of human time, cf. Epicurus (*Ep. ad Herod.* 72-73a; Sext. *M X.*219). See below.

<sup>12</sup> This opposition between mortal and divine temporal continuity is framed often in similar terms in Cicero’s dialogues, notably in discussions of the possibility of permanent happiness for mortal existence. See, e.g., in the Epicurean polemics at *de Fin.* 2.86-87; *Tusc.* 5.96; for Cicero’s use of *perpetuus* in contexts pertaining to physical nature, see *de Nat. De.* 2.127-28 and esp. *Tim.* 40.

summer of 45, Cicero began to write a dialogue which featured his recently deceased friend and treated precisely this topic. The dialogue, which was perhaps titled *de Universitate*, centered around the old Academic debate concerning the origin of time—i.e., whether time was created along with the universe or whether it is truly infinite and increate.<sup>13</sup> In this rarified philosophical discussion, Cicero included in the mouth of Nigidius as the “Pythagorean” speaker an extended translation from Plato’s *Timaeus* which deals with the moment of the creation of the universe and the problem of time.<sup>14</sup> As David Sedley has reconstructed the argument of this dialogue, Nigidius put forward the doctrinal and literalist reading of the *Timaeus*, which contends that the universe had an origin in time and thus that time also has a beginning.<sup>15</sup> The other speaker in the dialogue, identified in the extant prologue as the Greek philosopher Cratippus, would have presented the contrary Aristotelian view that time is infinite and without origin.<sup>16</sup> Cicero, then, would have been left to intervene in the debate between these two positions “in a Carneadean fashion” (*Carneadeo more et modo, Tim. 1*), which would seem in this case to involve emphasizing the obscurity of Timaeus’ speech and its relation to the opacity of the natural world

---

<sup>13</sup> On the origins of this debate, see Pl. *Tim. 37c-38c*; cf. Sedley 2012a: 196-8.

<sup>14</sup> Notably, in this context Cicero uses *perpetuitas* to distinguish the continuity of the Pancreator’s temporal creation from his own true infinity—an emphasis that is lacking in Plato’s version (cf. Cic. *Tim. 40* and *Tim. 41b4-6*). On this apparent explicit reference to Nigidius’ work in Cicero’s translation, see Hoening 2018: 98.

<sup>15</sup> 2012: 196, “in Cicero’s day it was common to read the *Timaeus* as describing a world which, although thanks to divine protection it will never end, did have a literally temporal beginning. Such is the literalist interpretation of creation in the *Timaeus* regularly assumed in Cicero’s dialogues, where it is echoed by spokesmen for the Epicureans (*ND 1.20*), for Philo of Larissa (*Luc. 118-19*), and for Antiochus (*Ac. 1.28*) as well as by Cicero himself as a New Academic speaker in the *Tusculans*.”

<sup>16</sup> On Cratippus, see Philod. *Ind. Ac. 35.13-18*; on the oddity of a native Greek speaker appearing in a Ciceronian dialogue, see Sedley 2012a: 194-95; Hoening 2018: 47-48.

from a human perspective.<sup>17</sup> The dialogue likely concluded, in a manner familiar from the other *philosophica* of this period, with a call for continued inquiry into the inscrutable relationship between the flux of time and human experience.

Cicero seems to have left this dialogue unfinished and, instead, incorporated some of its components into the theological debate of *de Natura Deorum*.<sup>18</sup> Its exceptional existence as an homage to Nigidius and their intellectual relationship, however, provides support for the philosophical significance of Cicero's apologetic letter from the previous fall. At that moment, just before beginning work on his new series of philosophical dialogues, we find Cicero failing to find satisfactory explanations within the political and social realms for the new configurations of *res* and *tempora* through which he is living. Indeed, Cicero's unwillingness to attribute to Caesar any real responsibility for the current period of transformation emphasizes this failure. If Caesar is not the true cause of the discursive and ideological problems that beleaguer Cicero and his political world, where else should he look but to philosophy? When he writes to Nigidius about the *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum*, he is thus not simply diagnosing a political situation, but is more fundamentally articulating a philosophical question of the type that, as he stresses in the letter,<sup>19</sup> he hopes they will both consider in their mutual retirement from public life.

---

<sup>17</sup> On Cicero's perspective on the obscurity of the *Timaeus*, see *de Fin.* 2.15.

<sup>18</sup> See *de Nat. De.* 2.47 with Sedley 2012a: 191-92.

<sup>19</sup> The letter concludes with an exhortation to Nigidius to consider his place in intellectual history and to engage in philosophical speculation as a form of consolation: "think not only of those ideas that you have received from other distinguished scholars, but also those which you yourself have brought to light by your ingenuity and enthusiasm. If you keep these things in mind, you will hope that everything will turn out well and you will bear more wisely whatever may occur, of whatever nature it will be," (*nec ea solum memineris quae ab aliis magnis viris accepisti sed illa etiam quae ipse ingenio studioque peperisti. Quae si colliges, et sperabis omnia optime et quae accident, qualiacumque erunt, sapienter feres*, IV.13.7).



It is thus the central argument of this dissertation that the dialogues that Cicero writes in the wake of the letter to Nigidius are aimed at addressing this fundamental philosophical problem: the nature of the *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum* and, in particular, how *res* and *tempora*—time and our experience of that time as the stuff of reality—relate to one another in light of the force of flux and change. To put it simply, I contend that experience and time form two essential pillars of interpretation for Ciceronian philosophy in this period. More specifically, I am interested in tracing the influence of this problem on the ethically-focused dialogues with which Cicero begins his new cycle of philosophical writing: this project commenced with the lost *Hortensius* in November 46 BCE, was redirected and focalized by the death of his daughter, Tullia, in February of 45, and was brought to a sudden conclusion in the form with which I am concerned by Caesar’s assassination in March 44.<sup>20</sup> Cicero’s choice to begin his new philosophical cycle with a strong emphasis on ethical concerns means that in order to understand how he investigates the relationship between “time” and “experience,” we should begin from the experiential side.

In the following chapters, therefore, I consider how Cicero’s experiences of this *vis et mutatio* are treated philosophically in order to open up distinct ways of understanding the human

---

<sup>20</sup> Of course, Cicero wrote “philosophy” both before and after this period; but since my argument is concerned with identifying a guiding focus and thematic interest in Cicero’s writings, I adopt this periodization as a way of situating his philosophical work in a specific personal, emotional, social, and political circumstance. For Cicero’s own view on the periodization of his work, see the retrospective catalogue provided at *de Div.* 2.1-4. Here, he presents the central texts of the period of my interest as the *Hortensius*, the “four books concerning the *Academics*” (*quattuor Academicis libris*), and the *Tusculans*. This list presents many difficulties, however; for instance, it entirely dismisses the *de Finibus*, and is clearly already looking ahead to the emphases of his coming works (e.g., *de Gloria*, *de Officiis*) through its reincorporation of the *de Republica* and the oratorical works of the previous decade into the ethical project of 45. Rather than using this catalogue as a definitive demarcation, therefore, I adopt the more inclusive chronological approach; for a full chronology of Cicero’s writing from this period, see Marinone 1997: 211-52. For a thorough consideration of the catalogue in *de Div.* 2, see Altman 2016: xi-xxxii.

perception and conceptualization of time. By observing textual resonances and preoccupations in the letters that Cicero writes during this period, I identify four categories of experience through which to interrogate the philosophical writings: solitude, doubt, grief, and failure. The first chapter relates the experience of solitude that Cicero describes following the death of Tullia to the different depictions of a bounded and finite lifetime explored in *de Finibus bonorum et malorum* (*de Fin.*). In the second chapter, I read the *Lucullus* (*Luc.*) with an interest in how Cicero's commitment to doubt as the drive of philosophy confronts the unknowability of limits in the progression of time. The third chapter considers Cicero's philosophical use of grief in the *Tusculan Disputations* (*Tusc.*) as a way of discerning the divergent temporal strata of human life revealed by proximity to death. Finally, in the fourth chapter, I work especially from the final book of the *Tusculans* and *de Senectute* (*de Sen.*) to examine how the personal and societal failures through which Cicero lives affect his theorization of the future. The course of chapters thus follows a chronological, but not fully inclusive, path through the ethical dialogues of the year 45-4 BCE.<sup>21</sup> Guiding this chronological reading is an interest in the experiences with which Cicero grapples in these dialogues<sup>22</sup> and the insight into human time that philosophical treatment of these experiences can divulge. I conclude this introduction by providing précis for the arguments of each chapter, but first it is necessary to give a general background of the

---

<sup>21</sup> Most notably, my project in its present form does not address Cicero's interest in time through the theological debates of *de Nat. De.* This addition will be forthcoming in a future iteration. See Ch. 4, section IV for an indication of how I see this text fitting in to my argument.

<sup>22</sup> It should be made clear that, while I engage with Ciceronian biography to make my argument, this dissertation is not intended to be a biographical, or even primarily historical, inquiry. When I refer to an "experience," I am inevitably referring to the complex interaction between Cicero's lived life and its textual reflections and refractions.

philosophy of time as it influences Cicero's work and to examine in particular *vita* and *aetas* as the two key formulations of his understanding of human time.

## II. Time and Eternity in Cicero's Philosophy

tempus autem est—id quo nunc utimur, nam ipsum quidem generaliter definire difficile est—pars quaedam aeternitatis cum alicuius annui, menstrui, diurni nocturnive spati certa significatione.

But time—I speak now only of present usage, for it is very difficult to define in general—is a certain part of eternity, with a particular outward appearance in the span of years, months, days, or nights.

*de Inventione*, 1.39

In this section, I consider the influence on Cicero's dialogues of the central temporal duality in Greek metaphysics—time and eternity. Drawing from Sabine Luciani's monograph *Temps et Éternité dans l'Oeuvre Philosophique de Cicéron*, I survey the Platonic and Stoic notions of eternity and discuss Luciani's application of these categories to Cicero's writing. I offer Luciani's work, which embraces the general view that Cicero's dialogues are exercises in philosophical "synthesis," only as a starting point for my own project. As I discuss below, I reject the notion that Cicero's philosophy is aimed at synthesis, and so I do not support Luciani's specific conclusions. Yet her work argues strongly for the importance of time in the Ciceronian philosophical corpus. I thus conclude this section by offering a different interpretation of Luciani's central claim—that Cicero transfers the philosophical treatment of time from physics to ethics—that will serve as the entry point for my own argument: we must look to the depiction and analysis of experience in Cicero's dialogues in order to understand his ethics of time.

We have no indication as to why Cicero failed to finish his *de Universitate*. If he had completed it, however, this fictional debate with Nigidius would have been his only explicit treatment of time in the *logos* to which it generally belonged among the Greek philosophical

schools: physics.<sup>23</sup> Cicero's philosophy participates in a general trend toward "ethicization."<sup>24</sup> In Cicero's writings firm distinctions between the three traditional philosophical *logoi*—physics, ethics, and dialectic—are elided by his insistence on the ethical purpose of all philosophy and the essential role that personal experience and behavior plays in his interests and arguments.<sup>25</sup> Physics, understood in the Greek mode as inquiry into the natural world, is a particular casualty of Cicero's ethically-focused approach, with his theological texts that follow the dialogues with which I am concerned (e.g., *de Nat. De.* and *de Div.*) serving to fill this perceived void.<sup>26</sup> Because Greek philosophy had tended to treat time principally as an element of the natural world and especially as a facet of metaphysical cosmology or material causation, the function of time in Cicero's ethical philosophy has often gone unnoticed.

Yet the importance of Cicero's writings for the development of an ancient philosophy of time is simply and abundantly evident in the definition of time that he provides in his first work of rhetorical theory—*de Inventione*, written when the author was only 22 years old in 84/3 BCE. Whether or not Cicero originated the neologism *aeternitas*,<sup>27</sup> his choice of this word not only marks the beginning of a lifelong engagement with the Greek philosophical tradition on time and

---

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Sedley 2012a: 195. On Cicero's treatment of the *logoi*, which he refers to as the *triplex ratio* (*Ac. Lib.* 1.19; *de Fin.* 5.9; *Tusc.* 5.68), see also Gawlick and Görler 1994; Schofield 2002. On the application of tripartite distinctions in Hellenistic philosophy generally, see e.g., Algra et al., eds 1999: xiii-xvi. For time treated specifically as a phenomenon of causation in physics, see Hankinson 1999: 497-98.

<sup>24</sup> On this historical trend more generally, see e.g., Foucault 1986; Schmid 1991; Sellars 2003.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., *de Fin.* 1.11, where Cicero's narrator defends his decision to write, to the exclusion of all other topics, about the central ethical question of Hellenistic philosophy—what is the "end" toward which all action is aimed. See also below, Ch. 4, section III.

<sup>26</sup> On "philosophical theology" as a form of inquiry in the metaphysical tradition of the Hellenistic schools, which aims to "rationalize the irrational," see Mansfeld 1999: 452-78.

<sup>27</sup> On this question, see esp. Luciani 2006: 9-14.

eternity, but also its entrance into common Latin usage.<sup>28</sup> By paraphrasing Plato's *Timaeus* in his definition of *tempus* as "a certain part of *aeternitas*,"<sup>29</sup> Cicero is flagging the depth of his engagement with the post-Platonic metaphysical distinction between αἰών and χρόνος. Furthermore, with a telling nod toward the future of his interest in the question of time, he urges his audience to understand that this definition is only situationally applicable—"I speak now only of present usage, for it is very difficult to define [time] in general" (*id quo nunc utimur, nam ipsum quidem generaliter definire difficile est*).<sup>30</sup> By thus translating the philosophical duality of time and eternity into Latin, Cicero's youthful foray into the debate establishes a starting point to which he will return again and again throughout his life and to which the entire Latinate philosophical tradition owes its articulation of these concepts.

The origins and influences of Cicero's formulation of *tempus* and *aeternitas* have received significant scholarly treatment in Sabine Luciani's monograph *Temps et Éternité dans l'Oeuvre Philosophique de Cicéron*. In this study, she argues that Cicero's dialogues, culminating in the *Tusculan Disputations*, are deeply engaged in the arguments concerning time and eternity familiar from Greek philosophy and, especially, seek to formulate an ethics in the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition that sees the potential for human life and action to "imitate

---

<sup>28</sup> Note that Nigidius' *sempiternus* articulates a similar concept to Cicero's *aeternitas* but emphasizes an alternate (non-Greek) etymological resonance. Cicero also rejects the more readily available archaic Latin cognate *aevum* and its related abstract noun *aevitas*, which had been preferred by previous philosophical authors (e.g., Lucretius, see below), using these forms only in quotation (*Brut.* 58; *Tusc.* 1.28) or in an imitation of archaic speech (*de Leg.* 3.7-9; *Hort.* fr. 110 G). The success of Cicero's choice of neologism transforms the way that these questions are treated in Latin. For the post-Ciceronian trajectory of *aeternitas*, esp. its incorporation as an aspect of Imperial ideology, see Charlesworth 1936; Étienne 1986; Balbuza 2014.

<sup>29</sup> See Pl. *Tim.* 37d-e, discussed just below.

<sup>30</sup> The context to which he is referring is an exhaustive definition of the aspects that make up the "performance of an action" (*in gestione negoti*, 38) in a forensic investigation, which includes also "place, manner, opportunity, and ability" (*locus, tempus, modus, occasio, facultas*).

eternity” (cf. *Tusc.* 5.70, *studium illius aeternitatem imitandi*). She contends, furthermore, that Cicero’s philosophical innovation lies in treating this relationship between time and eternity within a broader discussion of human life—beginning from human perception and experience rather than from metaphysical speculation.<sup>31</sup> She also proposes that the understanding of eternity at work in Cicero’s *philosophica* is not divorced from its Greek predecessors, but instead can be understood as a meeting between Platonic and Stoic theories. She claims that, by synthesizing the Platonic theory of metaphysical eternity and the Stoic notion of the eternally material present, Cicero’s ethical treatment argues in favor of the immanence of *aeternitas* in *tempus* through the mediation of the divinely immortal soul.<sup>32</sup>

According to a doctrinal interpretation of Platonic thought, only the forms are eternal. In the ontological creation story of the *Timaeus*,<sup>33</sup> the eponymous speaker recounts, “seeing that the Model (τὸ παράδειγμα) is an eternal Living Creature (ζῶον αἰδίου), the Father (ὁ πατήρ) set about making this Universe (τόδε τὸ πᾶν), so far as he could, of like kind. But inasmuch as the nature of the Living Creature was eternal (αἰώνιος), it was impossible to attach this quality in its

---

<sup>31</sup> She sees Cicero’s philosophy as a “transference” of the “problem of time” from the cosmological to the ethical discourses of philosophy, see, e.g., 2010: 18, “Dès lors, la problématique du temps se trouve transférée du plan cosmologique au plan éthique. Il ne s’agit pas tant de s’interroger sur la nature, l’origine ou le statut du temps que de mesurer les enjeux humains de la temporalité.” This interpretation is based in a tradition that contends that Cicero’s *philosophica* amount to a “humanization” of philosophy—that is, Cicero’s project, much like Plato’s Socratic dialogues before him, aims at every point to ground philosophical debate in the shared experiences of human life. This tradition begins in modernity with Montaigne (see esp. ch. xxxviii of his *First Essay*, “Of Solitude”) and Montesquieu (see his “Discourse on Cicero”) whose interest in Cicero as a model of humanistic philosophical inquiry has been furthered in 20th century scholarship by, e.g., Kretschmar 1938; Boyancé 1941, 1944, 1967; Görler 1990; Altman 2016.

<sup>32</sup> I draw from Luciani 2010 throughout the remainder of this section.

<sup>33</sup> As discussed above, Cicero was working on a translation of the *Timaeus* for his unfinished *de Universitate* between the completion of the *Ac. Lib.* and before *de Nat. De.* Fragments survive, on which, in addition to Sedley 2012a and Hoenig 2018: 38-101, see Lévy 2003 and Luciani 2010: esp. 214-222.

entirety to what is generated (τῷ γεννητῷ); therefore he planned to make a moveable image of eternity (εἰκὼ...κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος)...moving according to number (κατ' ἀριθμὸν), which we have named Time (χρόνον).”<sup>34</sup> In this allegory of the creation of the world, which serves as a touchstone for both ancient and modern debates about the nature of time, Eternity (αἰών) preexists and generates Time (χρόνος). The Platonic relationship between Eternity and Time, therefore, is one of model to material, idea to realization, being to becoming, motionlessness to movement. This theoretical construction is, of course, not without problems—most notably for the post-Platonic tradition concerning the nature of the soul.<sup>35</sup> In Timaeus’ account, the soul is simultaneously model and material; the form of existence and existence itself; possessed of eternity, but bound by time in its incarnation. This dual role given to ψυχή by Timaeus is symptomatic of the instances of doubling that characterize the opening of his speech in which everything—reason, god, heaven—must be created twice, first as model and then as generated matter.<sup>36</sup>

Timaeus’ account demonstrates a particular manifestation of this doubling as it relates to time. In his narrative, eternity (αἰών) exists in the atemporal being of the forms.<sup>37</sup> Yet, after the creation of time in the movement “according to number” of “days and nights and months and

---

<sup>34</sup> *Tim.* 37d-e. Trans. here and throughout for the *Timaeus* adapted from Bury.

<sup>35</sup> See further below, Ch. 3, section III. For Cicero’s catalogue of ancient philosophical theories concerning the nature of the soul see *Tusc.* 1.18-25.

<sup>36</sup> Of course, it is even more complicated since, according to the Principle of the Triad that Timaeus lays out at 31a, “it is not possible that two things alone should be conjoined without a third; for there must be some intermediary bond to connect the two.” This principle helps Timaeus to explain the refractive way in which the originary “Living Creature” exists as model, generated realization, *and* all-encompassing unity. See also on the “receptacle” as the “third kind,” below, Ch. 2, section V.

<sup>37</sup> This is not an uncontroversial reading of this deeply complex and contested passage. I follow Luciani’s account of the *Timaeus* here (starting esp. at 2010: 199), which is largely based on Degani 1961, Ramelli and Konstan 2007, and O’Brien 1995.

years, which existed not before the cosmos came into being,”<sup>38</sup> eternity persists in a logical dilemma: “For we say that ‘is’ or ‘was’ or ‘will be,’ whereas, in truth of speech, ‘is’ alone is the appropriate term [for Eternal Being]; ‘was’ and ‘will be,’ on the other hand, are terms properly applicable to the becoming which proceeds in time, since both of these are motions; but it belongs not to that which is ever changeless in its uniformity to become either older or younger through time.”<sup>39</sup> As such, “was” and “shall be” properly describe the conditions of becoming, whereas “is”—not the present tense, but rather an existential, tenseless presentness—truthfully relates the changelessness and uniformity of Eternal Being.<sup>40</sup> Platonic eternity, therefore, exists as being outside of time, yet simultaneously as a logico-grammatical puncture in the heart of becoming; a property of the atemporal model as well as an aspect of tenseless presentness.

The Stoics respond to the dilemma that this doubling of eternity poses in their theorization of eternity. In Stoic physics, the Platonic relationship between eternal model and the material of becoming is replaced by a thoroughly material explanation of the creation and destruction of the cosmos by *ekpurōsis*. The Stoics produce a unitary construction of time, which, nevertheless, is composed of antitheses that accommodate aspects of the metaphysical duality of Platonic time: as Luciani puts it, for the Stoics, “le temps est à la fois un et multiple,

---

<sup>38</sup> ἡμέρας γὰρ καὶ νύκτας καὶ μῆνας καὶ ἐνιαυτούς οὐκ ὄντας πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι, 37e.

<sup>39</sup> λέγομεν γὰρ δὴ ὡς ἦν ἔστι τε καὶ ἔσται, τῆ δὲ τὸ ἔστι μόνον κατὰ τὸν ἀληθῆ λόγον προσήκει, τὸ δὲ ἦν τό τ’ ἔσται περὶ τὴν ἐν χρόνῳ γένεσιν ἰοῦσαν πρέπει λέγεσθαι· κινήσεις γὰρ ἔστων, τὸ δὲ αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχον ἀκινήτως οὔτε πρεσβύτερον οὔτε νεώτερον προσήκει γίγνεσθαι διὰ χρόνου..., 37e-38a.

<sup>40</sup> On the nature of the “is” in this passage, see esp. Tarán 1979: 45, “In the *Timaeus* atemporal eternity is expressed by the timeless and tenseless ‘is’. It is a mode of being radically different from perpetual duration. The model of the universe, the general idea of animal and its four sub classes, is eternal because it is atemporal and immutable. By implication all ideas are eternal. Plato’s tenseless ‘is’ (*Tim.* 37 E 6), however, is existential, not copulative.”



limité et infini, périodique et cyclique.”<sup>41</sup> In the clearest ancient testimony on the subject, Stobaeus, quoting Arius Didymus, records that Chrysippus defines time (χρόνος) as an “interval of the movement of the cosmos” (τῆς [τοῦ κόσμου] κινήσεως διάστημα). The report continues with a passage that seems to refer directly to *Timaeus* 37d-e:

Μόνον δ' ὑπάρχειν φησὶ τὸν ἐνεστῶτα, τὸν δὲ παρωχημένον καὶ τὸν μέλλοντα ὑφεστάναι μὲν, ὑπάρχειν δὲ οὐδαμῶς φησιν,<sup>42</sup> ὡς καὶ κατηγορήματα ὑπάρχειν λέγεται μόνα τὰ συμβεβηκότα, οἷον τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑπάρχει μοι ὅτε περιπατῶ, ὅτε δὲ κατακέκλιμαι ἢ κάθημαι οὐχ ὑπάρχει.

[Chrysippus] argues further that only the present exists; the past and future *subsist*, but, according to him, do not exist at all. Similarly only those predicates which have come to be actual are said to be real. For example, walking around exists for me (or: is real in my case) while I am walking around, but when I am lying down or sitting, it does not exist.<sup>43</sup>

Chrysippus realizes *in materia* the grammatico-logical argument of the *Timaeus*. While “only the present exists (ὑπάρχειν),” this existence is achieved through the *subsistence* of past and future (ὑφεστάναι).<sup>44</sup> The present is only arrived at through a limiting process of convergence, whereby the overlapping sequence of temporal intervals “having been” and “about to be” shrinks infinitely toward the mathematical “Now.”<sup>45</sup> Yet, in the same way that predication in language describes the truth of an action like “walking” only when the subject is, in fact, walking, the only time that has a similar predicative truth-value is this vanishingly infinite duration that we call, however imprecisely, the “present.” Thus, the Stoics posit, the only true, i.e., predicative,

---

<sup>41</sup> 2010: 236.

<sup>42</sup> Φησιν conj. v. Armin; ms.: εἰσιν.

<sup>43</sup> See Stob. I.106,5-23 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.304 (51B).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. somewhat more explicitly, the polemical account at Plut. *de Comm. Not.*, 1081F = Long and Sedley 1987: i.304-5 (51C), citing Chrysippus, “one part of the present time is future and the other past.”

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Sambursky 1956: 151, “The present is thus given by an infinite sequence of nested time intervals shrinking towards the mathematical ‘now,’ and it is therefore to be regarded as a duration of only indistinctly defined boundaries whose fringes cover the immediate past and future.”

temporality is this eternal present.<sup>46</sup> Stoic eternity is thus not the divine atemporality of the Platonic Demiurge, but rather the omni-temporal infinity of the present.<sup>47</sup>

Luciani understands Cicero's *aeternitas* as a synthesis between these two ancient theories of eternity—Platonic and Stoic. In her reading, “Cicéron élabore une délicate synthèse entre l'éternité cosmique...des stoïciens, d'une part, et l'éternité transcendante et métaphysique posée par Platon, d'autre part. Faisant de l'âme un *medium* entre deux éternités, il explicite indirectement la distinction platonicienne entre temps et l'éternité.”<sup>48</sup> For Luciani, Cicero's isolation of *aeternitas* as a distinct articulation allows for him to conceive of a direct connection between the atemporal eternity of the Platonic αἰών and the omnitemporal infinity of the Stoics' cosmic present. The Stoic's infinite present realizes the implications of Plato's eternity within cosmic time—a realization that Cicero can simply refer to as *aeternitas*. The soul, then, is eternal in both senses: immortal because of its connection to the divine atemporality of αἰών, but existing in the omnitemporal present of Stoic time. Luciani thus argues that, by embracing the

---

<sup>46</sup> See esp. Goldschmidt 1979: 43, who comments on this passage from Stobaeus, “L'originalité de la théorie stoïcienne est d'interpréter ce 'est' éternel et immuable dans un sens temporel, et de le concevoir comme 'présent' pendant toute la durée, si l'on peut dire, de l'acte qui le définit...[D]ans le stoïcisme, la temporalisation de 'éternité' ou, si l'on préfère, le privilège accordé au présent d'être un temps et de concentrer cependant en lui l'achèvement et la perfection que le platonisme avait réservés à l'éternité, vont pouvoir s'étendre au passé et à l'avenir. Au lieu de n'être 'que des changements,' passé et futur sont résorbés dans le présent total de la période cosmique et, en ce sens, on peut dire avec Apollodore, que 'le temps dans son ensemble est présent.'”

<sup>47</sup> In keeping with their materialist metaphysics, the Stoics deny the Platonic immortality of the soul; yet, at the same time, they argue—uniquely among ancient philosophical systems—that some souls may survive for a limited period after the death of the body. Due to their materiality, as “breath characterized by tensile motion,” the souls of the wise attain a strength and consistency through which they persist, not retaining their individuality, but elementally “in the region below the moon...like the other stars” (Sext Emp. *M.* 9.73 = *SVF* II.812, ἔσκηνοι γοῦν ἡλίου γενόμενοι τὸν ὑπὸ σελήνην οἰκοῦσι τόπον, ἐνθάδε τε διὰ τὴν εἰλικρίνειαν τοῦ ἀέρος πλείονα πρὸς διαμονὴν λαμβάνουσι χρόνον, τροφῆ τε χρῶνται οἰκεία τῆ ἀπὸ γῆς ἀναθυμιάσει ὡς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἄστρα). On the material nature of the Stoic soul, see Long and Sedley 1987: i.320-321 on 53G 1-5 cf. 47Q-R.

<sup>48</sup> Luciani 2010: 382.

soul's immortality, Cicero's thought inscribes an aspect of eternity onto the immediate experiences that define a human life: death, grief, emotion, ethical action, duty, virtue, and happiness.<sup>49</sup> The inscription of the eternity of the soul onto these shared human experiences offers a way of thinking—in fact, a “moral pratique”—about how life should be lived as an “imitation of eternity” (*studium illius aeternitatem imitandi*).<sup>50</sup> Luciani thus argues that Cicero's philosophy is fundamentally concerned with tracing the consequences of *aeternitas* for human life.

Yet I see that Luciani's analysis opens the way for a further, decidedly less lofty, inquiry into Cicero's dialogues particularly concerning the nature of human temporality. Rather than approaching Cicero's treatment of time from the perspective of *aeternitas*, I think that his philosophical language and interest establishes the grounds for a more thoroughly human understanding of time. In Greek philosophical language, a relationship between eternity and human time is evident at a semantic level: αἰών, the word with which Timaeus refers to the eternity of the forms, means more readily, “a lifetime,” “a generation,” or an “epoch.”<sup>51</sup> The sense that the word comes to possess in the *Timaeus* is produced by active philosophical

---

<sup>49</sup> See esp., *ibid.*: 223, “Il est apparu que Cicéron, tout en adoptant sur l'âme l'hypothèse platonicienne, tendait à l'inscrire dans une conception immanente du monde. Cette position l'a conduit à considérer l'éternité, en tant que capacité à résister éternellement à la mort, comme un attribut de l'âme.” For my perspective on Cicero's defense of the immortality of the soul, which differs significantly from Luciani's, see also below Ch. 3.

<sup>50</sup> See *Tusc.* 5.70; cf. *Tim.* 6 and 34 with Luciani 2010: 387-88. And see below, Ch. 4, section IV for the Aristotelian and Platonic influences of this formulation.

<sup>51</sup> This association is not uncontested. See, e.g., Benvéniste 1937 who proposes that the underlying sense of αἰών is not durative but pertains to “l'idée de force vitale.” Opposing this hypothesis in favor of the durative sense offered here, see Degani 1961 and Festugière 1971. I generally accept the durative sense, which I explore in more detail below.

argumentation and through its opposition to χρόνος.<sup>52</sup> Thus, as I discuss further below, when Cicero formulates his translation of the Timaeian definition of time using the neologism *aeternitas*, he leaves behind in Latin a lexical remnant: *aetas*.<sup>53</sup> Cicero’s neologism, in fact, carefully *disentangles* the conflation of senses within the Greek αἰών in order to establish a clearer opposition between *tempus* and *aeternitas*.<sup>54</sup> For Luciani, it is precisely this clear demarcation that allows Cicero to formulate the synthesis of Stoic and Platonic theories of eternity with the divinely human soul at its center: “*aeternitas* désigne tour à tour un attribut du cosmos, un attribut de l’âme humaine et un attribut de l’être.”<sup>55</sup>

Luciani’s project, in part because of its focus on the *Tusculans*, considers primarily those places where Cicero more or less explicitly discusses the relationship between eternity and time. If, however, we pursue the premise that Cicero’s philosophy is an “ethicization” or, even more strongly, a “humanization” of philosophy, it follows that his philosophical interest in human time should enable other readings that are not based exclusively on the development of the duality of Greek physics: *tempus* and *aeternitas*. Even in Cicero’s youthful configuration of the problem in

---

<sup>52</sup> Elsewhere in classical Greek, it is more common to speak of an αἰών as a period of χρόνος (see, e.g., Aeschyl. *Ag.* 554) or even as the *child* of χρόνος (Eurip. *Heracl.* 900).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Varro’s discussion of the etymological roots of *aevum* where he uses *aetas* to denote the “duration of all the years” as the conceptual link between temporality and eternity properly: *LL* 6.11, “*Aevum* ‘eternity,’ from an *aetas* ‘period’ of all the years (from this comes *aeviternum*, which has become *aeternum* ‘eternal’): which the Greeks call an αἰών—Chrysippus says that this is <ᾗ>ε<ῖ> ὄν ‘always existing’” (*Aevum ab aetate omnium annorum [hinc aeviternum, quod factum est aeternum]: quod Graeci αἰῶνα, id ait Chrysippus esse [ᾗ]ε[ῖ] ὄν*). This passage is discussed by Luciani 2006: 11-13.

<sup>54</sup> See Luciani 2006: 13-14, “Il semble donc que l’utilisation d’*aeternitas* par Cicéron implique une aspiration vers l’abstraction et la volonté de distinguer nettement la notion générale de temps de l’expérience humaine. Désireux de donner une définition concise du temps humain qui corresponde à l’usage courant et soit utilisable par l’orateur, Cicéron le distingue du *tempus generale*, qu’il désigne par le néologisme *aeternitas*. Mais ce faisant, il établit une identification pour le moins problématique, qui renvoie à la question des rapports entre αἰών et χρόνος dans la tradition philosophique.”

<sup>55</sup> 2010: 242. See also Luciani 2006.

*de Inventione*, he indicates clearly that if we hope to understand time better, we must look not just to its metaphysical relation with *aeternitas* but also to its “outward appearance in the span of years, months, days, or nights” (*cum alicuius annui, menstrui, diurni nocturnive spatii certa significatione*). Rather than embracing the perspective of *aeternitas*, as Luciani does, I thus propose to examine the ways in which Cicero’s *philosophica* engage more directly with the complexities of *human* temporality, especially as our understanding of time is influenced and given character by the experiences of life.

In this dissertation, therefore, I offer readings of Cicero’s dialogues that take as their starting point Luciani’s proposition that his philosophy is concerned fundamentally with “les enjeux humains de la temporalité”<sup>56</sup>; but, I demonstrate that this philosophical concern can and should be used to elucidate other objects of Ciceronian inquiry. The guiding questions of my project are thus: what are the common human experiences that possess a privileged relationship to the perception and conceptualization of time? Can a certain experience alter the way individuals conceive of their temporal existence? How does philosophy, understood broadly as series of investigations into being and becoming, intervene in order to clarify or transform humanity’s relation to the temporal strata in which it exists? These are the questions that I have formulated for myself in reading the dialogues and traditions of their interpretation. But I also pose these questions in an attempt to understand how Cicero’s own experiences of the *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum* came to be reflected and addressed in his philosophy. Before surveying the four experiential categories—solitude, doubt, grief, and failure—that will structure my engagement with Cicero’s texts, first it is instructive to examine more closely the

---

<sup>56</sup> 2010: 18.

two primary concepts with which Cicero articulates humanity's temporal existence: *vita* and *aetas*.

### III. The Lifetime or the Time of Life?

Turning now to consider the conceptual grounds of my own project, in this section, I argue that the inquiry into the temporal strata of human being evident in Cicero's texts takes shape not only in relation to the theorization of eternity, but also with regard to the Greek tradition of the "life" or "lifetime" (βίος) as a central ethical category. By definitively distinguishing *aetas* from *aeternitas*, Cicero's philosophical language opens up a new avenue for thought on the unique formation of human time. As I examine throughout the chapters that follow, this new line of inquiry frequently considers and problematizes the relationship between the qualitative and ethical structure of the *vita* and the temporal accumulation of the *aetas* as two distinct modes of articulating humanity's temporal existence.

As we have seen, the operative conceptual duality for the Greek metaphysics of time was formed by αἰών as an extracosmic, limitless notion of time in opposition to the finite cosmic sequence of χρόνος.<sup>57</sup> This duality, however, was never static.<sup>58</sup> A particular source of continuing argument was the apparent inconsistency between the primary sense of αἰών as a durative "period of existence," which possesses a beginning and end, and the philosophical attribution to the concept of an ideal and unending "eternity." Aristotle influentially reconciles these different meanings of αἰών by ascribing to the First Mover the qualities of an unending life, "since both life and a continuously unending span of existence belong to god: for god is thus"

---

<sup>57</sup> In addition to the clearest statement from classical philosophy at *Tim.* 37d (discussed above), cf. Parm. fr. 8.5; Arist. *de Cael.* I, 279a; Plot. *Enn.* III.7.4.

<sup>58</sup> On the long and fractious history of the meanings of αἰών, see also Keizer 2010.

(φαμέν δὴ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῶον αἰδίων ἄριστον, ὥστε ζωὴ καὶ αἰὼν συνεχῆς καὶ αἰδῖος ὑπάρχει τῷ θεῷ· τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ θεός, *Metaphys.* XII.7[1072b]). Aristotle clarifies Platonic metaphysical time by affirming αἰὼν as an *eternal* “period of existence,” concomitant with the life of the θεός, which can more readily be compared with humanity’s impermanent duration in χρόνος.<sup>59</sup> Understood in this way, an αἰὼν is always conceived of as a durative “timespan,” which can either be quantified and subjected to generation and demise, as in the case of human experience, or which remains innumerable and without origin or end, as for First Mover. The human “time of life” thus attains its characteristic quality through analogy to the divine ideal: the only difference is constituted by quantification.

This metaphysical tradition was counterpoised by an alternate line of thought, such as made evident in Epicureanism, that rejected any ontological or metaphysical status for human time as established via the Aristotelian-Platonic concept of αἰὼν or even through the material infinity of the Stoics’ eternal present. In Epicurean physics, the constant movement of atoms produces an infinite number of possible worlds—all of them free from any teleological terminus or intervention from god.<sup>60</sup> As a consequence, time is simply a symptom of the movement or actions of bodies, which is made evident through perception and measurement. Epicurus

---

<sup>59</sup> Cf. earlier in the same passage, where Aristotle likens the divine way of life—the activity of immobility (ἐνέργεια ἀκινήσιας, *Eth. Nic.* 1154b) in contemplation that affords an eternal pleasure—with “the best which we may enjoy only in a short time” (διαγωγὴ δ’ ἐστὶν οἷα ἡ ἀρίστη μικρὸν χρόνον ἡμῖν. οὕτω γὰρ αἰεὶ ἐκεῖνο [ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ἀδύνατον], *Metaph.* 1072b). This metaphysical reconciliation between αἰὼν and χρόνος in the figure of the First Mover is of obvious importance to the history of Platonic and theological temporalities: see, e.g., Brown 1959: 96, “Aristotle succeeds in formulating philosophically the notion which also underlies the Christian theology of time—that time is relative to Becoming rather than Being, and Becoming is relative to imperfection...[H]is notion of activity that is motionless and in eternity may...formulate the abstract formal characteristics of perfection.” On the Aristotelian relationship between contemplation, pleasure, and the consummation of life, see Ch. 4, section III.i.

<sup>60</sup> For the constant movement of atoms in Epicurean physics, see, e.g., *Ep. ad Herod.* 43-4, Lucr. 2.80-124; Long and Sedley 1987: i.46-52 (11); and for its connection to infinite worlds and a view of world-formation that lacks direction or telos, see *Ep. ad Herod.* 45, Lucr. 2.1052-1104; Long and Sedley 1987: i.57-65 (13).

explicitly denies the need to “search for better descriptions of time” (καὶ οὔτε διαλέκτους ὡς βελτίους μεταληπτέον, *Ep. ad Herod.*, 72 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.33-34 [7B]; trans. Geer). Instead, he proposes that the nature of time is to be sought exclusively in the conventional means by which humans perceive and measure time in “days and nights and their parts, and in the same way with changes in our own feelings and with motion and rest, recognizing that the very thing that we call time is in its turn a special sort of accident of these accidents” (ὅτι ταῖς ἡμέραις καὶ ταῖς νυξὶ συμπλέκομεν, καὶ τοῖς τούτων μέρεσιν, ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τοῖς πάθεσι καὶ ταῖς ἀπαθείαις, καὶ κινήσεσι καὶ στάσεσιν, ἴδιόν τι σύμπτωμα, περὶ ταῦτα πάλιν αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐννοοῦντες, καθ’ ὃ χρόνον ὀνομάζομεν, *ibid.* 73a). According to this Epicurean position, then, time exists solely in the human perception of movement and the measurement of changes in the phenomena of real bodies that make up worlds.<sup>61</sup> For the Epicurean, therefore, it would be illegitimate to assign any ontological status to time, certainly from the human perspective, beyond the “accidence” of accidents.<sup>62</sup>

When Cicero intervenes in this debate, beginning first with the definition from *de Inventione* and playing out over the course of his lifelong oeuvre, he seems at first, as Luciani amply demonstrates, to simplify its core duality. By establishing *aeternitas* as an independent concept, Cicero’s use of this neologism erases the need for Aristotle’s metaphysical reconciliation of the senses of αἰών: his semantic incision effectively removes the meaning of “a

---

<sup>61</sup> As we saw above, the idea of χρόνος as the measurement of movement is familiar from both the Platonic-Aristotelian and Stoic traditions. But, unlike these traditions, Epicurus does not seek to reconcile this cosmic ἀριθμός with a metaphysical substance of eternity (αἰών).

<sup>62</sup> See Long and Sedley 1987: i.37 (on 5b), “Time is a special case..., being discernible not in bodies themselves but in certain of bodies’ accidents, typically motion and rest. Paradoxically, it is something self-evident, yet can only be understood by ‘analogical reasoning’—first drawing directly on experience to collect an appropriate set of accidents, then abstracting time as the common measure of them all... Since it depends for its existence on the bodies whose motion etc. it measures, it certainly cannot exist *per se*.”



lifespan” from the ideal of eternity. For Cicero, *aeternitas* describes exclusively the metaphysical substance of divine, infinite time without reference to a durative structure or “age.” Likewise, *tempus* refers simply to the sequences of cosmic time, as measured in the “outward appearance (*significatione*) in the span of years, months, days, or nights.” Yet, as a by-product of this distinction, which clarifies the relation between *aeternitas* and *tempus*, the question arises: what to do with the *aetas*? Through this lexical division, Cicero’s philosophy can approach the time of life as a form of temporal existence that is distinct for humanity—a unique accumulation or sedimentation of time, yet one that cannot be reduced to simple accident or enumeration because of its particular durative quality, its material effects on our biological nature, and the influence of its unknowable quantity on our perception of ourselves and the world.<sup>63</sup> Human time conceived thus cannot be defined, like the Epicurean notion of time, exclusively through the measurement of the behavior of bodies; likewise, as a distinctly durative temporal form, it also cannot be transmuted by analogy into the time of divine eternity: instead, the *aetas* both possesses its own ontological status, which, however, can only be described and accessed through human experience.<sup>64</sup>

Cicero’s isolation of *aetas* as an articulation of human time thus enables the creation of a new and more explicit duality in relation to the qualitative structure of human life, which in the

---

<sup>63</sup> I discuss the importance of *aetas* esp. in Ch. 1, section V with respect to *de Finibus*; Ch. 3, section III for the *Tusculans*; and Ch. 4, sections I, IV-V for Cicero’s thought in general and esp. in *de Sen*.

<sup>64</sup> It should be stressed that this dissertation is not exclusively about Cicero’s use of the word *aetas*, nor am I always concerned primarily with the relationship between *vita* and *aetas* that I outline here. My purpose in introducing these concepts is to establish the grounds on which my examination of “experience” can be built. The independence of *aetas* as an available concept for human time in Cicero’s philosophical language and thought helps to support my interest in the temporal aspects of the particular experiences—solitude, doubt, grief, and failure—on which my chapters are focused.

Greek tradition is primarily referred to as βίος, and in Latin as *vita*.<sup>65</sup> Of the many argumentative threads that weave through Plato’s *Republic*, for instance, the primary ethical trajectory begins from a question about how to select the best “course for a whole life” (ὅλου βίου διαγωγήν, 344d), which leads to a complex description of the βίοι that would populate the ideal *polis* as a social unit.<sup>66</sup> As a philosophical category, a βίος is founded on “a particular desiderative orientation,” which allows those who study and practice ethics to *live*—to perceive, desire, act, and think—in a purposeful and intentional way.<sup>67</sup> As Sara Brill puts it, “If part of the work of philosophy is to make life appear as an object of thought and choice...the question then is how to inspire contemplation of *bios*, how to overcome the impediments to doing so found in the unexpressed, tacit assumptions even the most philosophically inclined people have about the character and worth of their own lives.”<sup>68</sup> Within the post-Platonic ethical tradition, therefore, the study of βίοι is essential to the primary questions of philosophy: how to know oneself, how best to live with respect to one’s own capacities, and how to apply those capacities in the context of human society.

Aristotle preserves the central role that βίος plays as an ethical category, but also strengthens its relationship to creaturely life (ζωή).<sup>69</sup> As a “way of life,” Aristotle’s βίος

---

<sup>65</sup> For the collocation of *aetas* and *vita* in the ethical dialogues, see *de Fin.* 2.87, 3.76; *Tusc.* 1.94 (discussed below), 3.69, cf. 5.70; *de Sen.* 9, 76-7, 82; *de Am.* 87, 101. Cf. from the letters, e.g., *ad Fam.* VI.4, X.1; and from the theological works, see *de Nat. De.* 1.50-1, 1.66; *de Div.* 1.17.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. the four “lives” discussed at *Laws* 733d-734e. On this aspect of the *Republic*, see, e.g., Rutherford 1995: 218-27 and Weiss 2012.

<sup>67</sup> Brill 2016: 12.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> The relationship between these concepts in Aristotle’s corpus is a complex and well-studied topic both in classical scholarship and in contemporary thought: for the former, see, e.g., Cooper 1975: esp. 159-160 for the argument that βίος always refers to a “way of life,” with Keyt 1978: 8 for a refinement of the

describes how the manner in which an animal interacts with its environment demands a specific internal “coordination among its parts and activities.”<sup>70</sup> In this biological sense, a “way of life” is one of several differentiating factors that determine the essential identity of a species.<sup>71</sup> Beyond this descriptive role, as James Lennox argues, βίος plays an even more important part in the conceptual construction of Aristotelian biology because it is through this category that his thought grasps “the underlying unity in organic complexity.”<sup>72</sup> In the Aristotelian corpus, therefore, the biological sense of βίος can easily be conjoined with the ethical, as Aristotle confirms ethics as the study of the *human* “way of life”—i.e., the “underlying unity in organic complexity” that is particular to humanity. As a differentiating factor and an explanatory category, βίος thus comes to be associated both with an essentialist view of organismic life and, especially within the context of ethical philosophy, the range of activities that can be developed and sustained upon this underlying stratum of biological complexity for the human animal.<sup>73</sup>

In post-Aristotelian Hellenistic philosophy, this biological-*cum*-ethical βίος attains the status of an “art” or a “discipline.” Cicero, in fact, provides one of the earliest attested formulations of this purpose for philosophy in the peroration to Torquatus’ speech in *de Finibus*. Responding to the Ciceronian speaker’s disdain for Epicurus’ rejection of conventional education, Torquatus urges his audience to understand that the great teacher of the Garden “did

---

point. For a critical perspective on the latter, especially with regard to Giorgio Agamben’s controversial application of the Aristotelian categories, see Finlayson 2010. On the *bios praktikos* and *theoretikos* specifically, see, e.g., DeHart 1995 and Bénatouïl and Bonazzi 2012; see also below, Ch. 4.

<sup>70</sup> Lennox 2010: 352.

<sup>71</sup> On this specifically biological understanding, see Lennox 2009 and 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Lennox 2010: 351-52.

<sup>73</sup> On the nature of Aristotle’s biological “essentialism” evident in this definition, see Charles 2000 with Lennox 2010: 329-33.

not value any erudition except that which aided the art of a happy life” (*qui quod tibi parum videtur eruditus, ea causa est quod nullam eruditionem esse duxit nisi quae beatae vitae disciplinam iuaret, de Fin. 1.71*).<sup>74</sup> This *disciplina vitae* or τέχνη περὶ τὸν βίον comes to describe the goal of Hellenistic ethics—to bring philosophical inquiry to bear on the living of a life (βίος / *vita*) and to shape philosophy as an art, discipline, and practice that would enable those who pursue a *bios philosophikos* to live the happiest and most authentically human form of life possible.<sup>75</sup>

Although certainly not absent from these biological and ethical treatments of the βίος, the temporality of life is approached usually as an organizing feature or delimiting factor in the Greek tradition.<sup>76</sup> It is true that the human “way of life” must be discerned through the activities and pursuits in which an individual “spends his time” in the same manner that Aristotle describes how a “flat-beaked bird” is well-suited to pass its days eating plants in a swampy environment.<sup>77</sup> Time affords structure and sequence to the capacities and activities that shape an individual’s βίος. Similarly, time may be understood to be a delimiting or determining factor, produced, for

---

<sup>74</sup> On the attestation of this turn of phrase, see Schmid 1991: 25-32, 58-68; Sellars 2003.

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., Diog. Laert. 7.87-9 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.395 (63C; a report on the contents of Chrysippus’ *On Ends*), “Therefore, living in agreement with nature comes to be the end [of happiness], which is in accordance with the nature of oneself and that of the whole...The nature consequential upon which one ought to live is taken by Chrysippus to be both the common and, particularly, the human.” This, of course, was not an uncontentious position even among Stoics (e.g., Diogenes continues, “Cleanthes admits only the common nature...”); but, in support of Chrysippus’ definition, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 76.9-10 and Epict. *Disc.* 1.6.

<sup>76</sup> On the difficulty of understanding the post-Aristotelian βίος as a temporal category, see, e.g., on Aristotle’s claim that happiness requires a *bios teleios* (*Eth. Nic.* 1098a), Irwin 1985: 104-6 with Farwell 1995. See also below, Ch. 4, section III.i.

<sup>77</sup> Arist. *PA* 693a, “Those [birds] whose life is spent in swamps and are herbivorous have broad beaks, which are useful for digging and pulling up their food and for cropping plants” (ὄσων δ’ ἔλειος ὁ βίος καὶ ποοφάγος, πλατὸν τὸ ῥύγχος ἔχουσιν· πρὸς τε γὰρ τὴν ὄρυξιν χρήσιμον τὸ τοιοῦτον καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῆς τροφῆς σπάσιν καὶ κουράν, trans. Forster).

instance, by the features of our biology. A summation of this approach to the lifetime is found, for instance, in Aristotle’s study, “On the Length and Shortness of Life,”<sup>78</sup> which searches for the zoological and environmental αἰτίαι that dictate the relative longevity of different forms of animal life.<sup>79</sup> Thus, while a “way of life” is a configuration of features and activities that importantly take place *in time*, the βίος itself is not a temporal category properly, but a circumscription of biological possibility and ethical purpose.

As Hellenistic philosophy—and Epicureanism in particular—was incorporated into Latin language and culture, however, the role that time plays in ethics becomes more pronounced.<sup>80</sup> In Lucretius, we can see how translation into Latin reiterates and transforms the central debates of the Greek philosophy of time, especially as it relates to human life. Drawing both on the semantic resources of Latin and the conceptual basis offered by Epicurean physics, Lucretius formulates a philosophical vocabulary that sets the stage for Cicero’s own intervention. To take a representative passage, Lucretius concludes his third book on the nature and mortality of the soul with a summation of arguments on why we should not fear death and, in particular, why craving long life is a mistake.<sup>81</sup> A man who desires only to keep living—to persist in the repetitious and anxiety-driven pursuits that keep him “fleeing from himself” (*se quisque...fugit*, 1068)—is

---

<sup>78</sup> Περὶ μακροβιότητος καὶ βραχυβιότητος, part of the “Parva Naturalia.”

<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., on why larger animals live longer because they contain more moisture: “there are two causes, quantity and quality, so that the moisture must not only be present in quantity, but this must also be hot, in order that it may not easily be either frozen or dried” (δύο γὰρ τὰ αἴτια, τό τε ποσὸν καὶ τὸ ποιόν, ὥστε δεῖ μὴ μόνον πλῆθος εἶναι ὑγροῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο καὶ θερμόν, ἵνα μήτε εὐπηκτον μήτε εὐξηραντον ᾗ, 466a; trans. Hett).

<sup>80</sup> On the role played by time in Epicurean ethics more generally, see esp. Warren 2009: 242-48.

<sup>81</sup> On the Epicurean basis of this Lucretian argument, see *KD* 19-21. Cf. Warren 2004: esp. 57-108, who discusses the possibility of a “Timeless” subjectivity in Epicureanism, i.e., one that is not invested in its own futurity.



is a site of struggle against “the great and evil lust of life that drives us” (*quae mala nos subigit vitae tanta cupido*, 1077), which always leaves us with an “unchanging thirst of life and with our mouths always agape” (*et sitis aequa tenet vitae semper hiantis*, 1084). As the only true remedy for this excruciatingly repetitious and insatiable lust for more life, Lucretius recommends dedicating ourselves to study of the “nature of things” (*naturam primum studeat cognoscere rerum*, 1072). Such a dedication to (Epicurean) philosophy will allow us to understand that we should be concerned not with “our state for just one hour but for eternal time, in which condition all time that remains after death must be passed for mortals” (*temporis aeterni quoniam, non unius horae, / ambigitur status, in quo sit mortalibus omnis / aetas, post mortem quae restat cumque, manenda*, 1073-75). The nature of human life (*vita*) is thus to be understood in relation to death (*mors*)—a death that is emphatically conceived of as eternal (*temporis aeterni*).

Playing on the shared etymology available in Latin between *aetas* and the adjective *aeternum*, Lucretius gestures to the Greek metaphysical unity between these two concepts in αἰών and juxtaposes them to the finite existence accessible to humanity. As the “all time that remains after death” (*omnis aetas, post mortem quae restat*), Lucretius’ understanding of *aetas* is thoroughly opposed to the limited span of human life.<sup>83</sup> Although a human life must take place in time (*aetas*), this temporal embodiment can bring only uncertainty, the whims of chance, and an unknown outcome (*posteraque in dubios fortunam quam vehat aetas, / quidve ferat nobis casus quive exitus instet*, 1085-86). The infinite time of death (*mors aeterna*, 1091), in fact, demonstrates the baselessness of thinking about the *vita* as a principally temporal concept: “by extending life we do not deduct one iota from the time of death” (*nec prorsum vitam ducendo*

---

<sup>83</sup> Elsewhere, Lucretius simply uses the Latin cognate, *aevum / aevom*, to communicate the ontological primacy of this eternal time, see e.g., 1.45, 460; 2.647, etc. Note again that Cicero rejects this archaic Latin word in favor of the neologism *aeternitas*; see above, n.28 and n.53.

*demimus hilum / tempore de mortis*, 1087-88). In the face of the temporal primacy of the *aetas* that belongs ultimately to *mors aeterna*,<sup>84</sup> the *vita* lacks any temporal existence that is proper to itself—it is completely without extent or duration in comparison to the reality of *omnis aetas*: “Therefore you may live to complete as many generations (*saecula*) as you want: nevertheless that eternal death (*mors aeterna*) will still be waiting, and no less long a time will he not-be, who has made an end of life from the light of today, than he who fell many a month and year before” (*nec minus ille diu iam non erit, ex hodierno / lumine qui finem vitae fecit, et ille / mensibus atque annis qui multis occidit ante*, 1090-94). “Generations” (*saecula*) fall away and human time collapses so that there is no difference between dying at this moment or countless months and years before. By translating these Epicurean precepts, therefore, Lucretius conceives of the *vita* as a site of ethical possibility—i.e., for liberation from fear of death and the attainment of pleasure—conditioned by and subjected to an eternal time (*aetas*), rather than constituted as itself a form of temporality. Furthermore, by firmly locating the association between *aetas* and eternity in death beyond the realm of human experience, Lucretius translate into Latin the core duality of the Greek philosophical tradition in deeply antagonistic terms. Time, which is conceived as the *aetas* that belongs only to *mors aeterna*, opposes vividly the ethical structure of the human *vita*.

As is made clear in the chapters that follow, Cicero’s philosophy transforms the ways in which *vita* and *aetas* interact as two distinct conceptions of human time. This interaction is enabled and clarified by the separation in his thought of *aeternitas* from *aetas*.<sup>85</sup> By this separation, *aetas* is transferred from its antagonistic position in Lucretius’ formulation as the

---

<sup>84</sup> Cf. 1.233, *infinita aetas* with Berns 1976: 478-80.

<sup>85</sup> Unlike Lucretius, for instance, Cicero never modifies *aetas* with *infinita* or *aeterna*.



infinite time of death to offer a more productive and positive framing for humanity's relationship to time. For Cicero, human time possesses a definitive shape and finite structure, but also progresses elementally in a series that lacks predictability and a graspable endpoint from the perspective of the present.<sup>86</sup> While these two modes can be roughly ascribed to Cicero's use of *vita* and *aetas*, it is more precisely through the dynamic interaction of this duality that his philosophy communicates human temporality.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, and more importantly for the specific arguments of this dissertation, the value of his philosophy for the question of temporality lies less in his explicit discussion of these concepts than in the ways that his dialogues use common experiences and skeptical argumentation in order to arrive at a complex and dialectical understanding of human time.

Before turning to describe this role that experience plays in Cicero's philosophy, I offer a brief demonstration of the complexity of the duality *vita / aetas* in a passage taken from the first book of the *Tusculan Disputations*.<sup>88</sup> In this passage, we can clearly see that Cicero uses *vita* to articulate a qualitative and teleological understanding of life, while simultaneously employing

---

<sup>86</sup> For the structure and internal organization of a life, see, e.g., the definition of human *ratio* at *de Fin.* 2.45 as embracing the "whole structure of life even as it unfolds" (*omnis status vitae consequentis*), which is modified over the course of the debates in *de Fin.* to include Piso's Antiochean definition of a *vita* as nothing other than its constitutive *proredientes aetates* (5.41); this organization is discussed below, Ch. 1, sections IV-V. On the unknowability or unpredictability of the human experience of time, esp. in relation to the chronology of nature, see *Tusc.* 1.93-4 (discussed just below and in Ch. 3, section III). Chapter 2 also deals with the uncertainty in the progression of time due to the fact that "nature did not give us a knowledge of limits" (*rerum natura nullam nobis dedit cognitionem finium*, *Luc.* 92).

<sup>87</sup> This dynamic between *vita* and *aetas* addressed especially in Chapter 4.

<sup>88</sup> This book features two mutually exclusive arguments concerning the fate of the soul following death: on the one hand, according to the ideal argument drawn from primarily Platonic sources, the main speaker M. contends that the soul will survive the death of the body; on the other hand, building on material (esp. Epicurean) positions, M. also argues that the soul—or however we should identify the vital force—perishes along with the body. I discuss in more detail the argumentation of this book within the *Tusculans* and this passage in particular below; see Ch. 3, section III.

*aetas* in conjunction with *tempus* to articulate aspects of human temporality that are quantitative and ontologically prior to intent and action. Because this passage also treats arguments similar to those from the Lucretian passage discussed above, we can appreciate that, unlike Lucretius, who preserves the connection between *aetas* and *aeternum* in the infinite time of death, Cicero is interested in approaching *aetas* as a specifically temporal understanding of human life.

Within M.'s material argument that the soul is mortal, he considers the consequences of this mortality for the relationship between death and the time of life. If an individual lives with the knowledge that death (*mors*) marks an absolute end, life (*vita*) becomes a firmly demarcated period of time that is both characterized by the uncertainty of happenstance in the ephemerality of daily experience (*incertos casus cotidie*) and by a durative brevity (*brevitatem vitae*).<sup>89</sup> Yet what determines both the quality and extent of this *vita* is neither simply the biological potentiality nor the ethical choices and actions of the individual; rather, these elements that give character and structure to an individual life are conditioned by an "agreement" with Nature, which allows for time to be of use to humanity in the first place:

Pellantur ergo istae ineptiae paene aniles, ante tempus mori miserum esse. Quod tandem tempus? Naturaene? At ea quidem dedit usuram vitae tamquam pecuniae nulla praestituta die. Quid est igitur quod querare, si repetit, cum vult? Ea enim condicione acceperas. Idem, si puer parvus occidit, aequo animo ferendum putant: si vero in cunis ne querendum quidem. Atqui ab hoc acerbius exegit natura quod dederat. "Nondum gustaverat," inquiunt, "vitae suavitatem: hic autem iam sperabat magna, quibus frui coeperat." At id quidem in ceteris rebus melius putatur, aliquam partem quam nullam attingere: cur in vita secus?...Eorum autem, qui exacta aetate moriuntur, fortuna laudatur. Cur? nam, reor, nullis, si vita longior daretur, posset esse iucundior. Nihil enim

---

<sup>89</sup> "Death, which because of uncertain changes and chances hangs daily over our heads and on account of the shortness of life can never be far off, still does not deter the sage from considering the interests of his state or his family for all time." (*itaque non deterret sapientem mors quae propter incertos casus cotidie imminet, propter brevitatem vitae numquam potest longe abesse, quo minus in omne tempus rei publicae suisque consulat*, 91). M. presents this argument as supporting the sage's consideration of posterity even though he will have no perception of the future consequences of his actions after he has died. For the full argument in context, see below, Ch. 3, section III. Here I am primarily concerned with elucidating Cicero's philosophical vocabulary.

est profecto homini prudentia dulcius, quam, ut cetera auferat, adfert certe senectus.  
Quae vero aetas longa est aut quod omnino homini longum?

Let us cast aside, therefore, all these foolish old wives' tales about how wretched it is to die "before one's time." What time do we mean? Nature's? But she was the one who gave you use of a lifetime just like a loan without establishing a day for repayment. What is there to complain about, then, if she asks for it back whenever she wants? You accepted it on this condition. Likewise, if a small child dies, these same people think that this must be borne with equanimity and if it is an infant still in its cradle, they think there should be no cause for lament at all. And yet nature has taken away what it had given even more cruelly. "The infant had not yet tasted the sweetness of life," they opine; "but this one was already hoping for great things which he had begun to enjoy." But in other cases it is thought better to grasp some part rather than nothing—why would it be otherwise in life?... On the other hand, the fortune of those who die when their time is up is praised. Why? For, I think that to no one else would it be sweeter if a longer lifetime were granted to them. For certainly there is nothing sweeter to humanity than wisdom and, just as old age carries off other things, indeed it bestows that. What span of time is long or what that belongs to humanity is lengthy at all?<sup>90</sup>

Arguing against the conventional wisdom of "old wives' tales" (*istae ineptiae paene aniles*) that attribute significance to a death that comes "too early" (*ante tempus mori*), M. firmly locates temporal priority in the ontological catch-all, "Nature" (*Natura*). It is only by means of a "contract" (*condicio*), which Cicero likens to a loan agreement, that the time (*tempus*) that is Nature's becomes fit for human "use" as a "lifetime" (*usuram vitae*).<sup>91</sup> This notion of a contract between Natural chronology and the human lifetime supplants the Lucretian antagonism between the infinite *aetas* of the *mors aeterna* and the finite *vita*. Cicero's *condicio* allows human life, even while being subject to the capriciousness of Nature, to attain a meaningful relationship to time.<sup>92</sup> Yet, even with this more productive relationship, the conditions of the contract do not

---

<sup>90</sup> *Tusc.* 1.93-94.

<sup>91</sup> On this *condicio*, see further below, Ch. 3, section V.

<sup>92</sup> On this metaphor for the relationship between human and natural time, which appears after Cicero in the consolatory tradition, see Sen. *Cons. Polyb.* 29, "If anyone should be angry that he has had to pay back borrowed money—especially that of which he had the use without paying interest—would he not be considered an unfair man? Nature gave your brother his life, she has likewise given you yours. If she has

stipulate the “day of repayment” (*nulla praestituta die*), a persistent uncertainty that produces fundamental asymmetry between natural and human time.<sup>93</sup>

Recognition of this asymmetry reveals the baselessness of the popular sentiments that M. goes on to list.<sup>94</sup> First, M. criticizes the notion that the death of small children or infants should not be a “cause of lament” (*ne querendum*) because they have “not yet tasted the sweetness of life” (*gustaverat...vitae suavitatem*), whereas we should find more cruel the death of someone older because “he hoped for great things, which he had already begun to enjoy” (*hic autem iam sperabat magna, quibus frui coeperat*). In opposition to this sentiment, M. targets the very logical conception of life as a durative whole: if in all other matters it is better “to grasp some part rather than nothing—why would it be otherwise in life?” (*in ceteris rebus melius putatur, aliquam partem quam nullam attingere: cur in vita secus?*). At the base of this misconception about an appropriate “time” to die, therefore, M. pinpoints a deeper problem about how the parts

---

required from him from whom she wanted it an earlier payment of her loan, she has but used her own right; the fault is not with her, for her terms were known, but with the greedy hopes of mortal minds that often forget what Nature is, and never remember their own lot except when they are reminded (*si quis pecuniam creditam soluisse se moleste ferat, eam praesertim, cuius usum gratuitum acceperit, nonne iniustus habebitur? dedit natura fratri tuo uitam, dedit et tibi. Quae suo iure usa si a quo voluit debitum suum citius exegit; non illa in culpa est, cuius nota erat condicio, sed mortalis animi spes avida, quae subinde, quid rerum natura sit, obliviscitur nec unquam sortis suae meminit, nisi cum admonetur*; trans. Basore). Cf. *Cons. Marc.* 10; [Plut] *Consol. ad Apoll.* 106.

<sup>93</sup> Note that M. does not refer to suicide as a way of “evening” the scales, cf. *Sen. Ep.* 70.19 with Kennedy 2010: ad loc. For the engagement of this passage with Epicurean “symmetry” arguments, see Warren 2004: 57-108; see also below, Ch. 3, section III.

<sup>94</sup> On the Epicurean counterarguments that M. adapts here, which, like the Lucretian passage above, seem interested in the possibility of a “timeless” way of experiencing the world, i.e., one that is uninvested in its own futurity, cf. esp. Parfit 1984: 177 with Warren 2004: op cit., who proposes, “Timeless,” as a hypothetical subject, “We would be much happier if we lacked the bias towards the future. We would be much less depressed by ageing and the approach of death. If we were like Timeless, being at the end of our lives would be more like being at the beginning. At any point in our lives we could enjoy looking back or forward to our whole lives.” As I discuss below, Cicero seems interested in adapting these Epicurean arguments to support, not a timeless existence, but one that transforms its relation to the future.

of a life are related to its consummation. How much of a “life” is it necessary to live to achieve satiety or happiness? At what point in the consecutive stages of a life can we truly say that we have lived “enough”?<sup>95</sup>

In pursuit of this deeper problem, M. challenges the second popular notion that those who die “when their time is up” (*exacta aetate*) are the most fortunate.<sup>96</sup> He ridicules this misperception by asking why such lucky people should not want to live to be old men: if they have already reached the age that marks the peak of humanity’s physical potential surely nothing could be sweeter than to attain an even longer lifetime (*vita longior*). Living beyond the *aetas exacta*, in fact, would allow them to attain wisdom (*prudencia*)—the sweetest reward that human life has to offer, which is bestowed finally by old age (*Nihil enim est profecto homini prudentia dulcius, quam, ut cetera auferat, adfert certe senectus*). Looking at life in this way from within successive ages that make up a *vita*, M. proposes, it is always mistaken to say that there is a better or worse time to die. There exists no such thing as a death that is “timely” for the living: each age (*aetas*) of life gives way to the next, culminating, one hopes, in the wisdom of *senectus*. In the end, these erroneous sentiments only reveal the asymmetry between natural and human time, and the absolute primacy of the “contract” by which brute, chronological time is converted into the durative structure that we recognize as the “lifetime.” Yet, as the ironic and polemical cast of M.’s argument emphasizes, these popular views also reduce a purely teleological and qualitative understanding of human time to an absurdity: M. asks in summation, “What span of

---

<sup>95</sup> On these questions in the *Tusculans*, see below Ch. 3 and in the *de Sen.*, Ch. 4.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Lucr. 1.232-34, where this same idiom is used to refer to the creative destruction of the passage of infinite time. This is a peculiar turn of phrase in Cicero, but one that he uses also at *Sen.* 60 to refer to the “prime part” of Marcus Valerius Corvinus’ life spent in energetic activity in the fields; see below, Ch. 4, section IV. Thus, this is another *locus* where we can see clearly the difference between the Lucretian and the Ciceronian uses of *aetas*. Cf. Plaut. *Capt.* 720 for the idiom as it is used here.

time is long or what that belongs to humanity is lengthy at all?" (*Quae vero aetas longa est aut quod omnino homini longum?*).

In Cicero's philosophical language, *aetas* thus stands both as a part of and outside the *vita*. As a point of focalization for the asymmetry between natural and human time from within human experience, *aetas* represents a temporality that is purely quantitative, realized in human experience of the "stages of life"—infancy, adulthood, old age. Yet a life (*vita*) coincides with no "span of time" (*aetas*) long enough to realize the human potential—or satisfy the human desire—for living. M.'s contiguous uses of *aetas* to refer both to the age that marks the "acme" of human development and to the insufficiently long "span of time" within which human life must take place draws attention to this semantic and logical instability. The *vita* stands in relation to the *aetas* as whole to part; yet, viewed from the perspective of the part to the whole, the *aetas* surpasses this relation. A *vita* is lived through *aetates*, but no formation of *aetas* can ever coincide with the teleological structure of the *vita*. I propose, therefore, that in Cicero's philosophical vocabulary, the *aetas* articulates a particular accumulation or sedimentation of time that is unique to the development of life, whereas a *vita* typically possesses a certain quality or overall structure.

In this brief passage, we perceive the dynamic interrelation of *vita* and *aetas* as two related but often warring ways of formulating human time. It would seem from Cicero's interest in ethics that he, like Lucretius, would favor the structure of the *vita*, which provides a course within which the capacities and activities of human life might be developed and perfected or, in Lucretius' case, through which the dictates of culture and the fear of death might be unlearned in order to achieve a tranquil and "timeless" existence. Yet this passage demonstrates equally that, for Cicero, philosophical inquiry cannot turn away from the *aetas*—cannot relegate time to the

eternity of death in favor of an ideal of timelessness—but must address it as a constitutive part of human being in life. One primary goal of Ciceronian philosophy, as I see it and seek to outline in the chapters that follow, is therefore to define an ethics of time that is complementary to yet distinct from an ethics of life as it had been developed in Hellenistic philosophy. In other words, in these texts Cicero brings philosophical inquiry to bear on the temporality of human existence in a manner analogous to the ways in which post-Aristotelian thought had structured the biological and social possibilities of the human animal. Cicero's dialogues offer not just a view of an ethics of individual capacity and action, but an ethics of the time of life: a philosophy that represents the complexity of time through meditation on and the mediation of human experience.

#### IV. Experience

Nature does not like to be observed...Direct strokes she never gave us power to make; all our blows glance, all our hits are accidental. Our relations to each other are oblique and casual.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience" (169-170).

In this final section of the introduction, I consider the role that experience plays in Cicero's dialogues, particularly from a methodological perspective. Drawing a comparison to Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophical reaction to the death of his son in his essay, "Experience," I contend that Cicero's use of skeptical methods and arguments offers him a way to articulate the conceptual dissociation that accompanies profound human experiences. I then comment on how I have attempted to render some of this methodological richness in the presentation of my own readings by drawing on contrastive strains of thought from post-Ciceronian philosophy. Finally, I offer brief summaries of each chapter focused on the experiences that structure my argument—solitude, doubt, grief, and failure.

In Sharon Cameron's reading of Emerson's "Experience," she contends that the fractious and dissociated statements that comprise the content of the essay should not be understood according to a logic of synthesis or even contradiction. The various perspectives offered throughout are not meant to "fit" together in some final summation of human experience, even as a denial of completion or expressibility. Rather, Cameron argues, Emerson constructs his essay in an "elegiac" mode—that is, according to "a systematic representation of grief."<sup>97</sup> In response to the death of his son Waldo, Emerson writes a text that is as mimetic as it is analytical, imitating in its repetitious statements and its fluctuation of impressions and sentiments the aspects of his experience that escape prosaic description or direct observation.<sup>98</sup> In other words, the essay adopts mimesis as a technique to move beyond the inexpressibility of the experience that lies at its heart without, however, removing it. In Cameron's reading, therefore, Emerson's skeptical statements—his assertions that "we do not see directly, but mediately...we have no means of correcting these colored and distorting lenses which we are"<sup>99</sup>—are tied to his experience of grief in the form and method of his philosophy: because of the impediments to human knowledge and understanding we can only hope to grasp some aspect of the truth of our experience of the world through a philosophical art that mirrors our own oblique and partial perspective.

---

<sup>97</sup> Cameron 2007: 56.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.: 71, "Repetition in 'Experience' dramatizes the partiality of experience...Also its fleetingness. The man can mourn the same indirect relation to experience and to grief ten times because each time—every single time—what he says is both fleeting and partial...They are continuous, but as a series of continuous displacements."

<sup>99</sup> Emerson 2003: 181.



I discuss further in Chapter 3 the relationship between Emerson’s “Experience” and Cicero’s own expressions of grief at the death of his daughter in the *Tusculan Disputations*.<sup>100</sup> From a methodological perspective, however, I think that Cameron’s reading of Emerson offers important insight for the form of Cicero’s dialogues, and it has also helped me to conceptualize the argumentative structure of this dissertation. As we have already seen, Cicero does not approach time as either a purely metaphysical or exclusively accidental category. Rather, he approaches its primacy and reality through the vacillating and unstable lens of human experience. As I argue in each of the following chapters, Cicero’s texts illuminate a temporal ontology that is distinct from and constitutive of experience; yet, it is through the very experiences that form the basis of his philosophical inquiry that such an understanding of time arises. Much like Emerson’s “Experience,” I propose, Cicero’s dialogues blend an elegiac mode of representation and a form of skeptical philosophical investigation in order to communicate obliquely the flux of time and experience that is their object.

Building on significant recent scholarly work on Cicero’s skepticism, I aim to view his method as more than a sign of his affinity for the dialectics of the New Academy or a residue of his youthful philosophical training under Philo, the “last” of the Academic skeptics.<sup>101</sup> In addition to these important historical considerations and with the benefit of the comparison with Emerson, I contend that Cicero’s skeptical approach to philosophy reflects the fleetingness and incompleteness of the human experiences toward which he directs his inquiry. Like Emerson, Cicero develops a mode of presentation that allows him to incorporate the obscurity and

---

<sup>100</sup> See below, Ch. 3, section I.

<sup>101</sup> For work on Cicero’s skepticism in its philosophical and historical context, see, e.g., Burkert 1965; Lévy 1992; Görler 1995; Algra 1997; Thorsrud 2012; Woolf 2015; Brittain 2016; Cappello 2019. This scholarly tradition is discussed more fully below, Ch. 2, section II.

partiality of human perception as an integral part of philosophy’s drive to theorize and understand. In his most expansive methodological notice from the preface of the *Lucullus*,<sup>102</sup> for instance, Cicero makes clear that the inescapable *obscuritas* of reality and the *infirmitas* of human faculties are inevitably reflected in his own “discussions” (*nostrae disputationes*); yet these methodological hindrances do not overcome the “drive to inquire” (*studium exquirendi*), which enables the dialogues to “draw out” (*eliciant*) or “mold” (*exprimant*) their imperfect raw material into something that has a truth to it, or at least strives to render truth (*aliquid quod aut verum sit aut ad id quam proxime accedat*). The generative and mimetic metaphors through which Cicero expresses the hoped-for outcome of his inquiry (*elicio, exprimo*)<sup>103</sup> should guide us to look neither solely at the systematic, explicative content of his debates nor at their dialectical and inconclusive form. Rather, we should examine the interplay between content and form, analysis and mimesis, conclusion and inconclusiveness, which allows the imperfections of his work to reflect something of the truth of imperfect human experience.

Even the apparent clarity with which Cicero expresses his methodology in this passage from the *Lucullus* must be put into motion. Although there undoubtedly remains a strand of

---

<sup>102</sup> *Luc.* 7, “For although all understanding is obstructed by many hindrances, and there is both an innate obscurity in reality itself and a weakness in our faculties so that it was not without reason that the most ancient and wise thinkers distrusted their ability to discover what they desired, nevertheless they did not slack in their pursuit nor will we in our exhaustion abandon our drive of inquiry; nor do our discussions aim at anything besides, by debating either side of a matter, drawing out or somehow giving shape to something that is true or approaches it most closely” (*Etsi enim omnis cognitio multis est obstructa difficultatibus, eaque est et in ipsis rebus obscuritas et in iudiciis nostris infirmitas ut non sine causa antiquissimi et doctissimi invenire se posse quod cuperent diffisi sint, tamen nec illi defecerunt neque nos studium exquirendi defatigati relinquemus; neque nostrae disputationes quidquam aliud agunt nisi ut in utramque partem dicendo eliciant et tamquam exprimant aliquid quod aut verum sit aut ad id quam proxime accedat*).

<sup>103</sup> See Cicero’s use of *elicio* at *de Sen.* 15 to refer to the earth’s capacity for creation; cf. also *de Fin.* 2.2 where the verb is used to describe the Socratic practice “eliciting” an opinion against which to argue. For *exprimo* as a verb of imitation, see e.g., *Pro Rab. Post.* 2; of translation, *Rep.* 1.43; and of physical sculpting (although not frequently in this literal sense in Cic.), see Plaut. *Ps.* I.i.56.

continuity that reflects Cicero’s attention to disciplinary sympathies, he constantly revises the way in which he formulates his philosophical strategies throughout the works of 45: “arguing against the views of everyone else” (*contra omnes dicere quae videntur*, *Luc.* 7), “pursuing not only those views that we approve but also the doctrine of all the philosophical schools” (*non modo quid nobis probaretur sed etiam quid a singulis philosophiae disciplinis diceretur persecuti sumus*, *de Fin.* 1.12), “debating one side and then the other” (*in utramque partem multa disseruntur*, *Ac. Lib.* 1.46), “arguing whatever strikes us as being approvable” (*quodcumque nostros animos probabilitate percussit, id dicimus*, *Tusc.* 5.33), “following a Carneadean fashion” (*Carneadeo more et modo*, *Tim.* 1), etc. The development and transformation of these formulations—which are neither fully consistent between themselves nor in their application within the dialogues—gestures to partiality, repetition, and deferral as the only constant and central features of Ciceronian inquiry. The richness of Cicero’s argumentative strategies thus comes not simply from their ability to weigh different doctrinal positions on important philosophical questions:<sup>104</sup> more fully, they allow Cicero to communicate, like Emerson, the dissociation of experience and the experience of dissociation. Through this dedication to elegiac obliquity, the very impossibility of comprising the most profound human experiences, such as solitude or grief, in a single perspective or even with a single method of inquiry can be transformed into a meaningful form of philosophical writing.

---

<sup>104</sup> Although this is undeniably an intended aspect of his philosophical practice; cf. *de Div.* 2.4, which enticingly asserts that “if some grievous occurrence [i.e., Caesar’s death] had not interrupted [our writing], we would now have succeeded in laying open every topic of philosophy” (*nisi quae causa gravior obstitisset, nullum philosophiae locum esse pateremur*). This encyclopedic impulse gains significance beyond the old scholarly chestnut, “eclecticism,” if we attribute it to a desire to represent not simply a “totality” of philosophy, but a “totality through partiality” in the ever-changing transformation of experience. On Cicero’s so-called eclecticism, see, e.g., Gucker 1988; on the relationship between skepticism and eclecticism, see Brunschwig 1988.

I have attempted to preserve something of this methodological richness in my own approach to these texts by identifying strands of thought in the long history of post-Ciceronian “experiential” philosophy to frame my readings.<sup>105</sup> I introduce each chapter with a pair of epigraphs from later writers that are selected because they articulate contrasting, often mutually exclusive perspectives on the central questions of my reading. I intend these perspectives from later writers to help to articulate the dissociative aspects within the experience of the text. For instance, in the first chapter, I begin from two views drawn from 20th century French philosophy on the relation between solitary experience and temporal duration.<sup>106</sup> For Gaston Bachelard, solitude is a state of creative destruction by which one duration of time is punctuated in order to allow a new period to begin. On the contrary, Jacques Derrida contends that solitude—in particular, the solitude that follows the death of a loved one—is a moment of consummation in which the relation between present and past, self and other is realized. By taking this juxtaposition as my starting point, my reading aims to demonstrate both how these divergent perspectives are present in Cicero’s depiction of his own experience of solitude and, more importantly, how he incorporates this experiential dissociation into the form and content of his philosophical argumentation in *de Finibus* on the duration of a lifetime. I do not intend this approach to be either a systematic exercise in intellectual history or an “application” of modern thinkers onto Cicero’s philosophy. Rather, I hope that this framing device may illuminate

---

<sup>105</sup> This tradition of a “post-Ciceronian” philosophy of experience remains to be defined in full, but its general outline can be seen in studies in the philosophical reception compiled in Altman 2015. For the late antique and medieval form of post-Ciceronian philosophy, which is seen primarily in the consolatory and therapeutic traditions, see Brachtendorf 1997; Kendeffy 2015. For the Italian renaissance as a formative period, see McLaughlin 2015; DellaNeva 2015. On the importance of the early modern French tradition, see, e.g., Green 1975; Eden 2015; Sharpe 2015. On 20th century French philosophy and Derrida in particular, see Leach 1993; Miller 2015.

<sup>106</sup> For references, see below, Ch. 1, section I.

readings of the text that are aware of the resonances, developments and tensions in thought that connect Cicero's writings and our own world.

Chapter 1, "Specters of Solitude," is thus concerned with human time as duration. I argue that Cicero writes the solitude that he experiences following the death of his daughter into his philosophical inquiry on the origins and ends of life in *de Finibus bonorum et malorum*. In the first and second parts of the chapter, I examine Cicero's descriptions of solitude in the letters that he writes to Atticus from Astura especially in the weeks after Tullia's death. I argue that these descriptions encompass aspects recognizable from both the Bachelardian and Derridean perspectives on solitary experience: Cicero's *solitudo* is a moment of punctuating cessation in the ephemeral sequence of his life, which both erases and clarifies the relationship between his present and past. I then turn to consider in the third section how Cicero writes this experience of *solitudo* into the form of *de Finibus*. By transferring his experience of solitude following Tullia's death into his youthful reminiscence of the Academy in the final book of this dialogue (*de Fin.* 5.1), Cicero organizes these debates on the structure of a lifetime as a rendering of the relationship between the origin and ends of his own life. In the final two sections of the chapter, I demonstrate how this form is related to the content of the philosophical discussion that makes up the work: in the fourth section, I argue that Cicero's skeptical *divisio* draws out how the Epicureans and Stoics conceptualize, unsatisfactorily, the structure of human life (*status vitae*, 2.45). Finally, in the fifth section, I focus on the Antiochean argument in the final book, which introduces *aetas* into the debate about human duration. Rather than offering closure on the question of the structure of the *vita*, however, the skeptical form of the work also reveals the failure of the Antiochean configuration by accentuating the absence of any notion of cessation or withdrawal in Antiochus' vitalistic understanding of the *vita* as a series of unbroken *aetates*

*progređientes* (cf. 5.41, 59). On the whole, I argue, Cicero demonstrates that without solitude philosophy fails to understand the dialectical alternation between duration and cessation through which humanity can access the organizing structures of its lifetime.

In the second chapter, “Doubt’s Drives,” I consider the relationship that Cicero’s philosophy discloses between the progression of time and doubt. I argue in particular that Ciceronian doubt creates a procedure for confronting and traversing limits in experience. Drawing from the contrasting perspectives offered by Dante and Descartes on the relation between doubt and truth, I also contend that this procedure, by constantly deferring the ends of inquiry, serves as an approach to an ungraspable, unlimited truth. In the first section I examine how in the *Lucullus* Cicero intervenes in the epistemological arguments of the Hellenistic schools in order to arrive at an understanding of “doubt” as an intentional state of mind that can be adopted as a response to the pervasiveness of epistemic “uncertainty.” From this perspective on Cicero’s doubt, in the second section, I contextualize Cicero’s philosophical project within the history of the skeptical Academy and argue that his importance within the development of and possible divergence from this tradition pertains to the connection that he draws between doubt, truth, and time. In the third section I elucidate this connection by reading the *Lucullus* with attention to the verb *sequi*, the semantic nexus of which allows Cicero to articulate the limited and often circular trajectory of skeptical inquiry within the ineluctable progression of time. In the fourth section, I examine how this relationship between skeptical inquiry and time is evident not only in the argumentation and *mise en scène* of the *Lucullus* but also in Cicero’s own compositional practice, as we can see in his revision of the contents of the dialogue into the *Academici libri*. This connection between theory and practice demonstrates the force of the thought that “nature didn’t give us any knowledge of limits” (*rerum natura nullam nobis dedit*

*cognitionem finium*, 92) for Cicero's philosophy. In the final section, I return to the connection between doubt and truth. I contend that Cicero locates an approach to truth in the interplay of inquiry and time, limitation and limitlessness that doubt facilitates. Doubt does not invariably lead to truth; but by adopting doubt as a way of experiencing the world, its constant deferral of the end of inquiry transforms each new moment into a potential receptacle for truth.

The third chapter, "The Discernment of Grief," examines the temporal consequences of the death of a loved one in the *Tusculan Disputations*. I contend that Cicero's philosophical exercise of grief—not its resolution, but its incorporation *into* philosophy—creates a form of temporal "discernment" that embraces the different strata of time revealed by proximity to death. Beginning from the contrasting perspectives of Emerson and Freud on what grief can teach us, I raise the question of the relationship between Tullia's death and Cicero's philosophy and argue that the *Tusculans* should be read as a product of the irresolution of his grief. In support of this contention, in section II, I examine the representation of Cicero's grief for Tullia in the letters and biographical tradition. From this biographical evidence, I identify his experience as "melancholic," or at least as a failure to treat her loss as a particular loss. In section III, I trace the influence of this melancholic grief on the divergent arguments of the first book of the *Tusculans*. I argue especially that Tullia's death and the *Consolatio*, which serves as her textual cipher, functions as the force of dissociation between the ideal and material understandings of humanity's relation to death and time. As a structuring absence in the text, the loss of Tullia thus preserves the obliquity that is reflective of Cicero's experience of grief. In section IV, I examine how Cicero's presentation of philosophical therapies in *Tusc.* 3 foregrounds the loss of a subjective sense of time that accompanies grief. This temporal disturbance opens up in experience an approach to the unthinkability of death and the human relation to time that the first

book treats philosophically. In the final section, I contend that Cicero locates this approach to unthinkability in the “will” (*voluntas*), or as I propose an alternate translation suited to the argument, “discernment.” This exercise of *voluntas* is not a subjective will *to* recover from or forget grief, but an adoption of a general “human” will that allows the mourner to live in grief as a manifestation of the divergent temporalities that define his existence.

The final chapter, “The Future of Failure,” revisits the lifetime as a basic formation of human temporality in order to consider questions of judgement—how a life should be considered a success or a failure—and the future. In particular, I argue that by extending a skeptical approach to the structures of the *vita*, Cicero’s dialogues seek to formulate an ethics of the *aetas*. This mode of ethics takes as its foundation not the possibilities—and failures—of the lifetime, but the unbound temporal horizon of the time of life. Framing my argument with Heidegger and Levinas’ contrasting perspectives on the future orientation of human time, in the first section, I read from one of Cicero’s philosophical letters to Aulus Manlius Torquatus (*ad Fam.* VI.4[244]) to reaffirm the distinction between *vita* and *aetas* by means of their differing relation to the future. In the second section, I examine the ways in which Cicero’s life might be considered a “failure” and how biographical and scholarly interpretations tend to view Cicero’s philosophical writing as an amelioration for the failures of his own *vita activa*. The third section surveys Cicero’s own skeptical treatment of the philosopher’s life and its characteristic activity *theoria* or *contemplatio*. In the first part of the section, I focus on the inconclusiveness of his inquiry into the post-Aristotelian association between *contemplatio*, happiness, and the consummation of life. And, in the second part, I reconsider the relation between philosophy and truth that Cicero inherits from the Platonic tradition. By also demonstrating the inconclusiveness of this relation, Cicero’s skeptical treatment of the *vita* envisions a form of the philosopher’s life that is atelic



and anachronous, thus incorporating a form of “failure” within its defining activity. In section IV, I turn to the diachrony of the *aetas* as an alternative way of conceiving the future. In particular, I juxtapose the logical sequences of the “divine mind” (*divina mens*) from M.’s argument in *Tusc.* 5 with the future of the *aetas* as articulated in the later dialogue, *de Senectute*. By considering the future from within the breakdown of intergenerational time during the late Republic, Cicero aims in this dialogue to liberate the future of the *aetas* from the *vita*. In the final section, I expound upon this future aspect of the *aetas* by identifying two modes of futurity evident in *de Sen.*: paternity and fecundity. As a whole, I contend in this final chapter that Cicero’s philosophical work under Caesar’s dictatorship persists in and holds open the heterogeneity of failure, thereby emphasizing the ways in which his present is tied to and produced by an unknowable future.

This dissertation, therefore, aims to understand the influence of experience on time in Cicero’s ethical dialogues of 45-44 BCE. It draws from scholarship in ancient philosophy, Ciceronian biography and epistolography, Roman history, and modern theories of time and experience in order to elucidate how Cicero’s writing from this period can be read as a corpus dedicated to a specific philosophical problem and serving a unique place in the history of thought. Yet, by his very commitment to investigating the turbulence and transformations of time, Cicero’s philosophy is not systematic. Cicero did not relish in constructing an unassailable edifice through and out of which his readers will find no passage except those that he, the master-builder, has left open. Cicero was, after all, many things, but never a master-builder. It is my hope that these readings open up at least a few disused corridors in the maze that Cicero left behind, and to leave at least as many closed. Perhaps by design, and certainly by a long lineage of historical choices, these texts and their perspectives on some of the most pressing questions

for human existence have been preserved, not as an unchanging instantiation of one man's time and experience, but as a benefit for a posterity that will still be searching for their answers.

## Chapter 1. Specters of Solitude.

L'instant c'est déjà la solitude... C'est la solitude dans sa valeur métaphysique la plus dépouillée. Mais une solitude d'un ordre plus sentimental confirme le tragique isolement de l'instant: par une sorte de violence créatrice, le temps limité à l'instant nous isole non seulement des autres mais de nous-mêmes, puisqu'il rompt avec notre passé le plus cher. Dès le seuil de sa méditation—et la méditation du temps est la tâche préliminaire à toute métaphysique—voilà donc le philosophe devant l'affirmation que le temps se présente comme l'instant solitaire, comme la conscience d'une solitude.

Gaston Bachelard, *L'intuition de l'instant* (15)

This terrible solitude which is mine or ours at the death of the other is what constitutes that relationship to self which we call “me,” “us,” “between us,” “subjectivity,” “intersubjectivity,” “memory.” The *possibility* of death “happens,” so to speak, “before” these different instances, and makes them possible. Or, more precisely, the possibility of the death of the other *as* mine or ours in-forms any relation to the other and the finitude of memory.”

Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man* (33)

### I. The Solitude of Astura

In late November 46 BCE,<sup>1</sup> at the same time Cicero was beginning to outline what would become his new course of philosophical dialogues,<sup>2</sup> Cicero writes to Atticus from his recently

---

<sup>1</sup> The dating of this letter (*Att.* XII.9) is contested. Schmidt 1893 assigns this and the following letter a date in July 45 due to the seductive idea that Cicero intentionally acquired his villa at Astura as a place of mourning in the wake of Tullia's death; for the most extensive argument in this direction see Petersson 1963: 525 and also below n.3. Shackleton Bailey: ad loc., whose dating I adopt, cites Taylor 1937, “there seems to be no adequate reason for taking [these letters] from their context among the letters of 46” that cluster at the beginning of *Att.* XII. Aside from the benefit of being the less interventionist choice, a date circa 20 Nov. 46 allows us to draw out better the connections between Cicero's grief, Astura, and his philosophical project that this editorial choice discloses.

<sup>2</sup> Another contentious point of dating, but a *communis opinio* has emerged based on Cicero's comments in *Att.* XII.12(259) that the *Hortensius* was completed prior to Tullia's death in February 45. This protreptic call to the individual and communal study of philosophy stood as the first programmatic statement in Cicero's new project. For the extant fr. see Grilli 1962; cf. Diels 1888; Dyck 2008; Mihai 2014. Cicero's visit to Astura in late 46 and the completion of the *Hortensius* soon afterwards allows us to see the connection between this place and philosophy for Cicero. Grief over Tullia is an important, but subsequent admixture.

acquired villa at Astura.<sup>3</sup> The surrounding sea and landscape are common points of reflection in the many letters that Cicero dispatches from this secluded, cliff-side locale. And, this innocently brief, yet prophetically melancholy missive is no exception:

Ne ego essem hic libenter atque id cottidie magis, ni esset ea causa quam tibi superioribus litteris scripsi. nihil hac solitudine iucundius, nisi paulum interpellasset Amyntae filius. ὦ ἀπεραντολογίας ἀηδοῦς! cetera noli putare amabilia fieri posse villa, litore, prospectu maris, tum his rebus omnibus. sed neque haec digna longioribus litteris nec erat quid scriberem, et somnus urgebat.

I would remain here quite willingly, and would feel so more and more daily, if it were not for that reason I wrote you about in my last letter. Nothing could be more pleasing than this solitude—if it were not for the intermittent interruption of Amyntas’s son. What annoying, unending chatter! But, as for the rest, you could not imagine it to be more lovely—the house, the shore, the view of the sea, and indeed everything. But these things aren’t worth a long letter, and there was nothing else I wanted to write, and sleep presses on me.<sup>4</sup>

The letter seems to show Cicero at relative ease. He expresses his satisfaction, if not genuine pleasure, in “the house, the shore, the view of the sea, and indeed everything” before drowsily laying down his pen. He even engages Atticus in a joke about his tiresome neighbor.<sup>5</sup>

Considering the violent upheaval that continued to wrack the Roman world at this moment, Cicero finds a measure of solace and respite in “this solitude” (*hac solitudine*) at Astura.

---

<sup>3</sup> Schmidt 1899, based on his previous reordering of the letters in *Att.* XII, describes this purchase as a spur of the moment decision, which was transacted during a short stay at the more popular seaside destination, Lanuvium, while trying to recuperate from Tullia’s death. In addition to the problems with dating the letters, we know that in Feb. 45 Cicero was facing significant financial difficulties, and particularly a liquidity crisis caused by over-leveraging his existing properties; see XII.13 discussed below and XII.25(264). This situation makes the sudden purchase of a new villa in the early months of 45 unlikely. Given a more conservative dating of the letters from this period, Cicero probably acquired Astura in late fall 46, which may, in fact, have contributed to his later financial problems.

<sup>4</sup> *Att.* XII.9[246].

<sup>5</sup> “The son of Amyntas,” i.e., L. Marcius Philippus punningly referred to as Philip of Macedonia, cf. *Att.* IX.15(183), XIV.11(365).

As often with Cicero's shortest letters, however, *Att.* XII.9 is deeply complex.<sup>6</sup> Obliquely referring to "that reason (*ea causa*) I wrote you about in my last letter," Cicero conjures up anxieties that he need not spell out *again* for his friend.<sup>7</sup> Yet why would Cicero write this letter if not in an attempt to excise this *causa* from his mind as he tries to fall asleep? After all, "there was nothing *else* [he] wanted to write about."<sup>8</sup> Cicero also seems preoccupied by the fragility of the solitude that he finds at Astura. The phrasing of the first sentence, "I would remain here quite willingly, and would feel so more and more daily, if it were not for that reason" (*Ne ego essem hic libenter atque id cottidie magis, ni esset ea causa*), emphasizes the brittleness and vulnerability of his experience. The potential for daily growth (*cottidie magis*) in his enjoyment of solitude is punctured by the resurfacing of *ea causa* in much the same way that his physical isolation is interrupted (*nisi paulum interpellasset*) by the arrival of "Amyntas' son." Cicero's desire for solitude is frustrated by personal anxiety and inter-personal obligation. Even his joke about the busybody neighbor reveals deeper concerns of the moment: L. Marcius Philippus, was, much like Cicero himself, without firm footing in the current political maelstrom. He was married to Caesar's niece, but was also the father-in-law of Cato; he had openly opposed Caesar at the beginning of the civil war, and now after Caesar's consolidation of power remained safe only through the clemency of the dictator.<sup>9</sup> Philippus' disturbance annoys Cicero perhaps most of all because it forces him to confront his *own* political and social predicament. In his desire to

---

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., *Fam.* XIV.20(173) sent to Terentia just before their divorce.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Shackleton Bailey ad loc: "*ea causa*. Unknown."

<sup>8</sup> On the importance of this trope in Cicero's letters to Atticus during this period, see Martelli 2016.

<sup>9</sup> On Caesar and Philippus' relationship, see Caesar *B. Civ.* 1.6.5 and Cic. *Att.* IX.15.5(183). On his arrangement with Caesar after the civil war, see *Att.* X.4.10(195) with Shackleton Bailey ad loc.

avoid even the empathetic presence of Philippus, the solitude of Astura starts to feel less like a respite and more like a bitter retreat.

How, then, should we understand the solitude that Cicero both seeks and despairs to find at Astura in the winter of 46? The difficulty of encompassing the full nuance of his experience is reflected in the contrasting perspectives of Gaston Bachelard and Jacques Derrida.<sup>10</sup> As Bachelard contends, “par une sorte de violence créatrice, le temps limité à l’instant nous isole non seulement des autres mais de nous-mêmes, puisqu’il rompt avec notre passé le plus cher.” Put simply, a solitary instant separates us from others and from ourselves. At the same time, this withdrawal is not purely destructive, but seethes with the possibilities of creation. For Bachelard, solitude is a “positive experience of nothingness,” which has been subtracted from the continuities of life and confirms to philosophy “que le temps se présente comme l’instant solitaire.”<sup>11</sup> As a consequence of its subtraction from succession, solitude enables philosophy to embrace all emergent possibilities, having been freed from any necessary ties to the past.<sup>12</sup> Although also emphasizing a productive or creative aspect, Derrida writes, by contrast, “This terrible solitude which is mine or ours at the death of the other is what constitutes that relationship to self which we call ‘me,’ ‘us,’ ‘between us,’ ‘subjectivity,’ ‘intersubjectivity,’ ‘memory.’” Solitude, and specifically the solitude that follows the death of a loved one, does not erase the past, rather, it gives the past meaning; it does not isolate the self, but connects the self

---

<sup>10</sup> Cited above as epigraphs.

<sup>11</sup> 2000: 47, “The positive experience of nothingness in ourselves can only help to clarify our experience of succession. Indeed, it shows us a succession that is plainly heterogenous, clearly marked by occurrences of newness and surprise and by breaks, cut too by voids.”

<sup>12</sup> On Bachelard’s philosophical approach more generally, see the introduction to his work *The Dialectic of Duration* by Cristina Chimisso (Bachelard 2000: 1-16). See also below, n.110.

to itself and to others. Far from being, as it is for Bachelard, the reification of a singular instant and a liberation from past ties, for Derrida, solitude is the very condition of possibility for personal connection, inter- and intra-subjectively.

Cicero's own experience and philosophical use of solitude embraces the tension between these two positions. As I examine further in the next section, Cicero's descriptions of and associations with *solitudo* develop over the course of the early months of 45. Writing to Atticus following the death of Tullia, the solitude of Astura comes to represent for Cicero a moment of withdrawal, an instant that has been liberated from his subjective sense of continuity. It severs him from his public persona, his private anxieties, and even his own past. Yet, through the introspection and philosophical inquiry that solitude enables, this singular instant resonates with other moments throughout time, giving the past meaning and opening up a new way of approaching the duration of a lifetime. It is significant, therefore, that one of the first philosophical dialogues that Cicero begins to write in the early spring is concerned precisely with the relation between the origins and "ends" of life. The debates contained in *de Finibus bonorum et malorum* consider the different ways in which Epicurean, Stoic, and Antiochean theories on the ethical *finis*—i.e., "the end, the final, the ultimate aim, to which all precepts for living well and acting ethically refer"<sup>13</sup>—conceive of the finite structure of the *vita*. In order to arrive at these "ends," each speech in the dialogue begins from a "cradle argument," which makes a claim about how the first impulses of life are connected to its ultimate purpose and overall structure. The biographical framing of this dialogue also gestures to an interest in tracing the shape of a life. Each set of debates moves the reader further into Cicero's past until, in *de Fin.* 5.1, we find

---

<sup>13</sup> 1.11, *id quod his libris quaeritur, qui sit finis, quid extremum, quid ultimum quo sint omnia bene vivendi recteque faciendi consilia referenda.*

him in the *solitudo* of the Academy during a youthful sojourn to Athens. By writing his experience following Tullia's death into this reminiscence, Cicero creates in the form and content of this dialogue a sustained inquiry into the relationship between solitude and the duration of a life.

In this chapter, therefore, I argue above all that Cicero's *solitudo* can be understood best in relation to his interest in human time and, in particular, the finite structure of the *vita*. In order to elucidate this relationship between solitude and duration, in section II, I complete my reading of Cicero's letters from Astura and, in section III, relate these epistolary accounts to the programmatic opening of *de Fin* 5. In section IV, I consider the "cradle arguments" of Epicurean and Stoic ethics in *de Fin*. 1-4, which propose different theories of non-temporal continuity for the *vita*. In the final section, I focus on Piso's introduction of *aetas* in *de Fin*. 5 in order to offer an understanding of the continuity of the *vita* as a duration of time. I contend, however, that the skeptical impasse that awaits at the end of the work opens onto a moment of discontinuity, which represents through the form of the dialogue Cicero's experience of *solitudo*.

## II. A Philosophical Solitude

*Solitudo* functions as a dominant signifier in Cicero's letter writing in the early months of 45 BCE.<sup>14</sup> The importance of the word for understanding the themes and sequence of book XII of the letters to Atticus is belied by the editorial placement of XII.9 prior to a series of letters (XII.13-26) that Cicero wrote four months later, all from Astura. Through the editorial emphasis on geographical location over strict chronology, we can see more clearly how XII.9 foreshadows Cicero's return to Astura in March of 45 following the unexpected death of his daughter Tullia at

---

<sup>14</sup> See *Att.* XII.9(246), 13(250), 15(252), 16(253), 18(254), 23(262), 26(265), and XIII.16(323). Cf. Walters 2013: 427, who, however, ignores XII.9 and the chronological problems that it creates for his argument.



Tusculum in the middle of February.<sup>15</sup> If, even prior to Tullia’s death, Cicero is drawn to the *solitudo* of Astura, then, following her death, at which point it has become unbearable for Cicero to remain either at his Tusculan villa or at Atticus’ house in Rome, this quality becomes indispensable. Cicero departs from Rome for Astura specifically in search of the solitude that he associates with the place (XII.13[250]):

me haec solitudo minus stimulat quam ista celebritas. te unum desidero; sed litteris non difficilius utor quam si domi essem. ardor tamen ille idem urget et manet, non mehercule indulgente me sed tamen repugnante...cum enim mihi carendum sit conviviis, malo id lege videri facere quam dolore. Cocceium velim appelles. quod enim dixerat non facit. ego autem volo aliquod emere latibulum et perfugium doloris mei.

This solitude upsets me less than the busyness back in town. I wish I could just have you. But I’m writing with no more difficulty than if I were at home. Still, that white hot pain persists and overwhelms me—even though I’m fighting against it, not indulging it...So, since I must get rid of social obligations, I prefer for it to seem like I do this for some legal reason rather than pain. Please ask Cocceius to pay his debt, because he is not doing what he said he would. I wish to buy some little hiding-place and refuge from my pain.

In this first letter that survives after a nearly three-month break in the correspondence,<sup>16</sup> the *solitudo* of Astura does not simply offer a respite from Cicero’s political troubles or personal anxieties but has become a positive mode of experience that produces a specific state of mind. Cicero articulates an opposition between *solitudo* and *celebritas* to measure the difference between the agitation that the activity of Rome caused him and the “less upsetting” isolation of the villa.<sup>17</sup> But this is not a necessarily obvious duality: through it, *solitudo* opposes a state of

---

<sup>15</sup> Cicero spends nearly the whole of March 45 in Astura. During the following months he divides his time between this seaside villa (May 1-15, June 22- July 6, and August 25-30), his estate at Tusculum where Tullia had died (May 17-June 21, July 8-August 24), and a brief trip to his hometown Arpinium (June 22-July 6). For the full chronology see Marinone 2004: 211-13.

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that this gap may be, in part, a natural result of the fact that both correspondents were in or near Rome for these months.

<sup>17</sup> This opposition is found elsewhere in Cicero’s writings, even as far back as *Inv.* 1.38; cf. *Att.* III.7(52), *Off.* 3.1. He also uses *celebritas* in the sense of “fame” at *Tusc.* 1.12; cf. also its use to describe the

“swiftness” as well as “busyness” or “frequency,” thereby taking on a meaning that encompasses both a lack of motion and a singularity of occurrence. *Solitudo* is a motionless instant and an isolated moment outside of sequence.

The definition of *solitudo* in opposition to *celebritas* reflects other fundamental features of the way that Cicero thinks about the isolation of Astura. In the motionless and singular state that his seaside villa affords, two constants remain: Cicero’s literary activity and “that white hot pain” which “still persists and overwhelms [him]” (*sed litteris non difficilium utor quam si domi essem. ardor tamen ille idem urget et manet*). In Cicero’s world following Tullia’s death, his Asturan solitude is less a refuge or a retreat from political upheaval, defined simply by a lack of disturbance, and more of a necessary psychological support—a substantive experience that he seeks out in its own right. In fact, Cicero already begins to look elsewhere for the refuge that he had previously identified with Astura. This letter concludes with a plea to Atticus to straighten out affairs with Cicero’s debtor, Cocceius, so that he can free up enough cash to complete the purchase of another parcel of land, which he refers to as “some little hiding-place and refuge from my pain” (*latibulum et perfugium doloris mei*). As book XII progresses, it becomes clear that this *latibulum* is Cicero’s proposed shrine to Tullia.<sup>18</sup> This proposed shrine offers the prospect of a new refuge where he will be able to lay his grief to rest. The solitude of Astura, instead, serves as the place in which Cicero lives *with* his pain—and fights vainly against it.

This function of Asturan *solitudo* becomes more evident in the letters that follow. Cicero writes on March 8th, “solitude helps somewhat” in his battle against his grief, “but it would be

---

“throng” of society among which philosophers are observers in the Pythagorean fable at *Tusc.* 5.9; on this fable, see below Ch. 4, sections II and III.

<sup>18</sup> On Cicero’s shrine for Tullia, which will never actually be built, see esp. Boyancé 1944; Martelli 2016; and Englert 2017. See also below, Ch. 3, sections III and IV.

much more beneficial if you were present” (*solitudo aliquid adiuvat, sed multo plus proficeret si tu tamen interesses*, XII.14.3[251]). Again, on March 10th, “So far, nothing has suited me more than this solitude” (*mihi nihil adhuc aptius fuit hac solitudine*, XII.16[253]). Such comments, which resurface regularly throughout the correspondence of March 45, express both a desire for solitude, understood as the absence of others, and a paradoxical claim that, in fact, the only thing that could make Cicero’s solitude more complete or beneficial would be the *presence* of Atticus. This tension between solitude as absence and as desire for presence manifests itself most evocatively in XII.15(252):

in hac solitudine careo omnium colloquio, cumque mane me in silvam abstrusi densam et asperam, non exeo inde ante vesperum. secundum te nihil est mihi amicus solitudine. in ea mihi omnis sermo est cum litteris. eum tamen interpellat fletus; cui repugno quoad possum, sed adhuc pares non sumus.

In this solitude I lack communication with everyone. In the morning I hide myself away in a dense and thorny wood and I do not leave it before evening. Nothing is more a friend to me than solitude—apart from you. In my solitude all my speech is with books, although weeping interrupts it. I fight against the tears as much as I can, but as yet I am no match for them.

Whether or not we understand Cicero’s “dense and thorny wood” (*silvam...densam et asperam*) as a part of the real Asturan landscape or as a metapoetical reference to the writer’s immersion in his craft,<sup>19</sup> solitude, understood as a paradoxical mix of absence and presence, isolation and fullness, defines Cicero’s state of mind in his grief. Although he does not “talk to anyone,” nevertheless “all [his] speech is with books.” Likewise, “nothing is more a friend” (*amicus*) than solitude, except, that is, a real friend—Atticus. Of the several comparisons of this type,<sup>20</sup> this

---

<sup>19</sup> See Walters 2013 for an argument in favor of the metapoetic reading of *silva* akin to Gk., ὕλη. But cf. XII.9 above for Cicero’s infatuation with the “real” Asturan landscape which, of course, is just as literarily constructed as it is “real.”

<sup>20</sup> E.g., *nihil hac solitudine iucundius*, XII.9; *mihi nihil adhuc aptius fuit hac solitudine*, XII.16; *nec quicquam habeo tolerabilius quam solitudinem*, XII.18.

particular formulation stands out because it does not compare solitude to an abstract attribute, such as *iucundus*, *aptus*, or *tolerabilis*, but rather to Atticus himself in his capacity as *amicus*.

This letter demonstrates fully the paradoxical nature of Cicero's *solitudo*: it is an absence defined by presence, an isolation filled with *sermo*, and loneliness reconfigured as friendship.

This letter also marks the conclusion of a transformation, begun in XII.9, of the relationship between *solitudo* and an ephemeral, sequential sense of time. Unlike in XII.9, where the arrival of a nosy neighbor disturbs Cicero's respite and heralds the return of daily routine, in XII.15 Cicero's solitude is now so complete that *it* defines the rhythm of life. Cicero describes himself as departing "early in the morning" (*mane*) to hide in the dense thicket from which he does not depart until evening (*ante vesperum*).<sup>21</sup> In their cooptation of the natural rhythm of sunrise and sunset, Cicero's solitary habits reflect and shape his literary work.<sup>22</sup> The dialogues that Cicero writes at this period are "daily" affairs. Rather than being organized exclusively around the availability of leisure time for their aristocratic interlocutors,<sup>23</sup> they present

---

<sup>21</sup> For an interesting historical resonance on the rhythm of Cicero's solitary routine, cf. its inversion in Machiavelli's 10 Dec. 1513 letter from exile to Francesco Vettori: "When evening comes, I return home and enter my study; on the threshold I take off my workday clothes, covered with mud and dirt, and put on the garments of court and palace. Fitted out appropriately, I step inside the venerable courts of the ancients, where, solicitously received by them, I nourish myself on that food that alone is mine and for which I was born; where I am unashamed to converse with them and to question them about the motives for their actions, and they, out of their human kindness, answer me. And for four hours at a time I feel no boredom, I forget all my troubles, I do not dread poverty, and I am not terrified by death. I absorb myself into them completely" (1996: 262-65). My thanks to Peter Bing for this reference.

<sup>22</sup> On the organization of Cicero's *philosophica cottidiana*, see esp. Luciani 2010: 49-66.

<sup>23</sup> A common theme in the prologues of the literary works of the 50s is the defense of the use of *otium*—that is time free from public affairs—for the study of philosophy. See esp., *Rep.* 1.14, *de Or.* 2.24; cf. the shift in discourse evident in e.g., *Luc.* 5-6, *de Fin.* 3.7. As Gildenhard 2007 *passim* argues, in the *philosophica* of 45, Cicero ceases to refer to the traditional alternation of *negotium/otium* and instead uses the formulaic defense of *otium* as a polemic against Caesar's dictatorship. As Luciani 2010: 67 also points out, in the works of 45, Cicero's discussion of *otium* becomes a site for the debates surrounding the *genera vitae*. Cf. Kretschmar 1938; Boyancé 1941 and 1967. I return to these questions in Ch. 4.

philosophical inquiry as “quotidian”—that is, both so common as to be “everyday” occurrences and literarily structured around a division of days into morning and afternoon discussions.<sup>24</sup> *Solitudo* and *sermo* become nearly interchangeable through parallel pronominal use: “In it [*solitudo*] all my speech is with books, although weeping interrupts it [*sermo*]” (*in ea mihi omnis sermo est cum litteris. eum tamen interpellat fletus*). Any “interruption” (*interpellat*) of this solitary life, which used to be threatened from without (*nisi paulum interpellasset Amyntae filius*, XII.9), can now only come from within. *Sermo* can be replaced by “weeping” (*fletus*), but this does not disturb the essential solitude. *Solitudo* has come to define Cicero’s experience and mindset, his compositional process and philosophical goal; it is both a necessary condition for his literary production as well as the very object of his work.

Cicero reemphasizes his pursuit of solitude in two letters from the end of the sequence written from Astura. In response to a request from Atticus that he return to Rome, the still-grieving orator responds, “But, as you say, my house is the forum. What good is that house to me if I lack the forum? I am dead, dead I say, Atticus, and have been so for a long time, but I am only now admitting it after losing the one thing I was clinging to. And so, I seek solitudes...” (*sed domus est, ut ais, forum. quid ipsa domo mihi opus est carenti foro? occidimus, occidimus, Attice, iam pridem nos quidem, sed nunc fatemur, postea quam unum quo tenebamur amisimus.*

---

<sup>24</sup> See esp., the organization of *Tusc.*, e.g., 1.8, *Dierum quinque scholas, ut Graeci appellant, identidem libros contuli*. Cf., e.g., 3.7, *Ut enim in Acedemiam nostram descendimus inclinatio iam in postmeridianum tempus die*. See Luciani 2010: 64, “Cette ‘temporalisation’ de la philosophie permet de garantir son intégration dans la cité: insérés dans le cours naturel du temps par le biais de la scénographie, les entretiens de Tusculum se veulent une actualisation de la méthode socratique.” Luciani refers to “la cité,” despite the fact that Cicero’s dialogues are invariably set in country or suburban estates, because this claim is part of her argument that the dialogues of 45 should be understood as a protreptic call to his fellow Romans to engage in philosophical activity as an antidote to authoritarianism. This argument has become widespread in recent work on the *philosophica*; see, e.g., Gildenhard 2007 *passim*; Fox 2007: 67; Baraz 2012 *passim*. Thus, “la cité” is less a geographic location and more of a reference to the political collective.

*itaque solitudines sequor...*, XII.23[263]). “I seek solitudes” (*solitudines sequor*) defines the task that Cicero sets for himself in his grief at the loss of both his political position (*forum*) and his daughter (*domus*)<sup>25</sup>—and as a philosopher.<sup>26</sup> A few days after this pronouncement, Cicero responds testily to Atticus’ reports of public maligning of his grief by saying that at this time he is unable to enjoy the company of even *so noble* a friend as Nicias of Cos.<sup>27</sup> He writes that a complete break separates him from his former life as a public figure: “solitude and retirement are now my province” (*sed mihi solitudo et recessus provincia est*, XII.26[265]).

Although Cicero occasionally uses the word *provincia* in a general sense to mean “occupation” or “duty,”<sup>28</sup> it typically has a quasi-technical sense, referring to the purview of a foreign governorship. In the late Republican period, *provinciae* were sources of contention and tools of the ruling factions in their political maneuvering. The Senate sometimes granted provinces to former consuls as an excuse to remove them from Rome when they had gained too

---

<sup>25</sup> On the consistent association in the letters of this period between Tullia and Cicero’s *domus* in contrast to the *forum* as a metonym for public life, see esp. *ad Fam.* IV.6(249), “I am not able now, as in the past when my home received me in sadness from service to the Republic and lightened my sorrow, to flee in my gloom from my home to the Republic so that I might find a haven in its benefits. And so I am absent at home and in the forum because home cannot console the pain inflicted on me from the Republic and the Republic cannot console the pain inflicted on me at home” (*non enim, ut tum me a re publica maestum domus excipiebat, quae levaret, sic nunc domo maerens ad rem publicam confugere possum, ut in eius bonis adquiescam. itaque et domo absum et foro, quod nec eum dolorem quem de re publica capio, domus iam consolari potest nec domesticum res publica*). This letter and the trope is discussed in detail below, Ch. 3, section II. It is interesting to note, however, that Cicero reserves his elaborations on *solitudo* for Atticus. The word does not appear in the epistles of *ad Fam.* from this period.

<sup>26</sup> I return in Ch. 2 to the resonances between this formulation and the ways in which Cicero frames the Academic skeptical approach to philosophical inquiry as a “pursuit” (*sequi*). And, in Ch. 3, I consider fully the role that grief plays in this philosophical project.

<sup>27</sup> Likely a grammarian and textual critic to whom Cicero refers at two other times in the letters (*Fam.* IX.10[217]; *Att.* VII.3[126]). The self-defensive tone of the latter of these two lends more than a possibility of sarcasm to XII.26.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., *Pro Sul.* 52, *tum tuus pater, Corneli, id quod tandem aliquando confitetur, illam sibi officiosam provinciam depoposcit...*

much influence; yet the embattled systems of assigning *provinciae* invited significant abuse and, in the case of Caesar, played a vital part in his ultimate monopolization of power.<sup>29</sup> The pairing of *provincia* with *recessus* produces a further complexity. In almost every other instance where Cicero uses *recessus*, it appears with its antonym, *accessus*.<sup>30</sup> If we understand this technical sense of *provincia*, therefore, the phrase *solitudo et recessus provincia est* combines, under the rubric of *solitudo*, an ironically antithetical combination of senses: a withdrawal that is also a formally assigned duty; a fraught retirement from which Cicero must still carry out important and necessary tasks; a place of forced exile out of which a “rise” (*accessus*) may still be possible—but at what cost to himself and to his country?

It has become widely accepted in the scholarship on Cicero’s *philosophica* of 45-44 BCE that the former consul writes a “republic of letters” as a textualization of the *Res Publica* that was lost in the upheaval of the first half of the 1st century BCE.<sup>31</sup> This reading emphasizes above all the political function of the texts as statements of opposition to Caesar’s dictatorship.<sup>32</sup> This

---

<sup>29</sup> See Cicero’s own speech on the topic, *de Prov. Consul.*, which is concerned specifically with the issue of the renewal of Caesar’s governorship of Gaul in 56 BCE and is filled with anecdotes about the abuse of power that proconsular governors visited on their provinces; on this complex speech, see esp. Grillo 2015. On Caesar’s Gallic command in particular, see Balsdon 1939 and 1939a; Ridley 1981; Drogula 2015: 232-344.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., *Div.* 2.34 where the “rise and fall of the seas are governed by the movement of the moon” (*quorum accessus et recessus lunae motu gubernantur*). Cf. *Nat. De.* 2.49, 3.24, *Fam.* IX.14(326). In the only exception, aside from the present instance, it serves as a synonym for *latebrae*, meaning “hiding places” (*Sed tamen cum in animis hominum tantae latebrae sint et tanti recessus, augeamus sane suspicionem tuam, Pro Marc.* 22).

<sup>31</sup> This currently popular opinion is based upon the work of a series of German scholars, who have focused especially on the *Tusculans*. See Bringmann 1971; Strasburger 1990; Wassmann 1996; and Lefèvre 2008. For a critical consideration of the historicist roots of this position, see Altman 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Goldenhard 2007: 276 articulates this widely held scholarly position that, the *philosophica*, and in particular the *Tusculan Disputations*, “are a most determined effort by Cicero to *scribere πολιτεία*ς. On the (related) critical principles of economy and benevolence, an interpretation of the dialogue that foregrounds political and pedagogic aspects yields the most satisfying results...Read as an effort to

literary edifice, which is the product of the *otium* that was compelled upon Cicero by Caesar's ascendancy, is considered a relatively straightforward stand-in for the political *negotium* that the former consul had previously privileged morally and performed enthusiastically.<sup>33</sup> Cicero's repeated insistence in the prefaces to the *philosophica* that through his project he aims to remain beneficial to his countrymen even in the midst of his forced retirement supports this argument that we should understand his literary endeavors under Caesar as "politics by other means."<sup>34</sup>

Yet Cicero also claims in these letters of February and March 45, which were written at the very moments when, still emotionally raw from the death of Tullia, he is articulating the purpose of his intellectual labor,<sup>35</sup> that his pursuit is isolation (*sequor solitudines*) and his *provincia* is *solitudo*. The finality of these claims should lead us to consider the possibility that, rather than proposing literary *otium* as a simple stand-in for political *negotium*, Cicero's ethical dialogues record and advocate for a redefinition of the terms by which the philosopher measures his current endeavors and the previous political activity of his life. The social and political conditions of Caesar's dictatorship had invalidated the traditional distinction between and moral

---

reckon intelligently with the realities of tyranny, the dialogue will sparkle and testify to the genius of Cicero's political and literary imagination." Baraz 2012 pushes this argument to the extreme; see e.g., 9, "[Under Caesar], Cicero was forced into inactivity, and the virtual disappearance of the political system that had been a central concern of his life left him distraught. Writing, and the writing of philosophy in particular, became not a facet of his political life, but rather an alternate way of being in politics, a substitution that he struggled to construct as viable." On this position further, see below Ch. 4, part II.

<sup>33</sup> Görler 1990 provides a helpful label for scholarly approaches that characterize Cicero's philosophy as "politics by other means": the *Ersatzbeschäftigung* thesis (158).

<sup>34</sup> Cicero repeatedly refers in the prefaces to the pedagogic intent of his *philosophica*: see, e.g., *de Fin.* 1.2, 1.10, 3.6; and esp., *Tusc.* 1.7, 2.4-5. On the organization of the entire *Tusculans* as a catechistic narrative, see Gildenhard 2007: 207-75.

<sup>35</sup> See e.g., Marinone's dating of the so-called *volumen proemiorum* to February 45 (2004: 213). There are significant scholarly difficulties in handling this supposed "book of books," attested only in the late *Att.* XVI.6(414), but the debate around its dating offers a useful barometer for the point at which Cicero began to think of his new philosophical writings as a unified whole.



evaluation of *negotium* and *otium*; if we, therefore, posit a new term, *solitudo*, as animating Cicero's philosophy at its very origins, we find him engaged in a process of critique and revision both of the dominant ideology of the Roman elite and his own participation in a status quo that had brought about its own demise.<sup>36</sup> *Solitudo* is at once a personal refuge, a point from which to reckon with his former life, a place of mourning for the death of his daughter and collapse of his country, and a site from which to carry out the duties to come—which will not be the same as those of the past. *Solitudo* embraces both the failures of the present as well as the potentialities that arise from that failure. To inhabit and expand this *solitudo* becomes Cicero's goal, and this shift marks a profound awareness of the shortcomings of the categories of traditional Roman thought and a need to reinvigorate them through philosophical endeavor.

### III. The Solitude of the Academy

In the sections that follow, I examine how Cicero writes his experience of solitude at Astura into the form and content of *de Finibus bonorum et malorum*, one of the first ethical works that he began writing there following Tullia's death.<sup>37</sup> As I consider in detail in the next section, this multi-volume work consists of arguments and counter-arguments concerning the

---

<sup>36</sup> See esp. Habinek 1994 for the argument that Cicero's dialogues are not simply "reflective" of their historical juncture but are "constitutive of [their] political and social context" (66 n.5). Cf. Lotito 1981. Whereas Habinek's short essay on this topic focuses on how Cicero's dialogues—especially looking forward to *de Officiis*—might be understood as "the cornerstone of the imperial *pax Romana*" (55), I would like to hold this conclusion in abeyance. Throughout this project, my aim has been to restore a measure of unevenness to our understanding of Cicero's life and work. Thus, if we restrict our own interpretation diachronically, we can find a proliferation of constitutive possibilities in the temporal and historical failure through which Cicero writes, rather than a foreclosed conclusion. On this failure, see below, Ch. 4.

<sup>37</sup> More accurately, this work is the first fully extant dialogue *completed* in 45. It was written at roughly the same time as the *Lucullus*, but that dialogue was almost immediately submitted to total revision; see below, Ch. 2, section IV. See Marinone 2004 for dating, cf. Bringmann 1971: 93-138.

relationship between the origins and “ends” of life.<sup>38</sup> The skeptical *divisio* that organizes this debate proposes and ultimately rejects three different theories concerning the nature of the continuity that unites a human life (*vita*). The exposition of these arguments takes place in a series of retrospective and autobiographical settings that juxtapose a philosophical perspective with different moments from Cicero’s life. In this section I contend specifically that, by dramatizing the debate of the fifth book in the *solitudo* of the Academy, Cicero renders his own experience in the world of the dialogue. Through this interaction between form and content, experience and philosophy, the text as a whole approaches the duration of a life not as a seamless succession but through the spectral resonance between discontinuous moments of cessation and withdrawal across time.

The anomalousness of the final book of *de Fin.* marks it as of programmatic importance for this work and for Cicero’s philosophy more generally. The book begins, atypically for the introduction of a new dialogue, without a preface.<sup>39</sup> The choice of personae and setting also differs from the debates that make up books 1/2 and 3/4. Books 1 and 2 are staged at Cicero’s Cumaean villa in 50 BCE, just before the beginning of the Caesarian civil war. The main interlocutor, Lucius Manlius Torquatus, who had been a Pompeian partisan, was killed in 48. Books 3 and 4 creep slightly further into the past: 52 at Lucullus’ Tusculan estate. The

---

<sup>38</sup> The work is divided into five books comprised of three dialogues: books 1 and 2 on Epicureanism between L. Torquatus and Cicero; books 2 and 3 on Stoicism between Cato Minor and Cicero; and book 5 on Antiochus’ philosophical synthesis. The content of these dialogues is concerned with the structure of a lifetime (*status vitae*, 2.45) and the forms of continuity that unite the origins and ends of life. I consider this point in detail below, sections IV and V.

<sup>39</sup> Both book 1 and book 3, each of which begins a new diptych, commence with an extensive prologue (1.1-13; 3.1-7)—a pattern that would lead us to expect a similar introduction to book 5. Many readers have also remarked on the absence of a book 6 which would contain Cicero’s refutation of the Antiochean version of Academic philosophy presented by Piso *à la* books 2 and 4. On these and other oddities of the literary structure of *de Fin.* see esp., Giaccotti 1959 and Dörrie 1978.

interlocutor of these books, Cato the Younger, died only a year prior to the time of writing, in April 46.<sup>40</sup> In the final dialogue of book 5, however, none of the participants is particularly partisan and the setting—79 BCE in Athens—seems distant from the political fracas of the Caesarian era.<sup>41</sup> Cicero closes his first ethical dialogue, therefore, not amid the still pressing turmoil of the recent past, but in a time and place that could appear to be far removed from the present, even in an idealized rendering of his own youth.

Far from simple nostalgia, however, Cicero revisits this particular past self at this moment in time as part of his quest for solitude: when the group of young Romans arrive at the Academy, they find “the solitude [they] had wanted” (*solitudo erat ea quam volueramus*, 5.1). Cicero retrojects this series of dialogues onto his past selves in order to reckon with the duration of his own *vita*. Yet the disjointed nature of the work articulates a lifetime not as a seamless experience of continuity, but as punctuated throughout by moments of withdrawal, contemplation, and conversation.<sup>42</sup> As the letters express personally, *de Finibus* represents philosophically an understanding of solitude as a momentary cessation in the unfolding of life, which both severs the present from the past and gives the past its duration and meaning.

Cicero’s reminiscence of his youthful journey to Athens begins with a litany of proper names. This framing device establishes relationships not only between the speakers and places

---

<sup>40</sup> On the significance of the setting of books 3/4, see Frampton 2016, who focuses more on the *mise-en-scène*—a library—than the time. On the choice of Pompeian partisans as *dramatis personae* see Strasburger 1990: 41-43.

<sup>41</sup> Yet a reader alert to the recent political history of Rome knows that there is, in fact, a direct connection between the dictatorship of Caesar in 45 and the situation in 79 during Sulla’s brutal rule. Plutarch even tells us that Cicero traveled to Athens less out of a desire for a *Bildungsreise* and more out of fear of Sulla. He did not return to Rome until after Sulla had died (*Cic.* 3-4).

<sup>42</sup> This retrospective disjointedness differs significantly from Cicero’s other multivolume works of the period (*Ac. Lib.*, *Tusc.*, *Nat. De.*, *Div.* etc.), all of which move forward in time and take place on contiguous days.

within the world of the dialogue, but also their connection to the time and situation of the text's composition:

Cum audissem Antiochum, Brute, ut solebam, cum M. Pisone in eo gymnasio quod Ptolemaeum vocatur, unaque nobiscum Q. frater et T. Pomponius Luciusque Cicero, frater noster cognatione patruelis, amore germanus, constituimus inter nos ut ambulationem postmeridianam conficeremus in Academia, maxime quod is locus ab omni turba id temporis vacuus esset. Itaque ad tempus ad Pisonem omnes. Inde vario sermone sex illa a Dipylo stadia confecimus. Cum autem venissemus in Academiae non sine causa nobilitata spatia, solitudo erat ea quam volueramus.

After I had listened to Antiochus, dear Brutus, as I was accustomed to, along with Marcus Piso in the gymnasium that is called the Ptolemaeum, together with my brother Quintus and Titus Pomponius and Lucius Cicero, who was by relation my first cousin, but by affection my brother, we all decided among ourselves that we should take an afternoon stroll to the Academy, especially because at this time the place is free from any crowd. We all gathered at Piso's at the appointed time and passed the six stadia from the Dipylon gate in varied conversation. And, when we arrived in the justifiably renowned space of the Academy, we found the solitude that we had wanted.<sup>43</sup>

Following a spare setting and a single vocative, *Brute*, as dedication, Cicero succinctly introduces a cast of characters among whom, from the perspective of the time of composition, the living mingle with the dead. Marcus Pupius Piso Frugi, who died just a few years prior to the writing, had been perhaps a decade older than Cicero. Consequently, during their time in Athens, Piso had played the host. In the intervening years, however, the two had become political rivals and, it seems, never reconciled before Piso's death.<sup>44</sup> Lucius Cicero, although the youngest of the group, had died first, less than 10 years after the fictional date under apparently tragic circumstances.<sup>45</sup> Cicero's perennially rocky relationship with his brother, Quintus, had barely recovered at the time of composition from its low point during the Caesarian civil war and

---

<sup>43</sup> *De Fin.* 5.1.

<sup>44</sup> On their turbulent relationship see, e.g., *ad Att.* I.13(13), 14(14), 16(16), etc.; cf. *Brut.* 240, 310.

<sup>45</sup> See *Att.* I.5(1).

continued to be a source of tension due to financial issues and political disagreement.<sup>46</sup> Most marked of all these names is Titus Pomponius, an individual better known as “Atticus.” Cicero’s decision to name his best friend not with his cognomen, but with his family name is owed to an attention to historical consistency—after all, in 79, Atticus was not yet Atticus. But the choice also emphasizes the retrospection of the dialogue and Cicero’s awareness of his own belated removal from the period into which he writes his fictionalized persona. He is looking back on a lifetime that has already come to a close.<sup>47</sup>

The collection and naming of these friends and family members enacts a specific kind of commemoration that differs from the political martyrization of the preceding books. Whereas the presence of Cato and Torquatus owes its impact to the concerns, shared by many of Cicero’s readers, of the current political situation, these names—Piso, Lucius, Quintus, and Pomponius—take on their meaning through their relationship to Cicero’s personal, even interiorized life. By naming the living among the dead and the dead among the living, Cicero creates a fictional space through which, to use a Derridean turn of phrase, the proper name “remains”—that is, it stands in for and survives the deceased, but at the same time exists only as a remainder, and a reminder

---

<sup>46</sup> On the aftermath of the civil war and its effect on their relationship, see esp. *Att.* XI.5(216) and despite a thaw in 47-6, the dissolution of both brothers’ marriages and financial trouble once again chilled their relationship: see, e.g., XIII.39(342); XIV.13(367).

<sup>47</sup> Cicero explicitly makes this connection in the opening of *de Senectute*, a dialogue deeply invested in their friendship and its connection to the duration of their lifetime together; see §1, “I know that you brought back from Athens not only a cognomen, but humanity and wisdom as well” (*teque non cognomen solum Athenis deportasse, sed humanitatem et prudentiam intellego*); see below, Ch. 4, section IV. On the related use of the name in the correspondence, see Cappello 2016: 466-67, “The cognomen ‘Atticus’ denotes more than the informal register Cicero used to address his friend. The nickname functions as a reminder of Atticus’s intellectual and social pedigree, as well as highlighting the role he plays in the correspondence.” Cappello traces the use of Atticus as an appellation in the letters, which does not become common until the late 50s, but is prefigured by various forms of word play that link Titus Pomponius with Greece and the Greek ideal.

that the individual will never again answer to that name “except through what we mysteriously call our memory.”<sup>48</sup>

After a stroll spent in “varied conversation” (*vario sermone*) from Piso’s lodging and through the Dipylon gate, the group arrives at “the justifiably renowned space of the Academy” (*in Academiae non sine causa nobilitata spatia*) to find it exactly as they had hoped: deserted of local activity and, possibly, still dilapidated from Sulla’s sack of the city in 86. The interpretative crux of the phrase *solitudo erat ea quam volueramus* is, strikingly, the word *solitudo*. In this context, the word has been understood to mean either temporary “emptiness” or more permanent “desolation.”<sup>49</sup> With an eye to the archaeological implications of Cicero’s description, John Gucker emphasizes the continuity of urban use that Cicero’s interest in the monuments of the Academy demonstrates: “Despite the destruction of the groves by Sulla only a few years earlier (Plut. *Sulla* XII; Appian *Mithr.* 30), the gymnasium itself does not appear to have been entirely demolished. The *solitudo* which Cicero speaks of need not mean more than what we are told by Cicero himself: *quod is locus ab omni turba id temporis vacuus esset*. In the early afternoon, the Athenians had their customary *siesta*, and only ‘mad dogs and Romans’ would stroll in the midday sun.”<sup>50</sup> Gucker assimilates the Romans to a group of British colonists braving the afternoon heat while the “natives” take their “customary *siesta*.”<sup>51</sup> Discomfiting and potentially

---

<sup>48</sup> Derrida 1988: 48, “At the moment of death the proper name remains; through it we can name, call, invoke, designate, but we know, we can *think* (and this thought cannot be reduced to mere memory, though it comes from memory) that...the bearer of the name and the unique pole of all these acts, these references, will never again answer to it, never himself answer, never again except through what we mysteriously call our memory.”

<sup>49</sup> The debate is summed up between Gucker 1978 and Dörrie 1978.

<sup>50</sup> Gucker 1978: 242 with n.66.

<sup>51</sup> Gucker here refers to Noël Coward’s originally satirical quip (after Kipling), “Only mad-dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.”

apt comparisons aside, Glucker’s argument ignores the more surreal aspects of Cicero’s interest in the Academy—the living presence of dead philosophers<sup>52</sup> who appear among the monuments. Cicero is perhaps more interested in *l’esprit de lieu* than in the physical remains of the place themselves. Furthermore, Glucker’s insistence on the modern colonial resonance<sup>53</sup> of the scene only reaffirms the importance of Sulla’s recent devastation of Athens in the war against Mithridates.<sup>54</sup> What does it mean for a group of young Romans to explore an area of the city that their fellow countryman had “ravaged” (ἔκειρε) only a few years prior? How does this geopolitical state of affairs in 79 BCE relate to Cicero’s stated purpose in *de Fin.* of rendering the Greek tradition of philosophy “in Latin letters” in the mid-40s?<sup>55</sup> Although Glucker may be correct to imagine the Academy’s monuments that Cicero visited as a young man in 79 BCE as largely intact, the political significance of the Sullan devastation and the manifold connotations of *solitudo* argue against a primarily archaeological significance for the opening of *de Fin.* 5.

---

<sup>52</sup> See below.

<sup>53</sup> The colonialist valence of Glucker’s reading is strengthened by the fact that the only piece of positive evidence in support of his *siesta* hypothesis is a quote (242 n.66) from the French/Greek philologist Jean/Ioannis Psichari/Psychari’s *To ταξίδι μου* (*My Journey*, originally published in 1888). Although Glucker presents this story as a simple comparandum, Psichari’s complex relationship to modern Greek national identity should not be overlooked in such an offhand reference. For a brief biographical sketch, see Orgeolet 1978.

<sup>54</sup> Or at least the “lower” sections of the city. According to Plutarch, Sulla’s destruction amounted primarily to a pillaging of cultural goods and treasures, with the stated exception of the suburban areas of the Academy and the Lyceum: “And when timber began to fail, owing to the destruction of many of the works, which broke down of their own weight, and to the burning of those which were continually smitten by the enemy’s fire-bolts, he laid hands upon the sacred groves, and ravaged the Academy, which was the most wooded of the city’s suburbs, as well as the Lyceum” (ἐπλειπούσης δὲ τῆς ὕλης διὰ τὸ κόπτεσθαι πολλὰ τῶν ἔργων περικλώμενα τοῖς αὐτῶν βρίθῃσι καὶ πυρπολεῖσθαι βαλλόμενα συνεχῶς ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων, ἐπεχείρησε τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἄλσεσι, καὶ τὴν τε Ακαδημειαν ἔκειρε δενδροφορωτάτην προαστείων οὐσαν καὶ τὸ Λύκειον, *Sulla* 12.3; trans. Perrin).

<sup>55</sup> *De Fin.* 1.1: *cum quae summis ingeniis exquisitaque doctrina philosophi Graeco sermone tractavissent ea Latinis litteris mandaremus...*

Following a more literary approach to this passage, Heinrich Dörrie argues that the Academy of Cicero's recollection is deeply fragmented. This fragmentation is both physical—Dörrie puts more stock than Glucker in the ancient descriptions of Sulla's destruction of Athens and its relevance for the disused state in which the Roman groups finds the Academy<sup>56</sup>—as well as philosophical. In 89, three years prior to Sulla's sack of the city, Athens had sided openly with Mithridates in rebellion against Rome. At that point, the leading philosophers of the Academy—Antiochus and Philo—had departed from the city to different places of exile.<sup>57</sup> The leaders of the Academy were thus not only away from Athens during the crucial early months of 86 during the Sullan bombardment, but, also, as Dörrie says, “Diese Jahre räumlicher Trennung führten zu tiefer Entfremdung zwischen den beiden Akademikern.”<sup>58</sup> And, although Antiochus returns to Athens following the end of open conflict, this intellectual “Entfremdung” produces a schism in the history of Academic thought: “Das war kein ‘bloß akademischer’ Streit; sondern nach der

---

<sup>56</sup> See esp. 1978: 212, “Am alten Ort war es nicht mehr möglich zu unterrichten. Die Gebäude waren zerstört—und mit diesen war die Bibliothek, welche die schriftliche Hinterlassenschaft namentlich der Schüler Platons enthalten hatte, vernichtet.” Dörrie overstates his argument concerning the uniqueness of the library since, at least as far as the edition of Plato was concerned, copies were readily available to those wishing to pay for them since at least the scholarchy of Arcesilaus. See D.L. III.66 and IV.32 along with Wilamowitz 1920: 224; Solmsen 1981.

<sup>57</sup> Philo to Rome, where Cicero studied with him and where he died in 84/3, and Antiochus to Alexandria. For Cicero's own account of this exile and the “end of the Academy,” see *Brut.* 306. On the biography and thought of these two important and controversial scholars, see Brittain 2001 for Philo and Sedley ed. 2012 for Antiochus. Glucker 1978 also discusses this philosophical/political situation, but with rather different conclusions; see, 15-45, where he argues that Antiochus had already separated from the Philonian Academy by the time of their respective exiles (c. 87); as a corrective to this position, see Polito 2012, who argues that Antiochus' “secession” is better understood as “an internal—albeit perverse—development of scepticism. He put forward the argument that to claim everything is inapprehensible presupposes apprehension at least of this very claim” (32). In the context of my work, I am less interested in the historicity of these philosophical developments than in Cicero's representation of them.

<sup>58</sup> 1978: 212.



Katastrophe 89-86 war ein völliger Neubeginn erforderlich geworden.”<sup>59</sup> In fact, the very first words (*Cum audissem Antiochum...ut solebam in eo gymnasio quod Ptolemaeum vocatur*) of *de Finibus* recall this Academic schism—or, better, the end of the Academy as a continuous institution. Antiochus, the leader of the resurrected “Old” Academy, delivers his lectures not in the school’s ancestral home, but in a building, the Ptolemaic gymnasium, which lay at the busy heart of Athens’ *agora*.<sup>60</sup>

With a full appreciation of this political and historical context, we can understand better the programmatic quality of the opening of *de Fin.* 5. In the wake of the fragmentation of the late Academy, this group of young Romans conducts a pilgrimage to the site of its past unity.<sup>61</sup> Rather than discovering a univocal Academic tradition, however, they find evidence of both continuity and discontinuity, tradition and innovation. In this fractured and temporally layered setting, Cicero dramatizes the transformation of Greek philosophy “in Latin letters” as a potential avenue for the continued development of Academic thought, which embraces both the importance of its past and its potential for adaption and change.

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.: 213; cf. *Luc.* 11-14 for Cicero’s own discussion of this “Neubeginn.” See Polito 2012: 34 for a more cautious, but generally complementary appraisal of the same evidence: “Antiochus’ school neither had an institutionalized form comparable to the Academy nor, relatedly, was meant to compete with it but rather sought to take over its legacy at a time when the Academy itself was no longer active.”

<sup>60</sup> On the archaeological location and use of the Ptolemaeum, see Thompson 1966: 40-48.

<sup>61</sup> Antiochus’ resurrection of the “Old” Academy as a synthesis of several related philosophical traditions is contingent, at least in his argumentation, on the historical existence of a unified Academy. Yet, from the time of Plato, there was both a spatial fragmentation—with Aristotle’s choice to “walk” in a different place than Plato—and periods of temporal return—for instance, Arcesilaus’ decision to turn back the clock from Polemo to Plato. There was in antiquity a strong awareness, which Cicero clearly shares, of the fragmented and contentious nature of Academic philosophy and various attempts at reconstruction: see, e.g., the fragment of Hermippos on the conflict between Xenocrates and Aristotle, F 33 = D.L. V.2-3 with the commentary in Bollandseé 1999: 52-69.

Yet, beyond these considerations of Cicero's self-positioning within Academic history, how should the group's *desire* for the place to be deserted be understood (*solitudo erat ea quam volueramus*)? They had decided to visit the Academy in the early afternoon precisely when "it would be free of any crowd" (*maxime quod is locus ab omni turba id temporis vacuus esset*).<sup>62</sup> The narrator gives no indication of the composition or purpose of this *turba*—it is simply their absence that is sought by the Romans.<sup>63</sup> If we, then, also draw in the complex associations that *solitudo* possessed for Cicero at the time of composition and the opposition between *solitudo* and *celebritas*, familiar from the letters, that seems to be at work in the dialogue also, the *solitudo* of the Academy begins to look like the windswept *solitudo* of Astura. Just as Cicero seeks solitude at Astura away from the *celebritas* of Rome, the group of Romans desires to find a desolate Academy free from the bustle of the city (*turba*). Unlike Antiochus, who forsakes the solitude of the Academy to look for activity and purpose in the current heart of the city, Cicero and his friends embrace the space of contemplation and conversation afforded by the perfect *solitudo* that they desire and enjoy in the Academy. In addition to a subtle critique of Antiochus' philosophical activities, therefore, the group's desire for solitude renders Cicero's personal pursuit of solitude within the world of the dialogue. In the letters from Astura, his solitude enables him to converse with long-dead authors by means of their books (*in ea [solitudine] mihi*

---

<sup>62</sup> For Dörrie, this desire reflects the Romans' *curiositas*—a *vis admonitionis* (*Fin.* 5.2) that drives Cicero and the others to visit the site of the Academy in the same way that Greek worshippers traveled to shrines of heroes or modern tourists embark on their own "pilgrimages" (see esp. 1978: 219). Dörrie thus arrives at a conclusion not dissimilar to Glucker's, although he expands Glucker's figure of the British colonist to a "curiosity seeker," who is driven to visit sites of cultural or religious significance in search of the enlightenment that such travel promises.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Polito 2012: 36, "Either Piso [*sic*] is implying that the current lecturer is unworthy of his popularity, or, more likely, there are no ongoing lectures to attend there, and the crowd that gathers in the area does so for other and non-philosophical purposes."

*omnis sermo est cum litteris*, Att. XII.15). In the fictional manifestation of this solitudinous state of mind, the *solitudo* of the Academy enacts the conditions for a spectral interaction between present and past. It sets the stage for the arrival of the revenant.

Piso's first remarks make clear that, in fact, the group's purpose in visiting the Academy is not so much sight-seeing as specter-seeking:

Tum Piso: "Naturane nobis hoc," inquit, "datum dicam an errore quodam, ut, cum ea loca videamus, in quibus memoria dignos viros acceperimus multum esse versatos, magis moveamur, quam si quando eorum ipsorum aut facta audiamus aut scriptum aliquod legamus? Velut ego nunc moveor. Venit enim mihi Platonis in mentem, quem acceperimus primum hic disputare solitum; cuius etiam illi hortuli propinqui non memoriam solum mihi afferunt, sed ipsum videntur in conspectu meo ponere. Hic Speusippus, hic Xenocrates, hic eius auditor Polemo, cuius illa ipsa sessio fuit, quam videmus. Equidem etiam curiam nostram—Hostiliam dico, non hanc novam, quae minor mihi esse videtur, posteaquam est maior—solebam intuens Scipionem, Catonem, Laelium, nostrum vero in primis avum cogitare; tanta vis admonitionis inest in locis; ut non sine causa ex iis memoriae ducta sit disciplina."

Then Piso said, "Is it due to our nature or a certain error, I wonder, that, when we see the places in which, by our recollection, we have been told famous men used to spend their time, we are moved more than when we hear about their deeds or read their writing? I am now moved in just this way. For something of Plato comes to my mind, who, we are told, first used to hold discussion here; indeed, those nearby gardens not only bring his memory to me, but seem to place the man himself before my eyes. Here Speusippus, here Xenocrates, here his student Polemo, whose very sitting-place it is that we see. Likewise, our *curia*—I mean the *curia Hostilia*, not the new one, which seems smaller to me after its expansion—there I used to reflect gazing on Scipio, Cato, Laelius, and most of all my grandfather. Such a power of reminding is in places that it is not without reason that the methodical training of memory is based on them."<sup>64</sup>

Piso punningly relates the evocative power of physical places (*loci*) to the *topoi* of Greek mnemonics. In this bilingual wordplay, Piso affirms a connection between place and memory, but decidedly not a mnemonic one.<sup>65</sup> In particular, he recalls the familiar experience of

---

<sup>64</sup> *De Fin.* 5.2.

<sup>65</sup> For the influences of memory in this passage, see Marconi 1994; on Cicero and memory more generally, see, e.g., Jaeger 2002; Pieper 2014.

remembering something from one's past—in this case, the *curia Hostilia*—as having been “larger” than it is presently. This distorting effect of memory on place is only enhanced by the subsequent destruction and re-construction of the *curia* so that its old form can *only* exist in memory. Furthermore, Piso's naming of this building is already submerged in a temporal conflation: for many readers of Cicero's text, the destruction of the *curia Hostilia* calls to mind the dramatic events of 53 BCE when a building by this name was used as a funeral pyre for Cicero's political archenemy, Clodius. Due to Cicero's attention to historical consistency elsewhere in the passage, however, it is unlikely that this is a simple instance of anachronism. Rather, as Madvig proposes, the building that Piso refers to as the *curia Hostilia* existed prior to Sulla's dictatorship, when it was renovated.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, however, it is equally hard not to imagine that Cicero invites a conflation of these events. Like the use of names in the opening of the dialogue, Piso's commemoration is a recollection of a remnant: naming and memory restores to life, often in a greater form than it ever materially possessed, a fragment of a deceased time, creating in experience a temporal palimpsest.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Madvig 1877: ad loc., “Notat Gzius Ciceronis errorem, qui Pisonem inducat curiae Hostiliae deflagrationem significantem, quam multis annis post in P. Clodii funere accidisse notissimum sit; et tum demum Faustum Sullam ex SCto novam splendorem extruxisse. In eadem sententia ceteros fuisse puto; certe recentiores sunt omnes. Verum in ipso exordio, ubi Cicero sermonis olim habiti formam et occasionem fingit veterumque temporum memoriam et amorem fratris patruelis amissi renovat, non potuit ita oblivione implicari; facillimeque res expeditur. *Hostiliam* enim proprie appellat eam curiam, quae fuit ante L. Sullam dictatorem, in qua Scipio, Cato, Laelius sententias dixerant, *novam* autem, quam Sulla, vetere mutata et amplificata, fecerat uno aut altero anno ante, quam hic sermo haberi fingitur (a. 81 aut 80).”

<sup>67</sup> Through Piso's comparison between the *curia Hostilia*—a place that no longer exists—and the Academy—a place whose existence is in dispute—Cicero may also be drawing attention to the potentially distorting effects of his own recollection. Can he trust his memory of his friendships with the other participants? The apparently profound significance of this particular afternoon? The out-of-time experiences that he records?

In addition to these distorting and palimpsestic effects of memory, Piso specifies further that in some places—especially the nearby “Gardens” of Plato and the old *curia Hostilia* at Rome—memory is overcome by involuntary sight: the *hortuli* “not only only bring [Plato’s] memory to me, but *seem to place the man himself before my eyes*,” while the old *curia* building, prior to its renovation, allowed Piso to “gaze upon (*intuens*) Scipio, Cato, Laelius, and [his] grandfather.” These places owe something of their power to traditional knowledge. The repetition of the verb *accipere* marks a heritage associated with these sites that has been handed down over generations.<sup>68</sup> Yet the ultimate effect of the Academy and the *curia Hostilia* on Piso is not comfortably encompassed by the concept of “tradition” any more than it can be simply a function of memory.<sup>69</sup> The phrase *hortuli...ipsum videntur in conspectu meo ponere* adapts a common Latin idiom for seeing or considering unreal phenomena (e.g., a dream) to stress, instead, the very presence of the long-dead Plato.<sup>70</sup> By placing the *hortuli* as the subject, Piso’s utterance blurs the boundary between reality and spectrality. The apparently “real” gardens make manifest *ipsum*—emphatically, demonstratively Plato himself—in the path of Piso’s visual

---

<sup>68</sup> Cf. the common idiom *a maioribus sic accepimus* vel sim., e.g., at Cic. *In Q. Caec.* 61.6, *In Verr.* 2.5.145, *Pro Clu.* 159.15, *Tusc.* 1.3.

<sup>69</sup> Note the relationship between these cultural and individual forms of recollection that is disclosed by Piso’s framing of his experience: “when we see the places in which, by our recollection (*memoria*), we have been told (*accepimus*) famous men used to spend their time...”

<sup>70</sup> For Cicero’s use of the idiom *videor mihi* + inf. in relation to fantasy, see, e.g., his claim at *Luc.* 74, “I seem to have lived with [Socrates and Plato]” (*vixisse cum eis equidem videor*). The phrase is often used in his letters to express the uncertainty of a sense-perception or the impossibility of verifying a thought; consider e.g., the ambivalence of the phrase in the letter to Nigidius Figulus (*ad Fam.* IV.13.5), “I’m under the impression, first of all, that I see the mind of him (Caesar) who has the most power and it is favorable to your safety” (*Videor mihi perspicere primum ipsius animum qui plurimum potest propensum ad salutem tuam*). On this letter, see above, Intro., section I.

faculty (*conspetus*).<sup>71</sup> In Piso's phrasing the place in which he presently stands subordinates its reality to a remnant of the deceased past. Without ever leaving the present moment, he is transported through time.

The other characters in the dialogue corroborate Piso's spectral experience, each according to his particular interest. Quintus, a budding playwright, recalls catching a glimpse at Colonus not only of Sophocles, but even of Oedipus.<sup>72</sup> Pomponius at first mocks the others for their over-active imaginations claiming, as a good Epicurean, to "think only of the living" (*vivorum memini*, 5.3), but then refers to the Epicurean practice of surrounding oneself with images of the beatified teacher, "even in cups and rings" (*nec tamen Epicuri licet oblivisci, si cupiam, cuius imaginem non modo in tabulis nostri familiares, sed etiam in poculis et in anulis habent*). Finally, Cicero recalls an experience he had visiting the death-place of Pythagoras at Metapontum before turning his attention to a nearby *exhedra* where, he says, "I'm under the impression that I see [Carneades], for his image is well-known (*est...nota imago*), and I think (*puto*) that his seat itself, bereft of such a great spirit, longs for his very voice (*desiderari illam*

---

<sup>71</sup> A turn of phrase used often in speeches with demonstrative immediacy, see, e.g., *In Verr.* 2.1.122, *Quam rem etiam tribunus plebis in contione egit, cum eum quem iste virgis ceciderat in conspectum populi Romani produxit...*

<sup>72</sup> The connection between Quintus and Oedipus is otherwise unattested in Cicero's writings. Is it a convenient fiction? Or a memory of a youthful interest? Considering the significance of the others' visions, it seems hard not to ascribe more than random attribution to Cicero's association of *Oedipus at Colonus* and his often-estranged brother. In the corpus, Sophocles' final tragedy appears elsewhere only at *de Sen.* 22 in an anecdote about the old playwright's familial conflict: at the end of his life, his sons bring him to court for neglecting his business affairs on grounds of senile incompetence. Sophocles reads to the jury from this play and asks, "whether the poem seems to have been written by an imbecile" (*quaesisseque num illud carmen desipientis videretur*). Perhaps in Cicero's insertion of this play into his recollection of his brother, therefore, we find another durative figure, uniting youthful aspiration with the experiences of old age—with an emphasis on cantankerousness.

*vocem*).<sup>73</sup> This vision presses upon Cicero to the exclusion of the other “marks of famous men” that fill a place like Athens (*etsi multa in omni parte Athenarum sunt in ipsis locis indicia summorum virorum*). “At this moment,” he says, “I am moved by *that* sitting place” (*hoc autem tempore...ego illa moveor exhedra*, 5.4). Cicero’s present moment (*hoc...tempore*) interacts and resonates with another instant through the mediation of physical place. This temporal resonance is made evident not only through the internal sense by which Cicero is “moved” (*moveor*), but also verges on the aural, as he perceives in the place a longing for Carneades’ “very voice” (*illam vocem*). Cicero’s depiction of the group’s experience of solitude in the Academy thus teems with the presence of other moments throughout time.

The simultaneous presence of all these temporally heterogenous instants circumscribes an experience that is inescapably uneven and subtracted from sequential chronology. Yet, in its placement at the end of the retrospective sequence of autobiographical settings in *de Fin.*, this experience also creates a durative figure of Cicero’s own life, drawing together disparate moments in a temporal assemblage that conjoins the experiences of his youth and old age. I propose that this is more than a purely fictional device, but rather reflects Cicero’s own experience at the moment of the text’s writing. Cicero reuses the word *solitudo* to describe both his circumstance at the time of composition and the Academy of his reminiscence. This repetition marks a seam between real and written worlds, between present and past, and between human experience and the goals of philosophy. Cicero’s compositional technique and the autobiographical settings of the work allows us to see an author tracing the ambit of his life—registering in the fictional spaces of his text the contours of his lifetime. Yet, as a singular

---

<sup>73</sup> *quem videre videor (est enim nota imago), a sedeque ipsa tanta ingeni magnitudine orbata, desiderari illam vocem puto*, 5.4.

moment subtracted from the sequential unfolding of this lifetime, Cicero's solitude expands beyond his own sensuous experience to include the overtones of others' lives and other moments in time. As Cicero reckons with the ghosts of his own past—a litany of unresolved grief, failed relationships, and lost opportunities—the solitude of the Academy opens up another way of understanding the temporality of his existence. The *solitudo* that Cicero desires to find should therefore be understood not as desolation, emptiness, or even loneliness, but as a profound *solitudo* in the sense of “oneness”—a solitary instant unbound from the unfolding of a lifetime in which the multiple harmonizes inseparably with the one.<sup>74</sup>

#### IV. Looking for a Lifetime in Solitude

Turning now from the connection between Cicero's experience of *solitudo* and the representational form of *de Fin.*, I examine more closely the philosophical content of the dialogue. *De Fin.* is organized as a series of three debates on “moral ends”—that is, concerning “the end, the final, the ultimate aim, to which all precepts for living well and acting ethically refer.”<sup>75</sup> As indicated above, the settings of the three dialogues move backward in time, tracing the outline of Cicero's own life. Simultaneously, however, each dialogue is propelled forward by the *divisio Carneadea*, a form of skeptical meta-argumentation that pits different doctrinal

---

<sup>74</sup> On the etymology and derivations of *solus*, see Walde-Hofmann 1938: ii.557. Cf. Gk. μονότης, which has a similar derivation to *solitudo* (and is an exact match for Lt. *solitas*) and has the primary sense of “unity” (LSJ A.I). The sense of “oneness” for *solitudo* was clearly alive for Cicero; cf. *Off.* 1.139, where *solitudo* is used in opposition to *multitudo*; *Brut.* 227 where the orator Publius Antistius was the sole voice in the forum—i.e., the forum was his *solitudo*. This complexity of sense seems to be less prevalent in contemporary authors, for whom the word has a more straightforward meaning of “emptiness,” which is connected to the related verb *desolo*; see Walde-Hofmann 1938 ad loc. Cf. e.g., *Sal. Jug.* 74.1, 75.1; *Caes. De Bel. Gal.* 4.18, 6.23; *Liv.* 1.4, etc.

<sup>75</sup> 1.11, *id quod his libris quaeritur, qui sit finis, quid extremum, quid ultimum quo sint omnia bene vivendi recteque faciendi consilia referenda*. It is evident from the semantic range attributed to *finis* throughout the work that Cicero is interested in the relationship between an “end” as a goal and an “end” as a final limit or conclusion, i.e., the end of life. See e.g., 3.26, on which cf. Derrida 1993: 5-6.



positions on the chief good (*summum bonum*) against one another to reveal the inconclusiveness of each.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the speeches of the individual books are structured around reiterations of the “cradle argument” of Hellenistic philosophy,<sup>77</sup> which theorizes the relationship between first principles of life and the ultimate ethical good. Thus, the main ethical object of the work—the *summum bonum*—is connected by form and content to a larger question of the structure, constitution, or duration of a *vita*. As the *divisio* cycles through the different philosophical positions on the chief good, it proposes and ultimately rejects three models of the form of human life.

This section focuses in particular on the Epicurean and Stoic-influenced arguments from the first four books and traces the dialogue’s movement from the ethical narratives that these philosophies use to structure a life toward a more temporal understanding of duration. The Epicureans propose a static, homotelic *vita*, which is delimited not by progression or time, but by pleasure and pain. This position is supplanted by the Stoic theory, which proposes that the continuity of a life is determined by logical sequence, the material transformation of an individual’s constitutions, and the deterministically qualitative progress toward virtue. Finally, as I address in the final section, Piso’s Antiochean position challenges the qualitatively logical progression of Stoic theory by arguing for the continuity of a vitalistic duration that equates the *vita* with a succession of time (*proredientibus aetatibus*, 5.41). Due to the skeptical nature of the *divisio*, however, the work fails by design to arrive at a conclusive understanding of the *vita*

---

<sup>76</sup> For Cicero’s own account of the *divisio* within the text, see esp. 5.16-22; cf. 2.33-43 and 4.49-50. For a discussion of the form of the *divisio* as it operates in the text, see Annas 2001: xxiii-xxvii; Brittain 2016. On the *divisio* as a form of meta-argumentation see, e.g., Koch 2006: 188; Schofield 2012; Maso 2015: 199.

<sup>77</sup> On the term, see Brunschwig 1986 and below.

according to these available positions. In the impasse at which the text arrives in the *solitudo* of book 5, we find an alternative expression of philosophy as a search for solitude—a mode of inquiry that finds the duration of a life not in continuity, but in moments of resonant withdrawal and spectral disjuncture.

Each dialogue addresses the *vita* as an important object of inquiry. Yet the nature of the continuity that allows an individual “life” to be treated *as* a life shifts throughout the debate. In a definition that frames the argument as it progresses, the Ciceronian speaker in book 2, responding to the Epicurean Torquatus, asserts that the ability to reckon with the complete structure of one’s own life separates humans from animals:

homines enim, etsi aliis multis, tamen hoc uno plurimum a bestiis differunt quod rationem habent a natura datam mentemque acrem et vigentem celerrimeque multa simul agitantem et, ut ita dicam, sagacem, quae et causas rerum et consecutiones videat et similitudines transferat et disiuncta coniungat et cum praesentibus futura copulet omnemque complectatur vitae consequentis statum.

For humans differ from beasts in many ways, but especially in this: that they possess reason, given by nature, and a mind that is sharp, active, and able to perform many tasks at once quickly—in a word, sagacious—such that it sees the causes and effects of events, draws analogies, makes comparisons between what is dissimilar, relates the present to the future and embraces the whole structure of life as it unfolds.<sup>78</sup>

In this reiteration of a fundamental philosophical problem—the difference between human and animal life<sup>79</sup>—the expected response—reason—is defined by two distinct methods of reckoning the continuity of a life: logical sequence and a sense of time.<sup>80</sup> The capacity of reason to “embrace the whole structure of life as it unfolds” sums up a list of abilities, such as deduction

---

<sup>78</sup> *De Fin.* 2.45.

<sup>79</sup> Commonly referred to as the *scala naturae*. For the classic Aristotelian version, which divides humans from animals and plants on account of “mind and the contemplative faculty” (περὶ δὲ τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τῆς θεωρητικῆς δυνάμεως), see *de Anima* 413a-414a; cf. Pl. *Laches* 196e-197c.

<sup>80</sup> On the significance of this definition of reason for the history of this question, see Luciani 2010: 252.

and cognition by analogy, that are not in and of themselves dependent on temporality. Indeed, Cicero's definition begins from the notion of cause and effect (*causas rerum et consecutiones*) which, with reference to the Stoic "chain of causes" (*catena causarum*), foregrounds instead the deterministic nature of the cosmos.<sup>81</sup> These abilities, in fact, point to a Stoic definition of reason as the ability to recognize a timeless—or, better, not temporally contingent—and deterministic consequentiality, which is further emphasized by the repetition of the same root in the noun *consecutiones* and the participial adjective *consequentis*.<sup>82</sup>

Yet Cicero's definition does not end with this Stoic notion of *ratio*, but, looking forward to the argument of the next three books, raises a question about the relationship between the logical structure of Stoic consequentiality and the human sense of time. If reason "relates the present to the future and embraces the whole structure of a life as it unfolds" (*cum praesentibus futura copulet omnemque complectatur vitae consequentis statum*), where does Stoic rationality arise from or cross over into a temporal sense from within life? When does the ability to "relate present to future" become an exercise of reason? At what point in the sequential "unfolding" of a life will reason overcome ephemerality to render an understanding of its overall "structure" (*status*)? Rather than offering a purely logical notion of "consequentiality," Cicero thus emphasizes that humans inevitably experience the unfolding chain of cause and effect in the time of their own life. Reason's crowning accomplishment, therefore, lies in its ability to convert a

---

<sup>81</sup> See e.g., Alex. *On fate* 191.30 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.337 (55 N), "[The Stoics] say that since the world is a unity which includes all existing things in itself and is governed by a living, rational, intelligent nature, the government of existing things which it possesses is an *everlasting* one proceeding in a sequence and ordering. The things which happen first become causes to those which happen after them" (my emphasis). Note that in this definition, the Stoic notion of cause and effect is emphatically *not* dependent on time.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Gk. ἀκολουθία, "consequentiality," which for the Stoics played an important ethical role in the definition of "proper function" (τὸ καθήκον). See Long and Sedley 1987: i.359 (59 B).

temporal sense into a logical one or, conversely, logical sequence into a temporality—to apprehend the “whole structure” (*omnis status*)<sup>83</sup> of life even in the midst of its ephemerality (*vitae consequentis*).

To approach this human capacity for overcoming the ephemerality of experience in order to apprehend life’s total structure is one of the primary goals of *de Finibus*. Each dialogue is organized around a reiteration of a central “cradle argument,” a term proposed by Jacques Brunschwig to refer to a common form of argumentation in Hellenistic philosophy. The argument begins from “the behavior and psychology of the child in the cradle usually in conjunction with young animals and then draw[s] more or less directly certain conclusions which lead to the formulation and justification of a moral doctrine.”<sup>84</sup> As the first example—that of the Epicurean Torquatus—demonstrates, these arguments are ultimately concerned with the relationship between the origins and ends of human life. Torquatus commences his extended speech in favor of pleasure as the ultimate good with a formulation that will become a rhetorical reference point for the cradle argument throughout the dialogue:

Omne animal simul atque natum sit voluptatem appetere eaque gaudere ut summo bono, dolorem aspernari ut summum malum et quantum possit a se repellere; idque facere nondum depravatum, ipsa natura incorrupte atque integre iudicante. Itaque negat opus esse ratione neque disputatione quamobrem voluptas expetenda, fugiendus dolor sit.

Every animal, as soon as it is born strives after pleasure and rejoices in it as the greatest good, while it spurns pain as the greatest evil and repels it from itself as much as possible. And it continues to do this in obedience to the uncorrupted and intact judgment

---

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Off.* 1.11, which echoes this passage, but uses the phrase *totius vitae cursum*. Intriguingly, the nouns *status* and *cursum* are conceptual opposites. Cf. Varro *Ling. Lat.* 5.11, who lists *status* and *motus* as antithetical, and *cursum* as a type of motion; see e.g., *ibid.* 8.59-60. It is clear, therefore, that in the definition in *de Fin.* Cicero stresses the composite nature of the human sense of time both as finitely bounded (*status*), yet progressively dynamic (*consequens*).

<sup>84</sup> Brunschwig 1986: 113; cf. Inwood 2016. See also Altman 2016: 103, “Birth plays an unusually large role in Cicero’s *On Moral Ends*: each of the dialogue’s major interlocutors anchors their conception of the ultimate end in tendencies that emerge at birth, i.e., at the beginning.”

of nature itself so long as it is not perverted. For these reasons, [Epicurus] denies need for reasoning or discussion as to why pleasure should be sought and pain avoided.<sup>85</sup>

In the Epicurean cradle argument, therefore, the appetite of the *infans*—a category that encompasses both newborn humans and “every animal”—for pleasure and its avoidance of pain justifies the central tenet of the school’s ethics. The basic ethical principles established by “the uncorrupted and intact judgment of nature itself” (*ipsa natura incorrupte atque integre iudicante*) will remain unchanged throughout an individual’s life—so long as that subject remains “un-perverted.”<sup>86</sup> The “structure” of a human life, therefore, appears remarkably featureless. Any possibility for personal morality or collective engagement must be tempered by the limits of pleasure and pain. In the best case for human life, these limits will remain unchanged from infancy until death, but they are threatened constantly by worldly “perversions.” The first impulses of the infant provide to the Epicurean all the necessary orientation for an entire life lived from beginning to end in accordance with the chief good—*voluptas*.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> *De Fin.* 1.30. Torquatus’ main speech begins at 1.29 following an extended *elenchos* (1.14-28). On the transition from rapid debate to rhetorical speech in the *de Fin.* (*rhetorica disputatio*), see Inwood 1990. Gorman 2005 offers a comprehensive study of the Socratic method in Ciceronian dialogue as a whole.

<sup>86</sup> On this point, see Warren 2016: 44-5.

<sup>87</sup> As Brunschwig 1986: 122 notes, “In one sense...there is no ‘cradle argument’ in Epicureanism; the identification of pleasure with the sovereign good is founded not on any observation of the new-born child, but on adult feelings. Yet, in another sense, cradles do provide an ‘argument’; thanks to them, the adult is justified in accepting the force of his feelings. This position sets up a delicate balance between a summons to intuition and a return to reasoning.” This peculiar logical status of the Epicurean cradle “argument” is indicated by Torquatus’ final comment that, although having just discussed a form of reasoning, Epicurus “denies need for reasoning or discussion as to why pleasure should be sought and pain avoided” (*negat opus esse ratione neque disputatione quamobrem voluptas expetenda, fugiendus dolor sit*).

In book 2, the Ciceronian speaker's response to Epicurean ethics aims primarily to complicate the function and characterization that Torquatus ascribes to pleasure.<sup>88</sup> Yet he also includes his own polemical version of the cradle argument, which is instructive not only in its critique of the Epicurean *summum bonum*, but also for its radically different depiction of the structure of a life:

Omne enim animal, simul et ortum est, et se ipsum et omnes partes suas diligit, duasque quae maximae sunt in primis amplectitur, animum et corpus, deinde utriusque partes. Nam sunt et in animo praecipua quaedam et in corpore, quae cum leviter agnovit, tum discernere incipit, ut ea quae prima data sint natura appetat asperneturque contraria.

Every animal, as soon as it has been born, loves itself and all its parts, but especially it embraces those two most important parts—mind and body—and then the parts of each of these. For body and mind both possess certain special features which it recognizes at first only faintly, and later begins to discern, with the result that it begins to desire the first things given by nature and reject their opposites.<sup>89</sup>

As a corrective to the Epicurean cradle argument, Cicero introduces a process of ethical development or “appropriation,” which draws from Antiochean and Stoic theories of *oikeiosis*.<sup>90</sup> Instead of “pleasure” as the primary impulse of the infant, this theory claims that a human is born endowed with a self-love that any individual instinctively feels for itself and all its parts. Over the course of a life, this self-love expands to encompass those things that further one's own

---

<sup>88</sup> On this response to Epicureanism and some points of potentially willful misconstrual, see Morel 2016; and, on Cicero's presentation of Epicureanism more generally, see Armstrong 2011; Fish 2011; and Maso 2015. See also below, Ch. 4, section III.i.

<sup>89</sup> *De Fin.* 2.33; note Cicero's translation of the Stoic tag *ta prota kata physin* with *ea quae prima data sint natura*, cf. 3.17.

<sup>90</sup> On the inconclusive *Quellenforschung* for book 2, see Bénatouïl 2016: 200-1. One problem is presented by the fact that Cicero refers to the human being as divided between body and soul, whereas the Stoics generally propose a unicameral theory. On Cicero's conflation of this aspect of Stoic theory in *Tusc.*, see Graver 2002: xix. For the Stoic definition of *oikeiosis*, see Stobaeus 4.671 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.349-340 (57 G); for the function of the theory in Stoic thought more generally, see esp. Inwood 1985 and Engberg-Pedersen 1990. On the Antiochean development, see Gill 2016.

nature in expanding circles of sympathy and identification.<sup>91</sup> Yet the basic aspect of *oikeiosis* that Cicero emphasizes is simply its progression. The primary impulse of the infant—self-love—leads to development over time: guided by “the first things given by nature” (*ea quae prima data sint natura*), the individual recognizes, if only “faintly” (*leviter*), the capacities of itself and its parts. This faint recognition, in turn, promises a development of these capacities, even in the first moments of life, and a movement toward the realization of their potential for “appropriating” those external things that are in accordance with nature. *Oikeiosis* thus introduces a narrative of progress and dynamic change into the relation between origins and ends of life that is absent from the Epicurean conception of the *vita*.

If we reduce the arguments of the Epicurean Torquatus and the Ciceronian speaker of book 2 to consider only the features of the cradle argument, therefore, we note above all how the Epicurean theory offers a static model of human life. The limits of pleasure and pain remain an unchanged constant from origin to end with no need for development or sequence—the only alteration to these limits, in fact, is due to worldly perversion, and must be undone by philosophy so that they can be returned to their original state. On the other hand, Cicero’s response emphasizes progression as a defining element of life and the development of a sense of causation or temporality as the essential component of human reason. Cato’s speech in favor of the Stoic chief good, *virtus*, in book 3 picks up where Cicero’s polemic against the Epicureans leaves off. Cato, as we expect by this point, begins his speech with a reference to the cradle argument:

Placet his, inquit, quorum ratio mihi probatur, simul atque natum sit animal (hinc enim ordiendum), ipsum sibi conciliari et commendari ad se conservandum et ad suum statum eaque quae conservantia sunt eius status diligenda, alienari autem ab interitu iisque rebus quae interitum videantur afferre. Id ita esse sic probant, quod ante, quam voluptas aut dolor attigerit, salutaria appetant parvi aspernenturque contraria, quod non fieret nisi

---

<sup>91</sup> On the function of nature in the theories of *oikeiosis* in the text, see Inwood 2016.

statum suum diligenter, interitum timerent...Ex quo intellegi debet principium ductum esse a se diligendo.

He said, It seems correct to those whose system I approve, that as soon as an animal is born (for we must begin at the beginning), it feels attached to itself and is compelled to preserve itself and its constitution, and to care for those things that help to preserve its constitution; likewise it is repelled from destruction and from those things which seem to threaten destruction. They judge this to be correct because infants seek salutary things and shun the opposite even before they have chanced to experience pleasure or pain; and this would not happen unless they cherished their constitution and feared its destruction...From this we ought to understand that the primary impulse to action is drawn from self-love.<sup>92</sup>

Cato coopts the form of the Epicurean cradle argument—note the verbatim repetition of the tag *simul atque natum sit animal* (cf. 1.30). Yet, in this Stoic version, Cato refers to the origins of life not in order to justify the ethical good itself, but to clarify the natural starting point from which both progress toward virtue and philosophical inquiry into the ethical life must begin (*hinc enim ordiendum*).<sup>93</sup> In more explicit terms than Cicero’s response to Torquatus, Cato posits the origins of life only as the site of a natural self-love, a state of being “compelled to preserve itself and its constitution, and to care for those things that help to preserve its constitution” (*commendari ad se conservandum et ad suum statum eaque quae conservantia sunt eius status diligenda*). Cato uses the word *status* to refer to the “constitution” of the infant—that is, the material elements that make up its being.<sup>94</sup> As noted above, Cicero’s speech from book 2

---

<sup>92</sup> *De Fin.* 3.16.

<sup>93</sup> On this point, see Brunschwig 1986: 129.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 121. This entire letter deals with how the “constitution” (*constitutio*) of an individual changes over the course of life, causing what is suited to its constitution to also change: “But each age has its own constitution, different in the case of the child, the boy, and the old man; they are all adapted to the constitution wherein they find themselves. The child is toothless, and he is fitted to this condition. Then his teeth grow, and he is fitted to that condition also” (*Unicuique aetati sua constitutio est, alia infanti, alia puero, alia seni; omnes ei constitutioni conciliantur in qua sunt. Infans sine dentibus est: huic constitutioni suae conciliatur. Enati sunt dentes: huic constitutioni conciliatur*, 15, trans. R.M. Gummere). Unlike Seneca’s discussion, however, Cato avoids talking explicitly about the “age” of life (*aetas*), preferring instead the more logically inflected *status*. See below n.121.



introduces this same word to refer to the bounded and complete “structure” within which a life unfolds (*omnis status vitae consequentis* 2.45). The juxtaposition of *status* as both general structure and particular constitution argues against any theory of human life as uniform and homotelic. A life takes place *through* its *status*; the *vita* will be defined by different constitutions.<sup>95</sup> The *status* of the infant may be a necessary foundation for *oikeiosis*, but this initial constitution, along with what its nature requires, will give way to other constitutions in the progression toward the final good and the consummation of the *status vitae*.

The limitations of the cradle argument for understanding the relationship between origins and ends of life are clarified further in Cato’s discussion of ἀξία or *aestimatio*—the value assigned to the good. He describes a series of cognitive processes by which “notions” (*rerum notiones*) arise in the mind (*in animis fiant*) in the course of ethical progress. These are: experience (*usus*), combination (*coniunctio*), analogy (*similitudo*), and “rational inference” (*collatio rationis*).<sup>96</sup> It is through this last process that “the mind ascends from those things which are in accordance with nature and arrives at an understanding of the good.”<sup>97</sup> This “ascension” of the mind is not a quantifiable, step-by-step summation. Instead, the shift between apprehending “the first things in accordance with nature”—that is, in accordance with the primary impulse of self-love—and apprehending things in accordance with virtue—that is, in accordance with the

---

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Seneca’s use of *constitutio* for this second sense, quoted above n.94. But he also uses *status* in a similar sense in the same letter (121.8). See also, *de Off.* 3.117, where Cicero uses *constitutio* to translate Greek εὐστάθεια.

<sup>96</sup> This is the translation of Annas and Woolf 2001.

<sup>97</sup> *Cum enim ab iis rebus quae sunt secundum naturam ascendit animus collatione rationis, tum ad notionem boni pervenit*, 3.33.

good—is one of a qualitative shift in *aestimatio*.<sup>98</sup> To illustrate this complete change of state, Cato draws an analogy between estimation of the good and the taste of sweetness: “Just as honey, although it is supremely sweet, is nevertheless perceived to be sweet by its own unique kind of flavor, not by comparison with other flavors, thus this good that we are dealing with is to be valued among the most valuable things, yet its value depends on its innate quality not on quantity.”<sup>99</sup> In contrast to the homotelic depiction of a human life offered by the Epicurean cradle argument, the Stoics thus sketch the contours of a *vita* in which profound differences in kind separate origins and ends. Yet the Stoic theory of *oikeiosis* also eschews an accretive progression from primary impulse toward true ethical action in accordance with virtue. Rather, “the value of virtue is peculiar and distinct: it depends on a change in kind, not a summation in degree” (*alia est igitur propria aestimatio virtutis, quae genere, non crescendo valet*, 3.34).

This Stoic emphasis on the qualitative changes that define the structure of a life and progress toward virtue has a significant effect on the way that Cato understands human time. In his discussion of “opportuneness” (εὐκαιρία), he applies a similar qualitative logic to temporality:

Et quemadmodum opportunitas (sic enim appellemus εὐκαιρίαν) non fit maior productione temporis (habent enim suum modum quae opportuna dicuntur), sic recta

---

<sup>98</sup> The shift enabled by the exercise of these rational faculties is contingent, in part, on the material constitution of the individual. According to Stoic developmental psychology, children do not possess *logos*, but come into partial possession at the age of 7 and may have it fully only at 14. Thus, any exercise of reason can only possibly be carried out by an individual of the appropriate constitution, of which “age” is a necessary but not sufficient element. On this aspect of Stoic theory, see Long and Sedley 1987: i.259 (on 42), “By allowing all normal people to have some cognitions, albeit weakly held in most cases, the Stoics provided a basis for ‘progress’ exactly analogous to their doctrine of ‘proper functions.’ What perfects these latter is not a change in their objective content, but the expert understanding, consistency and moral integrity of their agent.” For the age of reason, see Aetius 4.11.1-4 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.238 (39 D). On the Stoic notion of “progress” or προκοπή toward virtue, see below.

<sup>99</sup> *Ut enim mel, etsi dulcissimum est, suo tamen proprio genere saporis, non comparatione cum aliis dulce esse sentitur, sic bonum hoc de quo agimus est illud quidem plurimi aestimandum, sed ea aestimatio genere valet, non magnitudine*, 3.34.

effectio (κατόρθωσιν enim ita appello, quoniam rectum factum κατόρθωμα), recta igitur effectio, item convenientia, denique ipsum bonum, quod in eo positum est ut naturae consentiat, crescendi accessionem nullam habet.

And just as opportuneness (for this is what I'll call *eukairia*) is not increased by a prolongation of time (for things that are called opportune possess their complete measure), thus right conduct (for I'll translate *katorthōsis* this way, since a *katorthōma* is a single right action)—indeed, right conduct as well as proper things and the good itself, which consists in agreeing with nature, permits no increase or addition.<sup>100</sup>

Cato's analogy connects the absolute quality of a truly ethical action and the "opportuneness" of a moment in time. Just as what is truly in accordance with nature permits of no quantification or enhancement (*quod in eo positum est ut naturae consentiat, crescendi accessionem nullam habet*), a time that is opportune exists always in its "complete measure" (*habent enim suum modum*). This *modus* is not arrived at by a "prolongation of time" (*productione temporis*), but comes into being in the fullness of the moment.<sup>101</sup> The quality of opportune time has important implications for the Stoic's further thinking about the time of life and, in particular, the temporal conditions of a happy life. As Cato goes on to say, "The Stoics don't think that a happy life is more preferable or desirable if it is long than if it is short" (*Stoicis non videtur optabilior nec magis expetenda beata vita si sit longa quam si brevis*).<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> *De Fin.* 3.45.

<sup>101</sup> It is interesting to consider *opportunitas* as in some ways the antithesis of Cicero's experience of *solitudo*. Both are exceptional in progression time, but whereas *solitudo* is a solitary instant subtracted from continuous succession, *opportunitas* is an over-determined fulfillment of duration—*solitudo* is characterized by withdrawal and cessation, which allows a sense of durative structure to form, while *opportunitas* is experienced as a "fullness" and a "completeness" in and of itself.

<sup>102</sup> On this point, Cato offers the analogy of the happy life as a shoe that fits just right—"so it is for the things of which the good is determined entirely by propriety and opportuneness; a greater number of these things will not be preferred to fewer, nor more long-lasting to shorter" (*Ut, si cothurni laus illa esset, ad pedem apte convenire, neque multi cothurni paucis anteponerentur nec maiores minoribus, sic, quorum omne bonum convenientia atque opportunitate finitur, nec plura paucioribus nec longiquiora brevioribus anteponentur*, 3.46).

Stoic theory clearly privileges quality over quantity and logical determinism over temporal succession in its conception of the unity of the *vita*. The qualitative shift that characterizes a life in accordance with virtue marks, for the Stoics, the attainment of “wisdom.”<sup>103</sup> At the same time, however, just like the infant, the sage must still be said to live “in accordance with nature.” Since the *status* of the sage has passed through a categorical change, his nature—and therefore the things needed to live in accordance with that nature—has been transformed according to the determination of cosmic reason. Thus, for all its emphasis on qualitative transformation, the determinism of Stoic *logos* unifies a human lifetime under the rubric of “nature.” Regardless of *status*, to live ethically is always to live in accordance with one’s nature.

The Ciceronian speaker of the fourth book, arguing from a generally Peripatetic or “Old” Academic position against Cato’s Stoicism,<sup>104</sup> takes aim at precisely this peculiarity in his characterization of ethical progress. This version of the cradle argument differs significantly from the previous instantiations as Cicero draws attention to the multi-form paths toward ethical perfection that the equally diverse first impulses of life open up:

Omnis natura vult esse conservatrix sui, ut et salva sit et in genere conservetur suo. Ad hanc rem aiunt artes quoque requisitas quae naturam adiuvent, in quibus ea numeretur in primis quae est vivendi ars, ut tueatur quod a natura datum sit, quod desit acquirat; iidemque diviserunt naturam hominis in animum et corpus; cumque eorum utrumque per se expetendum esse dixissent, virtutes quoque utriusque eorum per se expetendas esse dicebant; et cum animum infinita quadam laude anteponebant corpori, virtutes quoque animi bonis corporis anteponebant. Sed cum sapientiam totius hominis custodem et

---

<sup>103</sup> This qualitative difference is a defining aspect of the Stoics’ conception of progress toward virtue; see, e.g., Cato’s analogy at 3.48 that compares the attainment of wisdom and happiness to the qualitative difference between drowning and breathing air or blindness and sight. Cf. also Long and Sedley 1987: i.382 (61S-T).

<sup>104</sup> He names his sources as Xenocrates and Aristotle at 4.15, although the influence of Antiochus’ return to the “Old” Academy as a polemical maneuver against the Stoics can be perceived throughout. On the “Old Academy,” see 5.7; cf. Annas 2001: xi; Polito 2012.

procuratricem esse vellent, quae esset naturae comes et adiutrix, hoc sapientiae munus esse dicebant ut cum eum tueretur qui constaret ex animo et corpore, in utroque iuaret eum ac contineret.

All of nature desires to be the preserver of itself, in order that it might be safe and preserved in its own kind. To this end, [the Peripatetics/Old Academics] say that arts are also required to aid nature, among which is numbered most importantly the art of living so that it might guard what was given by nature and acquire what is lacking. These same men also divided the nature of a human into mind and body, since they argued that each of these parts ought to be developed for its own sake, and they also said that the virtues of each of these parts ought to be developed for their own sakes. And, since they praised the mind as infinitely more valued than the body, they also valued the virtues of the mind above the goods of the body. But since they desired wisdom, which is the comrade and accomplice of nature, to be the guardian and caretaker of the whole human being, they argued that it was the duty of wisdom, since it guards a being which consists of mind and body, to aid and maintain it on both accounts.<sup>105</sup>

This account of the origins of life varies from the more straight-forward cradle arguments of the Epicureans and Stoics in that it deemphasizes a singular, unified primary impulse—or even an individual life—while instead emphasizing the multiple and dynamic paths toward self-preservation and self-realization that are open to “all of nature” (*Omnis natura*) from its very inception. Cicero further includes not only “natural” paths, but also the addition of “arts” (*artes*) that “aid nature” (*adiuvarent*) and “acquire what is lacking” (*quod desit acquirat*) in nature. The argument continues along this line of thought: true progress toward ethical perfection, wisdom, and happiness involves constant development of the virtues of the mind, the goods of the body, and the various arts that humanity has developed to aid in this pursuit. This dynamic and accretive process, in fact, subtends and maintains the continuity of an entire *vita*.<sup>106</sup> Thus, while

---

<sup>105</sup> *De Fin.* 4.16-17.

<sup>106</sup> See e.g., 4.25, “Therefore we are humans; we consist of soul and body, which are of a certain kind. And it is fitting for us, as the first natural impulse demands, to care for these parts and to constitute from them that end of the supreme and final good. And if the first things are correct, this end must consist in arriving at the largest number and the most important of the things that are in accordance with nature” (*Sumus igitur homines; ex animo constamus et corpore, quae sunt cuiusdam modi, nosque oportet, ut prima appetitio naturalis postulat, haec diligere constituereque ex his finem illum summi boni atque*

the Ciceronian speaker agrees with the Stoic position that human life is a site of development and change, he challenges the doctrine that the attainment of wisdom requires a qualitative transformation of state between primary impulses and ultimate ends: he asks, “what nature ever forgot its own original constitution? (*Quae autem natura suae primae institutionis oblita est?*, 4.32)”

In a formal analogy to the movement from book 2 to 3, the “Old” Academic polemic against Stoicism in book 4 receives positive exposition in book 5, which I discuss below. The dialectical *divisio Carneadea* thus propels the text toward a conceptual impasse that defers any true argumentative or narrative closure beyond the “ends” of the present dialogue.<sup>107</sup> The inconclusiveness of this *divisio* does not simply pertain to the dogmatic *finis bonorum*, but incorporates along with them the unified structure of a life and the ability of philosophy to describe or explain it. We began from a definition of the human being that is based in reason’s capacity to apprehend the “whole structure of life as it unfolds” (*omnem...vitae consequentis statum*, 2.45). The various cradle arguments can be understood as competing claims concerning the relationship between philosophy and this essential human capacity. For the Epicureans, since

---

*ultimi; quem si prima vera sunt ita constitui necesse est, earum rerum quae sint secundum naturam quam plurima et quam maxima adipisci*). Cf. also 4.31-2.

<sup>107</sup> Many readers have argued, instead, that the Antiochean doctrine expounded by Piso in book 5 represents both a strong synthesis of the preceding *doxae* and the doctrine held by Cicero himself to be the most proximate to the truth; see Brittain 2016: 13 for the history of this reading. More recently, however, Charles Brittain has argued convincingly that this reading of Cicero as a “mitigated sceptic” misses the text’s “Carneadean scepticism” that expresses “radical doubt about such philosophical views [i.e., doctrines]—and in particular, systematic philosophical views about goods—through the dialogue as a whole” (Brittain 2016: 13-14). On this view, see also Annas and Woolf 2001: xxvii, “In book v, however, C. shows that in ethics at least he is unconvinced by Antiochus’ own theory. By producing a powerful argument against it he shows that for him no theory is left standing as the clearly preferable one. Attractive as is a synthesis like that of Antiochus, we are, in Cicero’s view, back where we always were: trying to think through for ourselves the arguments on each side and come to our own understanding of which is the best way to live.” For further consideration of Cicero’s skepticism, see below Ch. 2.

the primary impulse is identical to the final good, it is the task of the philosopher to unlearn—and to teach others to unlearn—the dictates of culture that prevent humanity from realizing the homotelic *status* of its *vita*. The Stoics contend that human life cannot be defined by a single *status* but passes through multiple constitutions defined by qualitatively different needs. Due to the deterministic worldview that animates the Stoic developmental narrative, however, these constitutions are unified under the common rubric of “nature” and directed by cosmic reason. The temporal existence of humanity is thus subordinated to the logically-dictated progress toward virtue: the only time that matters is the “fullness” of a moment (*opportunitas*) in which the ultimate good is present—the fulfillment of the *vita* for the sage has no distinctly temporal existence or quantifiable heterogeneity. The role that philosophy plays within the ephemeral experience of a lifetime, therefore, is ambiguous for the Stoics. Is philosophy simply a refinement of the basic human ability to apprehend cause and effect through reason? Can a human be wise without being a philosopher?<sup>108</sup>

## V. Finding Solitude

The point of undecidability toward which the argument of book 4 is already driving can be understood, in large part, as a problem in the relationship between continuity and time in the *vita*. Cicero’s objection to the Stoics’ logical explanation of the unity of a life—“what nature ever forgot its own original constitution?”—discloses a dilemma about continuity and human time: is the duration of a lifetime continuous? Or, is discontinuity inherent in the human experience of duration? This impasse drives the argument throughout the final book. In order to

---

<sup>108</sup> On this ambiguity in Stoicism more generally, see e.g., Sen. *Ep.* 89.4-5, who distinguishes between wisdom as “the good of the human mind perfected” and philosophy as “the love of wisdom, and the endeavor to attain it.” Thus, “philosophy strives toward the goal which wisdom has already reached” (*Sapientia perfectum bonum est mentis humanae. Philosophia sapientiae amor est et adfectatio. haec eo tendit quo illa pervenit*).

better clarify the terms of debate, I consider briefly as a comparandum the different conceptions of temporal duration offered by Henri Bergson and Gaston Bachelard. On the one hand, Bergson proposes that the human lifetime is nothing other than the continuity of duration. For Bergson, duration is the succession of conscious states through which we live and perceive the world. Yet these states are vitally unified and interconnected so as to be inextricable, except by abstraction and analysis.<sup>109</sup> Bachelard, on the other hand, argued that the structures of human life are formed from a series of apprehensions of temporal discontinuity. We begin not from unified duration but from a duality of time: “continuous as possibility, as nothingness...discontinuous as being.”<sup>110</sup> In order to explain duration, therefore, we must always bring continuity into being through “an artificial system—a rational or social system.”<sup>111</sup> All forms of continuous duration are thus inherently plural, constructed, and dialectical. The experience of solitude, on the other hand, as a “positive experience of nothingness”<sup>112</sup> provides a moment of cessation in which we are confronted with the discontinuous being of time. From this moment of “creative destruction” philosophy can apprehend the dialectic of durative structures that we understand as human life.

---

<sup>109</sup> See, e.g., 1910: 100-101, “Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states... We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought” (emphasis orig.). On Bergson and duration, see e.g., Deleuze 2002; Lin 2013: 18-32.

<sup>110</sup> Bachelard 2000: 44, “We need to give ourselves the *temporal alternative* that can be analysed by these two observations: either in this instant, nothing is happening or else in this instant, something is happening. Time is thus continuous as possibility, as nothingness. It is discontinuous as being. In other words, we start from temporal duality, not from unity” (emphasis orig.). On Bachelard’s response to Bergson, see Bachelard 1969; Kennedy 2011: 19-22.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.: 64.

<sup>112</sup> See above, n.11.



This early 20th century debate is relevant for considering the argument in the final book of *de Fin.* because it draws out the temporal aspect of Cicero's skeptical challenge to Piso's Antiochean synthesis. As I argue in this section, in Piso's elaboration of *oikeiosis*, we find the *vita* defined, finally, as a duration of time, which looks forward to Bergson's understanding of life as "pure duration." By emphasizing the temporality of succession as an response to the Stoics' strict qualitative determinism, Piso's Antiochism presents philosophy as a fulfillment of humanity's ability to apprehend the "whole structure of life," not simply as a chain of necessary cause and effect, but in such a way as to animate the time of life with constant subjective activity aimed at achieving happiness from within the unfolding of the *vita*. For the Antiochean speaker, as for Bergson, life *is* time and time is alive—that is, life exists only in the interconnection and continuity of time, which stretches in the unbroken succession of duration from original constitution to the ultimate end (*progređientibus aetatibus*, 5.41). Given that the durative continuity between origins and ends is temporal, the practice of philosophy transforms each new moment in the course of a life into an opportunity to add to ethical perfection and happiness.

Yet, in the consummate inconclusiveness of the work, we also find Cicero's skeptical response to Piso, which mounts a Bachelardian objection to Antiochus' vitalistic panchronism. Cicero asks, what if philosophy *fails* to accomplish the goal that Antiochus sets for it—of bringing ethics to bear on the continuity of time? If the structure of human life cannot be considered as simply static, deterministically qualitative, or continuously temporal, where can philosophy find its purchase on the *vita*? It is important to recall that book 5 takes place in the *solitudo* of the Academy, a moment of withdrawal and cessation. Through this rendering of Cicero's experience of solitude in the world of the dialogue, the text draws us toward the impasse that awaits at the end of the *divisio Carneadea* while it simultaneously opens up an

alternative way of understanding the importance of philosophy for human time. Rather than seeking to explain human life through the continuities of present and past, ends and origins, Cicero's skepticism operates in the discontinuities of a lifetime. Philosophy functions in the disjunction of the present from the past as a liberation from succession. Philosophy exists for and through the time of *solitudo*.

Piso's speech in book 5 offers the most elaborate variation on the cradle argument in the work. In fact, as Christopher Gill notes, Piso does not just use the cradle argument in order to support his ethical principles, but constructs his speech out of a single, unified developmental narrative.<sup>113</sup> In contrast to Cato's exposition of Stoic *oikeiosis*, which must account for doctrinal specificities, such as the value of the good, Piso avoids lengthy excursuses on individual points of dogma in order to leave his audience with a rhetorically integrated and seamless narrative that passes through birth, growth, and the perfection of life in its various forms. This narrative starts with the familiar cadence:

Omne animal se ipsum diligit, ac simul [et] ortum est id agit ut se conservet, quod hic ei primus ad omnem vitam tuendam appetitus a natura datur, se ut conservet atque ita sit affectum ut optime secundum naturam affectum esse possit. Hanc initio institutionem confusam habet et incertam, ut tantummodo se tueatur quaecumque sit; sed nec quid sit nec quid possit nec quid ipsius natura sit intellegit. Cum autem processit paulum et quatenus quidque se attingat ad seque pertineat perspicere coepit, tum sensim incipit progredi seseque agnoscere et intellegere quam ob causam habeat eum quem diximus animi appetitum, coepitque et ea quae naturae sentit apta appetere et propulsare contraria. Ergo omni animali illud quod appetit positum est in eo quod naturae est accommodatum. Ita finis bonorum existit, secundum naturam vivere sic affectum ut optime affici possit ad naturamque accommodatissime.

Every animal loves itself, and as soon as it is born it acts in order to preserve itself, because this is the first impulse given to it by nature with a view to its life-long protection, and to preserve itself in the way that it can exist best according to nature. At

---

<sup>113</sup> On the rhetorical and philosophical differences between the Stoic and Antiochean iterations of *oikeiosis*, see esp. Gill 2016: 221-26 and 246. Gill draws particular attention to the many asides and convolutions that characterize Cato's speech in contrast to the strong sense of narrative that defines Piso's.

the beginning of life this arrangement is opaque and vague such that it only seeks to protect itself, whatever it may be—it does not understand what it is or what its potential is or even what its own nature is. But when it has grown a bit and has begun to understand to what extent certain things affect it and pertain to it, then, gradually, it commences to make progress and to recognize itself and to perceive why it possesses that which we call a desire of the soul. It begins to seek out those things which it feels are suited to its nature and to repel the contrary. Therefore, for every animal, what it desires is located in what is suited to its nature. Consequently, the End of Goods comes into being, that is to live according to nature so disposed as to be best and most aptly disposed toward nature.<sup>114</sup>

Piso proposes to synthesize and reduce the doctrinal variations that, he claims, obscure the fundamental agreement between the Stoic and “Old” Academic narratives of growth and moral progress. For instance, he emphasizes the shared supposition that the primary impulse is toward self-preservation, using language (*diligo, conservo*, etc.) that recalls for Cicero’s reader intra-textually the terms previously used by Cato and Cicero in books 3 and 4. There is further agreement that the first impulse possesses no inherent ethical value or even clarity: rather, this initial inclination must be developed into self-awareness and recognition of the nature of the individual *animal*.

The difference, as Piso presents it, arises in the nature of the continuity that connects the origins and ends of life. The Stoic characterization of happiness and ethical living requires a change of kind, dictated by the logic of *aestimatio* and the attainment of *virtus*. According to the magisterial Antiochean narrative, however, which also seeks to systematize the whole history of ethical philosophy,<sup>115</sup> there are as many different Ends, as many different paths to the final good, as many different ways to realize happiness as there are ways of living.<sup>116</sup> Oxen, horses, humans,

---

<sup>114</sup> *De Fin.* 5.24.

<sup>115</sup> See Sedley 2012 on Antiochus’ practice of using the history of philosophy in argumentation.

<sup>116</sup> See esp. 5.26, “Therefore, when we say that the ultimate end for all living creatures is to live following nature, we should not be understood to be saying that all have the same end.” (*Quare cum dicimus*

vines, and crops may all possess different natures and therefore different *summa bona*.<sup>117</sup> But for the structure of each *vita*, the *finis* consists always in the ongoing activity and continuous development of the *partes-cum-toto*.<sup>118</sup>

In order to account for these continuous paths of development, Piso introduces a specifically temporal conception of the structure of a lifetime that supports and delimits his ethical narrative. As we have seen, in the previous speeches, the basic formation of human life, *vita*, has been understood as either a homotelic natural state defined by the limits of pleasure or a series of cause and effect, which passes through a logically determined succession of qualitatively distinct constitutions. These ways of conceptualizing the relationship between part and whole, beginning and end, subordinate temporality to ethical or logical sequences. By contrast, Piso's speech emphasizes that the parts of the whole of life are themselves a form of durative time:

Cum igitur ea sit quam exposui forma naturae, si ut initio dixi simul atque ortus esset se quisque cognosceret iudicareque posset quae vis et totius esset naturae et partium singularum, continuo videret quid esset hoc, quod quaerimus, omnium rerum quas expetimus summum et ultimum, nec ulla in re peccare posset. Nunc vero a primo quidem mirabiliter occulta natura est nec perspicui nec cognosci potest; progredientibus autem aetatibus sensim tarde potius quasi nosmet ipsos cognoscimus.

---

*omnibus animalibus extremum esse secundum naturam vivere, non ita accipiendum est quasi dicamus unum esse omnium extremum).*

<sup>117</sup> See 5.39-40, however, for a reiteration of the *scala naturae* that accentuates the continuity not just within a single life but between different forms of life; e.g., "But if sensation were given to the vine, so that it possessed a quality of appetite and a power of movement, what do you think it would do? Would it not try to accomplish for itself those things that the vitiiculturist had provided for it previously?" (*At vero si ad vitem sensus accesserit, ut appetitum quendam habeat et per se ipsa moveatur, quid facturam putas? An ea quae per vinitorem antea consequeretur per se ipsa curabit?*, 40).

<sup>118</sup> See esp. 5.55-60, e.g., "Furthermore, there are very clear, readily recognizable, and not at all doubtful indications from nature, especially evident for humanity but also with regard to every living creature, that the life force desires to always be engaged in some activity (*Sunt autem etiam clariora vel plane perspicua minimeque dubitanda indicia naturae, maxime scilicet in homine sed in omni animali, ut appetat animus agere semper aliquid*, 55).

Since the appearance of our nature is as I have laid out, if everyone were to recognize themselves as soon as they were born (as I said at the beginning) and they were able to judge what the power of their nature is as a whole and with regard to its individual parts, they would immediately perceive the very thing that we are inquiring into—that is, what is highest and last of all the things that we seek—and they would be incapable of being wrong in any matter. But as things are now, our nature is curiously hidden from us from the beginning and it can be neither perceived nor understood. But with the advancing ages we come to understand ourselves bit by bit, or rather, belatedly.<sup>119</sup>

In this restatement of the cradle argument, Piso subordinates the narrative of ethical development to the temporal succession of a life. Since humans do not possess clear knowledge of their nature “as soon as they are born” (*simul atque ortus esset*), that nature, which will determine “the highest and last of all things we seek,” must be constituted out of the very progression of the time of life (*progredientibus autem aetatibus*).<sup>120</sup> The *vita*, which is the site of ethical progress and the quest for self-knowledge, is nothing other than the interdependent and continuously unified moments of the time of life (*aetates*).<sup>121</sup> Only as we are formed in the fullness of our nature by the succession of these ages can “we come to understand ourselves bit by bit, or rather, belatedly” (*sensim tarde potius quasi nosmet ipsos cognoscimus*). Indeed, it is perhaps *only* “belatedly” (*tarde*)—that is, after a succession of *aetates*—that the nature of life is evident to the human. Piso’s speech thus introduces the *aetas* as a way of articulating the temporal continuity

---

<sup>119</sup> *De Fin.* 5.41.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. 5.59, “Therefore nature created and shaped the human body in such a way that some parts of it are complete from the first, while others are fashioned by the advancing age (*Natura igitur corpus quidem hominis sic et genuit et formavit ut alia in primo ortu perficeret, alia progrediente aetate fingeret...*). This notion is certainly not un-Stoic (on the material constitution of Stoic progress, see above, n.98. Yet Piso’s shift into the diction of *aetas* is notable (see below, n.121), and his stress on the unbroken continuity and constant action through these “ages” performs an important distinction.

<sup>121</sup> *Aetas* is used sparingly in the earlier books (9x total): e.g., in the repeated phrase, *ultimum tempus aetatis* (2.87, 3.76), cf. 1.63, 2.88, 2.118, 3.9, 3.76, 4.6, 4.13. By contrast it appears 11x in Piso’s speech alone, with a wide array of meanings; see also, 5.27 (x2), 5.43, 5.50, 5.55 (x2), 5.57, 5.59, 5.62 (x2).

of human life. As the *partes-cum-toto* that comprise the duration of human life, the succession of *aetates* subtends ethical progress and life itself.

Within this vitalistic and panchronic conception of the human lifetime, Piso claims that happiness consists in the enjoyment of as many bodily goods and the accomplishment of as many virtues of the mind as possible and in the manner best-suited to the nature of the individual. This totality of happiness can only be the result of a life-long process of philosophical study and determined action: because the *vita* is the time of life and the time of life is the condition of ethical progress for the *vita*, “it rests with us (and by that I mean our art) to seek out the consequences of those principal endowments that we received until we have achieved what we desire” (*itaque nostrum est [quod nostrum dico, artis est] ad ea principia quae accepimus consequentia exquirere, quoad sit id quod volumus effectum*, 60). Adopting the Stoic idiom of “consequentiality” (*consequentia exquirere*) for his own purpose, Piso emphasizes the interactive and accumulative aspect of humanity’s interaction with its own development and change over time. Unlike the Stoic definition of a happy life, therefore, which is based only on the presence of virtue, permits of no degree, and does not depend on the amount of time that it is lived, Antiochean happiness exists in time and can be prolonged because it is, in a fundamental sense, constituted by the time of life. In the translation of this temporal vitalism into ethical doctrine, Antiochus’ theory thus allows for a distinction between “happier” and “happiest” lives. For Antiochus, “the things which are counted as bodily goods are those that complete the happiest life, yet it is just as true that happiness can exist without them” (*illa enim quae sunt a nobis bona corporis numerata complent ea quidem beatissimam vitam, sed ita ut sine illis possit beata vita existere*, 5.71). The “happiest” life will be “filled with” and “completed by” (*complent*) the

accumulation of external goods and goods of fortune that takes place over time, but founded upon a “happy” life, which is determined by the potency of moral goodness and virtue.

According to Piso, therefore, the Stoics and “Old Academics” agree that an ethical life must unfold and develop from first natural impulse toward an end. They disagree, however, in the thread of continuity that conjoins the end and its origin—that is, whether it consists of the consequentiality of deterministic reason or the unbroken succession of durative time out of which any chain of consequence must be formed and experienced. Much of the remainder of the debate in book 5 between Piso and Cicero is focused on pushing this disagreement to a point of impasse.<sup>122</sup> In a peculiar dialectical twist, Cicero, who in the previous book, which is set later in time, argued against Stoicism in favor of Antiochism, returns, from the dramatic future, to argue from a Stoic position and to critique the Antiochean doctrine on happiness. In particular, Cicero compels Piso to address the apparent inconsistency between the Antiochean dogmata that happiness exists by degree *and* that the sage is “always and invariably happy” (*sapientes omnes esse semper beatos*, 5.77). For the Stoics, Cicero argues, only the sage can be considered happy and the happiness of the sage is unassailable, since his *status*—the logically constituted state of his being—is not dependent on extension in time and is defined by the presence of absolute good and the exclusion of the absolute bad.<sup>123</sup> For Piso, however, since happiness is formed out of the *progredientes aetates* and so exists by degree, the consistency of the Stoic notion is lacking.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> See Cicero’s speech: 75-86; and, Piso’s rebuttal: 86-95.

<sup>123</sup> Cf., e.g., Cato’s comment that, “A man who has made some progress toward the state of virtue is nonetheless as much in misery as a man who has made no progress at all” (*qui processit aliquantum ad virtutis habitum nihilo minus in miseria est quam ille qui nihil processit*, 3.48).

<sup>124</sup> See 5.81. Cicero presses Piso to defend the proposition, a consequence of the Antiochean’s acceptance that external goods bear on ultimate happiness, that happiness can coexist with the presence of evils: e.g., “It is violently inconsistent to consider the same man happy who is oppressed by many evils” (*nam illud vehementer repugnat, eundem beatum esse et multis malis oppressum*, 5.77).

Cicero thus challenges Piso to defend the function that Antiochus assigns to philosophy for understanding and acting upon the human lifetime: since his philosophy is pointedly eudaimonistic, if Piso cannot defend happiness, the entire Antiochean project is in jeopardy.<sup>125</sup>

Piso meets Cicero's critique on this point by arguing that, in fact, the Stoic dedication to the logical consistency of happiness puts true, lived happiness out of reach. If philosophy is an expression of the "burning desire to live happily" (*beate enim vivendi cupiditate incensi*, 5.86), Piso argues, then its consummation does not lie in definitions and syllogisms, but in the practices and the ways of living that have been developed and exercised by philosophers throughout history, from Plato, to Pythagoras, to the wisemen of Egypt and Persia.<sup>126</sup> Piso accuses the Stoics of perverting the true nature of philosophy by inventing new names to disguise the fundamental agreement between Stoicism and the "Old" Academy.<sup>127</sup> Thus, it is the Stoics who rob philosophy of the ability to defend happiness by rendering the terms by which the defense must be carried out meaningless for the conduct of life—for who would claim that "a crop of grain is not fertile and dense, if you can see a single weed anywhere in it or that a business is not profitable if among the greatest profits it incurs the smallest loss" (*ne seges quidem igitur spicis uberibus et crebris si avenam uspiam videris, nec mercatura quaestuosa si in maximis lucris paulum aliquid damni contraxerit*, 5.91). Piso maintains, therefore, that it is more important for

---

<sup>125</sup> See Piso's rebuttal to Cicero at 5.86, "The whole importance of philosophy, as Theophrastus contends, lies in obtaining a happy life" (*omnis auctoritas philosophiae, ut ait Theophrastus, consistit in beata vita comparanda*). On Cicero's skeptical treatment of eudaimonism more generally, see Ch. 4, section III.i.

<sup>126</sup> See 5.87.

<sup>127</sup> For instance, the Stoics call things that are truly "goods" only "preferables" (*et sumenda et eligenda et praeposita [quae ita definiunt ut satis magno aestimanda sint]*, 5.90).



philosophy to defend a definition of happiness that supports and conforms to human experience than to reduce that experience to a purely logical consistency.

In this final skeptical gambit of the dialogue, Cicero is not simply reversing the *divisio* by arguing in favor of Stoic doctrine—nor is he allowing Antiochism to have the last word. Instead, he is using skeptical argumentation in order to pit the Stoic and Antiochean positions against one another to draw out a latent undecidability.<sup>128</sup> On the one hand, Cicero’s challenge to Piso demonstrates how the Stoics privilege systematization and logic in order to produce a philosophical edifice that is as beautifully interconnected as a work of art: “By god, it is marvelous how their system is interwoven with itself (I must admit what I really think). The conclusions agree with the premises (*Respondent extrema primis*), the intermediate steps agree with both, every part fits with every other part; they understand what follows logically and what is contradictory.”<sup>129</sup> While this remark may seem to be highly laudatory, with Piso’s critique in mind, its emphasis on artifice discloses the failure of Stoic doctrine to account adequately for human experience: the logical continuity between “conclusions” and “premises” (*extrema primis*) supplants the true aim of philosophy—to apprehend the structure and potential of a human lifetime. On the other hand, Cicero criticizes Piso’s Antiochean theory for getting “ahead of itself” (*proclivi currit oratio*, 5.84)<sup>130</sup> and “getting stuck in a rut at the end” (*venit ad*

---

<sup>128</sup> Indeed, Cicero repeatedly states that he is not interested in whether the Stoic or the Antiochean position is “true” but what is consistent: 5.77, 79, 83, 84. In doing so, he is emphasizing that his use of Stoic argumentation is not to support its conclusions, but to render unsatisfactory the Antiochean’s. Cf. esp. 5.81, “What could be less approvable than to say that someone is happy, but not happy enough?” (*quid minus probandum quam esse aliquem beatum nec satis beatum?*).

<sup>129</sup> *Et hercule (fatendum est enim quod sentio) mirabilis est apud illos contextus rerum. Respondent extrema primis, media utrisque, omnia omnibus; quid sequatur, quid repugnet, vident*, 5.83.

<sup>130</sup> Cicero’s language here recalls Chrysippus’ comparison of an individual’s the loss of control over his emotions to a runner losing control over his legs on account of his own momentum (see Galen *PHP* 4.2.14-18 = *SVF* 3.462 and 4.6.35 = *SVF* 3.478); this language is reprised in the context of Cicero’s own

*extremum; haeret in salebra*). Furthermore, as Piso's response to this critique makes clear, this inconsistency in argumentation is required in order for philosophy to be a bastion of the very aspects of human experience that Stoicism sacrifices for logical consistency. Stoicism fails to produce a philosophy suited to human experience and Antiochus fails to render human adequately experience in philosophy.

What remains absent from these attempts to develop a philosophy of the human lifetime is allowance for an experience that confronts the discontinuity of time. Antiochus describes human time according to a durational continuity: a lifetime is an unbroken succession from origins to ends. The Stoics ascribe heterogeneity to human experience in the shift from *status* to *status*, but this is heterogeneity without discontinuity: given the power of cosmic reason, these changes, in fact, disclose the underlying continuity of "nature." As the *divisio* approaches the ends of knowledge available to these positions, however the skeptical *epochē* that awaits in its inconclusive conclusion creates its own kind of solitude.<sup>131</sup> Perhaps, as readers, we can experience the suspension of closure that Cicero's skeptical argument produces as itself a subtraction of time from continuity—a moment of Bachelardian withdrawal and disjuncture in which we are severed from the past, but in the same instant are able to look, even mournfully, on that past as completed and to consider the bare potentialities of the present. In other words, what is absent from these philosophical accounts of the relation between the origins and ends, but present through the representational form of the work as a whole, is Cicero's own experience of *solitudo*. Through the claims in his letters that solitude both enables and serves as the object of

---

discussion of the emotions at *Tusc.* 4.14 and 4.42, where the same form *proclivi* is found; see Madvig 1877: ad loc.

<sup>131</sup> On this "subjective" element in the outcome of the dialogue, see Brittain 2016: 29-30.

his philosophy, we can see in the impasse at the end of *de Finibus* an opening onto such a moment of unboundedness—and an invitation to the reader to experience this solitary instant as a liberation from temporal succession. In his text's ultimate rejection of the continuities of the *vita*, Cicero brings philosophy to bear on the interstices of a lifetime. It is there, in the positive experience of nothingness, that philosophy finds its purchase on human time and experience.

## Chapter 2. Doubt's Drives.

Although the usefulness of such extensive doubt [about all things, especially material things] is not apparent at first sight, its greatest benefit lies in freeing us from all our preconceived opinions...The eventual result of this doubt is to make it impossible for us to have any further doubts about what we subsequently discover to be true.

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, §12

Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo,  
a piè del vero il dubbio, ed è natura  
ch'al sommo pinge noi di collo in collo.

Thus doubt is born like a new growth  
from the root of truth, and its nature drives us  
toward the summit from peak to peak.

Dante, *Paradiso* 4.130-2

### I. From Uncertainty to Doubt

For Cicero, philosophy is a discourse and practice that owes its function and purpose to human fallibility. In the *Lucullus*,<sup>1</sup> the dialogue that will form the basis of this chapter, Cicero presents doubt as an experience through which philosophy can turn that very fallibility into the pursuit of truth in time.<sup>2</sup> In the sections that follow I argue that Cicero conceives of doubt as a response to reaching the limit of knowledge in the present moment. This limit marks a point of

---

<sup>1</sup> The composition of the *Lucullus* and its subsequent revision, all of which took place between March and July 45, is coextensive with *de Fin*. It is the third and only extant book from Cicero's original philosophical trilogy (or second book of the original diptych on Academic philosophy) *Hortensius*, *Catulus*, *Lucullus*. The material of the *Catulus* and *Lucullus* was quickly refashioned by Cicero into a significantly different four-volume work (the so-called *Academici Libri*). Griffin 1997 persuasively argues also for an intermediary version between the original diptych and revised four dialogues, although no material from this initial revision, the existence of which is based on evidence in the letters, remains extant. Thus, the *Academica* are really the remains of three different revisions. Following Hunt 1998: 13-16 and Cicero himself, I refer to the *Lucullus* (*Luc.*) and the fragments of the *Academici libri* (*Ac. lib.*) as distinct (see *Att.* XIII.32[305].3 for the *Lucullus* and *Catulus*; *Att.* XIII.13[321].1, 16[323].1, 19[326].3; and *Tusc.* 2.2 for the nomenclature of the later revisions), although I use the catch-all *Academica* (*Ac.*) to refer to the whole assemblage (cf. Cicero's Ἀκαδημικὴ σύνταξις, *Att.* XIII.13.1). See Griffin 1997 and Cappello 2019: 16-35 for the circumstances of composition and revision. On the significance of this compositional process for my argument, see below section IV.

<sup>2</sup> On the understanding of doubt as an experience for Cicero, see esp. Cappello 2019: 312-23.

“uncertainty,” a quality that inheres in sense-impressions of the natural world and is a characteristic of potentially truth-valued propositions. Doubt, in turn, is a symptomatic response to the pervasiveness of uncertainty in experience, a response which, furthermore, can be harnessed rationally and adopted intentionally as the drive of inquiry. By deferring and prolonging the confrontation with the uncertainty, I contend ultimately, Ciceronian doubt transforms each new moment in the progression of time into a potential receptacle for truth.

In this first section, I outline the debates about the limits of human knowledge that inform the *Lucullus* and establish the relationship between uncertainty and doubt that Cicero develops through his engagement with the categories of Hellenistic epistemology. In the dialogue, the venerable Republican aristocrat Lucullus<sup>3</sup> voices a position in favor of Antiochus’ syncretic and dogmatic epistemology.<sup>4</sup> In particular, Lucullus defends the basic Stoic proposition that some impressions are inherently and discernibly kataleptic—i.e., “graspable.”<sup>5</sup> Speaking from the perspective of an Academic skeptic,<sup>6</sup> Cicero argues, on the contrary, for a fundamental

---

<sup>3</sup> On the choice of *personae* and setting, see below, section IV.

<sup>4</sup> This is a conventional and admittedly simplistic understanding of Antiochus’ philosophical position, who, as Polito 2012 and others have recently argued, is more rightly conceived as a bonafide participant in and successor to the skeptical Academic tradition. I continue to use the conventional labels “syncretic” and “dogmatic” because they seem to me true to Cicero’s own view of Antiochus’ project, but this view should certainly be understood as polemical.

<sup>5</sup> On the kataleptic impression in Stoicism, see, e.g., D.L. VII.54 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.236-7 (39A).

<sup>6</sup> My use of the conventional label “Academic skepticism” is meant to be descriptive, referring to the Ciceronian speaker’s own characterization of his approach. On the one hand, he is “skeptical” in the sense that he resists accepting philosophical arguments on the basis of “authority” (see, e.g., 64), puts forward the view that there can be no certain knowledge, and employs dialectical argumentation that opposes the positions of dogmatic schools (see, e.g., his application of a *divisio* at *Luc.* 138-41; for the use of *divisiones* in *Luc.* and their difference from those found in *de Fin.*, see Lévy 1992: 335-444 and Algra 1997). On the other hand, he is “Academic” because he claims to belong to the philosophical tradition of Plato and insists that the purpose of his skeptical approach is the pursuit of truth, or at least the semblance of truth (e.g., 66, *Qui enim possum non cupere verum invenire, cum gaudeam si simile veri quid invenerim?*). On the view that Cicero must be understood as both a skeptic and a Platonist, see esp.

indiscernibility of impressions and, by extension, argumentative positions:<sup>7</sup> “I don’t think that there are any <impressions / positions> such that if I assented to them I wouldn’t often be assenting to something false, because there isn’t a differentiating feature dividing true from false” (*ego nihil eius modi esse arbitror, cui si adsensus sim, non adsentiar saepe falso, quoniam vera a falsis nullo discrimine separantur*, 141).<sup>8</sup> This position does not affirm or deny the existence of a truth, but simply opposes the Stoic idea that there is a criterion—“a differentiating feature”—inherent in kataleptic impressions that allows for the true to be discerned infallibly from the false. This epistemological uncertainty or “universal *akatalēpsia*”<sup>9</sup> leads the skeptic to argue *contra Stoicos* that it is necessary for the sage to withhold his rational assent from *all*

---

Burkert 1965; I discuss the nature of Cicero’s philosophical activity and its connection to truth further below, Chapter 4, section III.ii. The use of “skepticism” in this label is anachronistic, but not modern; see, e.g., Gell. IX.5.6 with Striker 1980: 54n.1. Cicero’s approach, which maintains the importance of “truth” for inquiry, should be considered as in some ways distinct from forms of ancient skepticism that, using a formulation from Brittain and Palmer 2001, are only “concerned with reporting how things appear...” (70). This latter approach, while its influence is clearly evident at times in Cicero’s philosophy, is more fully identifiable with the Pyrrhonian tradition; see, e.g., Sextus’ avowal that he merely reports what happens to him (*Ph.* 1.4, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ νῦν φαινόμενον ἡμῖν ἱστορικῶς ἀπαγγέλλομεν περὶ ἐκάστου; and, 1.15, τὸ δὲ μέγιστον, ἐν τῇ προφορᾷ τῶν φωνῶν τούτων τὸ ἑαυτῷ φαινόμενον λέγει καὶ τὸ πάθος ἀπαγγέλλει τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἀδοξάστως, μηδὲν περὶ τῶν ἔξωθεν ὑποκειμένων διαβεβαιούμενος). See further below, section II.

<sup>7</sup> There is frequent debate in the scholarship about Cicero’s apparent conflation of “impression” and “position” in the epistemological debates between the Stoics and Academics that he records; i.e., whether it is appropriate to say, as Cicero often seems to, that a sage *assents* to a philosophical position in the same way that he *assents* to a kataleptic impression. As I argue throughout this dissertation, I think Cicero’s philosophy is best understood as a creative translation of his Greek counterparts, thus, we should understand in his apparent conflation of these two categories a choice to broaden the purview of skeptical uncertainty from the restricted place (the impression) it holds in the dialectical confrontations of Hellenistic philosophy. On the origins of this debate, see Striker 1980, Frede 1984, Burnyeat (Unpublished), etc.

<sup>8</sup> *Luc.* 141; translations from this dialogue here and throughout draw extensively on Brittain 2006. On the contentious applicability of the *katalēpsis* to objects outside of the realm of sense perception, see Striker 1980: 70. Despite the difficulties that she identifies, I think that, within the world of Cicero’s dialogues, we are at least encouraged to make an association between the forms of *uncertainty* confronted in representation and conceptualization, sense-perception and belief.

<sup>9</sup> On this term, see D.L. IX.61.

impressions and positions, since, if his assent were given to a false impression, even if indiscernibly so, he would cease to be wise—according to the Stoics’ own definition of wisdom.<sup>10</sup> The acknowledgement of universal *akatalēpsia* is an admission that, because uncertainty is a characteristic of the interaction between the natural world and human cognition, there can be no adjustment to our senses or to our faculty of reason that would enable us to overcome definitively the limits of knowledge. Cicero thus argues throughout the dialogue that the skeptic’s “suspension of assent” (*retentio / sustinendae adsensiones; ἐποχή*) can transform this confrontation with uncertainty from a manifestation of biological and rational deficiency into a philosophical commitment.<sup>11</sup>

As a development of this standard Academic argument, to which I return below, in Cicero’s use of these skeptical categories, recognition of universal *akatalēpsia* is, furthermore, accompanied by a confrontation with the limitlessness of truth from within the limitation of human experience.<sup>12</sup> Human senses and beliefs will *always* be insufficient for a comprehension

---

<sup>10</sup> On the chain of reasoning behind this basic skeptical argument see Brittain 2001: 12-13. As with most, if not all, forms of Greek skeptical argumentation, this argument only has validity when directed against the assertion of an opponent—in this case, the Stoics, who held that the sage will never assent to a false impression or hold an opinion. Out of this context, the argument cannot necessarily provide any positive account of a skeptical position regarding the sage. On the *ad hominem* nature of skeptical argument, see esp. Striker 1980. On the historical basis for these arguments in their dialectical relation to Stoicism, see esp. Annas 1980; Couissin 1983.

<sup>11</sup> On the nature of this skeptical “view” or, as I prefer, “commitment,” which is fundamentally different from Stoic “assent,” see Frede 1984: 256: “having a view involves one kind of assent, whereas taking a position, or making a claim, involves a different kind of assent, namely the kind of assent a skeptic will withhold.” My preference for “commitment” comes from the active role of doubt that Cicero emphasizes in his presentation of the skeptic’s “view,” on which see further below.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Cicero’s use of the metaphor of a “mole desiring the light” (*talpam num desiderare lumen putas?*, 81) to describe the relationship between the limitations of human experience and the limitlessness of truth; this passage is discussed below, section II.

of truth, which, therefore, stands in an unlimited relation to the finitude of human experience.<sup>13</sup> Uncertainty and doubt demonstrate that, subtending the finite coherence of a sight, belief, or life, there is a potentially boundless truth of which any particularity can only ever realize a limited part. This is not to say that confrontation with uncertainty reveals anything substantive *about* that truth. Rather, it only confirms the partiality of experience, thereby reminding us to be aware of our own limitation in relation to the objects of our inquiry and observation. By channeling this partiality and limitation into the form and function of philosophy, Cicero's doubt is a sign and acknowledgement of the limitlessness of truth from within human experience.

To return to the epistemological debate as it played out between the Hellenistic schools of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, the skeptic's advocacy of a "suspense" of judgement in the face of *akatalēpsia* opened their argument up to a charge of *apraxia* from the Stoics.<sup>14</sup> If, the Stoics contend, the skeptic completely withholds his assent from all impressions and positions, he has surrendered his entire ability to live—to make decisions and take action in the world—not to mention to construct and defend philosophical arguments. Cicero's dialogue is overwhelmingly focused on this charge of "inaction" and the skeptic's defense of ways in which a life could be constructed around and lived fully through the suspension of judgement. The irreconcilable contention between Cicero and Lucullus concerns this "overturning of life" (*eversio vitae*) that threatens to follow upon the recognition of universal *akatalēpsia* and the suspension of judgement.<sup>15</sup> I discuss below in section III, how Cicero interprets the most common response to

---

<sup>13</sup> On this relationship between limitation in experience and the limitlessness of truth, see further below, section V.

<sup>14</sup> On the *apraxia* argument and the skeptic's response, see below, Section III.

<sup>15</sup> For Lucullus' attack, see 31-45; for Cicero's response, see esp. 98-111.



the *apraxia* charge—the Carneadean *pithanon*. In order to understand better how Cicero himself approaches skeptical philosophy, however, we must hold this solution in abeyance and first examine the role that he ascribes to doubt as a response to uncertainty.

In Cicero’s discussion of similarities (*similitudines*), he is most explicit about the nature of doubt as a symptomatic response to universal *akatalēpsia*.<sup>16</sup> If two impressions are similar to such a degree that they cannot be distinguished by the senses, the resultant similarity undermines the Stoic claim that a criterion exists that can infallibly discern true from false impressions. An example that both Lucullus and Cicero discuss—that of the twins Publius and Quintus Servilius—is of the order of stock skeptical examples that are, by Cicero’s own admission, trite and intended to stand in for a much larger problem that apparent identities pose to knowledge.<sup>17</sup> Lucullus, in fact, introduces this specific example to ridicule the skeptical position by arguing that such an indiscernible similarity could never actually *exist*—instead, it can only be posed as a spurious hypothetical sophism: “Imagine that those ancient Servilii (the ones who were twins) were as similar as they are said to have been; do you suppose that they were actually identical? They were not recognized apart in public, but they were at home...Or don’t we see that it comes about as a matter of course that, once we have had practice (*consuetudine adhibita*), we

---

<sup>16</sup> Although Cicero does not use a single Latin word to denote “doubt” in this sense, words related to *dubius* appear in the Lucullus and fragments of the *Academici libri* at a rate higher than in the other dialogues of 45-4. These words are used in the *Lucullus* and the fragments of *Ac. Lib.* at a rate nearly twice that of the *Tusculans* and significantly more than in the *de Fin.*, although there the difference is less pronounced, as we might expect considering the aporetic structure of both works and their overlapping compositional dates. From this it is clear that the cluster of senses “doubt, hesitation, suspicion” play a particularly important thematic role in these dialogues. The rates of occurrence for *Luc. + Ac.*: 21/23,021 = .00091; *de Fin.* 39/47,778 = .00081; *Tusc.* 27/47,958 = .0005.

<sup>17</sup> Cicero ironically goads Lucullus, who complains about the skeptics’ choice of simple examples, e.g., the ship or the oar, “Why am I talking about the ship? I saw that you were dismissive of the oar. Perhaps you’re looking for something a bit bigger. Well, what could be bigger than the sun...?” (*quid ego de nave? vidi enim a te remum contemni; maiora fortasse quaeris. Quid potest esse sole maius...?*, 82).

discriminate easily people who we thought we could never tell apart—so easily that they do not seem in the slightest degree similar?”<sup>18</sup> As often throughout his speech, Lucullus appeals to reason, art, and practice (*consuetudo*) in order to downplay skeptical epistemological critique.

Cicero responds directly to Lucullus’ use of *consuetudo* as the arbiter of knowledge by emphasizing that even habitual practice is fallible and, furthermore, due to the false security associated with habit, its rupture will, in fact, accentuate the feelings of doubt that emerge:<sup>19</sup>

Negas tantam similitudinem in rerum natura esse...ne sit sane: videri certe potest, fallet igitur sensum, et si una fefellerit similitudo, dubia omnia reddiderit; sublato enim iudicio illo quo oportet agnosci, etiamsi ipse erit quem videris qui tibi videbitur, tamen non ea nota iudicabis, qua dicis oportere, ut non possit esse eiusdem modi falsa.

You deny that there is such similarity between things in nature...You may well be right; but it can certainly seem to exist. If so, that similarity deceives the senses—and if one similarity deceives them, it will render everything doubtful. For without the criterion by which he’s supposed to be recognized, even if the person you’re looking at actually is the person you think you’re looking at, you still won’t be judging by the mark you say we’re supposed to use to avoid false, but exactly alike, impressions.<sup>20</sup>

Cicero’s response clarifies what is at stake in the example of the twins. First, he takes Lucullus to task for relying on a false distinction between being and nonbeing, whereas the true distinction lies in the varying intensities of appearance that define the human experience of the world: even if such a close resemblance does not “exist in nature,” it can *seem* to exist (*videri certe potest*)—

---

<sup>18</sup> 56, *Fac enim antiquos illos Servilios, qui gemini fuerunt, tam similes quam dicuntur: num censes etiam eosdem fuisse? Non cognoscebantur foris, at domi; non ab alienis, at a suis. An non videmus hoc usu venisse ut, quos numquam putassemus a nobis internosci posse, eos consuetudine adhibita tam facile internosceremus uti ne minimum quidem similes esse viderentur?*

<sup>19</sup> An assertion that feels particularly meaningful in light of the frequent discussion in the letters about the loss of *consuetudo* under Caesar; see, e.g., the letter to Nigidius Figulus (*ad Fam.* IV.13[225].1) discussed above, Intro., section I.

<sup>20</sup> *Luc.* 84.

i.e., it can have an appearance in the world, which is, after all, the only access to being afforded by a materialist worldview.<sup>21</sup>

Cicero then lays out the relationship between uncertainty, which is a function of the fallible relationship between the senses and the world, and doubt, a response to this fallibility. Given the appearance of indiscernible impressions, the senses are “deceived” (*fefellerit*), which, once it has occurred, “will render everything doubtful” (*dubia omnia reddiderit*). The verb *reddo*, “to deliver, hand back, give over, restore” speaks to the overwhelming transformation brought about by a confrontation with uncertainty. This verb also indicates a *return* to doubt, strongly implying that this response is only one in a series of reiterations in experience. Doubt spreads from the recognition of fallibility to undermine the basis on which any certainty had rested. Any attempt to achieve certainty by means of this formerly sufficient criterion can only fail and, as a consequence, increase feelings of doubt: “For without the criterion by which he’s supposed to be recognized, even if the person you’re looking at actually is the person you think you’re looking at, you still won’t be judging by the mark you say we’re supposed to use to avoid false, but exactly alike, impressions.” Cicero thus uses this stock example to depict the uncertainty (*akatalēpsia*) that undermines any Stoic epistemological claim for *katalēpsis*. At the same time—and more significantly for Cicero’s own project—this passage demonstrates clearly how feelings of doubt function as a symptomatic response of the individual’s confrontation with that uncertainty.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Cf. e.g., *Luc.* 111, *Ac. Lib.* 1.41; on the ontological status of impressions, see esp. Long and Sedley 1987: i.239 on 39 B 2-3, “The texts do not imply that impressions are internal pictures or images, so that what we perceive is images of objects. Rather, like light, impressions are the illuminations of, or means of our observing, actual things.”

<sup>22</sup> When considering the symptomatic resonance in the Latin words for “doubt,” it is important to note that the etymologically primary sense of the verb *dubitare* is “to dwell in two places,” which manifests

Although the narrativity of this scenario—from the uncertainty of faulty perception to a return to doubt (*fallet igitur sensum, et si una fefellerit similitudo, dubia omnia reddiderit*)—is rhetorically crafted and not necessarily reflective of experience,<sup>23</sup> nevertheless it helps to clarify the responsive quality of doubt. Doubt follows upon a confrontation with universal *akatalēspia*; it accompanies epistemic collapse as a symptomatic response to the recognition of the limits of knowledge in the present moment and, as I discuss further below, a sense of the limitlessness that subtends the finitude of human experience. In this brief narrative, furthermore, the feeling of doubt seems to spread from the point of failure to encompass the subject’s experience of the world beyond his control or intent. Yet if we return to the idea that Academic skeptical philosophy begins from the suspense of judgement, we can see that as a response to uncertainty, which is neither assent nor rejection, doubt accommodates well this essential commitment. By committing to doubt, this all-too-human response to uncertainty can be transformed into the dialectical drive of philosophical inquiry.

Doubt thus seems to stand in an analogous place to the Stoic’s rational responses to impressions: assent or rejection. Indeed, in Cicero’s rebuttal of the *apraxia* charge and as part of his defense of a skeptical approach to life, he offers this precise parallel as a way of undermining

---

physically and bodily an experience that in English we tend to think of as principally cognitive and internal: on \**Du-bh-* (i.e., *duo-habeo*), lit. “to be/dwell in two places,” see Walde-Hofmann 1938: i.375-6. This etymological sense was alive for Cicero, cf. *Verr.* II.2.74, *versabat se in utramque partem*; cf. also *Rep.* 1.4 and *de Am.* 1. Additionally, it is clear from Cicero’s frequent use of skeptical *divisiones* and other aporetic argumentative structures throughout the dialogues that he is perhaps more interested in dramatizing feelings of doubt than in analyzing the experience theoretically. Aside from Cicero’s penchant for theatricality (see esp. Cappelletto 2019: 177-87), this is also in keeping with an essential goal of skeptical argumentation, traceable to the Socratic *elenchos*, that seeks to demonstrate *isostheneia*. On which, see, e.g., Striker 1980: 59, “The Academics tried to induce suspension of judgement in their hearers by arguing on both sides of a thesis, and it is usually assumed that the arguments for and against were of equal weight.” Cf. Lévy 1992: 260-63 and Schofield 2012.

<sup>23</sup> In fact, as the last sentence in the passage seems to indicate, the experience often works in reverse: a creeping feeling of doubt causes us to question the criteria upon which our certainties are constructed.

the Stoic claim that it is impossible to assent to nothing (*negatis fieri posse ut quisquam nulli rei adsentiatur*, 107)—i.e., that action in life requires assent to at least *some* impressions. To oppose this claim, Cicero reminds his interlocutor that Panaetius, “nearly the chief of all the Stoics” (*princeps prope meo quidem iudicio Stoicorum*), used to say that,

ea de re dubitare se dicat quam omnes praeter eum Stoici certissimam putant, vera esse haruspicum responsa, auspicia, oracula, somnia, vaticinationes, seque ab adsensu sustineat. quod is potest facere etiam de iis rebus quas illi a quibus ipse didicit certas habuerunt, cur id sapiens de reliquis rebus facere non possit? an est aliquid, quod positum vel improbare vel approbare possit, dubitare non possit?

He was in doubt about something that all the other Stoics think is most certain, namely, that there is truth in the pronouncements of diviners, auspices, oracles, dreams, and soothsayers, and, furthermore, that he refrains from assent. If Panaetius was able to do this concerning these things that were held as certain by his teachers, why can’t the sage do this for all other things? Is there really anything that the sage can affirm or deny but can’t doubt?<sup>24</sup>

In this striking formulation, Cicero assigns doubt (*dubitare*) to a place analogous to the Stoic sage’s ability to affirm (*approbare*) or deny (*improbare*) an assertion (*aliquid, quod positum*).<sup>25</sup>

If Panaetius can “be in doubt” (*dubitare se*) and “refrain from assent” (*seque ab adsensu sustineat*) about the veracity of divine messages—a point of the “firmest certainty” (*certissimam*) to his Stoic teachers—what is there to keep the skeptical sage from adopting a similar intentional frame of mind with regard to all other such propositions? Cicero’s “doubt” and the skeptic’s suspension of assent are thus conceived as parallel and intentional responses to uncertainty.

Furthermore, the parallelism of Cicero’s final question reasserts that a confrontation with

---

<sup>24</sup> *Luc.* 107.

<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Cicero pointedly uses verbs related to *probare* to describe the affirmation or rejection of the Stoic. This word family is typically reserved to refer to the judgments associated with the *probabile*, on which, see below, section III and V. In this local context, however, a sense bordering on the Stoic “assent” and “reject” seems to be indicated, at least polemically, since Cicero is referring to the rational responses of the sage.

uncertainty can lead to doubt in a way that is similar to the Stoic's affirmation or rejection of an impression or proposition. Yet how parallel are these two sequences? On the one hand, Stoic *katalēpsis* is a function of reason and thus serves as the foundation of the school's entire ethical and scientific doctrine.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, doubt, although it may also be adopted as a rational frame of mind, corresponds only with a fundamental uncertainty; it can never lead to certainty, only to a re-cognition of uncertainty. To what ends can doubt lead beyond this uncertainty?

If Ciceronian doubt never leads to certainty, this does not mean that it cannot lead, in some sense, to truth. As I argue throughout the rest of the chapter, we can understand Ciceronian doubt as positioned between the Descartes' rational doubt and the spiritual doubt of Dante. Like its Cartesian counterpart, Ciceronian doubt is an exercise of reason—an intentionally and purposely adopted state of mind that is an appropriate and even “beneficial” response to the fallibility of “preconceived opinions” and the senses. Yet, whereas for Descartes, rational doubt ultimately makes it “impossible for us to have any further doubts about what we have subsequently discovered to be true,” Cicero does not conceive of a simple, uniform movement from doubt to truth.<sup>27</sup> Instead, like Dante's spiritual doubt, Ciceronian doubt “is born like a new growth from the root of truth” (*Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo, / a piè del vero il dubbio*). In other words, doubt emerges and grows from the ungraspable, unbounded truth of which uncertainty is a sign in human experience—not in opposition to that truth but as a manifestation of its limitlessness from within the partiality and finitude of human experience. In its persistence,

---

<sup>26</sup> On this chain of Stoic thought which links assent and virtuous action, see Inwood 1985; and, on the nature of the Stoic sage's assent, which leads to impregnable “scientific knowledge” (*epistēmē*), see Annas 1980: 92; Long and Sedley 1987: i.257-59 (41A-I).

<sup>27</sup> On the relationship between Cicero as a representative of ancient skepticism more generally and modern Cartesian skeptical philosophy, see, e.g., Burnyeat 1982; Groarke 1984; Fine 2000; Broughton 2002: 10-18.

therefore, Ciceronian doubt is the drive that propels human nature, however limited and fallible it may be, “from peak to peak” (*pinge noi di collo in collo*), although it never finally reaches the summit (*al sommo*). Its aim is not to arrive at a Cartesian truth any more than a Stoic certainty, but rather to approach truth as it is manifested through the time of human life.

In light of these comparisons, we can see that for Cicero philosophy becomes the practice and activity by which doubt is harnessed and transformed from a symptomatic response to uncertainty into a commitment to inquiry, and the pursuit of this ungraspable truth. Although doubt cannot, in and of itself, form a philosophical position or dogmatic “view,” even one such as the famous Socratic position “to know that one knows nothing,”<sup>28</sup> nevertheless, it sustains the movement of the pursuit. Doubt pursues, follows, suspends, and defers the closure of inquiry brought on by the recognition of uncertainty. In order to elucidate these connections between the drive of doubt and the pursuit of truth, I examine, in section II, Cicero’s transmission and development of skepticism especially in relation to the debates surrounding the history of the Academy. In section III, I consider the movement in time that Cicero associates with philosophical inquiry—the drive itself—by analyzing the semantic range of the verb *sequi* in the *Lucullus*. In section IV, I expand my view to the relationship between doubt and limitation in Cicero’s practice and the history of philosophy more generally; and, finally, in section V, I

---

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Arcesilaus’ position *contra Socratem* that “nothing can be known, not even that residuum of knowledge that Socrates left himself,” i.e., that nothing can be known (*Itaque Arcesilas negabat esse quidquam quod sciri posset, ne illud quidem ipsum, quod Socrates sibi reliquisset, Ac. lib. 1.45*). And further, “no one must make any positive statement or affirmation or give the approval of assent to any proposition, and a man must always restrain his rashness to give assent either to a falsehood or to something not certainly known, and nothing is more disgraceful than for assent and approval to outstrip knowledge and perception” (*quibus de causis nihil oportere neque profiteri neque adfirmare quemquam neque adsensione approbare, cohibereque semper et ab omni lapsu continere temeritatem, quae tum esset insignis cum aut falsa aut incognita res approbaretur, neque hoc quidquam esse turpius quam cognitioni et perceptioni adsensionem approbationemque praecurrere, ibid.*).

contend that Cicero's advocacy of a "pursuit of approvability" (*sequor probabilitatem*) offers a mode of conducting life in relation to the limitlessness of truth.

## II. Cicero's Doubtful Skepticism

As we have already seen, Cicero locates the need for philosophy—and for a skeptical philosophy specifically—in the inescapable limitations within which humanity exists. These limitations are most evident in daily human experience in the relationship between the senses and the natural world. Lucullus, in fact, sets up Cicero's deployment of this skeptical contention by arguing, on the contrary, that "there is a great deal of truth in the senses" (*maxima in sensibus veritas*) and that, "if human nature were given the choice—if a god demanded of it whether it is satisfied with its senses when they are sound and undamaged or whether it requires something better—I can't see what more it could ask for."<sup>29</sup> Cicero, in turn, responds to this "clichéd argument" (*communi loco*, 79) initially by citing the various ways in which human senses, even when functioning correctly and healthily, fail to achieve the "perspicuity" that the Stoics ascribe to them:<sup>30</sup> our sense of sight, for instance, is hampered by distance or perspective. But more than pointing out the deficiencies of our existing senses, Cicero criticizes Lucullus' claim that we could not even wish for more:

At amplius non desideramus! Quid? talpam num desiderare lumen putas? Neque tam quererer cum deo quod parum longe quam quod falsum viderem. Videsne navem illam? stare nobis videtur, at iis qui in navi sunt moveri haec villa. Quaere rationem cur ita videatur; quam ut maxime inveneris, quod haud scio an non possis, non tu verum te testem habere, sed eum non sine causa falsum testimonium dicere ostenderis.

---

<sup>29</sup> Luc. 19, *Ordiamur igitur a sensibus, quorum ita clara iudicia et certa sunt ut si optio naturae nostrae detur et ab ea deus aliqui requirat contentane sit suis integris incorruptisque sensibus an postulet melius aliquid, non videam quid quaerat amplius.*

<sup>30</sup> Cicero translates the Stoic ἐνάργεια with *perspicuitas*. On the status of "perspicuity" in skeptical Academic critique, see, esp. Allen 1997: 237-43.



*But we want nothing more.*<sup>31</sup> What? Don't you think that a mole desires the light? Though I wouldn't complain to god that I can't see far enough as much as I would that I *can* see what isn't true. Do you see that ship there? It seems stationary to us, while to the people on the ship this villa seems in motion. Of course, you can investigate the explanation for these impressions; but even if you find it—which I am inclined to think you won't be able to—you won't have shown that you have a truthful witness, but that there is a reason why your witness gives false evidence.<sup>32</sup>

In the figure of a “mole desiring the light” Cicero offers an analogy for the real limitation of the senses. The mole, a proverbially blind animal that exists in complete darkness, by analogy thus emphasizing the aspects of reality from which human senses are cut off. Yet even more than articulating this final limitation of human experience, the metaphor also articulates the relationship between human experience and truth as one of blindness to light, limitation to limitlessness. The mole still *desires* (*desiderare*) the light; although it may not be able to articulate this missing element, which exists entirely outside of its experience, it can register and circumscribe this lack by means of its desire. Thus, Cicero does not so much lament the deficiencies of the senses—e.g., the distance at which an individual can no longer see clearly—as he *desires* something the senses lack entirely: the ability to perceive the “truth.”

In the stock example that follows what is at stake is thus not the clarity or “perspicuity” of any particular view of the ship, but the inability of human senses to register, from the various multiple perspectives available, a single “true” impression—i.e., to achieve by means of vision something that is not possible by extension of the existing abilities of sight or, for that matter, in any other mode of observation—but something that is, on the contrary, lacking from them altogether. We may be able to rationalize a difference between two points of view through investigation (*Quaere rationem cur ita videatur*), yet the very need for *ratio* ultimately only

---

<sup>31</sup> In the translation of Brittain 2006, he italicizes those portions of a speech that paraphrase the arguments of the speaker's opponent, a practice that I maintain in my citations.

<sup>32</sup> *Luc.* 81.

emphasizes the fallibility of the senses and the fundamental lack from which this desire arises: “you won’t have shown that you have a truthful witness, but that there is a reason why your witness gives false evidence.” The outline of this lack thus demarcates a final limit of knowledge, which, while it may perhaps be ameliorated by the development of *ratio*, can never be surpassed or removed entirely. This immovable limit defines humanity’s relationship to the limitlessness of the world beyond our circumscribed and finite experience—like the mole’s desire for the light—and, furthermore, is the source of the need for a philosophy that incorporates uncertainty within its inquiry, instead of viewing it as an obstacle to be overcome.

Despite these evident skeptical credentials and Cicero’s claims, *in propria persona*, to adhere to an Academic approach,<sup>33</sup> the question of his philosophical commitment has a long and dogged critical history. Many readers, since antiquity, have questioned the sincerity of his skepticism<sup>34</sup> and have preferred instead to read his repeated assertions of a dedication to truth alongside his apparently heterogeneous philosophical stances as an expression of antiquarian

---

<sup>33</sup> It is true that Cicero’s references to his own scholastic sympathies tend to be delivered in highly situational terms, e.g., at *Luc.* 78, the Ciceronian speaker claims that he trusts Clitomachus’ interpretation of Carneades’ dialectic more than Philo’s or Metrodorus’. Yet this should not be taken as a sign of allegiance to Clitomachus any more than the various doctrinal arguments of the *de Finibus* or the *Tusculans* should be taken as indications of his adherence to Antiochean or Stoic ethics. Instead, Cicero’s situational treatment of philosophical problems and the movement of his apparent “approval” throughout the dialogues is precisely the result of his commitment to doubt. On Cicero’s various methodological claims, see above, Intro., section IV and below, Ch. 4, section III.ii.

<sup>34</sup> The most famous ancient skepticism of Cicero’s skepticism comes from Augustine *Contra Ac.* 3.40, “How can the sage pursue what is similar to truth when he is ignorant of what the truth itself is?” (*quomodo simile sequitur [sapiens], cum ipsum verum sit ignoret?*). Cf. Lucullus’ argument for a disingenuous reading of Socratic irony (15). Is Cicero, like Socrates, simply a provocateur? This position has been recently reinvigorated by Altman 2016 who argues for a Platonic Cicero, whose skeptical position is an ironic or at least exoteric posture (see esp. 2016: 81-99). Although my project is sympathetic with Altman’s in various ways, I find his often-casual rejection of Cicero’s skepticism unwarranted—Cicero’s Plato *is*, in some sense, a skeptical Plato, therefore his platonism must be a skeptical platonism. For a skeptical approach to Plato’s dialogues, see esp. Vogt 2012.

eclecticism or a covert form of dogmatism.<sup>35</sup> Even in cases, for instance in *de Fin.*, where “Cicero’s” role in the dialogue is unavoidably that of the antagonist, a common interpretation has been that Cicero-the-author espouses an “unexciting form of mitigated skepticism which allowed him to endorse dogmatic views.”<sup>36</sup> In this section, I draw from an increasing scholarly awareness of the complexities of Cicero’s philosophy to argue that, while it is impossible to understand the meaning and function of his dialogues without situating them within the history of Academic skepticism, we should not assimilate Cicero to one of his Greek predecessors. Rather than arguing in favor of one particular stance as Cicero’s own, I contend that his texts open up the categories of Greek thought to new uses and trajectories. In particular, I argue that his skepticism possesses a positive, constructive element—i.e., its relationship to truth—while, at the same time, incorporating the role of doubt as its drive.

---

<sup>35</sup> The characterization of Academic skepticism as a form of dogmatism has ancient roots in Sextus’ defense of Pyrrhonism, which he differentiates in part by arguing that the dogma of the Academics lies in Socrates’ claim to “know that he knows nothing” (*nihil sciri possit, Luc. 74*); see *PH* I.3 and above, n.28 for Arcesilaus’ further development of this position. On Cicero’s own apparently dogmatic tendencies, see e.g., Douglas 1990: 7, “It is not possible to decide why Cicero chose this particular technique [of skeptical argumentation in *Tusc.*], but it may well be that, apart from an urge to seek some artistic variety, he felt that having set out the views of competing schools...in *de Finibus*, ending with a leaning towards Stoicism, he was prepared both to be more dogmatic...and at the same time was seeking so far as possible to look for the common ground which might be found at least on the central issues...”. This comment, although properly concerning the *Tusculans*, is instructive in its summation of a number of scholarly clichés about Cicero’s philosophical proclivities: 1. a personal affinity for “artistic variety,” i.e., “eclecticism,” on which see esp. Glucker 1988; 2. an ethical “leaning towards Stoicism”; and, 3. an Antiochean quest for syncretism between schools, a “common ground.” These scholarly arguments are especially common with regard to the *Tusculans*, which is regarded as an “exception” or even marking a “Stoic turn.” See, e.g., Görler 1995: 110 or Gildenhard 2007: 19. Many recent scholars, with a more historicizing approach, e.g., Strasburger 1990 or Baraz 2012, tend to downplay the importance of the philosophical contents of the dialogues altogether, except in so far as they can be construed as political or, following a long modern biographical tradition, connect Cicero’s Academic position to his political “vacillations,” see., e.g., Fuhrmann 2000 for the 19th century history of this argument.

<sup>36</sup> Brittain 2016: 13.

A history of Academic skepticism and Cicero's relation to it must inevitably be a circular endeavor. Cicero is our earliest and often best source for the skeptical Academy that existed, with varying degrees of activity, from the tenure of scholarch Arcesilaus down to that of Philo of Larissa.<sup>37</sup> Despite this difficulty, scholars have typically reconstructed this history as follows:<sup>38</sup> Arcesilaus, possibly influenced by his older contemporary Pyrrho, first "breaks" from the existing Academic and Peripatetic<sup>39</sup> traditions in order to launch a critique against Zeno and the burgeoning Stoic school. In the process of this critique, he deploys central arguments for universal *akatalēpsia* and *epochē*, possibly as an ethical good.<sup>40</sup> After several generations, during which time Chrysippus honed Stoic counter-arguments against Arcesilaus' critique, Carneades rose to the head of the Academy.<sup>41</sup> Like Arcesilaus and Socrates before him, Carneades left no autographic writings, so inevitably our understanding of his approach is defined by its exegetes. It seems clear, however, that he met the Chrysippean reinvigoration of Stoicism with an equal

---

<sup>37</sup> Arcesilaus was scholarch from c. 267/6 until his death in 241/0 BCE. Philo of Larissa was head of the school from 110 until c. 83 at which point Antiochus and his brother Aristus may have served as quasi-scholarchs, after which point the Platonic school ceased to exist as a centralized institution. On the controversial status of Antiochus and Aristus in Academic history, see Gucker 1978: 98-120; Dorandi 1997: 89-106; and Polito 2012.

<sup>38</sup> This picture based largely on the extensive work on ancient Greek skepticism from the 1980s and 1990s; see esp., Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes, eds. 1980; Burnyeat 1983; and, on the *Academica* in particular, Inwood and Mansfeld, eds. 1997. I attempt to present as close to the *communis opinio* from this body of scholarship as possible, although this narrative has been altered in various ways in recent years by new work on individual Academic thinkers, see e.g., Brittain 2001 and Sedley, ed. 2012. In general this recent work has tended to reject the idea of a skeptical "decline" in favor of a more nuanced understanding of the philosophical aims of the later scholarchs.

<sup>39</sup> As noted above, Ch. 1, section III, it is difficult to argue for a unity of the "Academy" even prior to Arcesilaus that is not imposed by later authors. So, the severity of Arcesilaus' "break" from a prior Academic tradition will be determined by the allegiance of the later author who is reporting on it.

<sup>40</sup> On Arcesilaus, see Cooper 2004: 81-106; Brittain 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Carneades became scholarch sometime prior to the time of his official legation to Rome in 155 until his retirement. See Allen 1997 and 2012.

zeal, pushing Arcesilaus' skepticism to its methodological and conceptual limits.<sup>42</sup> Carneades' two primary interpreters, Metrodorus and Clitomachus, however, offered widely differing interpretations of his philosophical intent, which has resulted in an ongoing debate especially concerning the question of "probabilism."<sup>43</sup> With the introduction of the *pithanon* into Academic argumentation, as summarily lamented by David Sedley, "The subsequent history of the New Academy, from Carneades' retirement in 137 down to the headship of Philo of Larissa...is a depressing one of rapid drift into dogmatism."<sup>44</sup>

According to this traditional reconstruction, therefore, Arcesilaus (certainly) and Carneades (possibly) develop forms of "true," "unmitigated," "non-dogmatic" skepticism—that is, their argumentation remains *ad hominem* (against the Stoics) and seeks to drive their opponents towards an admission of universal *akatalēpsia* and an ethical valuation of *epochē*, without, importantly, ever holding these as positive, doctrinal positions. On the other hand, to varying degrees, Clitomachus, Metrodorus, and Philo all enact a rapprochement with the Stoics—whether through a "mitigated" skepticism, as advocated by Metrodorus and Philo, in which the wise man may hold opinions<sup>45</sup> or in the more limited allowance of Clitomachus, for whom the *pithanon* functions as a mode of judgement at least in philosophical debate, but

---

<sup>42</sup> Carneades is perhaps the most contentious figure in Academic history. An interpretation of this scholar will determine an ancient or modern view on the trajectory of skepticism in the Academy, "probabilism," dialectic, and the ethical value of the skeptical commitment.

<sup>43</sup> For the "dialectical," "unmitigated" interpretation, which relies on a "weak" understanding of the *pithanē phantasia*, see Burnyeat (Unpublished); Couissin 1983; Frede 1984; Bett 1989; Allen 1994. This consensus has been challenged by Obdrzalek 2006 and 2012, who argues in favor of a "strong" understanding of the *pithanē phantasia* as a criterion of judgment, but maintains Carneades' commitment to *epochē*, at least as a challenge to "epistemic hypocrisy" (278).

<sup>44</sup> Sedley 1983: 18. There are conflicting dates as to Carneades' retirement.

<sup>45</sup> On Metrodorus' "mitigated" interpretation of Carneades, see esp. Brittain 2001: 11-37.

possibly also for practical decisions and action.<sup>46</sup> This “rapid drift into dogmatism” sets the stage for the arrival of the ultimate iteration of ancient skepticism—that of Aenesidemus’ revival of Pyrrhonism—at which point skepticism has moved beyond the Academy.<sup>47</sup> In this understanding of Greek philosophical history, therefore, skepticism exists as an institutional gadfly—a necessary corrective to the overly theoretical and dogmatizing tendencies of the ancient philosophical schools.<sup>48</sup> As soon as a school of thought—Peripatetic, Stoic, Academic—becomes too dogmatic, a skeptical school—New Academic, Pyrrhonist—will emerge to engage it dialectically and seek to undermine the forms of certainty imposed by the positive school.

As a supplement to this history, many scholars of Hellenistic philosophy consider Cicero to be at best a relatively unimaginative adherent of Philo’s mitigated skepticism,<sup>49</sup> who adopts a “soft”<sup>50</sup>—i.e., non-dialectical—view of the *pithanon*, and at worst purely a doxographical resource. Although the latter view is no longer particularly common, it persists in overly

---

<sup>46</sup> There is good evidence that, at least in the case of Clitomachus’ interpretation of Carneades, these apparent positive assertions can be traced back to Carneades’ defense of the skeptical position against the Stoic charge of *apraxia*. See esp. Striker 1980. In this case, these apparently dogmatic assertions remain, in fact, purely dialectical. Again, cf. Obdrzalek 2006: esp. 261-73 for a reappraisal of this entire debate.

<sup>47</sup> Pyrrhonism lies beyond the scope of this project, but is an important point of comparison in scholarship on ancient skepticism generally. See, e.g., Burnyeat, ed. 1983 *passim*; Groarke 1990.

<sup>48</sup> This view of skepticism can be traced back to a certain understanding of the Platonic Socrates, for whose elenctic exchanges with his fellow Athenians, he compared himself to a “gadfly.” For the comparison, see *Ap.* 30e-31a.

<sup>49</sup> Very common until quite recently, see esp. Burnyeat (Unpublished); Sedley 1980; Groarke 1990; Glucker 1995; Allen 1997; Cooper 2004. This position has been revised, but persists, e.g., in Woolf 2015: 2-3, “In Cicero’s hands, this form of scepticism [that of Philo], while denying the possibility of knowledge, accepted that some ideas had greater rational credence than others, and that it was therefore possible rationally to accept some views over others.” The problem with this approach, even in Woolf’s measured account, is that it requires us to read “through” the dialectical movements of Cicero’s texts to exhume a hidden, authorial belief as “true”—a technique of reading that Cicero himself overtly criticizes and problematizes.

<sup>50</sup> Or, confusingly, in Obdrzalek’s terminology, a “strong” *pithanon*—i.e., one that makes some positive claim about the truth of an impression.

simplistic conceptions of Cicero’s compositional technique.<sup>51</sup> The former view—that Cicero is a mitigated skeptic of an increasingly dogmatist strain—although still widely held,<sup>52</sup> has been challenged by the work of Charles Brittain.<sup>53</sup> Yet his work simply aims to understand sympathetically Cicero’s own claims for the kind of hard-nosed skepticism that others would reserve only for Arcesilaus, the Pyrrhonists, and, perhaps, Carneades.<sup>54</sup> I would argue, in fact, that Brittain’s reappraisal of Cicero owes much to a former generation of scholars’ reconsideration of Carneades.<sup>55</sup> In the influential, but unpublished essay, “Carneades was no probabilist,” Myles Burnyeat argues that, rather than laying the groundwork for a dogmatic turn, Carneades’ maintains the category of the *pithanon* as a thoroughly dialectical tool, designed to further ensnare his Stoic opponents in increasingly untenable positions in relation to their own

---

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., Hunt 1998: 11, “In the case of the *Academici Libri*, however, perhaps Cicero did not need to do much in the way of research, as he calls these books ‘copies’ (ἀπόγραφα), for which he supplies only the words, of which he has plenty (*Att.* XII.52.3).” An article could be written on the scholarly misuse of this brief postscript to a deeply complex letter; for a corrective, see Burkert 1965: 177, “doch ist dieser Satz keineswegs Ciceros letztes Wort, schon gar nicht eine Selbstentlarvung, vielmehr voll von ironischem understatement.” It also persists in the many studies of ancient argumentation that seek to mine Cicero’s texts for all manner of “Greek originals”; see, e.g., Glucker 1995: esp. 133, where he refers, apparently without irony, to “the obscurity of [Cicero’s] provincial tongue” as compared to the clarity and elevation of the Greek texts he was translating.

<sup>52</sup> For a recent reappraisal of this position, which argues, counter-intuitively, for the logical coexistence in Cicero’s writings of Clitomachus’ and Philo’s interpretation of Carneades, see Thorsrud 2012. The various ways in which the mitigated reading of Cicero has been propped up following recent critiques can be observed throughout the volume Nicgorski, ed. 2012, which aims to resurrect Cicero’s mitigated skepticism as a proto-pragmatism.

<sup>53</sup> See 2001, 2006, and 2016.

<sup>54</sup> He accomplishes this mainly through a reconsideration of Philo of Larissa, which helps to emphasize the contrasts between the two approaches. See esp., 2001: 169-219.

<sup>55</sup> And his own reappraisal of Philo of Larissa, who, as the quotation from Sedley above indicates, is often held up as the dogmatic low point in the history of the Academy. Brittain 2001 challenges this understanding and proposes an interpretation of the “Sosus” affair and Philo’s “Roman Books” that searches for Academic continuity through skeptical discontinuity. See below, n.86.

criterion of certainty.<sup>56</sup> In turn, Brittain recasts Cicero as a rigorous dialectician. By engaging in the types of meta-argumentation that Carneades was famous for using to elicit *epochē* in his listeners,<sup>57</sup> the dialogues of Cicero, according to Brittain, should similarly deliver his readers over to a reckoning with uncertainty. While this approach has the benefit of taking seriously an important aspect of Cicero's own characterization of his approach, in some ways it moves too far, shutting down other significant avenues of interpretation that the texts open up.

Outside the scholarship on Hellenistic philosophy itself, this recent reinvigoration of Cicero Scepticus<sup>58</sup> has been adopted enthusiastically, if unevenly. Two recent books, *Cicero's Philosophy of History*, by Matthew Fox (2007), and *Cicero's Skepticism and his Recovery of Political Philosophy*, by Walter Nicgorski (2016), readdress in particular the political and ideological significance of Cicero's skeptical orientation.<sup>59</sup> These works generally consider the

---

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Obdrzalek's rebuttal of this position (2006: 254-61). Her main points are that Burnyeat's "weak" interpretation of the *pithanon* 1.) does not satisfactorily meet the Stoic's *apraxia* objection to skepticism because it renders the *kritērion* as a causal description of human action (after the fact), rather than a factor of judgement (*krisis*) for taking action (in the moment of decision); and 2.) does not account for the ample textual evidence from Cicero and Sextus that links the *pithanon* with the *eikos* (or, as Cicero provocatively translates them: *probabile* and *veri simile*); on this second point, see, from a more critical perspective, Glucker 1995 and below, n.152. While Obdrzalek's argument on the *pithanon* is an interesting one, I think, especially due to its reliance on the more evidently Sextan category of *kritērion*, that it conflates Carneades' argumentation with the attempts of later skeptics (Cicero and Sextus being the two most well-attested) to creatively apply skepticism to a philosophy of life.

<sup>57</sup> For instance, Carneades exercised an almost sophistical tendency to "argue both sides," perhaps most famously exemplified by the story of his expulsion from Rome after he had delivered on two subsequent days equally compelling speeches for and against justice. See Lact. *Inst.* V.14.3-5 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.442 (68M).

<sup>58</sup> The origins of this new appreciation for Cicero's skeptical commitment can be traced in part back to Charles Schmitt's *Cicero Scepticus* (1972), which studied the influence of Cicero's skeptical philosophy on medieval and early modern thought. It is notable how historically contingent interpretations of Cicero's skepticism (and philosophy more generally) are.

<sup>59</sup> Nicgorski 1978 participated in the initial scholarly return to skeptical readings of Cicero, although it must be noted that throughout his work, he presents Cicero's skepticism as a proto-Straussian pragmatism rather than a genuine form of ancient skepticism.



ways in which a skeptical *reading* of Cicero's dialogues, rather than a hunt for the author's philosophical view, can transform his philosophy into a critique of authoritarian ideology and the political status quo of the mid-40s BCE.<sup>60</sup> Fox argues that a skeptical reading demonstrates how Cicero's creative engagement with intellectual and political history does not support or reform aristocratic Republican norms, but rather constantly destabilizes and interrupts those traditions and institutions from the very point of their rupture.<sup>61</sup> Nicgorski reads the ethical treatises of the 40s alongside the political philosophy that Cicero wrote in the prior decade (*de Republica* and *de Legibus*) to argue that, taken as a whole, the philosophical corpus advocates for a politics that is untethered from authority and participates in an open-ended search for the goods of the state, at least on the part of the statesman, which mirrors the skeptical inquiry into the ethical *fines bonorum*.<sup>62</sup> Both of these scholars offer differing, but partially complementary models for work on the *philosophica* that seeks to remain faithful to the skeptical commitment that Cicero avows without, however, reducing that commitment to a partisan allegiance.

---

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., Fox 2007: 7-8 and 67, "The occlusion of skeptical modes of reading seems to me to have nurtured the evaluation of the philosophical works as a positive form of self-advertisement, rather than as a collective call to self-scrutiny and skepticism, both about Cicero's own position and more widely, and about central aspects of Rome's political identity... we should be reading the words of his speakers as a dramatization of a philosophical quest." On skepticism generally as a tool of ideological critique, despite the fact that it is often associated with conservatism and the preservation of the status quo, see Tsouna-McKirahan 1996.

<sup>61</sup> For a summary of his argument see 2007: 68.

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., 2016: 231, "The statesman, says Scipio, is 'never to cease from forming and examining himself' (*ut numquam a se ipso instituendo contemplandoque discedat*). Thus, the model statesman's very virtue consists partly in his continual Socratic striving for self-understanding and moral improvement. This is no finished incorruptible philosopher-king, nor a Stoic perfect Wise man, of whom Scipio speaks. It is a model on a more attainable, human plateau, yet the very incompleteness, the opening in this model to self-monitoring and self-improvement, reveals the usefulness of a concept of the model statesman/orator."

These approaches problematize the idea that Cicero's approach to philosophy can be satisfactorily explained using exclusively the labels of the Hellenistic tradition. As both Fox and Nicgorski demonstrate, aside from substantive philosophical issues, there is difficulty in translating this tradition into a Roman context, which possesses no innate method for contextualizing and adjudicating its claims.<sup>63</sup> Cicero is clearly not writing philosophy simply to participate in the debates of the Hellenistic philosophical schools, which, at any rate, had mostly dissipated by the mid-1st century, thanks, in significant part, to the geopolitical collapse and Roman subjugation of the Greek world.<sup>64</sup> But how, then, should Cicero's readers, ancient and modern, view his advocacy of some version of *skeptical* philosophy in a Roman context? Nicgorski's answer, which follows a long line of non-skeptical interpretations of Cicero's oeuvre, recalls the evident importance of rhetoric for Ciceronian political thought and the so-called *philosophia perfecta* that he, at times, seems to advocate.<sup>65</sup> While Cicero's use of oratory as a supplement to philosophy is certainly an important facet of his writings beyond the *philosophica*, Nicgorski's recourse to rhetoric to explain the apparent incompatibility between doubt and a political theory based on the individual virtue of the statesman amounts, ultimately, to a significant modification of or downright rejection of skepticism, except via the mediation of circumscribed and deeply elitist fora of rhetorical debate.<sup>66</sup> Fox, on the other hand, in translating

---

<sup>63</sup> Cicero's own awareness of the difficulty of this cultural translation is frequently on display in the prologues, see esp. *Luc.* 7; *Tusc.* 1.1-8 etc.

<sup>64</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section III.

<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., *Tusc.* 1.7 and Nicgorski's comment, 2016: 73. On this position, cf. Altman 2016: 19.

<sup>66</sup> That is, in Nicgorski's reading, exercise of philosophical skepticism is reserved exclusively for an isolated sphere of debate among ruling elites, which does not necessarily touch on the actual governing of the state. Cicero's political philosophy ends up looking like a *speculum principis*, in which the sole function of skepticism is to hone the rhetorical skills necessary for a statesman to rule. See esp. 2016:

Cicero's commitment into the Roman context, relies on an understanding of skepticism as purely negative dialectic, which is familiar also from Brittain's reappraisal. The "message" of Cicero's *philosophica* to his Roman (and modern) readers can only ever be a formal imperative: "be in doubt," i.e., "do philosophy."<sup>67</sup>

While it is clear that this imperative to "do philosophy" is at work throughout the ethical dialogues, I wonder about the hermeneutic limitations it places on modern readers of these texts. Again, Cicero most likely did not consider himself *only* a Socratic gadfly, driving his readers to doubt their certainties and engage in self-critique. Even more than the political valence of Cicero's skepticism, the deeply personal grief expressed by and the introspective nature of his philosophical project should point us away from an understanding of his skepticism as purely negative or critical. It is important in this regard to note that Cicero goes to great lengths to stress that he writes not just as a "translator" (*interpres*), but aims to "add something" to the development of philosophy through his "judgment and arrangement of composition" (*nostrum iudicium et nostrum scribendi ordinem adiungimus, de Fin. 1.6*). In defense of such an innovative and constructive "stance," Woldemar Görler contends that the position from which Cicero argues throughout the dialogues has some basis in, but cannot be reduced to the Metrodoran/Philonian interpretation of Carneades.<sup>68</sup> In particular, Görler maintains that Cicero's

---

205-44. For a more complete rebuttal of Nicgorski's position, which is consciously modeled on Leo Strauss' views on Plato, see Altman 2016: 18-20.

<sup>67</sup> See, Fox 2007: 26, "[Cicero's] message for Rome was more complex than the exhortations to control the emotions, have faith in the providential order of the universe, or aim for happiness; rather, it was an exhortation to 'do philosophy,' and the adaptation of philosophy for Roman readers was also a justification for the relevance of this vision of philosophy to the Roman context."

<sup>68</sup> As noted above, this interpretation relies on a corollary to the central skeptical epistemological critique of Stoicism that states that the wise man may hold opinions in the face of universal *akatalēpsia* as a way of accounting for human fallibility and avoiding the arrogance of claims to certain knowledge. See, e.g., Görler 1997: 48, "The keynote of *Luc. 115* is 'arrogance vs. modesty'; it is held through the rest of the

affinity for *probabilitas* as a mode of judgement in daily life arises from his understanding of Academic freedom that has no Greek counterpart: “it is in positive terms that [Cicero] conceives of his Academic ‘freedom’: he feels free *to* opine and *to* speculate on a grand scale about great themes. Every reader of Cicero’s philosophical books knows what themes he has in mind: God, the immortality of the soul, freedom of action, the high rank of virtue, human perfection.”<sup>69</sup> Görler thus labels Cicero’s approach “skeptical speculation,” which offers one way of formulating the constructive aspect of his skepticism.

Görler’s interpretation, however, framed as it is in terms of stance and intent, remains wedded to a relatively partisan understanding of Cicero’s skepticism. I propose that we can see in Görler’s “skeptical speculation,” with the benefit of Brittain’s and Fox’s advocacy of skeptical reading, a solution to this problem: we should look for the *function* of Cicero’s skeptical speculation—what does the text enact around or through the speculative ends of Cicero’s philosophical inquiry? What, in other words, does “speculative skepticism” *do*? The answer to these questions, as Görler himself indicates, lies in a reconsideration of the role that *probabilitas* or “approvability” plays in Cicero’s texts.<sup>70</sup> Rather than approaching Cicero’s *probabile* through its contentious relation to the Carneadean *pithanon*,<sup>71</sup> I focus my attention

---

section: ‘Is it not rather arrogant...to recommend your own philosophical system?...Lucullus the dogmatist, had blamed his opponents for their queer doctrine, irreconcilable with common sense; he likened the sceptics to riotous citizens and accused them of ‘upsetting a well-established system of philosophy’ (14) and ‘covering clear matters with darkness’ (16)...Cicero, in 115, as it were now turns the tables upon Lucullus: it is not we, the sceptics, whose doctrine gives offence to common sense and common feelings—what is much more scandalous is the presumption and the self-righteousness of the Stoics.’”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.: 54.

<sup>70</sup> On the difficulty of translating this term, see below n.113.

<sup>71</sup> On the debates surrounding Cicero’s use of the word *probabile* to translate the Greek *pithanon*, see esp. Glucker 1995, Obdrzalek 2006, Auvray-Assay 2006, and Cappello 2019; cf. below n.113. For a different

instead on the verb, *sequi*,<sup>72</sup> which Cicero uses to describe the action associated with the *probabile*.<sup>73</sup> I contend that in Cicero’s phrase *sequor probabilitatem* we can locate a procedure for confronting the unknowability of limits in experience, while simultaneously maintaining a relationship to the limitlessness of truth from within human time. To “pursue/follow ‘approvability’” is not a method of grasping a truth, nor is it simply a means by which to defend an opinion or judge the appropriateness of an action in life. Although these latter two uses are undeniably important in Cicero’s translation of Academic skepticism, his speculative inquiry aims further to offer the means by which humanity can achieve a relation to the ungraspable truth from within our experience of the world—not as an object of knowledge, but in the course of our interaction with the uncertain phenomena of temporal existence. The persistence of doubt as the

---

interpretation of the provenance of the Ciceronian concept, see Brennan 1996, who argues that Cicero’s choice is influenced by the Stoic category of “reasonable impression” (*eulogon*). Cf. *de Fin.* 3.58, where *probabilis* translates the Stoic *kathēkon*.

<sup>72</sup> On the importance of the action denoted by this verb for Sextus’ later interpretation of the *pithanon*, see *PH* 1.230, “For the word ‘believe’ has different meanings: it means not to resist but simply *to follow* without any strong impulse or inclination, as the boy is said to believe his tutor; but sometimes it means to assent to a thing of deliberate choice and with a kind of sympathy due to strong desire, as when the incontinent man believes him who approves of an extravagant mode of life” (τὸ γὰρ πείθεσθαι λέγεται διαφόρως, τό τε μὴ ἀντιτείνειν ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶς ἔπεσθαι ἄνευ σφοδρᾶς προσκλίσεως καὶ προσπαθείας, ὡς ὁ παῖς λέγεται πείθεσθαι τῷ παιδαγωγῷ· ἅπαξ δὲ τὸ μετὰ αἰρέσεως καὶ οἰονεῖ συμπαθείας κατὰ τὸ σφόδρα βούλεσθαι συγκατατίθεσθαι τι, ὡς ὁ ἄσωτος πείθεται τῷ δαπανητικῶς βιοῦν ἀξιοῦντι, trans. Bury); cf. *M* 11.175-78. The distinction that Cicero draws for *sequi* as “pursue” or “follow” falls along different lines that have less to do with belief and more to do with the relationality or positionality implied by the movement of the verb: to “follow” is to be behind, whereas to “pursue” is to look ahead. These two senses, however, do roughly correspond to the meanings assigned by Sextus to τὸ πείθεσθαι: to follow “weakly” as a child follows his tutor or to pursue “deliberately” as through a strong desire.

<sup>73</sup> *Sequi* is the only verb for which Cicero uses *probabilitas* as a direct object; the combination appears at *Luc.* 104, discussed below. This abstract noun appears only 5 times in Cicero’s corpus, elsewhere in an agentive usage with the verbs *fallere* (*Luc.* 75, *de Fin.* 3.72) and in the idiomatic expression *animos probabilitate percussit* (*Tusc.* 5.33). The other use at *Luc.* 99 is also discussed below, section V.

drive in Cicero's pursuit puts the limitations of human experience into relation with the limitlessness of truth.<sup>74</sup>

### III. Following Doubt

Although the verb, *sequi*, is used commonly in Latin literature of all genres and periods, I contend that the semantic bivalence of the word,<sup>75</sup> which means both “to follow”—as in, “to come behind, later”—and “to pursue”—that is, “to drive towards, to seek,” unites two key conceptual poles of the *Lucullus* in particular.<sup>76</sup> First, Cicero presents philosophy as a historical exercise. So, “to pursue” philosophy is “to follow” a tradition, adopting arguments, discourses, and terminology developed by previous philosophers.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, the belatedness of Cicero's present with respect to that tradition produces awareness of historical and generational difference. Thus, and this is the second important meaning of *sequi*, “to pursue” philosophy, especially skeptical philosophy, is also “to seek” an end that is not predetermined or fixed by the past. If the goal of philosophy is, as Cicero conceives of it in this text, to “draw out and in some

---

<sup>74</sup> See below, section V.

<sup>75</sup> Significant or poetic exploitation of this bivalence is also not unique to Cicero: cf., Statius' intriguing turn of phrase that closes the *Thebaid* (XII.816-17), in which the author advises his poem to “follow / pursue” the *Aeneid* “from afar” (*nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta, / sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora*).

<sup>76</sup> The importance of this word has not been widely noted by scholars previously; cf., however, several places where Cappello 2019 notes the word's significance in related contexts: 122-123, 286, 320; see also Obdrzalek 2012: 377-8 for a localized reading of *Luc.* 61-2 that accounts for the significant valences. *Sequi*, along with compounds like *adsequi* and *persequi*, appears 51 times in the extant text. In contexts that favor a meaning of “to follow, to come after,” see 3, 7, 13, 60, 61(x2), 70, 98(x2), 107(x2), 118, 132(x2), 133, 139, 140, 143(x2); in the sense of “to pursue, seek,” see 8, 24(x2), 33, 36, 44, 45, 54, 59, 74, 94, 99(x3), 104(x2), 109, 117, 121; in the “dialectical” usage see 21, 30(x2), 38, 50, 67, 91, 93, 95, 101, 108(x3). Notice how the first meaning clusters at the beginnings and ends of speeches, while the second and third occur during the argumentation itself.

<sup>77</sup> This is a primary focus of Cappello 2019: esp. 85-220.

way mold something that is true or at least approaches truth,”<sup>78</sup> then the “pursuit” of this aim must take place in the present moment, governed by what is “approvable” (*probabile*). Each new juncture in this movement thus defers the ends of inquiry, producing a new and further moment for the “molding” of something that “approaches” truth. Conjoining these two primary meanings of *sequi*, therefore, a dialectical usage, e.g., *sequitur*, “it follows that...,” is used to communicate the advance of this inquiry—an advance that, at the same time, re-stages the fundamental confrontation of uncertainty and persistence through doubt. In this section, I first establish the contrast in senses of *sequi* in the prologue of the *Lucullus* and then examine its use throughout the dialogue.

After the encomium of Lucullus that begins the text (1-7), Cicero directs a series of proleptic defenses against several groups of critics who, he fears, may disapprove of his philosophical project: those who have no respect for Greek literature and philosophy, those who object to Cicero’s use of the elite Romans of the past to stage philosophical discussion,<sup>79</sup> and finally,

Restat unum genus reprehensorum quibus Academiae ratio non probatur. Quod gravius ferremus si quisquam ullam disciplinam philosophiae probaret praeter eam quam ipse sequeretur. Nos autem quoniam contra omnes dicere quae videntur solemus, non possumus quin alii a nobis dissentiant recusare: quamquam nostra quidem causa facilis est, qui verum invenire sine ulla contentione volumus idque summa cura studioque conquirimus.

---

<sup>78</sup> 7, *neque nostrae disputationes quidquam aliud agunt nisi ut in utramque partem dicendo eliciant et tamquam expriment aliquid quod aut verum sit aut ad id quam proxime accedat*, 7. On this definition, see above Intro., section III and below, section V; on Cicero’s representation of philosophical activity more generally, see below Ch. 4, section III.ii.

<sup>79</sup> Including those who “deny that the disputants in my books had real knowledge of the subjects they debated—but they seem to me to envy the dead as well as the living” (*qui mihi videntur non solum vivis sed etiam mortuis invidere*, 7). This final comment supports of my argument from Ch. 1, section III, concerning the dialogues as a place for the living and dead to convene and converse. Despite his apparent dismissal of this criticism, Cicero himself will apparently succumb to it, as he tells Atticus, and revise the dialogue with different speakers. See below, section IV and cf. Ch. 4, section IV on Cicero’s use of Cato as a *persona*.

That leaves a class of critic that does not approve of the method of the Academy. We would take this more seriously if anyone approved of any philosophical school other than the one he followed himself. As for us, we can't demur when others disagree with us, since it is our practice to say what we think against every position. But our case is straightforward, because we want to discover truth without any contention, and we search for it conscientiously and enthusiastically.<sup>80</sup>

Cicero gestures dismissively, if with a dose of ironic self-deprecation, to philosophy as simply a pledge of affiliation. He invites the critic who does not “approve” (*non probatur*) of the Academic *ratio*<sup>81</sup> to reexamine the reasons for his own preference and the calcification of views that the adoption of a doctrine (*disciplina*) produces: after all, no one approves “of any philosophical school other than the one he follows himself” (*probaret praeter eam quam ipse sequeretur*).<sup>82</sup> Thus, the actions of “approving” (*probare*) and “following” (*sequi*) the teachings or method of a philosophical school are presented with some ambiguity. These actions can describe both a doctrinal partisan’s adherence to the teaching of his school and the activity of the Academic, who may approve of and follow a specific *ratio*—that of “say[ing] what we think against every position” (*contra omnes dicere quae videntur*)—but whose “case is straightforward” (*causa facilis est*): “we want to discover truth without any contention, and we

---

<sup>80</sup> *Luc.* 7.

<sup>81</sup> Note that in this prologue, Cicero does not explicitly differentiate the *ratio* of “his” skeptical Academy, from the Academic approach of his opponent.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. 114-15, where Cicero targets the arrogance of doctrinal philosophers who say that the skeptic is “most shameful” (*turpissimum*) and “excessively full of rashness” (*plenissimum temeritatis*), but then cannot admit that, after adopting a complete “system of wisdom, science of the universe, morality, and ethical ends...,” the follower of such a universal system might never “slip up” and have a mere opinion (*tantum tibi adroges ut exponas disciplinam sapientiae, naturam rerum omnium evolvas, mores fingas, fines bonorum malorumque constituas, officia describas, quam vitam ingrediar definias, idemque etiam disputandi et intellegendi iudicium dicas te et artificium traditurum, perficies ut ego innumerabilia complectens nusquam labar, nihil opiner?*).



search for it conscientiously and enthusiastically” (*verum invenire sine ulla contentione volumus idque summa cura studioque conquirimus*).

To explain the difference between the doctrinal and Academic philosopher’s relationship to his tradition, Cicero uses *sequi* in its other primary sense of “to seek or pursue” immediately after this passage, in the brief introduction to his own interpretation of Academic philosophy that precedes the beginning of Lucullus’ speech. After asserting that the only purpose of “[his] discussions” (*nostrae disputationes*) is to “mold” (*exprimant*) something that approaches truth, he claims,

Nec inter nos et eos qui se scire arbitrantur quidquam interest nisi quod illi non dubitant quin ea vera sint quae defendunt, nos probabilia multa habemus, quae sequi facile, adfirmare vix possumus.

There is no difference between us and those who judge that they have knowledge except that they do not doubt that the things they defend are true, whereas we consider many things to be approvable that we can pursue readily, but we cannot in anyway affirm them.”<sup>83</sup>

Simply put, Cicero says, the Academic approach is defined by doubt, whereas philosophies that claim certain knowledge do not possess this doubt-as-drive (*illi non dubitant*). The doctrinal philosopher “defends” only those things that the teachings of his own school have already established as true (*ea vera sint quae defendunt*), a practice which forms a self-contained system and self-sustaining worldview, unconnected to an ongoing inquiry outside of its teachings. The Academic skeptic, on the contrary, finds many things “approvable” (*probabilia*), not because of their pre-established connection to the teaching of his school, but rather because he finds in the present moment that he can “pursue them readily” (*quae sequi facile*). The Academic skeptic thus enters into a dynamic pursuit, the ends of which cannot be “affirmed” or “fixed”

---

<sup>83</sup> *Luc.* 8.

(*adfirmare*), but will develop and transform based on presently unknown factors.<sup>84</sup> The skeptic is thus “more free and unbound” (*liberiores et solutiores sumus*) because his “faculty of judgement is intact” (*integra nobis est iudicandi potestas*) and he is not bound by the necessity of defending the “prescriptions” (*praescripta*) of a school.<sup>85</sup> Instead, he is able to move through life from situation to situation open to the needs that arise and unforeseen circumstances that will influence his pursuit.

In Cicero’s presentation of the argument of the *Lucullus*, therefore, *sequi* appears as a key interpretative crux: to understand philosophical inquiry, and Academic philosophy in particular, Cicero’s text requires us to grapple with the relationship between what it means to come afterwards—to follow in the footsteps of previous thinkers—and to drive forwards—to pursue “the approvable” as the philosophical means of negotiating human limitation in the search for truth. By understanding how the skeptic should “follow” and “pursue,” the very “obscurity” (*in ipsis rebus obscuritas*) that inheres in the world and the “deficiencies” (*in iudiciis nostris infirmitas*) of our judgment can become, through doubt, the “zeal to inquiry” (*studium exquirendi*). This zeal, in turn, conjoins the pursuit of the philosophers of today with that of the “most ancient and learned thinkers” (*antiquissimi et doctissimi*), who also recognized and embraced the limitation of human experience as an aspect of their own pursuits.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> The stress on development over time is evident especially in Cicero’s lament that the decision to follow a philosophical school often occurs “at the most incompetent time of life” (*infirmissimo tempore aetatis*, 8), which hampers an individual’s curiosity and growth. Cf. the return of this theme at 115.

<sup>85</sup> 8, *hoc autem liberiores et solutiores sumus quod integra nobis est iudicandi potestas nec ut omnia quae praescripta a quibusdam et quasi imperata sint defendamus necessitate ulla cogimur.*

<sup>86</sup> 7, *Etsi enim omnis cognitio multis est obstructa difficultatibus, eaque est et in ipsis rebus obscuritas et in iudiciis nostris infirmitas, ut non sine causa antiquissimi et doctissimi invenire se posse quod cuperent diffisi sint, tamen nec illi defecerunt neque nos studium exquirendi defatigati relinquemus.*

As we leave Cicero's explication of Academic philosophy, however, we are immediately confronted by the difficulty of "following" in such a tradition. Lucullus' speech begins from the recent fragmentation of the Academy caused by, he claims, Antiochus' rejection of the "un-Academic" innovations of the last scholarch of the skeptical "New" Academy, Philo.<sup>87</sup> After Lucullus discusses this recent controversy, he turns his polemic toward the originators of this tradition—Arcesilaus and Carneades—who, he states, are the true adversary of the Antiochean Academic project.<sup>88</sup> Rather than speaking directly against the arguments or positions of these earlier philosophers, however, Lucullus' objection to the skeptical Academy starts at the level of intellectual history, targeting in particular their tactic of calling on authoritative philosophers of the past to support their own assertions that "nothing is able to be known" (*sciri nihil possit, Luc. 74*). Adding a further layer of complexity, Lucullus mounts his critique by comparing the internecine battles of Academic philosophy to the turbulent political history of the Republic. At the heart of this analogy is a debate about what it means to inherit or to follow in a tradition and how that tradition should be reconstructed according to the needs of the present:

"Primum mihi videmini"—me autem [nomine] appellabat—"cum veteres physicos nominatis, facere idem quod seditiosi cives solent cum aliquos ex antiquis claros viros proferunt quos dicant fuisse populares ut eorum ipsi similes esse videantur. Repetunt enim a P. Valerio qui exactis regibus primo anno consul fuit, commemorant reliquos qui

---

<sup>87</sup> After receiving "two volumes written by Philo" (*isti libri duo Philonis*) while in exile in Alexandria, Antiochus, as Lucullus tells us, "began to be very angry...and kept on asking Heraclitus [another philosopher there] whether he really thought these things were written by Philo or whether he had ever heard any such things being espoused by Philo or any other Academic" (*stomachari tamen coepit...ille Heracliti memoriam implorans quaerere ex eo viderentur illa Philonis aut ea num vel e Philone vel ex ullo Academico audivisset aliquando*, 11). On the "Sosus" affair and Philo's "Roman Books," see esp. Brittain 2001: 129-68. On the state of the Academy as an institution in Cicero's time, see above, Ch. 1, section III.

<sup>88</sup> 12, *Sed ea pars quae contra Philonem erat praetermittenda est, minus enim acer est adversarius is qui ista quae sunt heri defensa negat Academicos omnino dicere; etsi enim mentitur, tamen est adversarius lenior. Ad Arcesilan Carneademque veniamus.*

leges populares de provocationibus tulerint cum consules essent...Horum nominibus tot virorum atque tantorum expositis eorum se institutum sequi dicunt.

“First, in citing the early physicists, what you are doing”—here he really was addressing me—“seems to me to be exactly what seditious citizens do when they list a selection of famous men from the past, trying to represent them as populists, in order to make themselves look like them. They start with Publius Valerius, who was consul in the first year after the expulsion of the kings; and they list all the other consuls who proposed populist laws granting rights to appeal during their year of office...Once they have set out this long list of names of remarkable people, they claim that they are following in the footsteps of what these men began.”<sup>89</sup>

Lucullus takes aim at the New Academy’s apparently common practice of constructing an intellectual genealogy for itself through the “early physicists” (*veteres physicos*)<sup>90</sup>—those named here being, “Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Parmenides, Xenophanes, and even Plato and Socrates.”<sup>91</sup> Lucullus argues that, by referring to these ancient authorities as predecessors, the New Academic is perverting intellectual history to suit the argumentative ends of the moment—assimilating the purpose (*institutum*, lit. “what was begun”) of the pre-Socratic philosophers to the New Academic argument against doctrinal certainty, and ignoring, in the process, centuries of philosophical effort and advancement.

---

<sup>89</sup> *Luc.* 13.

<sup>90</sup> This appellation, which Cicero habitually uses to refer to the pre-Socratics, is notably of Aristotelian derivation. On Cicero’s use, cf. *de Or.* 1.42, 49; *Ac. Lib.* 1.6. For Aristotle’s account of the beliefs of the *physiologi*, see, e.g., *Metaphys.* I.3 (983a-987a). See also below.

<sup>91</sup> 14. On the significance of this practice within the skeptical Academy, see Brittain and Palmer 2001; Cappello 2019: 133-42. For a politico-historical discussion of the word *popularis* in this passage see Seager 1972: esp. 332-3, although his interpretation leaves no room for ambiguity or irony in the passage, “The last important element of the *popularis ratio* is the imitation of certain accepted models...It followed that if a man was accepted as a representative of the tradition, it would naturally be assumed that any measure he put forward must be for the good of the people.” See Tracy 2009 for a more recent historicist reading of Cicero’s ‘populism,’ which, however, remains wedded to a reductive concern for “Cicero’s political ambitions and of his particular need to justify to the senatorial elite his persistent dependence on popular support” (181). For a more open-ended reading of the tradition to which Lucullus refers, which unfortunately does not address this passage in particular, see Taylor 1962.

Lucullus' comparison also makes a cross-cultural claim about the transposition of skeptical philosophical inquiry into the Roman context. The "seditious citizens" (*seditiosi cives*) that Lucullus names—Publius Valerius, Gaius Flaminius, Lucius Cassius and Quintus Pompeius, Publius Africanus, Publius Crassus and Publius Scaevola, and, finally, Tiberius Gracchus and Gaius Marius<sup>92</sup>—comprise, from the mouth of the fabulously wealthy aristocrat and Sullan partisan, a counter-history of the Roman Republic, which records the expansion of the franchise and the redistribution of land. Not that this list of *populares* forms an obvious lineage; on the contrary, Lucullus draws attention to the incongruous and retrospectively constructed nature of these figures' genealogical relationship<sup>93</sup> and offers his own commentary on the accuracy and suitability of their selection.<sup>94</sup> Through this cross-cultural comparison, Lucullus asserts that skeptical philosophy destroys doctrinal certainty in the same way that the *populares* disturbed the peace of the Roman state that had been secured by the power of the *optimates*.<sup>95</sup> And so,

---

<sup>92</sup> *Luc.* 13. There remains work to be done on this list but see Brittain 2006 ad loc. for a rudimentary commentary. The unifying feature of their political careers seems to be that they advocated for either the enhancement of tribunate power, more equitable land distribution, and/or an expansion of citizenship rights to previously disenfranchised populations. Cf. Cappello 2019: 202, "Philosophy has a divided audience at Rome. Furthermore, in the *Academica*, particularly in the *Lucullus*, Rome is a divided political body. Challenging Philo's unitarian interpretation of Academic history, Lucullus provokes Cicero by casting him in the role of subversive citizen (*seditiosi cives*) and 'popularis'... By implication, Lucullus is identifying himself with the opposite faction, the 'optimates.' Cicero meets this accusation with equal vigor, calling Lucullus a seditious tribune who drags Cicero before a 'public assembly' (*contio*) in order to bring him into disrepute (*Luc.* 144)."

<sup>93</sup> E.g. 13, concerning Publius Africanus, *illi quidem etiam P. Africanum referre in eundem numerum solent*.

<sup>94</sup> See esp. the last entry in the list, *ibid.*: "They also add Gaius Marius, and about him at all events they are not lying at all" (*Addunt etiam C. Marium et de hoc quidem nihil mentiuntur*).

<sup>95</sup> See esp., 15, "After the most authoritative philosophical schools had come to rest is it not the case that, just as Tiberius Gracchus disturbed the peace in the best of all possible Republics, so did Arcesilaus overthrow the established philosophy, hiding behind the authority of those who denied that it is ever possible to know or perceive anything?" (*nonne cum iam philosophorum disciplinae gravissimae constitissent, tum exortus est, ut in optima re publica Ti. Gracchus qui otium perturbaret, sic Arcesilas*

Lucullus suggests, a Roman who adopts a skeptical *ratio*, especially a former consul—note that Cicero has Lucullus re-address this accusation directly at himself (*me autem [nomine] appellabat*)—perpetuates a mindset or advocates for a practice that can be linked by analogy to the decline of the aristocratic Republic. Lucullus’ lineage of *populares* draws a direct connection between the erosion of Senatorial power and the emergence of increasingly populist rulers, culminating in the names Tiberius Gracchus and Gaius Marius.<sup>96</sup> At the fictional date of the dialogue, 62 BCE—the year following Cicero’s consulship and his suppression of another *seditionis civis*, Catiline—Lucullus’ claim about the destructive role that the *populares* played in the history of the Republic clearly looks forward to Caesar; yet, at the same time, Lucullus’ implication of Cicero himself in this narrative of populist decline draws attention to the power wielded by the practice of historical reconstruction at which his criticism is ultimately aimed.

While criticizing the skeptics’ tendency to manipulate Academic history to suit their own ends, therefore, Lucullus is engaged in a similar exercise in genealogical construction that lays the foundation for his own philosophical (and political) views. Lucullus’ own mode of philosophical genealogy also aims to recuperate the *physici*, not as a model to be emulated, but as the origin point of a multi-generational process of intellectual and scientific effort that resembles the growth of an organism. In a clear Aristotelian echo,<sup>97</sup> Lucullus says that, while it

---

*qui constitutam philosophiam everteret, et in eorum auctoritate delitesceret qui negavissent quidquam sciri aut percipi posse?*).

<sup>96</sup> Of course, this is a deeply complex and perhaps ironic use of Lucullus’ persona, since he was a fervent supporter of Sulla and a representative of an increasingly tyrannical, but elitist lineage himself.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Aristotle’s appraisal of Empedocles at *Metaphys.* I.3(985a), “If one follows up and appreciates the statements of Empedocles with a view to his real meaning and not to his faltering, childlike language, it will be found that love is the cause of good and strife of evil” (εἰ γὰρ τις ἀκολουθοῖη καὶ λαμβάνοι πρὸς τὴν διάνοιαν καὶ μὴ πρὸς ἃ ψελλίζεται λέγων Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, εὐρήσει τὴν μὲν φιλίαν αἰτίαν οὖσαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὸ δὲ νεῖκος τῶν κακῶν). Cicero translates Aristotle’s ψελλίζω with his repeated use of *haesito* / *haereo* to describe Empedocles’ and the pre-Socratics’ manner of articulation.

may be true that the *physici* used to sometimes “cry out when they became stuck at some point,” they did this out of “modesty” (*verecundia*)<sup>98</sup> and a genuine “inability to discover the true nature of anything” (*nihil omnino quale sit posse reperire*).<sup>99</sup> When a skeptic like Arcesilaus, however, strikes a similar posture, he does so out of “pretension” (*calumnia*) and betrays an attitude of arrogance toward the true progress that has been made by the intervening generations: “Since, if those old thinkers found themselves floundering like babies just born into a new world, can we really think that all these generations and consummate intellects and comprehensive investigations have not succeeded in making anything clearer?”<sup>100</sup> Lucullus thus views intellectual history as the development of a body of knowledge that affects a real change on its objects of inquiry over time. The *physici* may have “struggled” or “floundered” to discover and articulate the reality with which they were confronted like “babies just born into a new world,” but later thinkers have, in fact, “made things clearer.” For Lucullus, it is proof of the New Academy’s pretension that they ignore this later progress in order to adopt a posture of ignorance that is unwarranted and insulting to the lineage in which they claim to take part.

In Cicero’s response to this attack, he addresses both Lucullus’ cross-cultural comparison and his opposition to the skeptic’s use of the *physici* as a model. He rejects out of hand the comparison between the perverse intentions of the *seditioni cives* and the New Academy and

---

<sup>98</sup> 14, *nec Arcesilae calumnia conferenda est cum Democriti verecundia*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, *Et tamen isti physici raro admodum, cum haerent aliquo loco, exclamant quasi mente incitati—Empedocles quidem ut interdum mihi furere videatur—abstrusa esse omnia, nihil nos sentire, nihil cernere, nihil omnino quale sit posse reperire*.

<sup>100</sup> 15, *quodsi illi tum in novis rebus quasi modo nascentes haesitaverunt, nihilne tot saeculis, summis ingeniis, maximis studiis explicatum putamus?*

focuses instead on strengthening the association between the skeptics and the “eminent thinkers” of the past:

Et primum quod initio dixisti videamus quale sit, similiter a nobis de antiquis philosophis commemorari atque seditiosi solerent claros viros sed tamen populares aliquos nominare. Illi cum res non bonas tractent, similes bonorum videri volunt; nos autem ea dicimus nobis videri quae vosmet ipsi nobilissimis philosophis placuisse conceditis.

And first let’s see if there’s anything in what you said at the beginning—that we make mention of philosophers from the past in the way that seditious people cite famous citizens who are also populists. Such people want to look like good men, though they’re up to no good. But we say that the views we have are ones that you yourselves allow were held by the most eminent philosophers.<sup>101</sup>

Cicero carefully restates Lucullus’ accusation from the Roman perspective, driving a wedge through his casual association of the *seditiosi cives* with *popularis* aims. In Cicero’s rendering, men from Roman history who are good (*clari, boni*) are simply opposed to the men who have no concern for the good (*seditiosi...illi...res non bonas tractent*), but only for the appearance of goodness.<sup>102</sup> Cicero’s distinction problematizes Lucullus’ partisan divide between *optimates* and *populares* and, instead, establishes a tradition of *boni*—or, in the analogy, *nobilissimi philosophi*—that can be agreed upon by both parties because of their undeniable worth.<sup>103</sup> After listing all the eminent philosophers of the past who share similar skeptical outlooks to the New Academy, Cicero asks, “do you finally agree that I am not simply name-dropping illustrious

---

<sup>101</sup> *Luc.* 72.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Cappello 2019: 202, “responding to the accusation of fabricating history, Cicero operates the same distinction as Lucullus, dividing Roman society between good men (*boni*) and those who are not concerned with the good (*res non bonas tractent*).” Unlike Cappello, I think the distinction is explicitly differentiated, with Lucullus working along party lines and Cicero emphasizing a more abstract conception of the “good.”

<sup>103</sup> It is intriguing to consider Cicero’s response as an only semi-veiled recuperation of the very Roman historical lineage of *populares* that Lucullus lays out.



personages like Saturninus used to do,<sup>104</sup> but in fact never emulate (*imitari*) anyone but the most accomplished and eminent thinkers?”<sup>105</sup> Cicero challenges Lucullus’ cynically partisan view of history with one that is based on the genuine, and austere Roman, imitation of worthy models from the past.<sup>106</sup>

In the imitative mode of historical engagement that Cicero proposes, the point of emulation is specifically the skeptic’s commitment to the drive of inquiry in the face of human limitation. For the skeptic, the history of philosophy is the history of the insurmountable limits of knowledge. The particular manifestation of these limits may certainly shift and change in a way that Lucullus interprets as progress, but it is the underlying continuity of doubt that drives philosophical inquiry over the generations, regardless of its contingent and historically-situated expressions.<sup>107</sup> When Cicero claims that his relation to the philosophers of the past is one of emulation and imitation (*imitari*), he is not claiming to reproduce exactly the content of the philosophical inquiries of the past. For example, he goads Lucullus by asking him whether it would be tolerable at present simply to restate Anaxagoras’ claim that “snow is black” (*nivem*

---

<sup>104</sup> Saturninus was one of Lucullus’ particular enemies among the *populares*, see *Luc.* 14.

<sup>105</sup> 75, *Videor ne tibi non ut Saturninus nominare modo inlustres homines, sed etiam imitari numquam nisi clarum, nisi nobilem?*

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Cappello 2019: 138 with a more cautious (in relation to the argument of Brittain and Palmer 2001), but similar appraisal of Cicero’s skeptical approach to the past, “The relationship between past and present in Cicero’s historiographical speeches is shaped by the theme of emulation or imitation (*imitari*), more so than by the theme of a gradual skeptical development as put forward by Brittain and Palmer... However, with the focus firmly on the Ciceronian project, his protagonists in the *Lucullus* and the first *Academic Book* are not mere signposts along the road of philosophical history, but paradigms.”

<sup>107</sup> Cf. esp. Cicero’s claim in the prologue, “it was not without reason that the most ancient and learned thinkers distrusted their ability to discover what they desired, but still they did not give up and nor will we, becoming tired, leave off in our zeal of inquiring” (*ut non sine causa antiquissimi et doctissimi invenire se posse quod cuperent diffisi sint, tamen nec illi defecerunt neque nos studium exquirendi defatigati relinquemus*, 7).

*nigram*) even if done “hesitatingly” (*ne si dubitarem*); yet, he insists, Anaxagoras remains a figure worthy of emulation.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the skeptic should not try to discover in the universal “darkness” that Democritus claims shrouds the senses (*sensus...tenebricosos*)<sup>109</sup> and in the passionate utterances (*furere*) of Empedocles<sup>110</sup> some disguised or yet-to-be articulated knowledge—or even an adumbration of the specifics of the skeptics’ current arguments. Instead, the claims of these *physici* about the deficiency of the senses and the inability of humanity to access the truth directly demonstrate the inescapability of human limitation and the need for doubt to drive philosophy at all times. Concluding his genealogy of skeptical philosophy, fittingly, with Socrates and Plato, Cicero conjoins his own pursuit to Plato’s: “He certainly would not have set out (*persecutus non esset*) this commitment [that he knew nothing] in so many books unless he had approved of it (*probavisset*), for otherwise there was no reason to follow through (*nulla fuit ratio persequi*) the irony of Socrates, especially because it is unending

---

<sup>108</sup> 72, *Anaxagoras nivem nigram dixit esse: ferres me si ego idem dicerem? tu ne si dubitarem quidem. At quis est hic? ...Maxima fuit et gravitatis et ingenii gloria.*

<sup>109</sup> 73, “What should I say about Democritus? We are hardly worthy to be compared to him not only for the greatness of his genius but also his spirit...And, he does not, in fact, mean what we do, who do not deny that some truth exists but that we cannot perceive it. He flatly denies that truth exists at all; likewise, he doesn’t say that the senses are ‘obscured,’ but entirely shrouded in darkness—for that is how he refers to them” (*Quid loquar de Democrito? Quem cum eo conferre possumus non modo ingenii magnitudine sed etiam animi...Atque is non hoc dicit quod nos, qui veri esse aliquid non negamus, percipi posse negamus; ille verum plane negat esse; sensusque idem non obscuros dicit sed tenebricosos—sic enim appellat eos.*)

<sup>110</sup> 74, “Empedocles seems to you to be raving madly, but to me his utterance pours forth in a manner most suited to the matters he is discussing. Surely, therefore, he is not blinding us or depriving us of our senses if he thinks that they do not have sufficient force to judge the objects that are submitted to them?” (*Furere tibi Empedocles videtur, at mihi dignissimum rebus iis de quibus loquitur sonum fundere; num ergo is excaecat nos aut orbat sensibus si parum magnam vim censet in iis esse ad ea quae sub eos subiecta sunt iudicanda?*).

(*ironiam...perpetuam*).”<sup>111</sup> Cicero locates the continuity with his project in Plato’s dedication to “setting out”(persecutus esset) and “following through” (*persequi*) the Socratic claim that he knew nothing and the “unending irony” (*perpetua ironia*) that results from this acknowledgement of limitation.

Lucullus’ analogy of the *seditiosi cives* and the skeptics, and Cicero’s response to it, allows us to see that above all “to follow” the Academic *ratio*—whether as a Antiochean or as a skeptic—is to engage consciously and provocatively with “what these men began” (*eorum institutum sequi*). From Lucullus’ evolutionary or progressivist perspective, the relationship between the past and the present is never a simple process of inheritance and re-affirmation. Instead, “to follow,” in the sense of “to participate in” a political or philosophical tradition always involves a process of creative selection, commentary, or complete revision, which must be carried out with the intention to add to or clarify what had come before. Yet, as Cicero’s response to Lucullus emphasizes, there persists in Academic (and Roman political history) a form of solidarity—in philosophical terms, the commitment to doubt—the emulation of which allows the skeptic to draw the past into the present. By choosing to “follow” the commitment to doubt found in the models of the past, Cicero maintains this drive of inquiry for the purpose of the present.

For Ciceronian philosophy, this purpose of the present is clear: to pursue, to seek, to inquire (*sequi*). The *Lucullus* offers many aims of this pursuit—wisdom, similarities (*similitudines*), impressions, philosophy itself<sup>112</sup>—but the most common object of the verb *sequi*

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., *Quid dicam de Platone? qui certe tam multis libris haec persecutus non esset nisi probavisset, ironiam enim alterius, perpetuam praesertim, nulla fuit ratio persequi*. For Cicero’s presentation of Socratic irony, see also *Luc. 15, de Orat. 2.270, Brut. 292-3*.

<sup>112</sup> See, e.g., 24, 54, 36, 44, 61.

in the text is a form of the substantive adjective *probabile* or the abstract noun *probabilitas*.<sup>113</sup> In the second of two explicit references to Clitomachus' interpretation of the Carneadean *pithanon*, Cicero draws attention to the relationship between the pursuit of the “approvable” and skeptical *epochē*:

Quae cum exposuisset, adiungit dupliciter dici adsensus sustinere sapientem, uno modo cum hoc intellegatur, omnino eum rei nulli adsentiri, altero cum se a respondendo ut aut adprobet quid aut improbet sustineat, ut neque neget aliquid neque aiat; id cum ita sit, alterum placere, ut numquam adsentiat, alterum tenere, ut sequens probabilitatem ubicumque haec aut occurrat aut deficiat aut ‘etiam’ aut ‘non’ respondere possit.

---

<sup>113</sup> The adjective is also found in the neuter plural, *probabilia*; note, however, that nowhere do we find a form corresponding precisely to the Carneadean *pithanē phantasia*, the formulation of which is confirmed by *M VII.166, 169, 174*. For Cicero's usage see, *Luc. 8, 33, 59, 99, 104, 109*. Contrary to the recent scholarly tendency to render *probabile* as “persuasive” by reading back to the Greek *peithein/pithanon*, I think that we must take into account the nuance of the translation choice in Latin. In particular, Cicero's habitual wordplay between forms of *probabile* and the verbs *probare / improbare* favors the translation of “approvable.” This translation shifts the emphasis from the active “persuasiveness” of an impression that strikes the subject to the passive “approvability” of an impression that must be bestowed by the subject. Certainly, “approval” has something to do with “persuasiveness,” but it cannot be reduced simply to a function of persuasion any more than it can be to the “likelihood” of a pre-theoretical notion of “probability” (on which, see Hacking 1975: 1-10). In Cicero's earlier oratorical definition of *probabile* at *de Inv. 1.46*, it is “that which for the most part usually comes to pass, or which is a part of belief, or which contains in itself some resemblance to these qualities, whether such resemblance is true or false” (*Probabile autem est id quod fere solet fieri aut quod in opinione positum est aut quod habet in se ad haec quandam similitudinem, sive id falsum est sive verum*). Thus the “approvable” in Cicero's conception is located at the intersection of belief and the resemblance of likelihood—being neither “persuasiveness” nor “probability,” but a quality pertaining to judgement that allows for the subject to form comparisons and act on the events of a life (*probabile quod sumitur ad argumentationem aut signum est aut credibile aut iudicatum aut comparabile, de Inv. 1.47-8*). The subject may find impressions or arguments “approvable” based on different criteria using different faculties at different times; but as a category that reflects on judgement and action, the *probabile* always emphasizes the subject's role in determining the relations that make up his understanding of and interaction with the world. On this view, see Cappello 2019: 318-19, “Ultimately, the *probabile* denotes something that is presented to an audience in such a way as to elicit their approval or appear demonstrable to them. The change from active to passive [between Carneades' and Cicero's formulation] brings about a radical transformation in perspective. At Rome, it is up to the subject to judge whether the impression—the percept, argument or idea—deserves approval and to be considered persuasive; it is not the impression that persuades the subject...[T]he Roman persuasive impression privileges the ‘rôle actif du sujet’...The responsibility is squarely placed on the perceiving subject to first and foremost evaluate any impression and evaluate whether to approve it or not”; cf. esp. Auvray-Assayas 2006: 40-1. On the extensive debates in recent scholarship about Cicero's use of *probabilitas*, see, e.g., Lévy 1992: 243-300; Glucker 1995; Obdrzalek 2006; Auvray-Assayas 2006: 22, 40-46, 121-26; Cappello 2019: 317-22.

After expounding these points [that the Academics never argued against truth, but against an infallible criterion of truth], Clitomachus added: ‘The sage is said to suspend assent in two senses: in one sense, when this means that he won’t assent to anything at all; in another, when it means that he will restrain himself even from giving responses showing that he approves or disapproves of something, so that he won’t say “yes” or “no” to anything. Given this distinction, the sage accepts the suspension of assent in the first sense, with the result that he never assents; but he holds onto his assent in the second sense, with the result that, by pursuing approvability in whatever direction it is present or lacking, he is able to reply “yes” or “no.”’<sup>114</sup>

On this deeply complex and much debated passage, I restrict my comments to three points: first, this passage, which comes at a key point in Cicero’s argument, is comprised almost entirely of a quotation from Clitomachus’ treatise *On Suspending Assent*. Cicero uncharacteristically emphasizes that he is, in fact, quoting directly from another author by providing his name and the title of the work.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, as noted above, Clitomachus wrote exegetical works on the philosophical approaches of Carneades. Thus, at least three distinct voices and historical moments are present in this short passage. As a result, any interpretation will be highly contingent upon which voice and moment the reader privileges. Rather than understanding this density of mediation as a form of antiquarian retrospection, which would privilege the past, I think that we can see here in practice a demonstration of the philosophical emulation favored by the New Academy in which the past exists for the present through the solidarity of the skeptic’s commitment to inquiry.

Second, Cicero selects this passage at this particular point in his own speech as a final argument defending the Academic position against the charge of *apraxia* leveled by Lucullus.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> *Luc.* 104.

<sup>115</sup> See 98 for the title. It is important to remember, of course, that Cicero is translating and transposing at the same time that he is quoting.

<sup>116</sup> The series of arguments against *apraxia* is found at 98-105. On the relationship between Carneades’ *pithanon* and the Stoic charge of *apraxia*, see esp. Striker 1980; Obdrzalek 2006 and 2012.

In a conventional reading of this passage, Clitomachus presents Carneades' *pithanon*, at least in the dialectical context of the rebuttal of *apraxia*, as a means by which the various choices and decisions required for everyday life and philosophical inquiry may be made without need for the Stoic *katalēpsis*. Thus, Cicero's citation of this passage within the context of these Academic debates provides his own argument against *apraxia* with an alternate method for governing of a life. Yet within the more restricted space of this particular passage, rather than foregrounding the role that the *pithanon* can play in overcoming *apraxia*, Cicero's quotation of Clitomachus emphasizes the maintenance of *epochē* alongside the *pithanon*, carving out a "second form of assent," that enables the sage to suspend assent even while "pursuing approvability"—which is a categorically different way of assenting.<sup>117</sup>

My final point about this passage, therefore, is that through his citation of this particular aspect of Clitomachus' theory, Cicero takes pains to conclude *his* argument against *apraxia* not, for instance, by emphasizing the ease with which practical judgment can be exercised through the *pithanon*, but, instead, by returning his readers to the role of doubt in his inquiry. "Pursuing approvability" (*sequens probabilitatem*) is an action that takes place *simultaneously* with, not instead of "suspending assent" (*adsensus sustinere*). In this intertwining of practical pursuit and doubt's drive, Cicero formulates the interminable work of his philosophical inquiry in the present.

This passage, therefore, formulates what it means, under the temporal conditions and commitment to doubt that define Ciceronian philosophy, to "be able to respond 'yes' or 'no,' by pursuing approvability in whatever direction it might occur or be lacking" (*sequens*

---

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Lévy 1992: 300, who interprets Cicero's dedication to maintaining *epochē* alongside the *probabile* as a rejection of Philo's teaching. For the canonical, dialectical interpretation, see Frede 1984.

*probabilitatem ubicumque haec aut occurrat aut deficiat aut 'etiam' aut 'non' respondere possit*). If we preserve Cicero's phrasing and translation choices, it becomes clear that he does not understand *probabilitas* as attached incontrovertibly to a specific type of impression or network of impressions that acts, perhaps even forcibly, upon the rational faculty of the subject—like Carneades' *pithanai phantasiai* or the Stoics' *katalēptikai phantasiai*.<sup>118</sup> Instead, *probabilitas* is itself an abstractable quality with which the subject's judgement chooses to engage, functioning like a field of discernment cast through the skeptic's suspension of assent. Notably, in the passage from *Tusc.* 5 in which Cicero reaffirms M.'s skeptical commitment, he writes, "We live from day to day; we assert whatever strikes our mind by means of approvability and so we alone are free."<sup>119</sup> The use of *probabilitas* as the object of the verb *sequi* in Cicero's translation of Clitomachus, therefore, emphasizes the deferral inherent in the simultaneous commitment to *epochē* and pursuit of approvability. Instead of a potential "practical criterion," inherent in the impressions of daily life, which allows the subject to overcome *apraxia* by applying an inductive rationality to his manner of living, Cicero offers a considerably more ambiguous formulation. To "live from day to day...by means of approvability," rather than simply rendering life a seamless transition from one persuasive impression to another, is to be "free"—that is, in a real sense, to be returned again and again to the doubt that preserves the

---

<sup>118</sup> On the force of the Stoics' *katalēptikai phantasiai* on its object, see, e.g., Zeno's image of the clenched fist, which Cicero provides at *Luc.* 145.

<sup>119</sup> *Tusc.* 5.33, *nos in diem vivimus; quodcumque nostros animos probabilitate percussit, id dicimus, itaque soli sumus liberi*. The noun *probabilitas* is almost certainly a Ciceronian coinage and appears only five times in Classical Latin, all of which are found in the *philosophica*. Cf. also *Luc.* 75, 99, 104; *de Fin.* 3.72. In antiquity, the word appears again only in Augustine esp. with reference to Academic practice, see *Contra Ac.* 2.9.23, 2.10.24, 3.6.13; cf. *Serm.* 170.7.

drive of inquiry. Cicero's "pursuit of approvability" provides less a sense of *relative* certainty than a deferral of *uncertainty*—at least until the next day.

In Cicero's usage, therefore, a direct line connects the two primary senses of *sequi*: to follow is always at the same time to pursue. That is, the creative use and imitation of the past *is* the deferral of uncertainty in the present. The inherited *ratio* followed by the Academic serves as the basis for an ongoing and dynamic way of engaging with the world—a way of accepting the subjective responsibility for the impressions that "I" say "yes" or "no" to, here and now, as part of an inquiry that is constantly being delimited by this immediate experience. It is significant, therefore, that the third distinct usage of *sequi* in the *Lucullus* marks the advance of dialectic. In Cicero's response to Lucullus' argument in favor of a certainty based on reason,<sup>120</sup> he challenges the Antiochean's definition of dialectic and the logic of Stoic consequentiality on which it relies:

Quid est quod ratione percipi possit? Dialecticam inventam esse dicitis veri et falsi quasi disceptatricem et iudicem. Cuius veri et falsi, et in qua re? In geometriane quid sit verum aut falsum dialecticus iudicabit an in litteris an in musicis? At ea non novit. In philosophia igitur?... Quid igitur iudicabit? quae coniunctio, quae diiunctio vera sit, quid ambigue dictum sit, quid sequatur quamque rem, quid repugnet? Si haec et horum similia iudicat, de se ipsa iudicat; plus autem pollicebatur, nam haec quidem iudicare ad ceteras res quae sunt in philosophia multae atque magnae non est satis.

"What is apprehensible by reason?" *Dialectic was discovered as the 'arbiter' and judge of truth and falsity*, you say. Whose truths and falsehoods, and according to what topic? Is the dialectician to judge what is true or false in geometry? Or in literature? Or in music? *No. He doesn't know these things*. In philosophy, then?... What, exactly, is he to judge? *Which conjunctions and disjunctions are true; which statements are ambiguous; what follows from something and what is incompatible with it*. But if dialectic judges these cases and ones like them, it makes judgements about itself—and yet it promised more. Being in a position to judge just these cases wouldn't enable it to adjudicate the important questions in the rest of philosophy.<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> Cf. esp. 45-53.

<sup>121</sup> *Luc.* 91.



Cicero takes aim at both the formal structure and, importantly, the idiom of the Antiochean's Stoic-influenced approach to logic.<sup>122</sup> In Cicero's paraphrase of the Antiochean's argument, the choices and use of words in the statement of the dialectician's purview—"Which conjunctions and disjunctions are true; which statements are ambiguous; what follows from something and what is incompatible with it" (*quid sequatur quamque rem, quid repugnet*)—are reflective of the Stoic formulations of "consequentiality" (ἀκολουθία) on which Lucullus' position rests.<sup>123</sup> In this case, *sequi* is used as an antonym of *repugnare*.<sup>124</sup> Thus, if a conclusion "follows" its premises, this marks a felicitous advance of dialectic and progress toward certainty; if a conclusion "fights against" or "contradicts" its premises, on the other hand, presumably the argument must return to those premises to discover where the chain of reasoning had gone astray.

In Cicero's discussion of forms of skeptical dialectic that contravene this formal logic, he employs a competing use of *sequi* in relation to the advancement of thought. This usage is found, in particular, in relation to the skeptical Academy's *sorites* paradox, which undermines the logical relationship between series and type, quantity and quality.<sup>125</sup> The essential paradox states that given a series,  $x, x_{x+1}, x_{x+2}, etc.$ , it is impossible to state with certainty at what point quantity

---

<sup>122</sup> On the logical argumentation of the *Luc.*, see esp. Barnes 1997. For the logical issues discussed here in other contexts, see also Bett 1989 and Schofield 1999.

<sup>123</sup> On this definition of Stoic "consequentiality," cf. *PH* 2.104-6 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.209 (35C). See also its role in the ethical "proper function" (*kathēkon*), which is defined as "consequentiality in life, something which, once it has been done, has a reasonable justification" (Stob. 2.85 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.359 [59B]).

<sup>124</sup> Cf. comparable usage with reference to formal logic at 21, 38, 67, 91, and 95. This is another instance of a marked translation choice, where Greek would tend to use ἀκολουθεῖν, not ἐπεσθαι. For *repugnare*, which is one of Cicero's favorite words for logical "contradiction" or "inconsistency," cf. e.g., *Top.* 11.7, 19.2, 21.1; *Ac. Lib.* 1.19.

<sup>125</sup> For Lucullus' critique of the skeptics' use of this paradox, see 49.

affects quality—i.e., that a “small” amount becomes a “heap.” In response to Lucullus’

complaint that “Sorites arguments are fallacious!” (*At vitiosi sunt soritae*), Cicero remarks:

Frangite igitur eos, si potestis, ne molesti sint; erunt enim, nisi cavetis. ‘Cautum est,’ inquit; ‘placet enim Chrysippo, cum gradatim interrogetur (verbi causa) tria pauca sint anne multa, aliquanto prius quam ad multa perveniat quiescere, id est quod ab iis dicitur ἡσυχάζειν.’ ‘Per me vel stertas licet,’ inquit Carneades, ‘non modo quiescas; sed quid proficit? sequitur enim qui te ex somno excitet et eodem modo interroget.’”

“So crack them if you can, so they don’t bother you—they certainly will, if you don’t take precautions. But we do take precautions, you say: Chrysippus thinks that when one is asked to specify gradually whether, e.g., three things are few or many one should come to rest (ἡσυχάζειν, as they put it) a little bit before one reaches ‘many.’ As far as I’m concerned, Carneades replies, you can snore if you like as well. But how does that help you? There’s someone coming after you who’s going to wake you from your sleep and keep asking you the same questions.<sup>126</sup>

This anecdote allegorizes the clash between Stoic consequentiality and skeptical dialectic. The idiom of logic is turned back on itself: Carneades challenges Chrysippus’ use of a quasi-suspension of judgement—or simply evasion (ἡσυχάζειν)—to impose a conclusion on a soritical chain by undermining its very status as a conclusion. “What follows” (*sequitur*) from this inconclusive conclusion is not progress toward certainty or even an acceptance of relative certainty, but rather a reassertion of skeptical inquiry and a return to doubt: “There’s someone coming after (*sequitur*) you who’s going to wake you from your sleep and keep asking you the same questions.” As Cicero’s formulation helps to foreground, therefore, “what follows” from skeptical dialectic is, certainly, an advancement—that is, it is the result of inquiry’s movement through time, humorously rendered in the anecdote by Carneades’ threat to wake up a “snoring” Chrysippus. Yet, unlike the felicitous advance of Stoic-influenced formal logic, the skeptical outcome occurs where inquiry collides with the limits of thought in the present moment. “What

---

<sup>126</sup> *Luc.* 93.

follows” from this outcome of inquiry is a renewed confrontation with uncertainty and a return to the doubt that drives the work of thought.<sup>127</sup>

#### IV. The Limits of Doubt

In this section I examine how the movements of “following” and “pursuing” that shape the content of the *Lucullus* are reflected in its form. In particular, I am interested in connecting Cicero’s discussion of the *sorites* with the process of revision to which he subjects this dialogue almost immediately after completing it. I argue that Cicero’s revisory approach to composition reflects back the influence of doubt—since “nature didn’t give us any knowledge of limits” (*rerum natura nullam nobis dedit cognitionem finium*, 92)—within Cicero’s experience and practice. Cicero’s pervasive interest in the unknowability of boundaries, limits, and endpoints aligns his project with a long lineage of skeptical or even “anti-philosophical” thinkers who use the uniqueness of individual experience as a way to undermine philosophy’s claims to comprehend and encompass truth. After briefly considering Cicero in this lineage by examining his approach to limitation in relation to Derrida’s reading of Heidegger, I move in the next section to examine how, instead, we might position Cicero, through his dedication to the connection between doubt and truth, as a part of a philosophical recuperation and reinvigoration of the concept of truth.

The *Lucullus* was written as the final book of a trilogy, preceded by the *Hortensius* and the *Catulus*, which as a whole issued a general exhortation to the Roman reading public to study

---

<sup>127</sup> A helpful comparison for Cicero’s characterization of skeptical dialectic is the Carneadean aphorism preserved by Stob. *Flor.* 2.2.20, “Carneades used to say that dialectic is similar to an octopus; for the latter eats its tentacles after they have grown, the former ‘overturns’ (ἀνατρέπειν) also ‘its own bases’ (τὰ σφέτερα) as its power grows (προιούσης τῆς δυνάμεως).” As such, the “conclusion” of dialectic is always also the destruction of the premises on which it was based, thus re-staging the fundamental recognition of uncertainty and the commitment to doubt.

philosophy and presented Academic philosophy in all of its complexity and multivalent traditions.<sup>128</sup> Whether it was intended to convince its readers to pursue, like Cicero himself, a skeptical Academic *ratio* should remain an open question—certainly the end of the *Lucullus* itself offers no clear indication. The conclusion of the dialogue relies on a pun: following the interlocutors’ final sparring and a general retrenchment of philosophical views—none of the primary participants decide to change their allegiance—Cicero turns to Hortensius, the group’s host,<sup>129</sup> and asks, “So, what are you thinking?” (*sed tibi quid tandem videtur, Hortensi?*) To this, Hortensius replies cryptically, “Away with it!” (*Tollendum*). This single word can be taken to mean both “Time to weigh anchor!” and “Get rid of assent altogether!”<sup>130</sup> That is, in one sense, Hortensius is putting an end to the dialogue simply by saying, “It’s time for you all to go home!” and, at the same time, suggesting that the only fitting conclusion for such a dialogue on Academic philosophy is to reaffirm *epochē*—the debate contained within the dialogue has turned back on itself and caused in its participants and, by extension, readers renewed feelings of doubt, which should lead them to suspend judgment.

---

<sup>128</sup> On the historical impact of Cicero’s advocacy for Academic skepticism *in propria persona*, see Griffin 1997: 10 and Cappello 2019: 85-114.

<sup>129</sup> It is also significant that Cicero addresses this final question to the speaker of the initial dialogue in the original trilogy. Not only does this serve as a fitting formal gesture of closure for the trilogy as a whole, but it is thematically important, since it is clear from the *frr.* that Hortensius maintains the position most hostile to a formalized practice of philosophy, favoring rhetoric instead (see esp. *frr.* 33-55G). Thus, Cicero’s final question to Hortensius does not simply refer to the topics addressed in the *Lucullus*, but to the larger project of presenting the practice of philosophy generally to a readership that is, for various reasons, opposed to it.

<sup>130</sup> It is important for this double meaning to note that the dialogue has taken place while Lucullus and Cicero are waiting for the wind to change so that they can sail from Hortensius’ villa at Bauli to their own villas at Naples and Pompeii, respectively, see 9. Cf. Cappello 2019: 177-78, who presents this passage as an example of Academic “theatricality.”

The pithy inconclusiveness of this ending, which is no ending, is exacerbated by the historical circumstances of the work's composition. After completing the encomia that preceded both the *Catulus* and *Lucullus* in late May,<sup>131</sup> Cicero soon decided that he was unhappy with his choice of interlocutors in these initial dialogues. He writes to Atticus on June 23rd that he had already “transferred these same conversations to Cato and Brutus” (*eosdem illos sermones ad Catonem Brutumque transtuli*),<sup>132</sup> before Atticus reminded him about an on-going intellectual exchange with Varro, who had promised to dedicate some of his *de Lingua Latina* to Cicero. In reciprocation of this promise,<sup>133</sup> Cicero ultimately re-writes the material that first formed the *Catulus* and *Lucullus* into a four-book dialogue, the *Academici Libri*, featuring Varro as the principal speaker of the Antiochean position. Despite continued concerns about the suitability of his new choice of interlocutor, by the end of July Cicero had delivered the new dialogues, which were intended to supplant the former edition, to Varro.<sup>134</sup> The collection of texts referred to as the *Academica*, therefore, comprise three different revisions differentiated by principal speakers and setting—Hortensius, Catulus, and Lucullus (c. 62 BCE); Cato and Brutus (probably late 50s); Varro (present day). Although much attention has been given to the change of speakers, in large part since this is the issue that Cicero emphasizes in his letters to Atticus as the reason for

---

<sup>131</sup> See *Att.* XIII.32(305).3 sent on May 29. Cf. Cappello 2019: esp. 13-35 for a thorough analysis of the epistolary documentation of Cicero's composition of the *Academica*.

<sup>132</sup> *Att.* XIII.16(323), a letter in which Cicero laments his inability “to seek out streams and solitudes” (at his childhood home in Arpinum this time) because of inclimate weather (*nos cum flumina et solitudines sequeremur quo facilius sustentare nos possemus, pedem e villa adhuc egressi non sumus; ita magnos et adsiduos imbris habebamus*).

<sup>133</sup> Or perhaps to compel Varro, who had been dragging his feet, to uphold his end of the arrangement. On Cicero and Atticus' apparent scheming in this regard, see, e.g., *Att.* XIII.12(320), 13(321).

<sup>134</sup> On Cicero's concerns about his use of Varro in the dialogues, see *Att.* XIII.19(325), 21(351), 24(332), 25(333).

his revision, the movement through time that accompanies the alteration of the setting is also striking.<sup>135</sup>

The passage through the different versions draws the debates out of the past, represented especially by the earlier speakers' connections to the old Republican elite, toward the present day.<sup>136</sup> I suggest that the rapidity of revision and the progressive temporality of the three settings can be understood best as an inversion of the temporal retrogression found between the three dialogues of *de Finibus*—it is the *repeating* to *de Fin.*'s *remembering*.<sup>137</sup> These two works were composed over the same period, share similar argumentative strategies and goals, and address in tandem the two most important philosophical topics of the day, at least according to Cicero's

---

<sup>135</sup> For a consideration of the revision of the *Academica* from a perspective on Cicero's compositional practice that emphasizes collaboration and social distribution, see Gurd 2007. Martelli 2013: 4 offers a helpful supplement to Gurd's approach that emphasizes the "diachronic axis of temporal drift"; and, in the context of a project on Ovidian revision, she argues that "the author is always already extended, because the authorial subject, like every subject, exists in time. Or, more accurately, that writing submits the authorial subject to the temporal extension that is both a symptom of and condition for the written word, alienating the author irrevocably from herself and multiplying her identities accordingly."

<sup>136</sup> See Griffin 1997: 8-10, "One might argue from the speakers, that the original trilogy of *Hortensius*, *Catulus*, *Lucullus*, was an exercise in nostalgia through which Cicero paid tribute to the old breed of *Optimates*, there depicted as his friends and social equals (cf. *Att.* V.2.2), and recalled his old political role...Some doubt about the idea that nostalgia was so important, however, is raised by the fact that Cicero did not persevere in using that generation but selected speakers from among the contemporaries of his own generation for the two revisions of *Academica*. Of course, that does not rule out nostalgia being his original motive, which later came to seem less important to him, but it is not necessary to assume that it was ever his only or principal motive..." Although Griffin's diagnosis of Cicero's motivation relies on an under-examined notion of "nostalgia," her explanation helpfully draws attention to the increasingly presentist temporal setting. Cf. Lévy 1992: 635, who, instead, argues in favor of understanding the *Hortensius* and *Catulus* in particular as a *laudatio funebris* for the Republican epoch. For a summary of the debates on this topic, see Cappello 2019: esp. 20-35.

<sup>137</sup> On Freud's famous sequence, "Remembering, Repeating, Working Through," see *SE* XII: 145-57. The comparison is particularly apt since the rapidity of the revisions and anxiety surrounding the compositional choices suggests compulsiveness in Cicero's repetitive re-writings. Additionally, although the state of *Ac.* offers little evidence on the issue, it is hard to ignore the possibility of the spectral persistence of the earlier versions and older time-periods through which the work had passed.

representation of Antiochus' interests: the standards of truth and ethical ends.<sup>138</sup> At the same time, they differ in internal structure—or lack thereof—and its relation to the time of the setting. *De Finibus* is a tightly organized *divisio*, the dialectical trajectory of which is cast back into the past, drawing together the argumentative “ends” with the origins of life.<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, the subsequent revisions of the *Academica* themselves progress like a *sorites*—that is, according to an additive logic and accretive temporality which concludes only by colliding with the limits of the present moment and recommencing under renewed doubts. Thus, if the temporal retrospection of *de Finibus* examines the construction of an entire life by recalling the relationship between origins and ends, then the process of constant revision—the inconclusive ends and false starts—that these “Academic” texts underwent for the better part of six months, and which compulsively retrace through the fictional time of the different revisions the last 15 years of Cicero's life, should be understood as a repetitive search for different ends altogether.

In short, the *Academica*, in their multiple, lost forms, reflect their content. The “following” and “pursuing” that makes up Cicero's inquiry—his belated awareness of the tradition to which he lays claim and the inconclusive ends toward which he drives—are reflected in the progressive movement of his compositional practice. For Cicero, the return of doubt—like the return of the nagging soritical questioner—marks an aporetic confrontation with the limits of thought in the present moment. As indicated above,<sup>140</sup> Cicero's philosophy is concerned with limits, ends, and boundaries in their physical and metaphorical manifestations. While this interest

---

<sup>138</sup> See *Luc.* 29, *etenim duo esse haec maxima in philosophia, iudicium veri et finem bonorum.*

<sup>139</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section III-V.

<sup>140</sup> See Ch. 1, n.75.

is often evident in Cicero's formal argumentation, the discussion of the *sorites* found in the *Lucullus* develops a conceptual relation between the *finis* and human knowledge itself:

rerum natura nullam nobis dedit cognitionem finium, ut ulla in re statuere possimus quatenus. nec hoc in acervo tritici solum, unde nomen est, sed nulla omnino in re minutatim interrogati, dives pauper, clarus obscurus sit, multa pauca, magna parva, longa brevia, lata angusta, quanto aut addito aut dempto certum respondeamus non habemus.

Nature didn't give us any knowledge of limits to let us decide how far to go in any case. And this isn't just true for a heap of wheat (the case [the *sorites*] took its name from): in any case at all when we are asked little by little when someone is, e.g., rich or poor, or famous or obscure, or things are many or few, big or small, long or short, or wide or narrow, we are unable to reply for certain how much needs to be added or taken away.<sup>141</sup>

Cicero thus uses the *sorites* paradox to emphasize a fundamental undecidability about the concept of the limit itself: because “nature didn't give us any knowledge of limits” (*rerum natura nullam nobis dedit cognitionem finium*), how can we ever know for certain when we pass a limit—of size, quantity, time etc.? If a limit marks an end or a boundary, when will we know that we have reached it, especially if we have never done so previously? How can we define what is on the other side of a limit without passing through it?

Cicero's thought in the *Lucullus* and its subsequent revision thus connects a circumscribed philosophical problem—the *sorites* paradox—with the concerns of human experience and especially the sense of a forward movement of time.<sup>142</sup> He is not interested in the human inability to know the *finis* as a purely logical dilemma, intended to undermine Stoic

---

<sup>141</sup> *Luc.* 92.

<sup>142</sup> The relevance of the *sorites* to human experience is also discussed, e.g., by Galen Περὶ τῆς ἰατρικῆς ἐμπειρίας 16.1 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.222-23 (37 E), “The doubt and confusion introduced by [the *sorites*] leads to contradiction of fact in the transition of man from one stage of his life to another, and in the changes of time, and the changes of seasons. For in the case of the boy one is uncertain and doubtful as to when the actual moment arrives for his transition from boyhood to adolescence, and in the case of the youth when he enters the period of manhood, also in the case of the man in his prime when he begins to be an old man.”



certainty—rather, his main concern arises when this limit of knowledge is confronted in the course of life. To look ahead to the *Tusculan Disputations*, the major work, discussed in the next chapter, that follows the *Academica* and *de Finibus*, Cicero explicitly structures his inquiries around a specific type of experience, exemplified in the text by death, pain, grief, and happiness. These “limit” experiences, although commonly shared by human beings, escape in some way the apprehension of knowledge around the question of the limit in time: at what moment will death arrive? Will pain end? When will grief be overcome? Can happiness be achieved? And, if so, sustained? These limit experiences become the focus of Ciceronian thought precisely because they escape knowledge in life.

In the *Lucullus*, therefore, philosophy offers a way to think about the unknowability of the *finis*. At the same time, however, the unknowability of the *finis* does not negate or undermine the thought itself. To consider, along with Cicero, “what follows” from the confrontation between thought and its own limit, we can find many moments in the history of philosophy that defer and extend this particular aporia. Cicero wrote at a transitional moment in the history of philosophy: within the Academy, skeptical critique had given way to a renewed interest in revitalizing older forms of philosophy via a multiplicity of new and resurgent approaches. In the process, the certainty of the Hellenistic Stoa had been coopted by its rapprochement with other schools, bringing the rigor of the Stoic system into contact with other, more pluralistic modes of thought. Philosophical unity was sought above all, yet, at the same time, there was a general geographic and linguistic proliferation and decentralization of philosophy. This trajectory, which from a skeptical perspective marks a “descent into dogmatism,” can also be usefully compared to a more recent juncture that has redefined contemporary philosophy following the anti-

philosophical trajectory of the 20th century.<sup>143</sup> The critical impulse that underlies many disparate forms of 20th century thought—the linguistic turn in both the analytic and continental philosophical traditions, structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis<sup>144</sup>—mirrors the skeptical Academy’s dedication to a subversion of philosophical certainty and the maintenance of non-dogmatic relativisms. Additionally, in both cases, these periods of anti-philosophical critique gave way to a moment of reckoning, in which the importance of a philosophy dedicated to truth, ethical good, and a humanistic subject, is reasserted.<sup>145</sup> Cicero is thus a figure who exists on both sides of a boundary that has been crossed and re-crossed throughout the history of thought. On the one side, Cicero belongs to the tradition of skeptical or anti-philosophical critique, which seeks to undermine philosophical certainty and draws attention to the singularity of human experience. On the other side, Cicero participates in the reinvigoration and refinement of the central philosophical categories that have traversed this critique.

As an example of how to negotiate this philosophical boundary, it is useful to consider briefly Derrida’s engagement with Cicero.<sup>146</sup> Derrida’s work on *Aporias*, for instance, which

---

<sup>143</sup> My use of the term “anti-philosophy” is here owed to Alain Badiou’s definition: any form of thought that seeks to oppose “the singularity of experience to the properly philosophical category of truth” (see Badiou 2018a: esp. 84). The examples that he considers in depth are Pascal, Rousseau, and Kierkegaard and, apropos of the 20th century, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Lacan. Although I do not mean to imply that ancient Academic skepticism is equivalent to Badiou’s notion of anti-philosophy, the two categories share similar enough methods and goals to allow for further comparison.

<sup>144</sup> See Badiou 2007: 98-110 for a succinct analysis of the inter-related development of these forms of thought throughout the century.

<sup>145</sup> Or, in our case, is still struggling to be reasserted. On the contemporary reassertion of truth, see esp. Badiou 2018.

<sup>146</sup> Cicero features prominently in Derrida’s “late” works which were written from the late-1980s until his death in 2004. This period corresponds to the “transition” between 20th century critique and the contemporary resurrection of philosophy; the period of the “late” Academy spans a similar movement. Consequently, Cicero’s presence in Derrida’s works of this period help to solidify him as a transitional figure in the history of philosophy as well as mark Derrida himself as a similarly cross-border figure. For

begins with the ironically anti-philosophical assertion that it is “a concession to the times” to discuss “truth” using only quotations,<sup>147</sup> incorporates within itself Cicero’s philosophy as a philosophy of finitude—of the condition of the limitations and boundedness of human thought, language, and life.<sup>148</sup> The affinity is not simply cosmetic. As Derrida’s reading of Heidegger’s *Holzweg* demonstrates, the juxtaposition of the unthinkable *finis* with the thought of the *finis*, which also defines Cicero’s philosophy, drives the *ratio* of Derridean deconstruction. Derrida asks: “Does one pass through [an] aporia? Or is one immobilized before the threshold, to the point of having to turn around and seek out another way, the way without method or outlet of a *Holzweg* or a turning (*Kehre*) that could turn the aporia—all such possibilities of wandering?”<sup>149</sup> Derrida emphasizes the directionality and temporality of aporetic structures; if an aporetic limit,

---

Derrida and Cicero see esp. *Politics of Friendship* (1997), on which see Leach 1993 and Miller 2015. On Derrida himself as a transitional figure, see Norris 2012 and Badiou 2016: 125-44.

<sup>147</sup> 1993: 1, “‘Limits of truth,’ with the prudence of quotation marks, is of course a citation [of Diderot]. A concession to the times: today one would scarcely risk putting forth such a disquieting phrase without sheltering oneself behind some kind of paternity.”

<sup>148</sup> See, with reference to Cicero’s defense of his translation of *telos* with *finis* at *de Fin.* 3.26, Derrida 1993: 6-16, who treats the slipperiness of the senses of *finis* in relation to the multiple Greek concepts that relate to the limit, end, boundary, or line of demarcation, e.g., τέλος / ἀτελής, ὄρος / ἀόριστον, πέρασ / ἄπειρον. Cf. Cappello 2019: 188 and 196-7 on the similarities between Derridean and Ciceronian “philosophies of the limit.”

<sup>149</sup> 1993: 33. *Holzwege* or “Off the Beaten Path” is the title of Heidegger’s first post-war book; cf. Heidegger 2002 ad loc., “‘Wood’ is an old name for forest. In the wood there are paths, mostly overgrown, that come to an abrupt stop where the wood is untrodden. They are called Holzwege. Each goes its separate way, though within the same forest. It often appears as if one is identical to another. But it only appears so. Woodcutters and forest keepers know these paths. They know what it means to be on a Holzweg.” See further, *ix*: “In entitling his work *Holzwege*, literally, ‘Timber Paths,’ Heidegger chose a term that carefully balances positive and negative implications. On the one hand, a *Holzweg* is a timber track that leads to a clearing in the forest where timber is cut. On the other, it is a track that used to lead to such a place but is now overgrown and leads nowhere. Hence, in a popular German idiom, to be ‘on a *Holzweg*’ is to be on the wrong track or in a cul-de-sac.” Derrida’s *Kehre* refers to the controversial “turn in Being” that many, including Heidegger himself, see marked in his thinking following *Being and Time* (see, e.g., Richardson 1963: 209-98). Derrida points to both these Heideggerian figures as more or less failed—even more than failed, treacherous—attempts to “get around” or “get out of” the fundamental aporetic structure that he sees subtending *Being and Time*.

such as death, cannot be passed *through*, the searcher “immobilized before the threshold,” reaches “the point” where he can only turn “back around” in a form of circular “wandering” of retrospective return, “without method or outlet.” As such, the experience of reaching a limit is always one of repetition of the past in the present—because “nature didn’t give us any knowledge of limits,” the searcher must turn and return again. According to the interpretation made evident by the comparison with Derrida, to “turn around and seek out another way...without method or outlet...” is as good a description of Cicero’s philosophical practice as can be formulated.<sup>150</sup> It captures the wandering course of his inquiry, the belatedness of his relation to the tradition to which he lays claim, and his confrontation with the limits of thought in the present moment. Cicero’s commitment to doubt embraces “all such possibilities of wandering.”

Given the dedication of Cicero’s thought to the unknowability of the limit, the debates surrounding the nature of Cicero’s philosophical intent represent attempts to understand how it is possible that such a form of inquiry—i.e., one that is driven by doubt—can ever be said, as Cicero claims it does, to serve as the basis for a genuine philosophy of truth. The question remains: what is the *purpose* of all this wandering? For an anti-philosophical figure like Derrida, who can easily incorporate Cicero within his project, the wandering of doubt is the end in itself. Yet, as I argued above, this way of thinking about Cicero’s skepticism overlooks the evocatively introspective, liberatingly speculative, and constructive element at work in his texts.<sup>151</sup> Read,

---

<sup>150</sup> Of course, this practice is not unique to Cicero. Cf., e.g., the organization of the debates on the immortality of the soul in Plato’s *Phaedo* around moments of uncertainty for the interlocutors and their expressions of a need to “return to the beginning”; see, e.g., 88d and 107a-b. On this organization of the *Phaedo* and Socrates’ method for managing the repetitious structure of such argumentation, see Blank 1986.

<sup>151</sup> On the purpose of philosophical activity for Cicero, see further below, Ch. 4, section III.

instead, as part of a tradition of philosophical reinvigoration that can conjoin Cicero with, for instance, Hegel, the purpose of Cicero's inquiry—the wandering turn and return to the limits of thought in the present—is to place the limitedness of human experience in a relation with the limitlessness of truth.

#### V. Limitless Doubt

In this final section, I sketch a view, which I return to more fully in Chapter 4, of Cicero's philosophy from the other side of the border. How does limitation give way to limitlessness in the philosophical pursuit that Cicero describes? Can truth ever be disclosed within human time or, better, can the activity of human life itself make truths manifest in time? As Cicero indicates in his preface to the *Lucullus*, his understanding of the Academic *ratio* is shaped by the pursuit of the approvable and the refusal to affirm the approvable as true; yet, at the same time, he is insistent that the purpose of this doubt-driven inquiry is to “draw out and in some way mold something that is true or at least approaches truth (*eliciant et tamquam exprimant aliquid quod aut sit aut ad id quam proxime accedat*). Cicero follows and pursues the *probabile* in order to inquire into and traverse the world through his commitment to doubt. This pursuit is by definition, not a matter of knowledge—that is, not defined by the classification of knowledge according to Stoic epistemology. Instead, this mode of situational approvability changes from moment to moment based on presently unforeseen circumstances; it is a deferral of uncertainty rather than the maintenance of relative certainty. I contend that it is precisely this deferral of uncertainty “from day to day” (*in diem, Tusc. 5.33*) that, in turn, creates space for “that which approaches truth” (*ad verum quam proxime accedat*) or, as it is sometimes rendered,

the *veri simile*.<sup>152</sup> Rather than simply allowing an “approximation” of truth, Cicero’s “approach to truth” can be understood as a construction—the finite and limited receptacle *in* human experience that belies the unbound and unlimited truth *of* that experience. Understood in this way, the appearance of the *veri simile* is always based on the unfailing “zeal to inquiry” (*studium exquirendi*) of its “approving” subject—the continuous deferral of doubt that drives the inquiry.

Because of the evident relation between *probabile* and *veri simile*, which is especially exploited by Lucullus’ polemical attacks on *probabilitas*,<sup>153</sup> it is clear that our own approach to an understanding of Ciceronian truth must pass, in some way, through the pursuit of approvability. If this approach, however, is going to avoid Lucullus’ objections that the *probabile* is a fallacious and deceitful evasion that disguises the need for a genuine criterion of truth as certainty,<sup>154</sup> we cannot conceive of the *probabile* as a “step towards” truth. In other

---

<sup>152</sup> Cicero often uses variations on the turn of phrase *veri simile* in close correspondence with *probabile* (e.g., *Ac. Lib.* 2.9). This Ciceronian phrase is related conceptually to the Greek *eikos*, an apparent conflation in Cicero’s thought. See Glucker 1995 for an attempt to unravel the lexical difficulties. Cf. Altman 2016: e.g., 96, “I am claiming that the *simillimum veri* constitutes the surface of the *Academica*, over which an Academic ‘Cicero’ presides—just as a Stoic M. will do in the case of the *Tusculan Disputations*—and that it is his text’s deliberately constructed *varietas* that leads the reader to search more deeply for Cicero’s own view.” In Altman’s reading, the *veri simile* constitutes an outward presentation of a hidden truth. Yet, since we, as interpreters of Cicero’s text, have no way of adjudicating Altman’s claims for a hidden esoteric truth, this means, ironically for Altman’s project, that we are put in the position of the wandering skeptic, not the masterful Platonist having returned from the cave. See below, n.152.

<sup>153</sup> See esp. for Lucullus’ polemical interpretation of the relationship, 32, 33, 47, 49, 59; for Cicero’s response, 66, 99; cf. 127-28. Note that, in this text at least, the explicit connection is made much more frequently in the Antiochean attacks on *probabilitas* than in Cicero’s exposition. For this reason, I aim my reading in this section more toward understanding how the *probabile* might be dedicated to pursuing a limitless, ungraspable truth by engaging with the terms of Cicero’s own presentation. I am less interested in the specific term *veri simile*, which, in fact, does not feature significantly in Cicero’s defense, except in response to Lucullus’ attacks.

<sup>154</sup> See esp., 59, “But the most absurd thing is that you say that you can easily pursue approvables if you aren’t hindered by anything. In the first place, how can you *not* be hindered when (you insist) the false is no different from the true? In the next place, what mode of judgement can you exercise when there is a single common criterion for truth and falsehood?” (*Illud vero perabsurdum quod dicitis probabilia vos*

words, the *probabile* cannot be conceived of as an indication of the “likelihood” that an impression is true rather than false, thus presupposing a knowledge of that truth which, for the skeptic, is entirely impossible. It is important to keep in mind, in this regard, that the most extensive positive discussions of *probabilitas* in the *Lucullus* are found during Cicero’s rebuttal of the charge of *apraxia*. Cicero begins this rebuttal as he ends it, with a quotation from Clitomachus’ *On Suspending Judgment*.<sup>155</sup> In this case, Clitomachus refers to Carneades’ division of impressions into two categories: apprehensible (or not) and approvable (or not). Cicero goes on to quote,

quare ita placere, tale visum nullum esse ut perceptio consequeretur, ut autem probatio, multa. Etenim contra naturam est probabile nihil esse, et sequitur omnis vitae ea quam tu, Luculle, commemorabas eversio; itaque et sensibus probanda multa sunt, teneatur modo illud, non inesse in iis quicquam tale quale non etiam falsum nihil ab eo differens esse possit. Sic quidquid acciderit specie probabile, si nihil se offeret quod sit probabilitati illi contrarium, utetur eo sapiens, ac sic omnis ratio vitae gubernabitur.

‘So [Carneades’] view, Clitomachus says, ‘is that while there is no impression such that apprehension is achieved from it, there are many impressions such that approval is achieved from them.’ For, I might add, it would be contrary to nature for nothing to be approvable—and the result would be the complete overturning of life that you remarked on, Lucullus. So many things deserve approval by means of the senses, too, provided only that one remembers that none of them is such that there couldn’t be a false impression not differing from it at all. Thus the sage will use whatever happens to be approvable by appearance, if nothing contrary to its approvability presents itself; and the whole manner of his life will be governed in this way.<sup>156</sup>

On the one hand, Cicero’s translation and citation of this passage at this point in his speech serves as a relatively straightforward counterargument to Lucullus’ charge of *apraxia*—that a

---

*sequi si nulla re impediamini. Primum qui potestis non impediri cum a veris falsa non distent? deinde quod iudicium est veri cum sit commune falsi?).*

<sup>155</sup> See above section III.

<sup>156</sup> *Luc.* 99.

skeptical outlook will lead to a “complete overturning of life” (*omnis vitae...eversio*).<sup>157</sup> Cicero points to Carneades’ *pithanon* as a satisfactory mode of decision making and a sufficient rational justification for action: although there may be no impressions that strike the skeptical sage as “apprehensible,” he finds an abundance that are “approvable by appearance” (*specie probabile*) with which he can readily govern “his whole manner of life” (*sic omnis ratio vitae gubernabitur*).<sup>158</sup>

On the other hand, if critical weight is given to the specific choices that Cicero makes in his translation, and the connections that these choices create within his thought, a more locally situated reading presents itself, which can, perhaps, illuminate a different kind of relation between approvability and truth. Cicero configures the pursuit of approvability as the thread that runs through the “whole manner of life” (*omnis ratio vitae*), connecting it with the “complete overturning of life” (*omnis vitae...eversio*). Pursuit of *probabilitas* trails off toward a limit—the vanishing point at which it is “contrary to nature for nothing to be approvable” (*contra naturam est probabile nihil esse*). This statement can be read against the grain to understand that there *is* a “nothing” or “negation” (*nihil*) that, contrary to nature, subtends the positive expressions of a life shaped by the *probabile*. This *nihil* forms a constitutive exception to the impressions, ideas, and beliefs that make up a subject’s interaction with the world. If “nature” is generally understood as

---

<sup>157</sup> This striking formulation is itself a kind of translation: cf. ζῆν ἀναιροῦσιν, Plu. *Col.* 1108d, cf. 1119c-d; D.L. IX.104, Πάλιν οἱ δογματικοὶ φασιν καὶ τὸν βίον αὐτοῦς ἀναιρεῖν, ἐν ᾧ πάντ’ ἐκβάλλουσιν ἐξ ὧν ὁ βίος συνέστηκεν. οἱ δὲ ψεύδεσθαί φασιν αὐτοῦς· οὐ γὰρ τὸ ὄρᾶν ἀναιρεῖν, ἀλλὰ τὸ πῶς ὄρᾶν ἀγνοεῖν. But Cicero seems also to be playing with the phrase’s Platonic iteration as well; see *de Fin.* 5.28, *de Rep.* 6.14; and Pl. *Phd.* 118a7-8. Cf. Altman 2016: 107.

<sup>158</sup> He goes on to point out, somewhat disingenuously, that even the Stoic sage makes use of persuasive impressions in the course of his daily life (although he will never assent to them as *doxa*): *Etenim is quoque qui a vobis sapiens inducitur multa sequitur probabilia, non comprehensa neque percepta neque adsensa sed similia veri*, 99.



the situation in which a life unfolds, approvability begins and ends with the negation of that situation—the *nihil* that brings about a “complete overturning of life.” The point of *apraxia*, as posited by the Stoics, can serve, for Cicero, as an exceptional limit—marking the point at which the finitude of life passes into its negation.<sup>159</sup>

This generative negation can be understood, furthermore, as forming an inflection point in the relationship between human experience and truth. A life lived by means of *probabilitas* intentionally preserves the opposition between the finitude of human experience and the potential limitlessness of truth by denying the certainty of impressions and constantly reminding the subject of the uncertainty within which he lives. This opposition, as argued above, is central to Cicero’s commitment to doubt. Because the human senses and reason will always be insufficient for the comprehension of truth, that truth stands in an unlimited relation to the limitations of human experience. Yet the generative negation at the heart of the pursuit of the approvable raises the possibility that this disjunctive relationship between the limitation and limitlessness can, in some sense, be developed and transformed over time. As in the figure of the “mole desiring the light” or like a *sorites* that always lacks a definite limit, a life governed by the *probabile* can be structured and oriented in relation to a truth that is ungraspable and illimitable. Under

---

<sup>159</sup> This interpretation of the generative nullity at the heart of life can perhaps help to unravel one of the most contested *loci* in the *Lucullus*: 74, where Cicero claims that he “seems to have actually lived with [Socrates and Plato]—so many conversations have been recorded, from which it can’t be doubted that Socrates thought that nothing could be known. He made just one exception, that he knew that he knew nothing, and nothing more” (*vixisse cum iis equidem videor; ita multi sermones perscripti sunt e quibus dubitari non possit quin Socrati nihil sit visum sciri posse; exceptit unum tantum, scire se nihil se scire, nihil amplius*). On this passage, see Burnyeat 1997: 280-90; Glucker 1997: 69; Cooper 2004; Altman 2016: 92-96. Rather than seeing this passage, and in particular the remarkable phrase *scire se nihil se scire* as evidence of Cicero’s self-contradictory skepticism or his exoteric performance of skepticism that masks a form of dogmatic “Platonism,” I suggest that a closer attention to the qualities that Cicero’s philosophy attributes to negation—the generative force attributed to the *nihil* that negates life’s limitedness—offers up a reading of this passage that presents Socrates, in true New Academic fashion, as a precursor to Cicero’s approach to the construction of truth in the time of life.

*probabilitas*, the cohesion and validity of the decisions and actions that shape a life are always traceable to their generative negation. These judgements thus always serve as a reminder that the finitude of human life is surrounded and produced by an unknowable limitlessness. The limitlessness of truth exists *in* the boundedness of human life through the generative nullity that threatens always to overturn it; yet this limit does not exhaust the existence *of* this truth outside the boundaries of human finitude.

As an example of the orientation of life in relation to the limitlessness of truth, Cicero offers another stock example from the debates between the Academics and Stoics that focuses on the limitations of human sight. Cicero assures his interlocutor that the Academic sage “will see the sky, earth, and sea with the same eyes as your sage” (*iisdem enim hic sapiens de quo loquor oculis quibus iste vester caelum, terram, mare intuebitur*, 105). With this claim, Cicero undermines the Stoic argument for the “perspicuity” of impressions for the sage. Instead, he offers a brief narrative that illustrates the appearance of truth for the skeptic who pursues the *probabile*:

mare illud quod nunc favonio nascente purpureum videtur, idem huic nostro videbitur, nec tamen adsentietur, quia nobismet ipsis modo caeruleum videbatur, mane raurum, quodque nunc qua a sole conlucet albescit et vibrant dissimileque est proximo et continenti, ut etiamsi possis rationem reddere cur id eveniat tamen non possis id verum esse quod videbatur oculis defendere.

This stretch of sea, which now looks dark as the west wind rises, will look the same to our sage. Yet he won’t assent, because it looked green to us just a moment ago, and it will look gray in the morning, and the patch that is glinting and gleaming where it is glittering in the sun is unlike the patch right next to it. So even if you could give an explanation as to why this happens, you still couldn’t defend the claim that the particular visual impression you had is true.

Although this example can be read as another relatively straightforward argument against Stoic *katalēpsis* and in favor of *epochē*, its placement in the larger argument following the excursus on approvability and *apraxia* lends it an additional element. This narrative illustrates that what is at

stake in a life lead by *probabilitas* is the importance of time for truth and of truth for a lifetime. The truth that the skeptical sage inquires into here is simply the “true” color of the sea. For Cicero, if this truth has any appearance—and there is no guarantee that it does—it is accessible not in any particularly perspicuous impression (*quod videbatur oculis*), but in the dialectical juxtaposition of the subsequently continuous and contrastive impressions as they appear at different moments in time: “dark as the west wind rises” (*favonio nascente purpureum*), “green just a moment ago” (*modo caeruleum*), “gray in the morning” (*mane ravum*), and gleaming at the points where the sun strikes it so that it is, at the same instant, dissimilar to itself even where it is touching and contiguous (*dissimileque est proximo et continenti*). The truth of the color of the ocean, therefore, is disclosed indirectly to the sage through the mediation of these sequential and incongruous impressions. It is unified only in the discernment of the faithful observer and, specifically, in his “approving” acceptance and adoption of this sequence of impressions as joined by an enduring substratum or, perhaps, a Platonic “receptacle” through which they appear and from which they cannot be isolated in any part without losing their relation to truth.<sup>160</sup> The

---

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Timaeus’ “receptacle” discussed at *Tim.* 48e-52a; see, e.g., Zeyl and Sattler 2019, “The receptacle is posited as the solution to a problem: none of the observable particulars persists as this or that (for example as fire or water) over time. We observe the very thing that is fire at one time becoming air, and subsequently becoming water, etc., ‘transmitting their becoming to one another in a cycle, so it seems’ (49c6–7). Thus the thing that appears as fire here and now is not fire in its own right: its fieriness is only a temporary characterization of it. What, then, is that thing in its own right? In a difficult and controversial passage Timaeus proposes a solution: In its own right it is (part of) a totally characterless subject that temporarily in its various parts gets characterized in various ways. This is the receptacle—an enduring substratum, neutral in itself but temporarily taking on the various characterizations. The observed particulars just are parts of that receptacle so characterized (51b4–6).” On the Cicero’s understanding of the receptacle, see Varro’s discussion of matter at *Ac. Lib.* 1.27, which seems to conjoin the Aristotelian theory of the continuum with the Platonic concept, “they [i.e., the Greek philosophers generally] say that a sort of matter underlies all the elements which is without any form and devoid of all ‘quality’...out of which all the elements are modeled and formed, which alone can receive all the elements and be altered in every way and over its whole extent and even pass away, not into nothing, but into its parts, which can be cut up and divided, since there is no minimum whatever in the nature of things that cannot be divided” (*sed subiectam putant omnibus sine ulla specie atque carentem omni illa qualitate...materiam quandam, e qua omnia expressa atque efficta sint, quae una omnia accipere possit omnibusque modis mutari atque*

*ratio* at work, therefore, allows the sage to approach the limitlessness of truth—like the lack of definite boundaries in the *sorites*—immanent within life even as life itself progresses in the bounded and limited sequence of human time.

Considering the, admittedly speculative, potential for reading Cicero’s method in this way, which privileges his dedication to truth, I conclude this chapter by offering another genealogical gesture. Rather than incorporating Cicero as a footnote to a skeptical or anti-philosophical tradition, it is also possible to trace a lineage through those thinkers whose philosophies seek to reinvigorate the concept of truth—here, I consider a brief passage from Hegel. In the first chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel offers a defense of sense-certainty which relies not on a notion of immediate perspicuity or indivisible unity, but is attained through the movement of dialectic:

The Here pointed out, which I keep hold of, is likewise a this Here which, in fact, is not this Here, but a Before and Behind, an Above and Below, a Right and Left. The Above is itself likewise this manifold otherness—above, below, etc. The Here, which was to be pointed out, disappears in other Heres, and these disappear similarly. What is pointed out, held fast, and is permanent is a negative This (*das Aufgezeigte, Festgehaltene und Bleibende ist ein negatives Dieses*), which only is so when the Heres are taken as they should be, but therein cancel/sublate/supersede themselves (*aber darin sich aufheben*); it is a simple complex of many Heres. The Here that is “meant” would be the point. But it “is” not: rather, when it is pointed out as being, as having existence, that very act of pointing out proves to be not immediate knowledge, but a process, a movement from the Here “meant” through a plurality of Heres to the universal Here, which is a simple plurality of Heres, just as day is a simple plurality of Nows.<sup>161</sup>

This passage clearly echoes the example that Cicero cites on the color of the sea. In both cases, the philosophers are concerned with the dialectical relationship between the limited and bounded

---

*ex omni parte, atque etiam interire, non in nihilum sed in suas partes, quae infinite secari ac dividi possint, cum sit nihil omnino in rerum natura minimum quod dividi nequeat*). On the relation of this passage to the Platonic iteration, see Miller 2003: 116-17.

<sup>161</sup> §108, trans. adapted from Miller 1977.

nature of human experience on the one hand and the possibility of the existence of categorical and unbounded universals on the other. Of course, Cicero does not take the extra step as Hegel does to identify “sense-certainty” as “nothing else than simply this history” of dialectical movement (§109). Nevertheless, insofar as Cicero’s pursuit of *probabilitas* offers a method by which the finitude of life attains a constructive relation to the limitlessness of truth, it finds its genealogical consummation in Hegel’s formulation of sense-certainty. Reading back from Hegel, we can see especially the importance of negation in Cicero’s description of a life lived in accordance with the *probabile*. Just as in Cicero it is *contra naturam* for *nihil* to be approvable—that is, the traversal of the bounded structures of life depends upon the limit at which those structures pass over into limitlessness—for Hegel the existence of “what is pointed out, held fast, and is permanent” owes the truth of its existence to “a negative This” (*ein negatives Dieses*) in relation to which the This that is pointed out is “canceled out/sublated” (*sich aufheben*). In this untranslatable Hegelian word (*aufheben*), we find the idea, evident *mutatis mutandis* in my reading above, that the boundaries of finitude in human experience serve as a generative negation, around which incongruous and temporally distinct impressions are cancelled out and sublated into a truth without limit or boundary.

In these passages from the *Lucullus* and the *Phenomenology*, both Cicero and Hegel are concerned with defending a phenomenological access to truth, based on the multiplicity and dialectic movement of human experience, yet which can serve as the basis for a metaphysics of the limitlessness of truth. While Hegel, certainly, comes closer to completing the defense, it is important to note that for both of these thinkers what is “true” can never be understood as univocal or static, but must involve a dedication to extending and playing out the relationship between human experience and those aspects of being that lie always just beyond the limitations

of that experience. In this philosophical lineage connecting Cicero and Hegel, we can recognize a potential for the finitude of human experience to approach the limitlessness of truth—a truth, worthy of Dante’s formulation, from which doubt can be born “like a new growth.”

### Chapter 3. The Discernment of Grief.

There are moods in which we court suffering, in the hope that here at least we shall find reality, sharp peaks and edges of truth. But it turns out to be scene-painting and counterfeit. The only thing grief has taught me is to know how shallow it is. That, like all the rest, plays about the surface, and never introduces me into the reality, for contact with which we would even pay the costly price of sons and lovers... Grief too will make us idealists.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience" (169)

When in his heightened self-criticism [the melancholic] describes himself as petty, egoistic, dishonest, lacking in independence, one whose sole aim has been to hide the weaknesses of his own nature, it may be, so far as we know, that he has come pretty near to understanding himself; we only wonder why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind.

Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (*SE* XIV.246)

#### I. Enough Grief?

In the first book of the *Tusculan Disputations*, the main speaker who, by convention, is referred to as "M." argues against the initial statement of his interlocutor, "A.,"<sup>1</sup> that "death seems to me to be an evil" (*malum mihi videtur esse mors*, 1.9).<sup>2</sup> In response to A.'s assertion,

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Pohlenz 1911, the letters M. and A. enter the mss. tradition through the 6th century Byzantine convention of marking the interlocutors in catechistic texts with the Greek letters M and Δ (for the Latin *magister* and *discipulus*): "Aus Δ kann A auf rein mechanischem Wege entstanden sein" (629). The use of this practice to clarify the received text gives the weight of a long hermeneutic tradition to Goldenhard's didactic reading (2007). Without the benefit of a more recent critical work on the mss., it is difficult to evaluate Pohlenz's final claim, "Jedenfalls hat Cicero selbst in diesem Gespräch, in dem er bewußt von einer individuellen Charakterzeichnung absieht, den Personenwechsel nicht durch Buchstaben, sondern wahrscheinlich nur durch Freilassung von Raum bezeichnet." Cf. Giusta 1984: *praef.* for a more recent but inconclusive reappraisal.

<sup>2</sup> The narrator of the preface indicates that during the conversations of which these dialogues purport to be a record, the interlocutors followed "the old Socratic method of arguing against the belief of the other" (*vetus et Socratica ratio contra alterius opinionem disserendi*, 1.8). On the opening "Socratic" dialectical argument of book 1, see Gorman 2005: 64-84; Warren 2013. For the various genre tags that are found in the prologues of *Tusc.*, see Goldenhard 2007: 7-21.

M. contends that, according to the philosophical tradition on death,<sup>3</sup> there are two likely explanations of the postmortem condition: either the soul survives the death of the body because of its immaterial and immortal nature or death simply means the end of all sensation and life. Although M. stresses that we have no way of knowing which option will be true prior to each individual's experience, he assures A. that in either case death—both the state of being dead and the moment of dying—cannot be considered an evil.<sup>4</sup>

M. loudly performs, for the benefit of the impressionable A.,<sup>5</sup> his preference for the “ideal”<sup>6</sup> option—that the soul survives the body. Yet, notably, he closes his speech in favor of the soul's immortality with a sentiment that veers suddenly from the aspirational tenor of the preceding argument: “When we will have arrived there [in the afterlife], then, finally, we shall live, for this life is truly death, and I would lament it, if it were allowed me” (*quo cum venerimus, tum denique vivemus; nam haec quidem vita mors est, quam lamentari possem, si*

---

<sup>3</sup> Especially, in this case, Plato's *Phaedo*. On the extensive intertextual relationship between *Phd.* and *Tusc.* 1, see Gould 1968: 125-43 and Stull 2012. It should be noted, however, that because Stull only examines the interplay between these two texts, he overstates Cicero's reliance on Plato and the *Phd.*; see e.g., 2012: 49-50 where he implies that *Tusc.* 1 is an unproblematic acknowledgment of “the truth of Plato's position on immortality.”

<sup>4</sup> On the structure of this argument, which Schofield 2012 refers to as “neutralizing,” see below, n.57.

<sup>5</sup> M. frequently remarks on A.'s rather naive enthusiasm for the immortality of the soul, e.g., 82, “I see that you gaze upward and want to pilgrimage into heaven. I hope that it will happen this way for us” (*video te alte spectare et velle in caelum migrare. Spero fore ut contingat id nobis*). Cf. also M.'s comments that precede a “neutralizing” argument portion of his speech, 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> The “ideal” arguments in *Tusc.* are not ideal in a strictly metaphysical sense, since the Platonism and Stoicism from which Cicero tends to draw his arguments find various material explanations to support their conclusions. My use of the terms “ideal” and “material” to refer to the contrasting positions presented by M. in each of the books is suggested by Görler's rather imprecise characterization of the transition from “weiterreichenden' zum 'bescheideneren' Niveau” (1996: 234) in the argumentation as well as the comparison to Emerson's turn to “idealism” through a thwarted desire to find “reality” in grief.



*liberet*, 75).<sup>7</sup> M. thus concludes his ideal argument, not with the “victory” of death, but with the “harshness” of life<sup>8</sup>—that is, the consummation of life in death comes at the expense of life; the nature of our embodied life transforms living into a being-unto-death which, although fortifying with respect to the afterlife, is accompanied by grief and lamentation for those trapped *in life*.

Indeed, A. responds to M.’s expression that he could go on “lamenting” or expressing his grief, “if it were allowed me” (*lamentari possem, si liberet*), with his own admission of a weariness for life: “You have lamented enough in your *Consolation*, which, when I read it, I want nothing more than to leave this life, and after I’ve heard these things just now, I want it all the more” (*satis tu quidem in Consolatione es lamentatus, quam cum lego, nihil malo quam has res relinquere: his vero modo auditis, multo magis*, 76). This exchange between M. and A., and the reference to Cicero’s *Consolatio*, a text that he wrote in the weeks immediately following the death of his daughter, marks a turning point in the argument.<sup>9</sup> After having passed through the

---

<sup>7</sup> This, and A.’s responsive usage (below), is the only instance of the verb *lamentari* in book 1. But, cf. 1.30, “It is true that no one grieves for his own discomfort; perhaps people may feel sorrow and anguish, but that mournful lamenting and tearful grieving comes from the belief that the one whom we loved has been deprived of life and we believe that they are sensible of it (*nemo enim maeret suo incommodo: dolent fortasse et anguntur, sed illa lugubris lamentatio fletusque maerens ex eo est, quod eum, quem dileximus, vitae commodis privatum arbitramur idque sentire*). Thus, in this instance, I would argue that *lamentari* refers specifically to a type of mourning or expression of grief, which would be suitable to A.’s further reference to the *Consolatio* below.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Marx’s aphorism on human mortality, “Death seems to be a harsh victory of the species over the *definite* individual and to contradict their unity” (1988: 106; emphasis orig.).

<sup>9</sup> For a thorough consideration of the lost *Consolatio ad se*, which is discussed by Cicero in the letters of the period and in the *Tusculans*, see the treatments of Kumaniecki 1968 and Baltussen 2013. As I discuss below, however, Baltussen relies on an understanding of the “stages” of Cicero’s grief that I aim to problematize. See, e.g., 2013: 69, “The *Consolatio*, I suggest, marks a halfway house between unresolved and resolved grief. This point about grief *stages* in the Ciceronian sources becomes important, if we want to reach a more realistic interpretation of his bereavement *process*. Asking about the nature and evolution of Cicero’s grief therefore requires analyzing its progression and how this unfolded in his writings” (emphasis orig.). While I share Baltussen’s interest in analyzing Cicero’s grief, which certainly changes over time, I question the assumption, which is imported from the prescriptive approaches to grief that are the objects, not the outcome, of his philosophical inquiry that we should be looking for a movement from

edifying argument in favor of the divinity and immortality of the soul, M. and A. end with a shared expression of exhaustion in life and a wish for death.<sup>10</sup> From this death-wish, the debate returns to its starting point to consider an equally strong case for a human being based on negation in death. As I discuss in section III, this “material” argument is neither simply a counterpoint to the initial “ideal” position nor offered as a foil for the preferred line of reasoning. Rather, it is precisely in the dissociation, tension, and underlying undecidability between the two options that the true thrust of Cicero’s thought lies.

The dynamic pivot which simultaneously conjoins and separates these two positions can thus be framed by the question of how much of an “expression of grief” or “lamentation” (*lamentari*) is *enough*. Has Cicero grieved “enough” or “satisfactorily” (*satis*) in the *Consolatio*, as the speaker M. now claims he has? What is or was the object of these expressions of grief? Could there *ever* be enough grief? If not, what are the consequences of a surfeit of lamentation? In this chapter, I argue that in the *Tusculans* Cicero incorporates grief at the death of his daughter into his philosophy as a tool for thinking about the unthinkable—for engaging closer with the thought that “nature didn’t give us any knowledge of limits,” which I examined above in the *Lucullus*.<sup>11</sup> In particular, as I consider in section III, his grief enables a confrontation with the unknowability of death and the consequences for human life that arise from this aporia. Yet Cicero’s use of Tullia in this way entails something important about his own experience of grief:

---

“unresolved” to “resolved” in Cicero’s experience. In other words, this narrative, while well attested in the theoretical aspects of Cicero’s writings, should not necessarily be taken to be reflective of his personal experience of and philosophical engagement with grief. See further below, section II.

<sup>10</sup> On the relationship between A.’s wish for death and the text’s relationship to the *Phaedo*, see below, section III.

<sup>11</sup> See above, Ch. 2, section IV.

the transformation of his daughter's death into a philosophical instrument means that he does not and cannot process this loss as a loss, at least textually.<sup>12</sup> As I discuss below in section II, it is notable that Tullia's name *never* appears in Cicero's writings after her death, either in the copious letters that describe his experience of grief or in the philosophical works in which he treats grief theoretically.<sup>13</sup> This explicit erasure of Tullia as the named object of "lamentation" is precisely what allows her to become a tool for thinking about what remains outside of thinkability. Cicero's careful excision of Tullia from his writing means that there is an avenue within his textual creations for thought that is outside of language or knowledge. Yet, with regard to his own grief, does this absence mean that he has mourned "enough"—or not at all?

Cicero's philosophical exercise of grief thus falls somewhere between Freud's and Emerson's notions of a "failure" in mourning. Writing from an explicitly therapeutic perspective, Freud envisions a split between mourning and melancholia: the former being a normative process of dealing with and working through grief, while the latter refers to a pathological state warped by an individual's inability to accept and articulate a loss as loss. Freud notes with clinical interest how the melancholic develops self-obsessive tendencies, constantly worrying away at the wound that cannot be acknowledged as a wound and allowing it to reorient his entire experience of the world and perception of himself: "he describes himself as petty, egoistic, dishonest, lacking in independence, one whose sole aim has been to hide the weaknesses of his

---

<sup>12</sup> It is important to reiterate that my claims about Cicero's grief should only extend so far into a biographical reading. I am more interested in Cicero's explicit textualizations of his grief in the letters, *Consolatio*, and *Tusculans*. The melancholic absence of Tullia as a specific object of loss and mourning is most evidently a textual absence, which should not necessarily be taken as a faithful "transcript" of Cicero's experience, but rather its reflection.

<sup>13</sup> This is in strong contrast to the frequency with which she had been named and written about in his letters previously; for a thorough biographical consideration of Cicero's relationship to his daughter especially with reference to her role in his correspondence, see Treggiari 2007.

own nature.” Writing as a therapist, however, Freud—at least the Freud of “Mourning and Melancholia”<sup>14</sup>—is interested primarily in melancholia as the failure of a normative process. Rather than pursuing this experience of failed mourning as a source of a different kind of emotional “work,” he wonders, with more than a hint of exasperated sarcasm, while “it may be, so far as we know, that [the melancholic] has come pretty near to understanding himself...why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind.” Freud leaves in abeyance, and for others, an examination of the kind of self-knowledge or contact with reality that might be accessible to the melancholic.

In Emerson’s essay on “Experience,” by contrast, we find an example of what a philosophical exercise of grief *as* a product of “failed” mourning might look like. Although, like Cicero, Emerson never explicitly names his recently deceased son, the imprint of this loss defines the “elegiac” approach to experience that the essay represents.<sup>15</sup> Rather than mourning the loss of Waldo as a particular loss, Emerson writes that he “grieve[s] that grief can teach [him] nothing, nor carry [him] one step into real nature.” For Emerson, “we court suffering, in the hope that here at least we shall find reality, sharp peaks and edges of truth” only to find ultimately that “grief too will make us idealists.” As Sharon Cameron argues, it is through this dissociation

---

<sup>14</sup> On the post-Freudian applications of this division, which has been thoroughly re-wrought by later psychoanalysts and thinkers, see, e.g., from a clinical perspective esp. Abraham and Torok 1994, who recuperate some of the “melancholic” processes that Freud describes; for a literary approach which helpfully contextualizes the advancements in the psychotherapy of melancholia, see Rickels 2011. On the application of melancholia to the formation of gendered and political subjectivities, see esp. Butler 1995 and Traverso 2016.

<sup>15</sup> In the essay itself, Waldo is referred to only once as “my son”: “In the death of my son, now more than two years ago, I seem to have lost a beautiful estate—no more. I cannot get it nearer to me. If tomorrow I should be informed of the bankruptcy of my principal debtors, the loss of my property would be a great inconvenience to me, perhaps, for many years; but it would leave me as it found me,—neither better nor worse. So is it with this calamity; it does not touch me...” (169). For Emerson’s very different responses to Waldo’s death in his journals and letters, which offers a further interesting avenue for comparison with Cicero, see Cameron 2007: 64-5.

between a desire for truth and a retreat into idealism, between the profundity and the shallowness of grief, that Emerson's essay transforms his "failed" work of mourning into a philosophically realized expression of that inexpressible experience: "dissociation in 'Experience'...always seems resorted to so as to sustain at a remove what cannot be sustained in immediacy."<sup>16</sup> Emerson puts his grief to work in order to hold open access to what is unthinkable and ungraspable in the experience of loss.

Like Freud's melancholic, Cicero articulates his experience of grief, especially in the letters, as a form of self-abnegation and obsession over generalized loss. This form of articulation can be understood as symptom of his inability to acknowledge the death of Tullia as a specific loss, tied to this unique lost object. Additionally, like Freud, Cicero had a strong sense of a normative mourning process—derived both from Roman culture and Greek philosophy—against which he compared his own experience and to which his expressions of grief were compared by others.<sup>17</sup> I argue in this chapter, however, that we should understand the *Tusculans* and their manifestation of grief more like Emerson's elegiac essay than either the realization of a normative healing process or, conversely, its simple failure. Like Emerson's text, the *Tusculans* are produced by and produce a dissociation between the materiality of experience and a retreat into idealism when the reality of that experience cannot be grasped in full. Similarly, the dissociation between these mutually exclusive manifestations of the experience of grief preserves for Cicero the efficacy or, in Emerson's terms, the "Power," of that experience to serve as a

---

<sup>16</sup> Cameron 2007: 77.

<sup>17</sup> In my project I am more concerned with the normativity imposed by philosophy; for the relation to traditional Roman forms of mourning, see Wilcox 2005 and Treggiari 2007: esp. 143-54; for a general consideration of Roman practice, see Hope and Huskinson 2011.

philosophically generative tool.<sup>18</sup> Thus while we may not be able to think about the *Tusculans* as a part of a “working through” of grief in a normative and personal way, this philosophical work, like Emerson’s essay, is a “work.” I propose that what Cicero’s work *with* grief accomplishes is to create an approach to the unthinkability of death in experience through time and “will” (*voluntas*).

In the sections that follow I move from examining, in section II, how Cicero’s grief for Tullia is represented in the letters and biographical tradition, arguing that we can identify his experience as “melancholic,” or at least as a failure to treat her loss as a particular loss. In Section III, I trace the influence of this melancholic grief on the arguments of the first book of the *Tusculans*. I contend, in particular, that Tullia’s death and the *Consolatio*, which serves as her textual cipher, functions as the force of dissociation between the ideal and material conceptions of humanity’s relation to death. As a structuring absence in the text, the loss of Tullia thus preserves the obliquity that is reflective of Cicero’s experience of grief. Transitioning in section IV to consider the application of this dissociation to the experience itself, I examine how Cicero’s presentation of Hellenistic philosophical therapies foregrounds the loss of a subjective sense of time and a confrontation with the chronology of nature that accompanies proximity to death. This temporal disturbance opens up in experience an approach to the unthinkability of death and the human relation to time that the first book treats philosophically. In the final section, drawing in particular on Chrysippus’ therapeutic emphasis on the voluntariness of grief and feelings of obligation to mourn, I contend that Cicero locates this approach in the “will” (*voluntas*), or as I propose an alternate localized translation, a form of

---

<sup>18</sup> See Cameron 2007: 77, “Power is not so much a consequence of obliquity per se, then, as it is a consequence of the driving force that marginalizes objections to primary claims without ever emasculating those claims...”

“discernment.” This *voluntas* is not a subjective will *to* recover or forget grief, but an adoption of a general “human” will that allows the mourner to live in grief as a manifestation of the divergent temporalities that define his existence.

## II. A Philosophy of Grief

In Plutarch’s biography of Cicero, he describes the death of Tullia in a peculiarly round-about fashion. After briefly summarizing the events of Cicero’s failed first marriage to Terentia, Plutarch introduces a new unnamed bride, whom Cicero chose either, as Terentia publicly maintained, “because of his desire for her youthful beauty” (ἔρωτι τῆς ὄρης), or as Tiro relates, in his lost biography,<sup>19</sup> because of his need for her money, of which she had plenty, to repay his debts, of which he had a mountain (ὡς δὲ Τίρων ὁ τοῦ Κικέρωνος ἀπελεύθερος γέγραφεν, εὐπορίας ἔνεκα πρὸς διάλυσιν δανείων, 41.4). In the context of this new, strategic matrimonial partnership, Plutarch informs us of Tullia’s death:

γῆμαντι δ’ αὐτῷ μετ’ οὐ πολλὸν χρόνον ἢ θυγάτηρ ἀπέθανε τίκτουσα παρὰ Λέντλω· τούτῳ γὰρ ἐγαμήθη μετὰ τὴν Πείσωτος τοῦ προτέρου ἀνδρὸς τελευτήν. καὶ συνῆλθον μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν παραμυθίαν τῷ Κικέρωνι πανταχόθεν οἱ φιλόσοφοι<sup>20</sup>. βαρέως δ’ ἄγαν ἤνεγκε τὸ συμβεβηκός, ὥστε καὶ τὴν γαμηθεῖσαν ἀποπέμψασθαι δόξασαν ἡσθῆναι τῇ τελευτῇ τῆς Τυλλίας.

And when he had married, his daughter died not a long time afterwards in childbirth in the house of Lentulus (this was the man she had married after the death of Piso, her former husband). The philosophers came together from all sides to offer Cicero consolation, but he bore what had happened too hard, so that he even divorced the wife he had married because she seemed to have taken pleasure in Tullia’s death.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> On this biography written by Cicero’s freedman and secretary, which he prepared in part under Cicero’s own guidance in the last years of his life, see Görler 1990: esp. 169-70.

<sup>20</sup> This text (1964 Teubner ed. Ziegler) prints the mss. reading; other editors adopt φίλοι (Graux after Volkmann).

<sup>21</sup> Plut. *Cic.* 41.7-8; trans. Moles, modified. On the inaccuracies of this account, see Moles 1988: ad loc. Most notably, Tullia did not marry and die in the house of Lentulus, but rather Publius Cornelius Dolabella.

This is the only passage in Plutarch’s biography that names Tullia and even within this passage she seems only to be a means to an end. The effects of her death on Cicero are described in two clauses: “he bore what had happened too hard” (βαρέως δ’ ἄγαν ἤνεγκε τὸ συμβεβηκός) and “he even divorced the wife he had married because she seemed to have taken pleasure in Tullia’s death” (τὴν γαμηθεῖσαν ἀποπέμψασθαι δόξασαν ἡσθῆναι). Neither effect tells us anything about Cicero’s relationship with his daughter, her role in his life, or the emotional content of his grief. Instead, the second statement describes the domestic consequence of her death: divorce and, we are meant to understand, forfeiture of the wealth that the new bride had promised. The first statement refers solely to Cicero’s state of grief. Expressed in a pointedly abstract phrase, he grieved excessively (ἄγαν) and beyond consolation at “what had happened” (τὸ συμβεβηκός). Neither Cicero’s excessive mourning nor his new bride’s apparent sadism reveals the content of his grief—Tullia’s death becomes a precipitating occurrence, a circumstantial catalyst.

The peculiar emptiness of Plutarch’s account finds ample corroboration in Cicero’s own letters. As Andrew Erskine notes, “In fact, after her death, he never once mentions Tullia by name in any of his letters or other writings. Instead, he concentrates on his own suffering and his attempts to ‘cure’ himself.”<sup>22</sup> Readers of these letters throughout history have found Cicero’s simultaneous overwhelming “performance” of grief and absence of the cause of that grief possibly disingenuous, likely self-serving, and certainly self-pitying.<sup>23</sup> If, however, we read

---

<sup>22</sup> Erskine 1997: 36.

<sup>23</sup> On ancient (unfavorable) characterization of Cicero’s relationship with his daughter, see the heavily suggestive Ps.-Sallust *Invectiva in Ciceronem*, esp. 2, “But, I suppose, your spirits are raised by the brilliance of your home, by a wife guilty of sacrilege and dishonoured by perjury, by a daughter who is her mother’s rival and is more compliant and submissive to you than a daughter should be to a parent” (*Verum, ut opinor, splendor domesticus tibi animos tollit, uxor sacrilega ac periuriis delibuta, filia matris paelex, tibi iucundior atque obsequentior quam parenti par est*, trans. Rolfe). Cf. Baraz 2012 on Cicero’s self-serving use of his grief, e.g., 93: “A reason for writing that is based on the personal feelings of grief



Plutarch's or Cicero's own account of his grief with Freud in mind, we find melancholia in the stark separation of mourning and its lost object. It is Cicero's *inability* to mourn Tullia—to remember her and speak about her fully—that transforms his grief into a self-perpetuating and centripetal cycle without clear beginning and end. Freud compares the “behavior of melancholia” to that of an “open wound, drawing investment [cathectic] energies to itself from all sides...and draining the ego to the point of complete impoverishment.”<sup>24</sup> Melancholia turns grief on itself, interrupting and redirecting the ego's outward activity and attachments back onto itself in an exhaustive loop. Everything is pulled toward that open wound and given new melancholic order and meaning—everything, that is, except the lost object, which remains at the center of the abscess without feature or function beyond its formal, structuring absence.

Cicero eloquently articulates the empty self-referentiality and complete egoic impoverishment of melancholia in his April 45 response to a formal letter of consolation from his colleague Servius Sulpicius.<sup>25</sup> In this letter, Cicero distinguishes between the loss he felt about the demise of the Republic before and after Tullia's death:

---

and dislocation will counteract [...] potential hostility by locating his motivation for the project and, implicitly, its goals, within the more personal sphere of the author's life. Such a shift relieves some of the anxiety provoked by the public claims: a multiplicity of causes diminishes the importance of any single one...”

<sup>24</sup> *SE XIV.253*, trans. modified. As indicated above, Freud also describes the tendency toward self-diagnosis of the melancholic in terms of a “loss of ego”: “The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable, he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished” (246). These utterances of self-reproach and self-pity are precisely those that Freud feels need to be analyzed, and in Cicero's case this kind of self-diagnosis is abundantly present in the letters, see below.

<sup>25</sup> The two had a long-standing professional friendship; see *Mur.* 10 (63 BCE), which refers to their *familiaritas*, despite being on opposite sides of a court case (cf. Brunt 1988: 375). On the nature of their relationship in the context of epistolary consolation, see Wilcox 2005: 246-49, “These three letters [of consolation] show how an ongoing friendship was also a campaign waged through letters. The partners in this contest were not ‘zero-sum’ adversaries because there was no absolute winner or loser. Rather, Cicero and Sulpicius use adversarial rhetoric in a [sic] epistolary tug-of-war: now to exhort one another,

non amicorum negotiis, non rei publicae procuratione impediabantur cogitationes meae, nihil in foro agere libebat, aspicere curiam non poteram, existimabam, id quod erat, omnis me et industriae meae fructus et fortunae perdidisse. sed cum cogitarem haec mihi tecum et cum quibusdam esse communia, et cum frangerem iam ipse me cogereque illa ferre toleranter, habebam quo confugerem, ubi conquiescerem, cuius in sermone et suavitate omnis curas doloresque deponerem.

nunc autem hoc tam gravi vulnere etiam illa, quae consanuisse videbantur, recrudescunt. non enim, ut tum me a re publica maestum domus excipiebat, quae levaret, sic nunc domo maerens ad rem publicam confugere possum, ut in eius bonis adquiescam. itaque et domo absum et foro, quod nec eum dolorem quem de re publica capio, domus iam consolari potest nec domesticum res publica.

[Previously,] my thoughts were not hindered by the business of my friends or by service to the Republic, there was nothing for me to do in the forum—I could not even look upon the senate building—and, as was truly the case, I judged that the fruits of my effort and fortune had perished; but since I reflected that these losses were shared with you and certain others, and I could subdue myself and compel myself to bear them patiently, I had, so to speak, a place of refuge, where I could rest, in whose conversation and sweetness I could set down all my cares and pains.

But now, even those wounds which seemed to have healed are gaping open again under such a heavy blow; for I am not able now, as in the past when my home received me in sadness from service to the Republic and lightened my sorrow, to flee in my gloom from my home to the Republic so that I might find a haven in its benefits. And so I am absent at home and in the forum because home cannot console the pain inflicted on me from the Republic and the Republic cannot console the pain inflicted on me at home.<sup>26</sup>

In keeping with the pattern of his letters and Plutarch's account, nowhere does Cicero explicitly name Tullia or write directly about her or her death. Yet, through a series of circumlocutions (e.g., "such a heavy blow," *hoc tam gravi vulnere*) and the virtual space (*quo confugerem, ubi conquiescerem*) that brings together Tullia and the entire domestic sphere (*domus*), her death comes to represent for Cicero a decisive moment, a point from which his position and idea about

---

now to enforce behavioral expectations, now to display self-control through eloquence as well as admirable comportment" (249).

<sup>26</sup> *ad Fam.* IV.6(249).2.

himself changes irremediably.<sup>27</sup> In Cicero's reflection, Tullia's sudden and unanticipated passing forms a limit from beyond which he is confronted by the subtractive *Spaltung* that proximity to death reveals.<sup>28</sup> The dominant metaphors Cicero uses here and throughout the letters to allude to his daughter's death are those of the rupture, schism, or, as here, the gaping wound.<sup>29</sup>

Cicero demonstrates awareness that Tullia's death is already a doubling of his own—in Lacanian terms, a “symbolic death.”<sup>30</sup> Is he truly lamenting his daughter's passing or his own erasure from Roman society? How can he tell the difference? Certainly, Tullia's death is a moment of focalization. Prior to it, thanks to the assuagement (*suavitas*) provided by the sympathy of his compatriots, Cicero was able to keep himself under tight control, expressed here with the violent verb *frangere* (to break, break down, subdue). Her death removes this externally imposed, superegoic structuration. It rises up to reopen the wound that could never truly be healed, to confront Cicero with the negation of self that Lacan identifies in Oedipus' “last words”  $\mu\eta\ \phi\acute{o}\nu\alpha\iota$ —“rather not to be.”<sup>31</sup> Cicero melancholically identifies his being (*sum*) with absence

---

<sup>27</sup> On the role of Tullia in Cicero's domestic life from a biographical perspective, see Treggiari 2007: esp. 118-54. On the specific association between her and a refuge in grief, see also Treggiari 1998: 16-22.

<sup>28</sup> For Freud, the “splitting” (*Spaltung*) of the subject was a defense mechanism that occurred in fetishism or psychosis that allowed for two different, dissociative positions to exist simultaneously in the *ego*, such as “acceptance” and “disavowal”; see, esp. *SE* XIII.273. In Lacan's influential reinterpretation of the concept all subjects are always already “split” by the fact of speech, which “separates” the subject from the enunciation from the self, like truth from knowledge; see, e.g., 1977: 269-90.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. e.g., *ad. Att.* XII(254).18 where Cicero's memories are “like a bite” (*quasi morsu*).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. e.g., *ad Att.* XII(262).23 (discussed above, Ch. 1, section II), “But, as you say, my house is the forum. What good is that house to me if I lack the forum? I am dead, dead I say, Atticus, and have been so for a long time, but I am only now admitting it after losing the one thing I was clinging to” (*sed domus est, ut ais, forum. quid ipsa domo mihi opus est carenti foro? occidimus, occidimus, Attice, iam pridem nos quidem, sed nunc fatemur, postea quam unum quo tenebamur amisimus*). On Cicero's symbolic death, see also Martelli 2016: 426-9; Butler 2018: 2-3.

<sup>31</sup> Lacan 1992: 306. This is (the English translation of) Lacan's translation of the Greek, but a fuller translation (and truer to the Sophoclean meaning as well) would be “better not to be born,” “not to come

(*ab-*) both “at home and in the forum” (*domo et foro*), those spaces that belong above all to the living.<sup>32</sup> Thus, as Cicero represents his experience of grief in this letter, the lost object of Tullia serves only as an orienting absence for the splits and fractures of his own sense of self and his relations to the world. Tullia allows him to mourn for himself and for his country. But to mourn for her, in fact, would destroy the fragile balance of negation and contradiction that his life has become.

Within this fragile and melancholic balance, defined by the absence of his former places of refuge, Cicero struggles to construct philosophy as a viable alternative. If we return to the passage from Plutarch, it is clear that philosophy and Cicero’s grief are so interrelated as to be the source of textual confusion. The textual crux φιλόσοφοι/φίλοι<sup>33</sup> reveals the strength of the association, but also, if we accept the manuscript reading φιλόσοφοι, presents a spectral image, familiar from *de Finibus* and the letters, of philosophical texts personified as their undead authors, coming from everywhere to console Cicero.<sup>34</sup> As Woldemar Görler notes, Cicero

---

to be.” The phrase, in fact, derives not from a line of Oedipus himself, but from the chorus prior to Oedipus and Antigone’s reunion with Polyneices: “Not to be born is, beyond all estimation, best; but when a man has seen the light of day, this is next best by far, that with utmost speed he should go back from where he came” (μη φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νι- / κᾶ λόγον· τὸ δ’ , ἐπεὶ φανῆ, / βῆναι κείθεν ὅθεν περ ἤ- / κει, πολὺ δεύτερον, ὡς τάχιστα, *O.C.* 1224-7, trans. Jebb).

<sup>32</sup> To follow the line of thought from Lacan, this locates Cicero in that region “between two deaths” where the world of good/s falls away and, like Oedipus or Antigone in Lacan’s readings, the hero acts through conformity to his desire. Cf. Lacan 1992: 280 on Antigone’s lamentation, “from Antigone’s point of view life can only be approached, can only be lived or thought about, from the place of that limit where her life is already lost, where she is already on the other side. But from that place she can see it and live it in the form of something already lost.” Cicero finds himself in an analogous position—absent from the world of the living (*absum*) but living still.

<sup>33</sup> καὶ συνῆλθον μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν παραμυθίαν τῷ Κικέρωνι πανταχόθεν οἱ φ., Plut. *Cic.* 41.7, see above, n.20.

<sup>34</sup> Moles 1988: ad loc., although he retains the mss. reading, comments, “this mass philosophical deputation is elsewhere unattested and presumably invented by P.,” i.e., he reads the φιλόσοφοι literally. I argue that φιλόσοφοι is a better reading than the emended φίλοι if, instead, we regard φιλόσοφοι as referring to Cicero’s technique for composing his *Consolatio*, see, e.g., *Tusc.* 3.76: “There are also some

consistently develops a narrative about the course of his life from his very earliest impressions in which, “Die Philosophie ist ein Hafen, die Politik das wilde und gefährliche Meer.”<sup>35</sup> The image of philosophy as the “harbor” or “haven” in which Cicero finds refuge is also closely related to maternal metaphors and memories of Cicero’s youthful philosophical instruction.<sup>36</sup> In the preface to *Tusc. 5*, for instance, Cicero writes that, “the correction of this fault [the tendency to blame circumstance rather than personal weakness] and all our other short-comings and failings must be sought entirely from philosophy; into whose bosom (*in sinum*) from the earliest age (*a primis temporibus aetatis*) my desire and enthusiasm drove me and in the midst of heaviest calamities we find refuge (*confugimus*), being battered by a great storm, in this same haven (*in eundem portum*) from which we first departed.”<sup>37</sup> The *sinus* of philosophy—its harbor (*portum*) or its bosom—offers up an image of the fold or curve in which Cicero spent a protected childhood (*a*

---

who gather together all these types of consolation—for each person is affected by a different method—almost just as in our *Consolatio* we threw every type into one consolation” (*Sunt etiam qui haec omnia genera consolandi colligant—alius enim alio modo movetur—ut fere nos in Consolatione omnia in consolationem unam coniecimus*). On this passage, see below, section IV. On the spectral presence of dead philosophers elsewhere in the Ciceronian corpus, see above Ch. 1, section III.

<sup>35</sup> 1990: 159. Cf. e.g., *ad Att.* IV.18(92).2 (54 BCE); *ad Fam.* VII.30(265).2 (44 BCE).

<sup>36</sup> The image of philosophy as a harbor is present also in Philodemus and the Virgilian *Catalepton* esp. 5, in which the youthful speaker bids farewell to the “vacuous pots of rhetoricians” (*inanes...rhetorum ampullae*, 1) and “sets sails” for the “port” of “Syro’s learned words,” where he “will claim a life free of all worry” (*Nos ad beatos vela mittimus portus / magni petentes docta dicta Sironis, / vitamque ab omni vindicabimus cura*, 8-10). Syro was most likely an Epicurean, who taught at Rome and was a friend of Cicero’s. See Mooney 1916: ad loc.; cf. Longo Auricchio 2004: 37-42.

<sup>37</sup> *Tusc. 5.5, sed et huius culpa et ceterorum vitiorum peccatorumque nostrorum omnis a philosophia petenda correctio est; cuius in sinum cum a primis temporibus aetatis nostra voluntas studiumque nos compulisset, his gravissimus casibus in eundem portum, ex quo eramus egressi, magna iactati tempestate confugimus.*

*primis temporibus aetatis*), but has since been excluded. He desires now to return and “find refuge” (*confugimus*) again in this virtual space of womb-like wholeness and inclusion.<sup>38</sup>

Emphatically, Cicero also uses this verb, *confugio*, in the letter to Servius Sulpicius to describe *Tullia*: prior to her death she was a “place of refuge where I could rest, in whose conversation and sweetness I could set down all my cares and pains (*habebam quo confugerem, ubi conquiescerem, cuius in sermone et suavitate omnis curas doloresque deponerem*).<sup>39</sup> *Tullia* and “philosophy” overlap as virtual spaces: both daughter and abstraction are characterized first and foremost as places of refuge from which Cicero has been excluded, but into which he fantasizes about returning. Perhaps, more accurately, “philosophy” as the maternal-*sinus* rises up as the dominant fantasy of protection and escape after his exclusion from the filial-refuge; but, in either case, the circuit of *Tullia*-Philosophy traces an imaginary field within which Cicero is confronted with the inextricably related issues of death and exclusion, origin and inclusion.<sup>40</sup> Although we might be tempted to see “philosophy” simply as a remedy and replacement for the losses of *forum* and *domus*, the absent figure of *Tullia* complicates such a straightforward

---

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Cicero’s characterization of the *Tusculans* as his *senilis declamatio* (*T.D.* 1.7) a formulation that similarly brings together Cicero in his old age (*senilis*) with the childhood activity of “declaiming.” On the debates around this formulation, see esp. Gilkenhard 2007: 16-17; cf. Gunderson 2003: esp. 81-89.

<sup>39</sup> Note the use of the adverb *ubi* in reference to a person, which features prominently in the vows of the bride and groom at the formal Roman wedding ceremony (*confarreatio*), e.g., *ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia*. See, e.g., Treggiari 1991: ad loc.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Dressler 2016: 135, who, citing a letter from 58 BCE in which Cicero calls *Tullia* the “image of my face, my speech, my mind” (*effigiem oris, sermonis, animi mei, ad Quint. Frat.* I.3[3].3), proposes that *Tullia* represents for Cicero “the partly external, third-person character of personhood.” In the context of Dressler’s general argument about the relationship between elite Roman men and their daughters, *Tullia* enables the “outsourcing” of the work of subjection in the gender-based division of labor in classical Rome. In other words, with the *effigies* of their daughters, these men used women, not only to ‘think,’ but also to feel and exist” (136). While this is certainly right in large part, what is interesting to me, which Dressler does not address directly, is what happens when this externalized personhood is voided by the death of the daughter.

substitution. Through Tullia, who had previously represented the domestic sphere, the construction of philosophy as a viable emotional and discursive alternative to public and private life is problematized and, at least in part, thwarted. How can philosophy provide safe harbor from Cicero's grief at the loss of his daughter when her absence is what creates and structures that harbor?

In Cicero's melancholic world, therefore, philosophy is foremost among the activities that are reoriented by the absence of Tullia's presence. As Erskine's observation indicates, in the letters of the period Cicero frequently calls upon philosophy as a "cure" for his grief. Likewise, in the *Tusculans*, we find insistent claims couched in medical metaphors that philosophy can serve as a form of therapy, and specifically self-therapy, which guides a normative process for bereavement and a resolution of grief:<sup>41</sup> "Of course, after all, there *is* a therapy of the soul (*est profecto animi medicina*), philosophy, whose assistance (*auxilium*) must not be sought, as in the case of bodily disease, outside ourselves, and we must bestow its care with all our means and strength so that we might become able to heal ourselves."<sup>42</sup> As Bernhard Koch argues, the frequent depiction in this text of philosophy as primarily therapeutic owes much to a tendency in Hellenistic philosophy to consider ethics as the purpose of the philosophical endeavor.<sup>43</sup> The "assistance" (*auxilium*) of *philosophia* in the struggle against human failings and the tyranny of

---

<sup>41</sup> Cf., e.g., *Tusc.* 3.76, 4.63. These claims are found in both the voices of the narrator (as at 3.6) and of M. (3.76 etc.).

<sup>42</sup> *Tusc.* 3.6, *est profecto animi medicina, philosophia, cuius auxilium non ut in corporis morbis petendum est foris, omnibusque opibus atque viribus, ut nosmet ipsi nobis mederi possimus, elaborandum est.*

<sup>43</sup> For Koch 2006, the *Tusculans* especially reflect Philo of Larissa's characterization of ethics as comprising protreptic, therapeutic, and preservative phases; see esp. 50-60 and 61-193. For this approach to the *Tusculans*, see also Schofield 2002. On Philo's tripartite distinction in ethics more generally, cf. Brittain 2001: 255-95.

circumstance is applied not, as in the case of a medical doctor, by an external practitioner, but through guided self-care and strengthening of internal fortitude.

Certainly, it is possible to read the *Tusculans* as a more or less faithful exposition of the Philonian ethical modes, as Koch does, or of the Stoic principles of extirpation and *apatheia*, like Margaret Graver.<sup>44</sup> According to these readings, the aim of the dialogue as a whole is roughly equivalent to the stated goal of its primary speaker: to “be bold enough not only to trim the branches of wretchedness, but to tear out all the fibers from its roots” (*nos autem audeamus non solum ramos amputare miseriarum, sed omnes radicum fibras evellere*, 3.13).<sup>45</sup> Yet, I think, Cicero’s association of philosophy with Tullia—the therapy with the object of that therapy—complicates from the beginning the notion of a normative and “resolved” therapeutic outcome in the *Tusculans* along the lines of Stoic extirpation. What would it mean to “rip out from the roots” any feeling of grief when the tools with which Cicero attempts this surgical intervention have been shaped and are maintained by those very feelings? Without articulating Tullia as the object of grief, and instead using her loss to structure the *sinus* of philosophy itself, the *Tusculans* are an elegiac product of Cicero’s melancholic state of mind much more than they are the summation of a therapeutic theory that would extirpate the “roots” of this tension altogether.

As I discuss further in the next section, Cicero’s commitment to representing the dissociation of grief in the philosophical arguments of the dialogue makes it difficult to read the

---

<sup>44</sup> E.g. 2002: xii, “Cicero is not himself a Stoic...it is the Stoic position which he recommends to his readers in these books as the best-reasoned view...”; for similar readings of the *Tusc.* cf., e.g., Nussbaum 1987 and 1994. See also Thorsrud 2008: 172, “Cicero’s presentation of this ideal [of *apatheia*] is Stoic in inspiration, but it also reflects his skeptical reservations about the viability of Stoic ethics. Throughout the *Tusculans*, Cicero makes a point of reserving his Academic freedom to endorse whichever position seems most probable (*Tusc.* 4.7, 47). That is, he does not report the Stoic views *as a Stoic*.”

<sup>45</sup> The language of extirpation is at work across the text to refer to the desired impact of philosophy on the sources of pain for the *animus*, see, e.g., 1.111, 3.13. Cf. Nussbaum 1987: e.g., 163, 172-175.



*Tusculans* as a simple exposition of therapeutic practice, or as the advocacy of a singular normative approach to mourning. If they are not satisfactorily read as exposition, then perhaps they can be understood as a new stage in Cicero's own mourning process—a working through of grief in their own right.<sup>46</sup> This understanding has the benefit of recognizing the representational aspect of the work, which can, therefore, offer therapeutic guidance not contained explicitly within the doctrinal debates found therein. Additionally, this more biographical approach helps to identify the connections between the philosophical arguments of the *Tusculans* and the model of literary self-therapy that Cicero develops in his *Consolatio ad se*.<sup>47</sup> Along these lines, both Han Baltussen and Walter Englert have recently argued that we should understand Cicero's grief for Tullia as playing out over time in a process that is reflected in the different genres of writing which treat his experience.

For Baltussen, in fact, the temporal progress of this process seems almost ancillary to the evident shift in literary perspective from the letters written soon after Tullia's death, to the *Consolatio*, which serves as a rhetorical address from Cicero to himself,<sup>48</sup> and finally to the theoretical work of the *Tusculans*. With reference to the changes in Cicero's treatment of grief between these genres, Baltussen notes, "The different degrees of privacy found in the three types

---

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Douglas 1995: 214, "In the *Tusculans* we see the physician of the soul trying to heal himself."

<sup>47</sup> Intriguingly, prior to Tullia's death and Cicero's writing of the *Consolatio*, he attributes a "faculty for self-consolation" to Nigidius Figulus, see *Fam.* IV.13(225).4 (discussed above, Intro., section I), "But you have in the highest degree, if ever any man had, the faculty of consoling yourself or another" (*at ea quidem facultas vel tui vel alterius consolandi in te summa est, si umquam in ullo fuit*).

<sup>48</sup> On the apparent rhetorical organization and aim of the *Consolatio*, see Aug. *De civ. dei* 19.4, who refers to it as a "a mere speech," and questions whether it was efficacious, "For who has the sufficient capacity to explain away the miseries of this life with a stream of eloquence? When Cicero lamented at the death of his daughter, he did what he could. But how much could he actually do?" (*Quis enim sufficit quantuvis eloquentiae flumine uitae huius miserias explicare? Quam lamentatus est Cicero in consolatione de morte filiae, sicut potuit; sed quantum est quod potuit?*). Cf. the differing judgment of Lact. *Inst.* I.15.16.

of evidence show that reading [Cicero's] progression in the proper order illuminates the grief process. The day-to-day thoughts in his letters on his own mental state, its causes and proposed solutions should not be ignored: they show how he struggles with a desperate situation and moves through a progression towards acceptance of his loss...When he next started to write a self-consolation (in parallel to the correspondence and his first philosophical treatises), he was seeking an unusual solution for unusual circumstances."<sup>49</sup> For Baltussen, then, the shift in literary genre and the relative "privacy" of each type maps the progression of a "grief process," which, like the Freudian conception of a normative mourning, marks the trajectory from the early expressions of an "unresolved" grief in the letters to the affirmation of a "resolution" in the Stoic philosophical commitments of the *Tusculans*.

Similarly, but with a focus on the *Tusculans*, rather than the *Consolatio*, Englert argues that this philosophical dialogue reveals Cicero at a point in his mourning process *after* he has worked through his initial excessive and unrestrained responses.<sup>50</sup> Like Baltussen, Englert locates this initial response in Cicero's letters and, particularly, in his repeated expressions of a desire to build a shrine (*fanum*) to a divinized Tullia—a desire that, notably, Cicero never

---

<sup>49</sup> 2013: 81. Baltussen also aptly emphasizes the reason for Cicero's "unparalleled" consolation to himself; *ibid.*: 82, "In view of his status Cicero would have been expected to mourn for his daughter publicly, but in the context of the breakdown of the Republic he did not have the opportunity to do so in a dignified way. As a result he resorted to 'performing' his duties in his writing. His strategy to deal with the loss of his daughter is in one sense typical for a Roman male of the upper classes in the first century BC, determined by social pressures to restrain emotions and rationalise the meaning of the event. Less typical are his admission that he is not coping well, his limited use (or explicit rejection) of philosophical ideas, and his decision to find a way out of his grief by writing about it in a work addressed to himself."

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., Englert 2017: 54-55, "The form and content of the *Tusculan Disputations* show that Cicero is using the work, at least partially, to help him put the grief he felt at Tullia's death into a broader philosophical perspective...In the *Tusculan Disputations* he seems to have reached a new stage in dealing with the death of his daughter that he was unable to attain when he wrote the *Consolatio*."

realizes in physical form.<sup>51</sup> When Cicero arrives at the point of writing the *Tusculans*, Englert argues, his efforts at “diminishing his grief” (*luctu minuendo*) in the *Consolatio*<sup>52</sup> had been more or less successful and, furthermore, he is now in a position to reflect on his experience and offer it as a model for others who might also be suffering. In particular, Englert finds Cicero in the *Tusculans* efficaciously applying, and recommending to others through his own testimony, Chrysippus’ therapeutic approach: “Part of getting over his daughter’s death, Cicero implies, is discovering that mourning is at least partially voluntary, caused by the mistaken belief that it is right and a duty for the mourner to mourn.”<sup>53</sup> Englert thus identifies a similar progression in time and genre to the one that Baltussen notes, and he takes the further step of pairing the experience of this progress from unresolved grief to its resolution with a specific form of therapy that Cicero addresses theoretically and recommends publicly.

I agree with both Baltussen and Englert that it is correct to look for a movement or change in Cicero’s writings that deal with his grief. And, furthermore, it may be the case that Chrysippus’ therapeutic guidance held value for him at a point in his experience.<sup>54</sup> I take issue, however, with the assumption, shared by both scholars, that we should map Cicero’s experience of grief so readily onto the prescriptive therapeutic model of the Hellenistic schools or, by comparison, Freud’s normative “mourning.” In particular, there is a slipperiness that should give

---

<sup>51</sup> On this desire in *ad Att.* XII, see esp. Martelli 2016.

<sup>52</sup> See *ad Att.* 12.20(258).2, where Cicero refers to the *Consolatio* as a “the book which we are writing concerning the diminishing of grief” (*librum quem de luctu minuendo scripsimus*).

<sup>53</sup> Englert 2017: 57; on Cicero’s treatment of Chrysippus’ theory, see 3.61-66; cf. 79. The importance of this discussion was established by White 1995. I discuss Cicero’s presentation of Chrysippus’ therapy below, sections IV and V.

<sup>54</sup> But cf. M.’s critique of Chrysippus’ approach, which in particular addresses the infeasibility of its timely application (79), discussed below.

pause in conceiving of this trajectory as temporal—commencing with Tullia’s death in February 45 and completing more or less summarily in July—and as literary—passing from the intimate confessions of the letters, to the self-address of the *Consolatio*, to the public face of the *Tusculans*. Is this evident progress from unresolved grief to resolution really a function of Cicero’s experience or is it simply a literary construct? Could this literary construction, in fact, be *intended* to satisfy performatively the societal expectations of one type of normative mourning process—which, furthermore, the text uses Greek philosophy to critique? Of course, there is no way to answer these questions definitively, yet, I think, a different solution presents itself if we pursue instead the notion that the *Tusculans* do not mark a “resolution” of Cicero’s grief, but rather a transformation of it *into* philosophy.<sup>55</sup> The stubborn absence of Tullia as the object of mourning throughout these modes of expression and periods of time suggests that we should look not for a movement from “sickness” to “health,” but to a more melancholic development from the obsessive and depressive self-abnegation of the letters toward an instrumentalization of loss in the philosophical texts. It is this textual absence of the loss of Tullia as loss that creates an opening for Cicero’s philosophy to approach an experience that is beyond the grasp of speech and knowledge.

### III. Grief unto Death

In light of this more melancholic trajectory, I contend that, to understand the explicit discussion of the therapy of loss that occurs in the later books of the *Tusculans*, we must first grapple with the way in which Cicero’s grief is instrumentalized in the debate of the first book

---

<sup>55</sup> On this view, cf. esp. Butler 2018: e.g., 15-6, “The sensitive reader cannot fail to conclude that, in mourning his daughter, Cicero was just as surely mourning himself, a living corpse in a dying world. If Cicero’s letters of this period provide the picture of a man who is something of an emotional wreck, then his literary productions achieve something slightly different: a self-portrait as ‘a ruin amidst ruins’...”

on the postmortem condition. In the undecidable choice that M. presents between the survival of the soul or absolute mortality, Cicero uses philosophy to put his grief over Tullia in the service of articulating something that humanity cannot access about its existence, something we cannot be present to, something we cannot grasp. In particular, as indicated in the first section, I argue that the *Consolatio* functions as a textual cipher for the unnamed and unnamable Tullia.<sup>56</sup> This cipher, in turn, operates as a force of tension between ideal and material arguments, both binding them together and keeping them irreconcilably apart. In other words, the divided structure of the argument in *Tusculans* represents philosophically the dissociation of Cicero's experience of loss. Furthermore, in this section, I begin to trace how Cicero conceives of this dissociation in temporal terms. I explore how, through the divergent material and ideal arguments, Cicero aligns the thought of the unthinkability of death with the unknowability of humanity's relation to time.

The structure of the first book of the *Tusculans* establishes a pattern of argumentation that Cicero pursues in each the following debates.<sup>57</sup> In response to A.'s assertion that "death is an

---

<sup>56</sup> On Cicero's marked use of quotation in the *Tusculans* more generally, and especially of tragic authors (both Latin and Greek), see Michel 1983; Caston 2015; Schierl 2015 and 2017. On the political valence of the quoted translations from Greek authors specifically, see Gildenhard 2007: 36-37; cf. 65-67.

<sup>57</sup> Schofield 2012 refers to this pattern as a "neutralizing argument," although his analysis works specifically from the apparent harmonization of Stoic and Peripatetic positions on virtue and happiness at *Tusc.* 5.120 (cf., the often-repeated claim by various speakers that the dispute between these two schools is a matter of *verba not res*: e.g., *Fin.* 5.89). The idea of a "neutralizing argument" helps to clarify what Görler identifies as the "Wechsel des philosophischen Standpunkts" (1996: 234) that generally structures the *Tusculans*. As Görler's analysis demonstrates, each book juxtaposes a Platonic or Stoic thesis on the topics of death, pain, grief, the emotions, and happiness with an equally tenable materialist position—usually influenced by Epicurean and Peripatetic views—that excludes it and is excluded by it. Rather than deciding in favor of one or the other—*contra* the many interpretations of the text that assume a doctrinal and usually Stoic "turn" (e.g., Graver 2002)—Cicero's method at the structural level remains skeptical, i.e., he does not seek to ameliorate these aporias directly. As Görler argues further, "ein Standpunkt ist der eigentlich 'erwünschte,' aber er ist nur schwer in Einklang zu bringen mit der Erfahrung in unserer Welt; der andere ist weniger erhebend aber leichter beweisbar und einleuchtender für jedermann" (235). On this structure of the *Tusculans*, see also Knapp 1927. The juxtaposition between a rarified (usually Stoic) philosophical ideal and a position based in the material experience of human life leads to a series of concessions or "neutralizations" that require neither position to be regarded as true. Importantly, these

evil,” which M. quickly demonstrates is untenable and inconsistent,<sup>58</sup> M. suggests two logically sound, but ultimately unverifiable alternative arguments. Rather than choosing between these two alternatives, the discussion finally settles on a “neutralized” concession—that regardless of the truth of the postmortem condition, death is not an evil. This concession is intended, and does in fact, have a fortifying and therapeutic impact on A.<sup>59</sup> In an echo of Socrates’ ironic comparison of himself to those “rather boorish people” (οἱ πάνυ ἀπαίδευτοι) who “give no thought to how the matters under discussion are, but are eager only to make the things that they themselves have proposed seem true to their audience,”<sup>60</sup> A. desires persuasion over continued inquiry, therapeutic effect over a dedication to truth. He hopes that “we may be able to free ourselves from the fear of death,” if at all possible, without first arriving at a better understanding

---

concessions are the source of the therapeutic value that many identify in the text; thus, in book 1, regardless of whether the soul survives or perishes upon death, death cannot be considered an evil; in books 2, 3, and 4, pain, grief, and emotion do not affect the perfect wisdom of the sage, even if they may affect the rest of us; in book 5, virtue can always secure happiness, although it may not be true that *only* virtue can secure happiness. While most therapeutic readings of the *Tusculans* focus on these neutralized conclusions of the arguments, I consider the more profoundly aporetic tension that subtends these concessions.

<sup>58</sup> On the opening “Socratic” exchange between M. and A., which initially problematizes A.’s belief, see esp. Warren 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Notably, at the beginning of the second dialogue, A. celebrates his newly achieved liberation from the dread of death and states that he has been “freed” entirely from “this kind of distress” (*hoc genere molestiae...sum liberatus*) thanks to “yesterday’s discussion” (*hesterna disputatione*, 2.10). M. responds, “It’s hardly surprising since this is what Philosophy does: it heals souls, it removes empty anxieties, it frees us from desires and drives away fears” (*minime mirum id quidem; nam efficit hoc philosophia: medetur animis, inanes sollicitudines detrahit, cupiditatibus liberat, pellit timores*, 11). This dynamic between M. and A. speaks to a narrative reading of the *Tusculans* that revolves around the development of A. as a student of philosophy through the teaching of M. as instructor. On this reading, see esp. Goldenhard 2007, who argues that the dialogues are a depiction of a philosophical-*cum*-political catechistic education, which results, over the course of the five days of discussion, in the transformation of A. from “*mega nepios* to *familiaris*” (72).

<sup>60</sup> καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι ὅταν περὶ τοῦ ἀμφισβητῶσιν, ὅπῃ μὲν ἔχει περὶ ὧν ἂν ὁ λόγος ἢ οὐ φροντίζουσιν, ὅπως δὲ ἂ αὐτοὶ ἔθεντο ταῦτα δόξει τοῖς παροῦσιν, τοῦτο προθυμοῦνται, *Phd.* 91a. For the specific Socratic resonance, see Stull 2012: 41-3.

of the nature of the soul (*qua re si, ut ista non disserantur, liberari mortis metu possumus, id agamus*, 1.23). A. positions the aim of the discussion, therefore, as liberation from the fear of death and M. ultimately delivers to A. a therapeutic “mantra” in the form of the neutralized conclusion that satisfies this desire to be persuaded.<sup>61</sup> Similar neutralizing procedures are reproduced throughout the succeeding books on the topics of pain, grief, the emotions, and the sufficiency of virtue for happiness. In each case, A.’s initial untenable belief is rejoined by a bifurcated argument that in the end serves up a practical bit of philosophical therapy for the benefit of A.

Yet it is important to recall that in each instance this neutralized concession—the practical effect that is A.’s desire—is produced because of and in order to turn away from an underlying aporia.<sup>62</sup> The therapeutic concession emerges precisely to mask a fundamental tension developed to the point of exhaustion by M. that, far from being neutralized, persists within it. In fact, it is the very unavailability of this undecidability that gives meaning to the apparent conclusion of the argument. Without the aporetic uncertainty regarding, in the case of *Tusc.* 1, the experience of death, there would be no need for such a therapeutic mask in the first place. By focusing on this dissociative tension rather than the performatively therapeutic conclusion, I contend that we can trace the instrumentalization of Cicero’s melancholic experience of loss on his philosophy. I turn now to examine the ideal argument and material

---

<sup>61</sup> A. is particularly taken with the divinity of the soul. When M. proposes to move on to consider the alternative, A. replies, “If you want to, but no one will drive me from immortality” (*ut videtur, sed me nemo de immortalitate depellet, 77*). Cf. *Phd.* 91a-b.

<sup>62</sup> In continuing to follow the thread of comparison between *Tusc.* 1 and the *Phaedo*, it is notable that in Plato’s dialogue Socrates does not, in the end, assuage Simmias’ lingering doubts about the immortality of the soul with a rational argument, but with a *muthos* (see 108d-115a). In the comparison between these two texts, then, M.’s “neutralized” conclusion stands in a structural relation to Socrates’ *muthos*, which is introduced explicitly for the purpose of persuasion.

arguments in turn and to consider how the references to the *Consolatio* that cluster at the turning point of the dialogue preserve the aporetic tension between these positions.

According to M.'s ideal argument, the immortality of the soul, if indeed it exists, must be due to its divine nature. M. looks for evidence of this divinity in the functions and capacities of the *animus*, starting, first of all, with its powers of memory. M. explains that, according to a Platonic understanding, an individual's capacity for memory is really the result of a recollection of an "infinity of numberless things" (*infinitam rerum innumerabilium*), which are stored in the mind as an imprint from a "previous life" (*quam Plato recordationem esse vult superioris vitae*, 57).<sup>63</sup> To support his claim for this theory of ἀνάμνησις, M. explicitly cites the *Meno*, but also refers implicitly to the complementary discussion of the topic from the *Phaedo*.<sup>64</sup> With the support of this authority, M. contends that the soul partakes of a form of remembrance which stretches beyond a single lifetime to encompass "ideas inborn and as it were stamped on our souls of so many and such great things, which are called ἔννοιαι," (*tot rerum atque tantarum*

---

<sup>63</sup> Cf. the Ciceronian speaker's use of this *memoria rerum innumerabilium* at *de Fin.* 2.113 to argue against Torquatus' Epicurean contention that the purpose of life and philosophy is pleasure, "No, believe me, Torquatus, we were born for certain higher and more magnificent purposes. This is not only evident from functions of the mind, in which there is a memory of innumerable things—indeed in you it reaches infinity—and a power of forecasting the sequence of events that is not much different from divination..." (*ad altiora quaedam et magnificentiora, mihi crede, Torquate, nati sumus, nec id ex animi solum partibus, in quibus inest memoria rerum innumerabilium, in te quidem infinita, inest coniectura consequentium non multum a divinatione differens...*).

<sup>64</sup> Cf., e.g., *Men.* 81c-e, and *Phd.* 73a. On the reference to the *Meno* cf. 1.24 with Gould 1968: 164, "Since he was not content with a mere rehearsal of the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence as it pertained to the previous existence of the soul, Cicero went far beyond this view of memory. He appears to have been illustrating his own power of memory as an orator in giving this detailed account of the marvelous powers of memory and mental capacity of the man who is engaged in the discovery and observation of various phenomena in the universe." On Platonic ἀνάμνησις, see Allen 1959 and in the broader context of theories of *a priori* knowledge, see Scott 1987.



*insitas et quasi consignatas in animis notiones, quas ἐννοίας vocant, 57).*<sup>65</sup> Yet, for the benefit of the incredulous, M. stresses that he does not need Platonic ἀνάμνησις to prove his point about the divinity of the soul. He claims further that there is sufficient capacity in what can be achieved by even “the common memory” of someone engaged in “elevated study and art” (*de communi hominum memoria loquor et eorum maxime, qui in aliquo maiore studio et arte versantur, 59*) to demonstrate that this function of the soul comes from a divine source. Through this concerted study, an individual’s memory embraces a contemplation and knowledge of the universe that stands independently from, but complementary to the Platonic theory of intergenerational ἐννοιαί. In both the individual’s capacity for memory, therefore, and its apparent connection to an intergenerational store of inherited impressions, M. sees evidence of the soul’s divinity.

The implication of *memoria* as both an individual and collectively shared capacity of the soul plays out over the course of M.’s argument. M. turns next to consider a specific understanding of human being, as differentiated from animal life, that is based, on the soul’s ability to “investigate what is hidden through inquiry and invention” (*illa vis quae tandem est, quae investigat occulta, quae inventio atque cogitatio dicitur, 62*). This power is, certainly, exercised on an individual basis by the unique contributions of humans throughout time,<sup>66</sup> but

---

<sup>65</sup> Cicero may conflate aspects of Platonic and Stoic theories of memory. For the Stoics, as Lucullus informs us (*Luc. 30*), ἐννοιαί are the “conceptions of objects” (*notitiae rerum*) that are formed by the sense-perception of external objects; these impressions are imprinted as ἐννοιαί in the mental storage that records everyday life (cf. on Stoic memory, Long and Sedley 1987: i.53 [G]). Cicero is attracted to the notion of “imprinting” (*consignatas*) emphasized in the Stoics. Otherwise, the phenomenon he describes here is derived from the more recognizably Platonic ἰδέαι. It is also worth noting, however, that in the discussion of the theory of ἀνάμνησις starting at *Phaed. 72d*, from which M. quotes just below, Plato does not use vocabulary of ἰδέαι, but rather of ἐννοιαί and ἐννοεῶ (see ἐννοιαὶν 73d, ἐννοεῖν 74a, ἐνενοήσαμεν 74b etc.). Thus M.’s word choice also might simply reflect the section of text to which he is referring and from which Cicero is working.

<sup>66</sup> M. ascribes significant advances in human life to nameless individuals in a brief anthropology: “The man who first gave names to everything, which act Pythagoras thought was of the highest wisdom, or the one who gathered scattered humanity and called them all together to the communion of shared life or the

the true importance of “inquiry and invention” is realized only with respect to the totality of humanity: “it is only through the civilizing and refining influence of [the former generations who dedicated themselves to inquiry and invention] that we have succeeded from concerns of brute existence to more delicate pursuits” (*a quibus mansuefacti et exculti a necessariis artificiis ad elegantiora defluximus*, 62). If the soul is immortal, and therefore divine, the essence of this divinity in human being lies not in any particular or individualized instantiation, but in the “determined action, wisdom, inquiry, and memory” (*vigere, sapere, invenire, meminisse*, 65)<sup>67</sup> that at all times conjoins the lifetime of a definite individual to the totality of humanity’s historical existence. By engaging in these activities, which are unique to the human soul, the individual participates in the shared collective of divine human being. In light of this true essence of humanity, not only is death not an evil, it is a moment of consummation,<sup>68</sup> when the profound relationship between individual and collective human being manifests itself and, according to M., is realized physically in the afterlife of souls.<sup>69</sup>

---

one who defined the seemingly infinite sounds of our voice using the marks of only a few letters or the one who recorded the paths of the planets, their intersections, their boundaries of movement...” (*qui primus, quod summae sapientiae Pythagorae visum est, omnibus rebus imposuit nomina, aut qui dissipatos homines congregavit et ad societatem vitae convocavit, aut qui sonos vocis, qui infiniti videbantur, paucis litterarum notis terminavit, aut qui errantium stellarum cursus, praegressiones, insti[tu]tiones notavit*, 62).

<sup>67</sup> The translation of *vigere* as “determined action” is suggested by the wordplay in this section between the *divina vis* and *vigere*: the verb denotes the basic “activity” that defines the divine mind. Cf. also, *de Fin.* 2.45, *homines enim, etsi aliis multis, tamen hoc uno plurimum a bestiis differunt, quod rationem habent a natura datam mentemque acrem et vigentem celerrimeque multa simul agitantem...*” See further below.

<sup>68</sup> Indeed, M. goes so far as to claim that it is a good (*bonum*), see 16, 23, 76.

<sup>69</sup> M. provides an extended narrative tracing the path of souls after death (42-49), on which see Setaioli 2001. I discuss this passage below, Ch. 4, section III.ii.

M. caps this argument in support of the divinity of the soul with an explicit quotation from Cicero's *Consolatio*. In fact, from the resonances in diction made evident by the quotation, it becomes clear that M. has been paraphrasing a line of thought that had already been thoroughly developed in this previous work. Furthermore, the quotation makes explicit that, given the divinity and immortality of the soul, the relationship of humanity to time is realized in eternity (*aeternitas*).<sup>70</sup> M. recalls that "we have expressed and pursued this view in the *Consolatio* in these very words" (*hanc nos sententiam secuti his ipsis verbis in Consolatione hoc expressimus*),

"Animorum nulla in terris origo inveniri potest; nihil enim est in animis mixtum atque concretum aut quod ex terra natum atque fictum esse videatur, nihil ne aut humidum quidem aut flabile aut igneum. His enim in naturis nihil inest quod vim memoriae, mentis, cogitationis habeat, quod et praeterita teneat et futura provideat et complecti possit praesentia: quae sola divina sunt nec inveniatur umquam unde ad hominem venire possint nisi a deo. Singularis est igitur quaedam natura atque vis animi, seiuncta ab his usitatis notisque naturis. Ita quidquid est illud, quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vivit, quod viget, caeleste et divinum ob eamque rem aeternum sit necesse est."

"No source or origin of souls can be found on earth. For there is nothing in souls that is blended or combined, or which seems to have been generated and shaped from earth—nothing at all that is either moist or airy or fiery. For there is nothing in these elements of nature that have the force of memory, thought, and understanding, which holds onto the past, foresees the future, and embraces fully the present. These things can only be divine, and the source for their arrival in humanity will never be found except from god. Therefore, there is a unique and particular nature and force of the soul, separate from the common and well-known elements. And so, whatever it is that feels, that is wise, that lives, that is active, it is heavenly and divine, and for that reason it must be eternal."<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> The identification of the temporality of the soul as "eternal" enters M.'s argument as a Pythagorean notion (39; cf. 50), and is then discussed in an extensive quotation from Plato's *Phaedrus* (via a translation that Cicero had previously rendered for his *de Rep.*; see *Tusc.* 1.54-55). In the ideal argument, M. thus *only* discusses the eternity of the soul without an explicit Greek source in this quotation from his author's own *Consolatio*; cf. 80-81.

<sup>71</sup> *Tusc.* 1.66 = *Cons.* fr. 10M = 21V = 12K.

This passage, which likely came from the final section of the *Consolatio*,<sup>72</sup> draws together M.'s ideal argument in a torrent of *eloquentia*. The combination of activities that demonstrates for M. the divinity of the human soul—*vigere, sapere, invenire, meminisse*—are present in “the force of memory, thought, reflection” (*vim memoriae, mentis, cogitationis*), which serves to differentiate the nature of the soul from the “common and well-known elements of nature” (*His...in naturis...his usitatis notisque naturis*). The source of these qualities and activities of the soul cannot be traced back to any material element, such as fire, earth, or air; instead, “whatever it is that feels, that has wisdom, that lives, that is active, is heavenly and divine, and for this reason is eternal” (*ita quidquid est illud, quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vivit, quod viget, caeleste et divinum ob eamque rem aeternum sit necesse est*).<sup>73</sup> Thus, the exceptional uniqueness and divine origin of the soul is realized in experience through a particularly human sense of time, which has the power to “hold onto the past, foresee the future, and embrace fully the present” (*et praeterita teneat et futura provideat et complecti possit praesentia*).<sup>74</sup> The metaphysical quality of the soul as “heavenly, divine, and therefore eternal” (*caeleste et divinum ob eamque rem aeternum sit necesse est*) produces in humanity’s embodied existence a capacity for embracing diachrony through synchrony. Human time and experience reflect back the *aeternitas* of its constitutively immortal soul.

---

<sup>72</sup> For the most recent reconstruction of the fragments, drawing together the various attempts of previous scholars, see Baltussen 2013: 70-6.

<sup>73</sup> Note the wordplay especially between *vis* and *vigere* throughout this section (see above, n.67). But cf. also the collocation with *vigere* and *vivere* at *de Nat. De.* 2.83, *Div.* 1.33; Sen. *Quaest. Nat.* 6.16.1, which adds an additional sense of “growth” to *vigere* here. See Kennedy 2010: ad loc.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *de Fin.* 2.45, discussed above, Ch. 1, section IV.

As we arrive at this climax of the ideal argument, however, we are confronted with the realization that this thought about the unthinkability of death—this tenuous and aspirational construction—has been founded on the loss of Tullia or, more specifically, Cicero’s transformation of his loss of her as loss into philosophy. The three explicit references to the *Consolatio* in *Tusc.* 1, which function as ciphers for structuring absence of Tullia, cluster in the middle portion of M.’s speech, where the transition between ideal and material arguments takes place. As a subtext within the *Tusculans*, therefore, the *Consolatio* surfaces particularly to demarcate gaps or sensitive moments where the dissociation of thought is most evident. In this first instance, which is the only direct quotation of the *Consolatio* in the first book—and, in fact, is the longest extant fragment from this lost work—the incorporation of Tullia into the text subtends the summation of the ideal argument and ties the realization of this defense of the divine and immortal soul to an expression of Cicero’s melancholic experience of grief.

The second reference, introduced above in section I, functions as an explicit segue between the ideal and material arguments. This segue comes in an exchange between M. and A., and culminates in A.’s admission, “when I read [your *Consolatio*], I want nothing more than to leave this life” (*quam cum lego, nihil malo quam has res relinquere*, 76). A.’s reading of Cicero’s *Consolatio* and his resultant desire for suicide introduces an additional source of textual complexity to this transitional moment. The interlocutor’s comment serves not only to bring Cicero’s *Consolatio* to the textual surface of the *Tusculans*, but also isolates the further intertextual relation between the *Consolatio*, the *Tusculans*, and Plato’s *Phaedo*. The latter was often read in antiquity as an exhortation to suicide; and A.’s comment seems to refer directly to this tradition, transferring its influence from “Plato’s book” onto Cicero’s work of self-

consolation.<sup>75</sup> In light of the many textual references and reflections, it is notable that Plato's dialogue uses the death of Socrates to think about the unthinkability of death in a way that Cicero's *Tusculans* intentionally emulates and continually comments upon.<sup>76</sup> Yet in A.'s comment, the explicit comparison is drawn between the experience of reading the *Phaedo* and Cicero's self-consolatory text—not the *Tusculans* themselves.<sup>77</sup> The *Tusculans* thus stand in an analogous relation to both the *Consolatio* and to the *Phaedo*—and so, by extension, to the deaths of Tullia and the death of Socrates. At this pivotal moment in M.'s divided argument, we find, therefore, a refraction of the incorporation of grief into philosophy. A.'s layered comment gestures to the textual history of Cicero's philosophical transformation of his inability to accept the loss of Tullia as loss.

A.'s suicidal response thus reveals the incorporation of Socrates' death into Plato's text, the influence of Plato's text on the *Consolatio*'s incorporation of Tullia's death, and, finally, the instrumentalization of this whole assemblage within Cicero's *Tusculans*. This transmission of

---

<sup>75</sup> This characterization of the *Phaedo* as an exhortation to suicide is explicitly referred to by M. at 84, where he recalls, "There is a certain epigram by Callimachus about Cleombrotus of Ambracia, who, he says, after reading Plato's book threw himself from a wall into the sea although nothing bad had happened to him" (*Callimachi quidem epigramma in Ambraciotam Theombrotum est, quem ait, cum ei nihil accidisset adversi, e muro se in mare abiecisse, lecto Platonis libro*). Cf. Callim. fr. 53 Gow and Page with Williams 1995 and Warren 2001: 93-4.

<sup>76</sup> For the close textual correspondences, see *Tusc.* 57 with *Phd.* 72d; *Tusc.* 69 with 78c; 73 with 84e; 73 with 85d; and 74 with 67d. Cf. Degraff 1940; Poncelet 1957 *passim*; Gould 1968: 125-43; and Stull 2012.

<sup>77</sup> It is interesting to note further that A. addresses M. as a reader to the author, drawing a correspondence between the speaker of the dialogue and Cicero the author; on this identification, see below. Yet this correspondence is already slightly destabilized because M. stresses the *self*-address of the *Consolatio* as a text. What does it mean for A. to be configured as an external reader of M.'s self-addressed consolation? On the long scholarly history of speculation on the relationship between M. and A., as, e.g., ciphers for different aspects of Cicero's personality, see, Douglas 1995: 212, "The debate is in effect with himself"; for a similar perspective see also Görler 1996: 210 n.26, who specifically identifies A. as an "alter ego." For a rebuttal of this argument that emphasizes the independence and growth of A. throughout the dialogue, see Goldenhard 2007: 70-6.

grief into philosophy and back again reaches its culmination in the final reference to the *Consolatio* in *Tusc.* 1. At the beginning of his material argument, M. identifies as the source of anxiety about death—of the “kicking-the-bucket” kind—the thought of leaving behind all that is good and pleasant in life.<sup>78</sup> In response to this anxiety, M. directs A. to “this book in which we have done everything in our power to console ourselves” (*fecimus hoc in eo libro, in quo nosmet ipsos quantum potuimus consolati sumus*, 83), where he has already laid out in detail a litany of the cruelties of life and examples of the power of death to liberate an individual from suffering. Despite directing A. to the *Consolatio* for this type of lament,<sup>79</sup> M. goes on to cite a number of these examples of which the crowning entry is Cicero himself: “I pass over the others. What do they help us? We have been deprived of solace and distinction in both private and public life, and if we had died before, death would have saved us from evil, not good things” (*Mitto alios: etiamne nobis expedit? qui et domesticis et forensibus solaciis ornamentisque privati certe, si ante occidissemus, mors nos a malis, non a bonis abstraxisset*, 84). At the very beginning of the material argument, therefore, Cicero’s own autobiographical experience of grief expressed by a reference to the *Consolatio* provides the speaker M. with evidence for his contention that death liberates human being from its worldly existence defined by suffering and evil.

This final reference to the *Consolatio* thus draws Cicero-the-author explicitly into the chain of grief and philosophical intertexts that has been building throughout this transitional

---

<sup>78</sup> 83, “What does cause anxiety or rather torment is the thought of departing from all that is good in life. But take care that it might not be more truly said from all its evils!” (*Illud angit vel potius excruciat, discessus ab omnibus iis, quae sunt bona in vita. Vide ne a malis dici verius possit*).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., “What need do I have to now bemoan human life? Truly and justly I could. But what need is there, when I am trying to make it so that we won’t think that we will be miserable after death?” (*Quid ego nunc lugeam vitam hominum? Vere et iure possum. Sed quid necesse est, cum id agam, ne post mortem miseros nos putemus fore, etiam vitam efficere deplorando miseriorem?*).

section. The emphatic injection of Ciceronian autobiography into the voice of the anonymized M. might point to a simple identification between writer and character.<sup>80</sup> Yet, in light of the textual complexities that are revealed by the references to the *Consolatio*, I think that it instead focuses attention on the dissociative nature of the argument and the melancholic *Spaltung* of its author. M., the speaker in the dialogue, is an enthusiastic advocate for the first, ideal, position that the soul is immortal and divine. To make this point, the speaker draws on Platonic theory, and quotes directly and abundantly from Plato's dialogues.<sup>81</sup> Yet this ideal argument is capped by a quotation from the *Consolatio*, which belies the pervasive underlying relationship between the ideal of an immortal soul and the melancholic grief of the author. In the second passage, A.'s suicidal response to reading the *Consolatio* marks the turning point between ideal and material arguments, serving as both the link and source of dissociative tension of these two positions. A's comment also reveals another side of the intertextual relation between Plato's *Phaedo* and Cicero's texts by emphasizing the philosophical incorporation of grief as a way of accessing the unthinkability of death. Finally, at the beginning of the material argument, M. explicitly draws his author into his speech by calling on him as an example among examples, bringing to the fore the transmission of grief that binds together the multiplicity and divisions of the text.

---

<sup>80</sup> Of course, there are many incidental attributes that indicate some level of identification between M. and Cicero: the villa in Tusculum, the apparent connections between the narrator of the prefaces and the main speaker of the dialogue, the direct addresses to Brutus that occur in both prefaces and dialogue. These points of identification, however, only belie the peculiarity of Cicero's choice to depart from his practice of explicitly using himself and other named speakers as interlocutors in favor of the riddling anonymity of the *Tusculans*. On the long debate about the *dramatis personae*, see Gildehard 2007: 21-34; cf. his own solution to the problem, 69-76.

<sup>81</sup> In addition to the references to the *Phaedo* and the *Meno* discussed above, see also citations of the *Timaeus* 38 and 47b at 63 and 64.



Considering this multiplicity of texts, authors, readers, and lost objects, it is notable that in the two instances where M. introduces the *Consolatio* he markedly employs the first person plural to refer to his interaction with this text (*expressimus*, 66; *fecimus...consolati sumus*, 83).<sup>82</sup> By contrast, A. refers to M. as the author of the *Consolatio* in the singular (*tu...es lamentatus*). How should we understand this difference? Is M.'s plural intended to reflect an "authorial whole" that embraces both the speaker M. and Cicero as the author of the *Consolatio* and the *Tusculans*? Or, noting especially the difference from A.'s singular address, could it be that the plural in M.'s usage is occasioned by Cicero's role in the *Consolatio ad se* as both author and audience? Or, does M.'s plural usage reflect the textual incorporation of grief that conjoins the death of Socrates and Plato's *Phaedo* with the death of Tullia and Cicero's *Consolatio*—an assemblage in which A., as a reader who is led to wish for death by this transmission of philosophical grief, may also be included? However we construe the constituents of M.'s plural subject, it is clear that this plurality is a dissociative plurality. In M.'s adoption of a plural subject he is attempting to contain and preserve the multiplicity and divergence that this chain of textual incorporations of grief manifests.

From this final reference to the *Consolatio*, M. turns to consider the implications of an absolute death for human life. In my reading of this material argument for what it can tell us about humanity's relationship to time, I consider three interrelated points. First, and most simply, if death is the end of human existence, then the time of life, in all its brevity and uncertainty,

---

<sup>82</sup> Although Cicero and other Latin authors commonly use the first person plural to refer to themselves singularly without, apparently, a change in sense (on the linguistic basis of this practice see, e.g., Sauerland et al. 2005), the use of the plural at 66 and 84 seems marked and formal, especially in contrast to the intimacy of the statements' contents. Cf. the contrast at 84 with the preceding singular verb, *mitto*, or the narrator's use of the first person singular at 1.7-8, *iubebam...disputabam* etc.

becomes essential for human being. Drawing on Epicurean doctrine,<sup>83</sup> M. argues that the question of what one feels at the moment of death is “entirely trivial” (*totumque hoc leve est*), since, whether it occurs with a sensation of pain or even pleasure, “it occurs in a prick of time” (*fit enim ad punctum temporis*, 82). The briefness of death in relation to a lifetime is mirrored by the length of a lifetime in relation to eternity: “What lifetime is actually long or what is there that belongs to humanity that is long-lasting?...Compare even our longest life with eternity and we will be found nearly in the same category of brevity as the little bugs [which Aristotle says live only for one day] (*Quae vero aetas longa est aut quid omnino homini longum?...Confer nostram longissimam aetatem cum aeternitate: in eadem propemodum brevitate qua illae bestiolae reperiemur*, 94).<sup>84</sup> Just as death is only the smallest moment on the scale of a lifetime, a lifetime (*aetas*) is barely registered in the measurement of eternity (*aeternitas*). The use of the duality *aetas / aeternitas* here draws attention to the ineffectiveness of a quantifiable duration to measure a human lifetime: on an absolute scale, an *aetas* cannot compare to *aeternitas*.<sup>85</sup>

At the same time, however, the very inconsequentiality of the measurement of life with respect to eternity, and of death with respect to life, belies the qualitative effect that these *puncta temporum* may have on their extensive counterparts. The quantitative shortness of the time of death is counterposed to its omnipresence in life as possibility: “Death looms daily imminent on account of the uncertainty of chance and can never be far off because of the brevity of life”

---

<sup>83</sup> The statement combines the second and fourth of the *Kuriai Doxai*: death is nothing to us and pain is easy to endure since, even if it is intense, it will last only a short time. On Cicero’s engagement with Epicureanism in the *Tusculans*, which problematizes his polemical treatments elsewhere (e.g., *de Fin.* 2), see Gildenhard 2007: 37-38; 67-68. Cf. Maso 2015: 184-6. Cicero comments on his Epicurean leanings at this period (perhaps unwilling) at *ad Fam.* IX.20(193); see also below, Ch. 4, section III.i.

<sup>84</sup> For the Aristotelian reference, see *H.A.* 5.19(553a), where the author refers to these insects as ἐφήμερον. Cf. also Pliny *H.N.* 11.36.

<sup>85</sup> See above, Intro., section III.

([*mors*] *propter incertos casus cotidie imminet, propter brevitatem vitae numquam potest longe abesse*, 91). This omnipresent possibility of death courses through every moment of life, which, in turn, adds a sense of posterity to every decision and action made in the present time of life: “Death...does not deter the sage any less from taking counsel for his state and his own family for all time, and so, even though he will have no sense of it, he will think that posterity does matter to him” (*Itaque non deterret sapientem mors...quo minus in omne tempus rei publicae suisque consulat, ut posteritatem ipsam, cuius sensum habiturus non sit, ad se putet pertinere*).<sup>86</sup> If death is the end of human being, the potentialities of that being can only be acted upon within the time of life; as such, humans have the opportunity to think and act in such a way as to ensure that our thoughts and actions live on after our creaturely-being has been negated. Death, despite and, indeed, because of its brevity, gives meaning to life, just as a life, for all its measurable inconsequentiality, can similarly attain a purchase on eternity. If death severs human being from existence, this liberates human being to achieve an aspect of eternity from within the finite confines of life. The oppositional quality of *aetas* / *aeternitas* in this passage, in fact, enables human being to struggle against death.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Cicero’s use of the verb *pertinere* marks an interaction with the Epicurean “symmetry argument,” a basic version of which states that the prenatal and postmortem conditions are “symmetrical” and, furthermore, just as what happened prior to birth does not “matter” to us (*pertinet*), neither will the time after death; on the symmetry argument generally, see esp. Warren 2001a and 2004: 57-108; and below, n.94. Cicero’s particular use of this argumentative form here reflects the substance of many modern objections to the symmetry argument; see, e.g., Nagel 1970, who emphasizes that our concern for the projects we begin in life extends into the future after death, even if our cognizance might not. Cicero here notes that these projects might relate to one’s “state and family” (*rei publicae suisque*). Interestingly, though, Cicero does not treat this as an objection, but presents it alongside as an augmentation of the doctrinal form of symmetry argument. For the Epicurean response to the objection, which emphasizes, in turn, that none of our concern for projects in life can make death an evil for us and, furthermore, that worry about staying around to complete our projects can only spoil our happiness, see the discussion of Warren 2004: 109-60.

<sup>87</sup> For further consideration of how Cicero conceives of the future in the face of death, see below Ch. 4, section V, which examines similar themes and diction in the *de Sen.*

Alongside this strong assertion of life against death, M. defends, as my second consideration of the material argument, a definition of human life and experience that is founded on lack. In his extended discussion of the semantic range of *carere*, “to lack” or “to feel the need of,” M. argues against the belief that the dead are wretched because they “lack” the pleasantries of life and makes the basic point that “feeling the need of” is, instead, an essential condition of life:

An potest is, qui non est, re ulla carere? Triste enim est nomen ipsum carendi, quia subicitur haec vis: habuit, non habet, desiderat, requirit, indiget. Haec, opinor, incommoda sunt carentis: caret oculis, odiosa caecitas: liberis, orbitas. Valet hoc in vivis, mortuorum autem non modo vitae commodis, sed ne vita quidem ipsa quisquam caret. De mortuis loquor, qui nulli sunt.

Or is it possible for someone, who does not exist, to feel the need of something? For the very term ‘lacking’ sounds sad, because of the sense that underlies it: ‘she had, she has not; she desires, longs for, desperately needs.’ These, I think, are the misfortunes of someone who ‘feels the need of’: for someone who lacks eyes, hateful blindness; for someone who lacks children, bereavement. It has this sense for the living, but among the dead no one ‘feels the need,’ not just of the comforts of life, but even of life itself. I’m talking about the dead who do not exist.<sup>88</sup>

Apart from reiterating the primary argument that the dead can *feel* nothing because they *are* nothing, this discussion emphasizes that “to lack” or “to feel the need of” is a basic condition of life. The condition of “feeling the need” is precisely what is denied to the dead. It is, paradoxically, this lack that has been negated for the dead, and this is what defines their state—they no longer “feel the need” of life. Conversely, what defines life is the persistence of lack, desire, and longing, which produces, not just the “misfortunes” (*incommoda*) listed here—the

---

<sup>88</sup> 1.87. Although the text of this passage is sound, the sections immediately following it, which I discuss below and continue the consideration of *carere*, are the most contentious editorial *loci* in the text: see Giusta 1984: ad loc. for a highly interventionist revision; cf. Powell 1987: 31 for a corrective.

pointedly chosen “blindness” (*caecitas*) and “bereavement” (*orbitas*)<sup>89</sup>—but even apparently positive states of being, for instance, when someone may be said to “lack a fever” (*inest enim velle in carento, nisi cum sic tamquam in febris dicitur alia quadam notione verbi*, 88) or to “desire” moral improvement<sup>90</sup> and, emphatically, to seek political liberation from tyranny.<sup>91</sup> Through the multiple uses and senses of the word *carere*, M. accounts for the manifold experiences of human life that are denied categorically to the dead. The condition of lacking becomes the sole purview of the living with all the dynamism, uncertainty, but also moral conviction and commitment that this view of human being entails.

The human being that M. defines in the material argument, therefore, is bound temporally and circumstantially. Yet it attains its meaning and purpose precisely by acknowledging and

---

<sup>89</sup> The autobiographical resonance of M.’s repeated references to bereavement are clear: see also, *Fin.* 5.84, *Tusc.* 3.58, 5.16, 5.24. His preoccupation with blindness is not as easily explainable from what we know of Cicero’s life (was he struggling with his eyesight at this time? There is no indication in the letters), but it features even more prominently than bereavement as an object of discussion in *Tusc.*: 3.4, 3.11, 3.81, 4.40, 5.15, 5.29. The end of book 5 is dedicated to a consideration of whether happiness is possible given the loss of senses, especially sight and hearing: 5.110-18. It is hard not to read a metaphorical sense into the physical blindness discussed in these places; cf. the blindness of the mole who desires the light at *Luc.* 79; or, *Tusc.* 1.64, where M. elevates philosophy to a proof of the soul’s divinity, since it has the “power to cast darkness, as it were, from the eyes of the mind so that we might see all things above and below, from first to last and in between” (*eadem [philosophia] ab animo tamquam ab oculis caliginem dispulit, ut omnia supera infera, prima ultima media videremus*). On the relationship between sight and blindness in Platonic *theoria*, to which this passage seems to refer, see esp. Nightingale 2004: 98-118.

<sup>90</sup> “‘To feel the need’ is not said with respect to what is morally bad, for then it would not cause suffering; instead, we say ‘to feel the need of what is good,’ since that means the current situation is bad. But not even a living man feels the need of a good, unless he also wants it” (*carere in malo non dicitur: nec enim esset dolendum: dicitur illud, bono carere, quod est malum. Sed ne vivus quidem bono caret, si eo non indiget*, 88).

<sup>91</sup> The digression on *carere* closes, rather unexpectedly, with a direct address apparently to Brutus, who is the general addressee of the *Tusculans* (see 1.1, 2.1 etc.): “For a living man, it can make sense to say that he ‘feels the need of a kingship’—although that can’t be said quite accurately for you, though it could have been said for Tarquin after he was expelled from his reign” (*Sed in vivo intelligi tamen potest regno te carere—dici autem hoc in te satis subtiliter non potest, posset in Tarquinio, cum regno esset expulsus*, 88).

acting within this finitude. Given the briefness of life with respect to eternity, the living have an obligation to consider the possibilities of thought and action *hic et nunc*, and, furthermore, must maintain an awareness of how their thoughts and actions could affect a posterity of which they will have no direct knowledge. Similarly, since all human life is based on lack, the living are free to desire and to strive—indeed these are the very manifestations of their essential state of “feeling the need,” which separates them from the dead. The limitations set by the absolution of death turn out to be the precipitating factors for the liberation and fulfillment of humanity from within the time and material conditions of life itself.

The third and final aspect of this conception of human being, however, while not negating those powers, contextualizes them by emphasizing an ultimate non-relation between human being and nature. The challenge that mortality presents to human creativity and resilience is to conceive of the world without oneself, to exist with the awareness of humanity’s severance from the world into which it is born, to come to terms with the fact that our *being* as such belongs to nature—not to the “human”:

Natura vero si se sic habet, ut, quo modo initium nobis rerum omnium ortus noster adferat, sic exitum mors: ut nihil pertinuit ad nos ante ortum, sic nihil post mortem pertinebit...Pellantur ergo istae ineptiae paene aniles, ante tempus mori miserum esse. Quod tandem tempus? Naturaene? At ea quidem dedit usuram vitae tamquam pecuniae nulla praestituta die. Quid est igitur quod querare, si repetit, cum vult? Ea enim condicione acceperas.

If the way of nature is such that, just as our birth brings the beginning of everything for us, thus death brings the end, then just as nothing mattered to us before birth, so will nothing matter after death...Let all these foolish old wives’ tales be cast aside such as thinking it is wretched to die “before our time.” And what “time” are we talking about? Nature’s? It was nature that gave use of life like a loan of money without settling on a day of repayment ahead of time. What is there to complain about, then, if she asks for it back when she wants? For you accepted the deal on this condition.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> 91-93. On this passage, see also Intro., section III.

Despite the real and vital powers that humanity possesses in its struggle against death and the magnitude of eternity, human life comes into existence according to a condition (*condicio*),<sup>93</sup> set by nature and agreed to by the simple fact of birth. This *condicio*, furthermore, is subject to “repayment” like a “loan of money,” which may be required at any time. This material position is thus bound to a view of nature (*Natura*) that maintains humanity within a strict metabolic mechanism: just as the world does not exist for us prior to our birth or after our death, so we do not exist for the world (*nihil pertinuit ad nos ante ortum, sic nihil post mortem pertinebit*).<sup>94</sup> Humanity exists in non-relation to the world of its incarnation, except through the *condicio* by the terms of which we pass into the time of Nature.

M. expands on this thought at the conclusion of the argument. His discussion ends by enumerating examples of individuals who have faced death steadfastly and courageously in different contexts. He begins this list with those “who are able to be consoled upon death by their

---

<sup>93</sup> On this word, see below section V.

<sup>94</sup> As noted above, n.86, Cicero employs the verb *pertinere* to flag his engagement with the Epicurean symmetry argument. In this instance, he essentially reproduces the version found in Lucretius, who also uses this verb: “Therefore death is nothing to us, it matters not at all, since the nature of the mind is understood to be mortal and as in time past we felt no distress...so, when we shall no longer be...then sure enough nothing at all will be able to happen to us, who will then no longer be, or to make us feel...” (*Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum / quandoquidem natura animi mortalis habetur; / et, velut anteacto nil tempore sensimus aegri...sic, ubi non erimus...scilicet haud nobis quicquam, qui non erimus tum, / accidere omnino poterit sensumque movere*, 3.830-42; trans. Rouse). It is interesting to note, however, that in *Tusc.* 1 Cicero adapts the symmetry argument to support both the ideal and material strands of thought: in this iteration within the material argument he faithfully replicates the Epicurean contention that “nothing pertains” (*nihil pertinere*) to the both prenatal and postmortem states (91-2; cf. 24). M. also modifies the argument to address the specific insignificance of burial practices for the dead at 104 and 109. Yet, as cited above, just before this passage he employs a modified version to argue that, though the state of death may be as irrelevant to us as was the prenatal state, the projects undertaken in life attain a relation of consequence to posterity (*posteritatem...ad se pertinere*, 91). Strikingly, a similar modification is used earlier in the ideal argument to defend the immortality of the soul. In this “ideal” version, Cicero contends that the concern of individuals for their projects in life is *proof* that “the coming ages are their concern” (*postera saecula ad se pertinere*, 31). Furthermore, they will be able somehow to perceive and sense this consequentiality (see 35). Cf. also the further transformation of this modified version in *de Sen.* 24-25 and 82, discussed below Ch. 4, section V.

life full of public acclaim” (*suis se laudibus vita occidens consolari potest*, 109) and, once again, speaks emphatically as “Cicero” himself:

Multa mihi ipsi ad mortem tempestiva fuerunt, quam utinam potuissem obire! Nihil enim iam acquirebatur, cumulata erant officia vitae, cum fortuna bella restabant. Qua re si ipsa ratio minus perficiet ut mortem negligere possimus, at vita acta perficiat ut satis superque vixisse videamur.

In my own life there have been many moments timely for death, how I wish I could have died then! For there was nothing left to be sought afterwards; the duties of life had been fulfilled; only the war with fortune remained. For this reason if all these arguments fail to make it possible for us to disregard death, a life having been passed through will bring it about that we will think that we have lived enough, if not more than enough.<sup>95</sup>

The counterfactual expressed both in *si ante occidissemus* and *quam utinam potuissem obire* operates according to an anterior temporality: it begins from the premise, what if Cicero had died *before*—prior to the “war with fortune” (*cum fortuna bella*), which is all that remains after a “life has been passed through” (*vita acta*).<sup>96</sup> Unlike the “condition of repayment” set by nature, which sets an end of life beyond human understanding or control, Cicero’s *vita acta* suggests an awareness of a different form of “completion”—not biological completion, but an end of life determined by the accomplishments of the individual with respect to himself and his community. Yet the counterfactual anteriority through which Cicero arrives at this realization suggests that it may be only through the contemplation and retrospection on life that grief produces that humanity can come to terms with the facts of its existence and *condicio* with nature: perhaps, *only* a “a life having been passed through (*vita acta*) will bring it about that we will think that we have lived enough, if not more than enough (*satis superque*).” Before reaching this point of surfeit, how can we know when our *vita* has been passed through (*acta*)? What would be the

---

<sup>95</sup> 109.

<sup>96</sup> On this phrase, see *ad Fam.* VI.4[244].4, discussed below, Ch. 4, section I.



accomplishments that would allow an individual to understand that his *vita* is over, *contra naturam*? At what point have we lived “enough” (*satis*)?<sup>97</sup>

Despite the inconclusiveness of these questions, which I hold in abeyance for Chapter 4, it is evident that M.’s material argument constructs an independent and self-contained theory of human life via its relation to death. In particular, where the ideal argument conceives of the human relation to time as one of a reflection between *aeternitas* and the synchronic grasp of “past, future, and present” (*praeterita...futura...praesentia*) from within life, the material argument offers a more combative and contingent relation between human time and the chronology of nature. Yet the *condicio*, which binds humanity to the time of Nature, does not mean that humanity is debarred from struggling to attain a relation with posterity from within the *aetas*. Indeed, in some ways, M.’s material argument demonstrates that the material position valorizes an ethical approach to time. If the soul is immortal, then human being is constituted by our exception from the laws and relations of nature, and our capacity for thought and action extends to meet the divine eternity of our souls. On the other hand, if the body and soul are together mortal, then we must first decide how we should act *within* the time of life and in recognition of our subjection to Nature—a condition that offers our only possibility for thought and action. And, furthermore, we must decide for ourselves as mortals whether, in fact, we *should* strive to attain a relation of consequence to posterity. In these divergent relations to eternity and to posterity, M.’s framing of the ideal and material arguments stretches toward its exhaustion. Each offers fully elaborated, yet mutually exclusive grounds upon which to understand humanity’s relation to itself, to nature, and to time. This duality is not capped or

---

<sup>97</sup> I return to these questions in the final Ch. 4, which examines issues of “completion” and “failure” in Cicero’s treatment of the *vita* and the *aetas*.

synthesized but is held in tension by the orienting absence of Tullia. In the references to the *Consolatio* that mark the transition from ideal to material, we can see the persistence of Cicero's melancholic experience of grief in the dissociative structure of the argument. By incorporating his grief as an exercise of philosophy, Cicero employs his inability to mourn for Tullia as a tool for thinking about the unthinkability of death.

#### IV. A Time for Grief

Following the structure established by the first day's discussion,<sup>98</sup> each of the subsequent debates that follows is comprised of an ideal and a material argument. The ideal arguments in *Tusc.* 2-5 are drawn in particular from the Stoic classification of physical pain, grief, and the other passions as misapprehensions of external indifferents, and their defense of the self-sufficiency of virtue for securing happiness. The text frequently makes the point that the "sage,"<sup>99</sup> if he existed,<sup>100</sup> would embody and manifest these ideals. Additionally, as we saw in

---

<sup>98</sup> On the organization of the *Tusculans* according to days, see 1.8, cf. Luciani 2010: 49-66 and above, Ch. 1, section II.

<sup>99</sup> The arguments of books 2, 3, and 4 are framed explicitly in terms of the sage: e.g., A.'s assertion to begin the discussion in book 3 is "It seems to me possible for distress to befall the sage" (*videtur mihi cadere in sapientem aegritudo*, 7). Generally, it seems that Cicero means by this a specifically Stoic sage, yet he never makes this explicit—certainly he insists that he is not talking about the Epicurean sage (see 3.33-34, 51, etc.); on the identification of the sage, see Gawlick and Görler 1994: 1042. This framing device significantly simplifies the "neutralization" of the conclusion: since the proposition is framed in terms of the theoretical attributes of the sage, the neutral position between ideal and material arguments can simply be that "ideal x is true, given the existence of the sage (omitting consideration of the material)." This simplification, however, does not diminish the importance or presence of the material arguments. M. frequently recalls himself and his audience to the ideal argument after he has been carried away by material considerations by reminding us that they are supposed to be only talking about the sage, see e.g., 3.12, 25, 27, 54, 66, 80.

<sup>100</sup> Following what appears to be a common tag in skeptical discussions of the sage (see e.g., Sextus *M.* VII.432), Cicero frequently expresses doubt about the possibility that such a wise man has or could ever exist: see e.g., *de Fin.* 4.65, *Tusc.* 2.51, *de Div.* 2.61, *de Am.* 18, *de Off.* 3.14-16. This theme is thus one of the most sustained threads of criticism of Stoicism and unites the more explicitly skeptical works with those, like *Tusc.*, that have often been seen as more doctrinal, or at least accepting of Stoic positions as the most "reasonable." On this trope in Stoicism and its critics more generally, see Brouwer 2014: 97-106.

book 1, the ideal arguments are often presented as aspirational and alluringly persuasive—without, however, being verifiably true or sufficient for the satisfactory conclusion of inquiry. Juxtaposed to and divorced from these ideals of the sage are a series of material arguments that are based in the more common “everyday” experiences of individuals who struggle and suffer without attaining perfect wisdom. Also in keeping with the structure of book 1, Cicero’s incorporation of his melancholic grief into his philosophical activity, which is disclosed especially through references to the *Consolatio*, consistently serves to maintain the dissociative tension between ideal and material positions.<sup>101</sup> Cicero thus represents the dissociation of the experience of grief in the argumentative structure of the dialogue by drawing together, yet holding apart the ideal and material positions and disallowing a satisfactory conclusion beyond A.’s desired therapeutic concessions.

In this section, I turn to Cicero’s explicit discussion of grief in book 3. I argue that Cicero, by creatively engaging with the categories of Hellenistic philosophy on the emotions, presents a theoretical understanding of “distress” or “grief” (*aegritudo*) that emphasizes its temporal aspect.<sup>102</sup> Cicero identifies in an individual’s experience of loss a profound breakdown

---

<sup>101</sup> In addition to the passages of book 1 discussed above, see e.g., the transitional passages, 2.42, 3.71-6, 3.83, 4.60-3. Görler provides a schematized layout of the structure (1996: 233) and identifies *tamen* as an important transitional conjunction or, perhaps more aptly, “disjunction” for the movement between the ideal and material arguments. He does not note the correspondence between these passages and references to the *Consolatio*. For a consideration of book 5, which is structured differently, see Ch. 4, section IV.

<sup>102</sup> The word that Cicero uses consistently, but not exclusively in books 3 and 4 to refer to “sorrow at the death of a loved one” (i.e., grief) is *aegritudo*. This word is rare prior to Cicero’s usage and found primarily in drama; see esp. Ter. *Heaut.*, e.g., 123, 422, 424; it is notable that Cicero refers explicitly to this play once and to Terence twice in book 3., where M. also claims that the playwright drew ideas from philosophy into his poetry (see 3.31; cf. Caston 2015: 144-5). Much of the beginning of book 3 is concerned with defending and defining specifically the use of this word in Latin, initially with reference to an Ennian line, *animus aeger semper errat* (5) and then by contrast with Greek terms for emotion (πάθη; see esp. 7, 23). As seen in the passage below, the meaning of *aegritudo* is further modified by analogy with the Stoic technical term “distress” (λύπη). The word subsequently falls from favor in Cicero’s writing: it is used only twice in *de Nat. De.* (1.9, 2.70), once in *de Div.* (2.2), and once in *de Off.*

in the subjective sense of temporal continuity and a confrontation with the time of nature. In the ideal of Stoic *apatheia* and the various therapies that Cicero discusses in the material argument he likewise stresses the role that time plays in avoiding the onset of grief and in the successful application of treatment. As Englert and others have noted, Chrysippus' interpretation of Stoic therapy, which involves restoring an individual's *voluntas* by confronting the belief in an obligation to mourn, seems to be particularly favored by M.<sup>103</sup> The content of the discussion in this book thus offers an individualized, theoretical, and therapeutic view that adheres to a normative prescription for grief: the aim of the ideal argument is to advocate for the extirpation of grief by means of the sage's *apatheia* and the material argument offers philosophical therapies by which those who have already "come to grief" might resolve their suffering and restore a sense of self and time. As I discuss also in the final section, however, this therapeutic content must be understood within the dissociative form of the dialogue as a whole. The outcome of the philosophical exercise of grief that the *Tusculans* represent, while in some ways mirroring the normative processes that it considers, results not in the restoration of *voluntas* as "resolution" of grief, but in the transformation of this will into a form of "discernment"—a more general and

---

(1.69). On the difficulty of consistently translating Cicero's use of *aegritudo* in *Tusc.*, see Graver 2002: xxxviii, "The word *aegritudo* is used in book 3 especially for distress at the death of a loved one, what 3.81 calls 'that one type of distress which is the most grievous of all'; in book 4, however, *aegritudo* is used only in its broad generic sense (as at 4.14), distress specifically at bereavement being called *luctus*." Graver's solution to the problem—to translate *aegritudo* generically throughout—suppresses the importance of Cicero's own experience of grief for the development of the argument in the *Tusculans*. Thus, as in the previous chapter on "doubt," there is some difficulty in identifying a single Latin term that encompasses the various expressions of grief that can be found in Cicero's writing and are discussed in this chapter.

<sup>103</sup> For Cicero's specific references to Chrysippus in the third and fourth books, see 3.52, 3.59, 3.61, 3.76, 3.79, 4.23, 4.53, and 4.69; cf. Graver 2002: 203-14 for a consideration of Chrysippus as a source for these books. On M.'s preference, see White 1995; Englert 2017: 56-7.

“human” understanding of *voluntas* that embraces rather than restores the divergent temporal frames manifested by loss.

Just prior to the point in *Tusc.* 3 where M. turns aside from the ideal argument that the sage should never feel grief, the speaker puts forward a Stoic definition of λύπη as his preferred understanding of “distress” (*aegritudo*) precisely because of its consideration of temporality:

Satis dictum esse arbitror aegritudinem esse opinionem mali praesentis, in qua opinione illud insit, ut aegritudinem suscipere oporteat. Additur ad hanc definitionem a Zenone recte, ut illa opinio praesentis mali sit recens. Hoc autem verbum sic interpretantur, ut non tantum illud recens esse velint, quod paulo ante acciderit, sed quam diu in illo opinato malo vis quaedam insit, ut vigeat et habeat quandam viriditatem, tam diu appelletur recens. Ut Artemisia illa, Mausoli Cariae regis uxor, quae nobile illud Halicarnasi fecit sepulcrum, quam diu vixit, vixit in luctu eodemque etiam confecta contabuit. Huic erat illa opinio cotidie recens; quae tum denique non appellatur recens, cum vetustate exaruit.

Enough has been said, I think, to establish that distress is the belief of a present evil in which belief inheres a sense of obligation to feel sorrow. It was added rightly by Zeno to this definition that this belief of a present evil is fresh. But by this word the Stoics interpret not only that it is recent, in the sense that it happened a little while ago, but also that for as long as a certain force inheres in this conceived evil so that it has vigor and a certain greenness, so long can it be called fresh. For instance, that Artemisia, the wife of the king of Caria Mausolus, who built that noble tomb at Halicarnasus, for as long as she lived, she lived in grief and finished her days in the same state until she was consumed. For her this belief was fresh every day; and it finally is no longer called fresh when it shrivels up from old age.<sup>104</sup>

As a part of the Stoic classification of the four genus-type emotions, “distress” (*aegritudo*) is a “belief” (*opinio*), as all “passions” are conceived, about the presentness of an “evil” (*malum*).<sup>105</sup>

In the case of distress at the death of a loved one, this basic judgment is sustained by an ancillary belief that it is an obligation to feel “distress” or “grief” (*aegritudinem suscipere oporteat*)—i.e.,

---

<sup>104</sup> 3.74-75.

<sup>105</sup> On the Stoic system of the passions, see Inwood 1985: 127-81; Nussbaum 1987 and 1994; and Graver 2002.

that it is socially expected and morally correct to feel and express the presence of the perceived *malum*.

To this basic definition, Zeno “rightly” (*recte*) adds that the belief in a present evil must be “fresh,” which Cicero translates as *recens* from the Greek πρόσφατος.<sup>106</sup> As Inwood explains concerning the Stoic theory, “The most important fact about this fresh opinion is that, for both Zeno and Chrysippus, it does not refer primarily to a temporal recentness of the object about which the opinion is made, but rather to the fact that a fresh opinion is one which still has a certain kind of force for the agent...In terms of the psychology of action, we may explain the fresh opinion as assent to the proposition that such and such a state of affairs is the appropriate sort of thing to have this or that affective reaction to.”<sup>107</sup> For a Stoic theory of the passion “distress,” “freshness” has much more to do with a continued psychological assent to a proposition than with the chronological “recentness” of a trauma. In M.’s definition, this understanding of “freshness” is communicated in the vital and even vegetal metaphors that he uses to describe the “certain force [that] inheres in this conceived evil so that it has vigor and a certain greenness (*vis quaedam insit, ut vigeat et habeat quandam viriditatem*). Likewise, he envisions that the *recens opinio* finally loses its force “when it shrivels with old age” (*cum vetustate exaruit*). Yet Cicero’s choice of translation activates something latent in this Stoic conception: while the Greek word πρόσφατος relies on a metaphor of decomposition—its basic

---

<sup>106</sup> For sources and commentary on the original Greek definition, see Inwood 1985: 150 and Graver 2002: 117-20. On Cicero’s choice of *recens*, cf. significantly Ter. *Adelph.* 311-12, where Geta says, “I want nothing more than to run into the whole lot of them so that I can pour out all my anger on them while my *aegritudo* is still *recens* (*nil est quod malim quam illam totam familiam dari mi obviam / ut ego iram hanc in eos evomam omnem, dum aegritudo haec est recens*). Given the prominence of citations of Terence in *Tusc.* 3 it is hard not to feel the influence of this passage in Cicero’s choice of translation.

<sup>107</sup> Inwood 1985: 147-48.

meaning is “freshly slain,” “not yet decomposed”<sup>108</sup>—Cicero’s choice of *recens* emphasizes rather the *newness* of the belief. What is πρόσφατος has only been temporarily suspended in an inevitable process of decomposition; it looks forward to its destruction. Conversely, what is *recens* has only just come into existence; it looks back toward its origin.<sup>109</sup> It is the proximity of the belief to its origin that matters for Cicero and this proximity, in turn, affects the subjective sense of time.

The fact that we are meant to understand the effect of grief, at least in part, as a disruption of a subjective sense of time is made clear in the example of Artemisia. After the death of Mausolus, Artemisia lives “daily” with her “fresh belief” (*Huic erat illa opinio cotidie recens*). For as long as she lived her very presentness was defined by the presence of her husband’s absence (*quam diu vixit, vixit in luctu*). Her own body is consumed and rots away (*contabuit*), but she remains in the same state (*in luctu eodemque etiam confecta*) until the very end of her life. Biological time moves forward around her, but her own sense of temporal sequence and structure is determined by the recentness imposed by her grief. Artemisia’s contact with death profoundly interrupts her subjective sense of time as it was priorly constituted. Her grief creates its own presentness by binding her to a past moment—whether as it was actually or belatedly experienced. This re-tethering of presentness to the *recens opinio* defines the temporality of grief.

---

<sup>108</sup> In non-philosophical contexts, πρόσφατος is used especially of corpses that have been impossibly protected from decay through divine intervention (*Il.* 24.757; cf. *Hdt.* 2.89 on embalming) and meat that has not been preserved in salt (*Diod. Sic.* 3.31). In both cases, the view is toward the suspended, but inevitable final decomposition of the organic matter.

<sup>109</sup> See Walde-Hofmann 1938: ii.423-4, ‘frisch...neu, jung’ (opp. *vetus*); ‘unmittelbar nach; jüngst unlängst’...als *re-cen-t* (*re-* wie in *renidere*).” The shift in perspective is marked clearly by the change in prefix: πρόσ- to *re-*.

As Englert astutely notes, the parallels between Artemisia’s story and Cicero’s own melancholic reactions to Tullia’s death assimilate their experiences.<sup>110</sup> Her construction of “that noble tomb at Halicarnassus” (*nobile illud Halicarnasi fecit sepulcrum*) enacts *in extremis* Cicero’s fantasy of a return to the *sinus* following the death of Tullia. Notably, this fantasy is expressed in his letters to Atticus by the never-fulfilled desire to divinize his lost daughter through the erection of a shrine (*fanum*).<sup>111</sup> For Englert, however, through this pairing of the *sepulcrum* that was built and the *fanum* that was not, Artemisia serves as a contrastive exemplary figure. He argues that M. introduces this story in order to look back on Cicero’s initial experience of grief and to demonstrate how, with the help of philosophical therapy, he had been able to overcome the consequences of contact with death. Artemisia is thus conceived of as a negative exemplum, who helps Cicero to gauge his progress along a normative trajectory from unresolved grief to resolution. It is notable, however, that M. does not offer this commentary on the story explicitly; instead, he seems to offer Artemisia as an example simply to demonstrate that some experiences of grief are *never* resolved: he sums up the anecdote with a reassertion that “For her this belief was fresh every day” (*Huic erat illa opinio cotidie recens*), before ever considering the possibility that a *recens* belief might fade into old age (*vetustas*). Confronted suddenly by the primacy of natural chronology as revealed in the death of her husband, she loses

---

<sup>110</sup> Englert 2017 reads this passage from the normative perspective that in the *Tuculans* M. is commenting on Cicero’s earlier experience of grief and demonstrating the resolution of his bereavement process; see, e.g., 58, “While writing the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero came to see in Artemisia a sad image of his own predicament if he had built the *fanum* and, as he had planned, lived out the rest of his life in its shadow. Artemisia represents an almost dystopian vision of Cicero’s earlier plans for the *fanum*. She shows that no matter how glorious the monument one builds, and how famous it becomes, it does not necessarily help one’s grief to go away. In fact, far from bringing him peace, Cicero came to realize that it might keep his grief, or as he had called it at *Att.* 12, 18 (SB 254), his *vulnus*, always fresh (*recens*) and thus never allow him fully to get over it.”

<sup>111</sup> See above, n.51; on the religious aspect of Cicero’s plans to build a *fanum*, see also Boyancé 1944.



the ability to construct a viable subjective sense of time. Instead, she erects “that noble tomb” in order to maintain a space—like Cicero’s various fantasy-places—in which the only temporality is the “recentness” of her grief.

It is true that Cicero, unlike Artemisia, never fulfilled his desire to construct a physical shrine for Tullia to which he might tether his “presentness.”<sup>112</sup> He may, however, be understood to have transformed this desire into the work of philosophy within which Artemisia and her tomb are themselves enclosed.<sup>113</sup> As a way of dealing with grief and its temporal incongruities, tombs and entombment hold a highly ambiguous place in the *Tusculans*. At the beginning of M.’s ideal argument in book 1, for instance, tomb burial provides anthropological evidence for the survival of the soul after death (see e.g., 1.13, 27, 29). Yet, at the close of the first day’s discussion, the speaker returns to the theme of funeral rites to argue that, in fact, the arbitrariness of such cultural practices suggests only that they have nothing to do with the dead—burial customs can offer no insight into the experience of death, only the coping mechanisms of the living.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> On the inconclusiveness of Cicero’s plans for the *fanum* from a perspective that allows for a more melancholic experience of grief, see esp. Martelli 2016: 418, “His mourning for her expresses a mourning for other lost objects: for his place within and connection to the world of meaning that was that order, or, rather, for a memory of wholeness within this *res publica* (that never actually was). And the strange shape that Cicero’s mourning takes in this book [*ad Att.* 12]—namely, his obsessive preoccupation with building a religious shrine to Tullia to the exclusion of virtually all other concerns—demonstrates a need to lend concrete form to the emptiness of his desire for that prior state of belonging.”

<sup>113</sup> On the specific idea that Cicero’s philosophical works stand in for or supplant the *fanum* in Cicero’s mourning-work, see esp. Altman 2016: 101-23, who focuses in particular on the *de Finibus*; but see also his reading of the *Tusc.* which stresses the submerged influence of the loss of Tullia, esp. 2016: 127-57. Cf. for a slightly different approach, Fuhrmann 1992: 57 and White 1995: 223-5, who argue along similar lines that Cicero’s transformation from a statesman to self-styled philosopher occurs through his bereavement. This notion has been criticized in recent historicist work that emphasizes the political function of the *philosophica* to the exclusion of considerations of his grief; see, e.g., Baraz 2012: esp. 86-95.

<sup>114</sup> See 1.108; the list includes Egyptian and Persian embalming practices as well as the more “alien” customs of the Magi and Hyrcanians.

Likewise, in a translated passage from Plato's *Phaedo*, Cicero recalls Socrates' disdainful response to Crito when the latter asked "how he wished to be buried" (*quem ad modum sepeliri vellet*): "Indeed have I wasted much effort since I have not convinced our dear Crito that when I fly away from here I will leave nothing of myself behind."<sup>115</sup> Yet, in a metaphorical usage that summarizes the ideal/Stoic argument in book 2, M. urges that, "either courage must be lost or pain must be entombed" (*amittenda igitur fortitudo est aut sepeliendus dolor*, 2.32). This image of the *corpus* as a tomb for pain ironically elevates the Socratic notion of the body as a "prison" for the soul to the level of a highest philosophical ideal.<sup>116</sup> Thus, the Stoic sage's bodily indifference to human pain, while fortifying and efficacious in preserving courage in the face of physical harm, risks becoming a "tomb" in its own right.<sup>117</sup> Taken together, therefore, these examples of tombs in the text demonstrate a concern about the false sense of certainty and finality that such structures represent emotionally and philosophically. Like Artemisia's tomb or the arbitrary cultural practices of burial, Stoic *apatheia* holds out the enticing possibility of finality, which cannot be sustained in the everyday and must, in turn, be "opened up."

Drawing both from Englert's reading and the ambivalence towards entombment within the text itself, we can see that Artemisia and her *sepulcrum* encapsulate in a single exemplum both the dangers of confronting the death of a loved one without philosophical therapy and,

---

<sup>115</sup> *multam vero, inquit, operam, amici, frustra consumpsi; Critoni enim nostro non persuasi me hinc avolaturum neque mei quidquam relicturum*, 1.103. Cf. *Phd.* 115c-d.

<sup>116</sup> For the Socratic image, see esp. *Phd.* 82e and 92a; cf. Olszewsky 1976.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Thorsrud 2008, who contends that, in contrast to the Stoic argument that the error which causes a misapprehension of indifferents arises from "believing something to be genuinely good or bad when in fact it is not," Cicero's goal in the *Tusculans* is to demonstrate that "there is another sort of error...: thinking one knows what in fact he does not. Thus Cicero promotes a Socratic medicine that works by eliminating the vigorous opinion that some object is worthy of pursuit or avoidance, when in fact it is not" (184). This "Socratic medicine" is identifiable with Philo's "therapeutic" stage of ethical teaching; for this reading, see Koch 2006: 82-164, esp. 119-36 on book 3.

furthermore, the alluring temptation of thinking that, perhaps even *with* therapy, a normative resolution of grief can always be achieved. I think it would be a mistake to acknowledge, as Englert does, the first warning and not to consider the second, more complex, concern about the lure of certainty and closure in grief. With regard to the painful experiences of life Cicero is equally as wary of the temptation to be persuaded—to give up on the drive of doubt—as he is with regard to the epistemological quandaries of the *Lucullus* or the ethical ends of *de Finibus*.<sup>118</sup> The *Tusculans* may advocate, at times, for *apatheia* and for philosophical therapies, but importantly they also, in their dedication to divergent possibilities and arguments, never pursue these paths towards normative resolution outside of a philosophical exercise of grief that embraces the variability and inconclusiveness of human experience. This dedication to the philosophical exercise of grief rather than its therapeutic resolution means that its outcome will not be final, certain, or resolved. Thus, in a significant way, Cicero’s incorporation of his loss of Tullia as loss into the *Tusculans* demonstrates a trajectory of grief that looks more like Artemisia’s than Englert’s reading allows. At the very least, the “recentness” of the text, if not also Cicero’s personal experience, is tethered to the absence of Tullia as a lost object, just as Artemisia lives day to day (*cotidie*) “the same” in grief. If we accept this parallel between Artemisia’s tomb and the *Tusculans* themselves, the question, which I consider in the next section, then becomes, what is the outcome of Cicero’s philosophical incorporation of grief in the *Tusculans*? If it is not a resolution, what does it look like?

Before turning to this question, I consider briefly the ideal and material arguments of book 3 and examine how both respond to the concerns made evident in the exemplum of

---

<sup>118</sup> See above, Chs. 1 and 2.

Artemisia: the temporal manifestations of grief and the problematization of resolution as the outcome of grief.

The “ideal” argument of book 3 is focused primarily on the sage’s ability to adequately consider and foresee all events of fortune that might befall him. M. introduces this idea in response to the Cyrenaic position that the source of mental distress comes from the unexpected nature of an evil (*Cyrenaici non omni malo aegritudinem effici censent, sed insperato et necopinato malo*, 28).<sup>119</sup> While M. disagrees that unexpectedness is the true source for *aegritudo*, he nevertheless acknowledges that “all sudden events seem more serious” (*videntur enim omnia repentina graviora*)—a consequence of “suddenness” that can be avoided by careful forethought and consideration of all possibilities. M.’s defense of the *praemeditatio futurorum malorum* as a central aspect of the sage’s immunization from *aegritudo* shapes the ideal argument especially through M.’s opposition to the Epicurean approach.<sup>120</sup> He contends that, “they wrongly censure the consideration of future evils. For there is nothing that so blunts and alleviates distress than the continual life-long consideration (*perpetua in omni vita cogitatio*) that there is nothing that cannot happen, and meditation on the human condition (*mediatio condicionis humanae*), and mental preparation for obeying the law of life (*vitae lex*), which does not make it so that we are always gloomy, but that we are never.”<sup>121</sup> According to M., Epicurean doctrine, by forbidding

---

<sup>119</sup> On the Cyrenaic approach to grief, see esp. Annas 1993: 227-36 for an overview.

<sup>120</sup> See 29, *Haec igitur praemeditatio futurorum malorum lenit eorum adventum, quae venientia longe ante videris*. For M.’s lengthy rebuttal to the Epicurean approach to grief, see 32-51. On the relationship between Cyrenaic and Epicurean positions in the text and more generally, see Graver 2002: 195-201. For Cicero’s complex antipathy to Epicurean positions across the dialogues, see above, Ch. 1, section IV and below Ch. 4, section III.i.

<sup>121</sup> 34, *principio male reprehendunt praemeditationem rerum futurarum. Nihil est enim quod tam obtundat elevetque aegritudinem quam perpetua in omni vita cogitatio nihil esse, quod non accidere possit, quam meditatio condicionis humanae, quam vitae lex commentatioque parendi, quae non hoc adfert, ut semper maereamus, sed ut numquam.*

the contemplation of future evils, in fact, denies its practitioners the most powerful technique for proleptically excising the harmful effects of grief.

The perfect exercise of *praemeditatio* renders the sage immune to the temporal disturbances of grief and preserves a seamless sense of temporal continuity in life (*perpetua in omni vita*) through the constant consideration of “the human condition” (*meditatio condicionis humanae*) and “the law of life” (*vitae lex*).<sup>122</sup> Indeed, M. asserts that, “Nearly the same consequence seems to happen for those who take consideration beforehand as those whom the passage of days heals, except that an exercise of reason heals the former while nature on its own suffices for the latter (*et mihi quidem videtur idem fere accidere iis, qui ante meditantur, quod iis, quibus medetur dies, nisi quod ratio quaedam sanat illos, hos ipsa natura*, 58). By exercising reason (*ratio*) in order to “consider beforehand” (*ante meditantur*) all future possibilities, the sage forestalls the temporal collapse that threatens to suspend the mourner in the recentness of his grief. This incorporation of the time of grief into an exercise of *ratio* ensures temporal continuity regardless of the events or calamities that befall the sage: *ratio* supplants the unaided passage of time (*dies*).

The sage’s super-human ability to foresee future events and to incorporate the temporality of grief into the seamless duration of his life is juxtaposed to the material argument that considers therapeutic approaches for those who are not sages and, therefore, will inevitably come to grief at some point in life. As in book 1, M. develops the sustaining tension between ideal and material arguments with explicit references to Cicero’s *Consolatio*. These reference to his experience of grief preserve the dissociation of the argument and maintain the connection of

---

<sup>122</sup> On this strategy of *praemeditatio* in Seneca, see esp. Hadot 1969: 60-3. On the *condicio humana* and *lex vitae*, see also below, section V.

the text to its lost object. At the beginning of the comprehensive list of *medicinae in consolationibus*, for instance, M. recalls that at the time of writing the *Consolatio*, “my soul was swollen and I attempted every type of cure for it” (*erat enim in tumore animus et omnis in eo temptabatur curatio*, 76).<sup>123</sup> The attempted cures that M. goes on to list are gathered from every school of philosophy that has already been considered in book 3: a Stoic treatment, like the one advocated by Cleanthes, aims to convince the mourner that “the evil does not exist at all” (*docere malum illud omnino non esse*, 76), the Peripatetic approach seeks simply to alleviate the sense of magnitude (*non magnum malum*), the Epicurean method distracts the sufferer by focusing only on the good (*abducant a malis ad bona*), the Cyrenaics attempt to show that “nothing unexpected had occurred” (*ostendere nihil inopinati accidisse*), and, finally, Chrysippus’ refinement of the Stoic approach emphasizes the importance of removing a sense of obligation from mourning.

As noted above, throughout his speech M. seems to single out Chrysippus’ therapeutic approach as of special interest and, possibly, efficacy.<sup>124</sup> Chrysippus represents a modified version of the strongly normative mode of Stoic therapy, the aim of which is to “entirely root out [distress/grief] by disentangling its cause” (*tota poterit evelli, explicata...causa aegritudinis*, 61). Thus, like other Stoics, Chrysippus is interested in treating emotions as beliefs—judgements of the rational faculty that assent to certain kinds of propositions. In the case of grief, as with the

---

<sup>123</sup> The other explicit reference to the *Consolatio* in book 3 comes at 70, marking another transitional passage, in this instance between the discussion of Chrysippean Stoic therapy and Crantor’s more tempered approach, see below, section V.

<sup>124</sup> Aside from any connection to Cicero’s own battles with grief, this prominence in the text may be due to the author’s use of Chrysippus’ *On Emotions* as a primary source for both books 3 and 4. For a consideration of this possibility, with parallels drawn from Galen *PHP*, see Graver 2002: 203-14. For a proposed reconstruction of this lost work, which was highly influential in the consolatory tradition, see Tieleman 2003: esp. 288-320 for a thorough discussion of the Ciceronian evidence.

other passions, however, the faculty of reason is misapprehending the presence of an evil, instead of grasping the truth of the impression. For all Stoics, therefore, the treatment of the passions is essentially aimed at restoring the rational faculty to itself; i.e., the treatment of grief, like grief itself, is an exercise in reason and judgement. As a modification of this approach, Chrysippus' therapy acknowledges that in the throes of distress (*λύπη*), which he defines etymologically in Greek as a "dissolution of the whole person,"<sup>125</sup> the sufferer will likely *not* be susceptible to the kind of rational argument that would bring about a resolute "disentangling of the cause" of grief.<sup>126</sup> Chrysippean therapy aims instead at guiding the sufferer to resolve primarily or at least initially (*caput*) the ancillary belief that the activity of grieving or mourning "is a duty justly and rightly performed" (*se officio fungi putet iusto atque debito*).<sup>127</sup> The "removal" (*detrahere*) of this ancillary belief may, in turn, allow the sufferer to be accessible to rational argument, which would eventually result in the final disentangling of reason from grief.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> 61, *ex quo ipsam aegritudinem λύπην Chrysippus, quasi solutionem totius hominis appellatam putat.*

<sup>126</sup> On the "excessive impulsiveness" of sufferers, see the vivid Chrysippean image recorded by Galen *PHP* 4.6.35 of angry people who "are like those persons at the races who are carried forward through what is excessive [in their impulse]: in the one case [the impulse is] contrary to one's impulse in running; in the other, contrary to one's own reason" (trans. Graver 2002: 208). The importance of the ancillary belief for treatment of sufferers who may not be susceptible to rational argument is attested clearly at Orig. *Contr. Cels.* 8.51 = *SVF* 3.474, "during the critical period (*kairos*) of the inflammation one should not waste one's efforts over the belief that preoccupies the person stirred by emotion, lest we ruin the cure which is opportune by lingering at the wrong moment over the refutation of the beliefs which preoccupy the mind" (trans. Graver 2002: 212-3).

<sup>127</sup> 76, *Chrysippus autem caput esse censet in consolando detrachere illam opinionem maerenti, si se officio fungi putet iusto atque debito.* On Cicero's characterization of consolation as an *officium* in the letters, see Zehnacker 1985.

<sup>128</sup> On the strong normativity of Chrysippus' approach, see esp. the comparisons that Cicero attributes to him that equate conditions of the mind with conditions (e.g., illnesses) of the body, 4.23, 4.30-1; cf. 3.7 and esp. Galen *PHP* 5.22-4 = *SVF* 3.471.

Apart from any special significance that Chrysippus' approach may hold in the text or in the author's own experience, M. stresses that in the event of coming to grief—for all those who are not sages—no one treatment will be sufficient. Starting from the “every cure” (*omnis curatio*) that Cicero attempted on himself in his *Consolatio*, the material argument embraces the perspective that every person may require a different therapeutic combination or sequence. M. insists that “the duties of the consolers are to tear out distress root and branch—or to soothe it and diminish it as much as possible, or to stop its spread and not let it seep in deeper or to divert its energies onto other things” (*haec igitur officia sunt consolantium, tollere aegritudinem funditus aut sedare aut detrahare quam plurimum aut suppressere nec pati manare longius aut ad alia traducere*, 75-76). This conceptualization of responsibility to others' grief extends far beyond the strictures of the ideal argument or any particular doctrinal approach to therapy.<sup>129</sup> Consolation is conceived as an exercise in empathetically responding to the particular nature of an individual's suffering and arriving at a course of treatment that addresses the material manifestations of grief.

Key among these material manifestations is, of course, temporality. Regardless of which course of treatment is applied, “we must consider time no less in relation to diseases of the mind than those of the body” (*sed sumendum tempus est non minus in animorum morbis quam in corporum*, 76). As an illustration of the importance of timeliness in addressing grief, M. adduces a short exchange from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*: in response to Oceanus' assertion that “speech can heal anger” (*mederi posse orationem iracundiae*), Prometheus clarifies, “Only if there is someone to apply a timely cure who doesn't aggravate the wound with a biting hand” (*Si*

---

<sup>129</sup> See e.g., M.'s rebuttal of the Stoic approach: “Cleanthes consoles the sage who does not need any consolation” (*Nam Cleanthes quidem sapientem consolatur, qui consolatione non eget*, 77).



*quidem qui tempestivam medicinam admovens / non adgravescens vulnus illidat manu*).<sup>130</sup> M.

furthermore concludes his discussion of the Chrysippean approach with an expression of concern that it is “the most secure with regard to truth, but difficult with regard to the time of grief” (*Chrysippi ad veritatem firmissima est, ad tempus aegritudinis difficilis*, 79). Chrysippean therapy places the responsibility of choosing the consolatory approach most suited “to time” or “to opportunity” (*ad tempus*) squarely on the consoler, who must recognize the emotional state of the sufferer and respond accordingly.

Yet, read in a slightly different way, this brief critique of the Chrysippean approach condenses the dilemma around which the entire argumentative structure of the discussion turns: the coherent and convincing positions put forward by Chrysippus and the Stoics seem in the abstract to border closest on “truth” (*ad veritatem firmissima*), but they are difficult to render in the material—that is, temporal—conditions of human life (*ad tempus...difficilis*). Consequently, a philosophical exercise of grief cannot dispense with either perspective. Time is the stratum of material experience that philosophy struggles to grasp and form in its own image; conversely, from within the experience of time, humanity strives in vain to accomplish the ideals of philosophy.<sup>131</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Aesch. *Prom. Vincit.* 379-82. On Cicero’s use of dramatic quotations in book 3, see Caston 2015: 143-48.

<sup>131</sup> In this regard, one of M.’s chief pieces of evidence in favor of the material argument—that not only is grief an inevitable part of human experience, sometimes it is also justified and necessary—is an otherwise unattested story about Alcibiades (possibly extrapolated from Plato *Symp.* 215e-216c; cf. Graver 2002: ad loc.). In opposition to the Cleanthean Stoic contention that all distress arises from “foolishness” (*stultitia*) and a misapprehension of what is truly evil, M. argues, “It seems to me that Cleanthes does not recognize well enough that sometimes distress arises from that very thing that even he himself admits is the greatest evil. For what shall we say—when Socrates had convinced Alcibiades, as we are told, that he was in no way a real man nor was there any difference between him, despite his lofty birth, and any pathetic mule, and when Alcibiades then was shattered and weeping begged Socrates to teach him virtue and to drive off his shamefulness, what shall we say, Cleanthes? Surely not that in this cause that made Alcibiades feel distress there was no true evil? (*Et tamen non satis mihi videtur vidisse hoc Cleanthes, suscipi aliquando*

The expositional content of the material argument thus pertains to the reestablishment of a sense of subjective temporality through the timely treatment of grief. The effect of timely or “opportune” treatment on the temporality of grief is indicated in the metaphor that concludes the final statement of the material argument. This comparison aligns an effective application of philosophical therapy with a convincing forensic argument. M. says, “It’s no wonder, then, that in court cases (*in causis*) we do not always use the same construction (*eodem statu*)—for we refer thus to the types of argument—but we take into account the time, the nature of the dispute, and the character of those involved (*ad tempus, ad controversiae naturam, ad personam*); in just this same way with regard to alleviating distress we must consider how each individual person will be able to receive each type of cure.”<sup>132</sup> The explicit analogy reiterates the need to take into account the timeliness of treatment in order for it to be successful in alleviating distress. Yet, within the comparison to “court cases” (*in causis*) itself, there is an implicit comment on the “constitution” (*status*) of the mourner. In this context *status* is used as a translation of the Greek *στάσις* to refer to the technical legal framing of a point of order.<sup>133</sup> Yet, as we saw above in

---

*aegritudinem posse ex eo ipso, quod esse summum malum Cleanthes ipse fatebatur. Quid enim dicemus, cum Socrates Alcibiadi persuasisset, ut accepimus, eum nihil hominis esse nec quidquam inter Alcibiadem summo loco natum et quemvis baiulum interesse, cum se Alcibiades adflicaret lacrimansque Socrati supplex esset, ut sibi virtutem traderet turpitudinemque depelleret, quid dicemus, Cleanthe? num in illa re, quae aegritudine Alcibiadem adficiebat, mali nihil fuisse, 77).* This story compresses several of the most important aspects of the material argument: the difficulty of students of philosophy to attain the ideals of philosophy within life, the inevitability of grief, and a certain perception or insight that accompanies melancholic grief. On the latter, cf. Freud’s discussion of the clarity of self-perception and knowledge afforded to the melancholic, see section I.

<sup>132</sup> 79, *nimirum igitur, ut in causis non semper utimur eodem statu—sic enim appellamus controversiarum genera—, sed ad tempus, ad controversiae naturam, ad personam accommodamus, sic in aegritudine lenienda quam quisque curationem recipere possit videndum est.*

<sup>133</sup> For Cicero’s only other use of the word in a rhetorical sense, where it has the even more specific meaning of a *refutatio accusationis*, see *Top.* 93-4. The common forensic sense in Latin is developed later by Quint., e.g., *Inst.* 3.6.

Chapter 1, *status* is more commonly used in the philosophical texts of this period to denote the durative structures that make up a lifetime.<sup>134</sup> What is at stake in the timely application of philosophical therapy as in the appropriate choice of legal argument is the *status*—the durative whole that is defined by “time, nature, and *persona*.” Just as the choice of a *status* ensures a successful court case, kairotic therapy restores a coherent *status* to the mourner, allowing him to overcome the temporal disturbances of grief that threaten to redefine entirely, as it did for Artemisia, a subjective sense of time.

#### V. A Will to Grieve

If a normative treatment of grief results in such a restoration of the mourner’s *status* and sense of subjective time, what is the outcome of Cicero’s philosophical exercise of grief? If we resist reading through the dissociative multiplicity of the arguments of the *Tusculans* to impose a singular trajectory from unresolved grief to its resolution, how can we understand the result of Cicero’s philosophical use of Tullia’s death? What sense of time and self awaits the melancholic philosopher? In heeding the warning against the lure of finality communicated by Artemisia’s story, the answer to these questions will not take a single, definitive form. Rather, as I have suggested above, the dissociative tension between the arguments of the dialogue is aimed at holding open and preserving access to the divergent temporal and existential frames produced by the melancholic experience of loss. In this section, therefore, I consider how we might conceive of the inconclusive outcome of this melancholic development. In particular, I examine the relationship between “will” (*voluntas*) and grief that Cicero sketches in *Tusc.* 3. If the normative treatment of grief restores the individual, through *voluntas*, to a cohesive subjective sense of self

---

<sup>134</sup> E.g., *de Fin.* 2.45, discussed Ch. 1, sections IV-V. It is notable that the other word used by Cicero (and later Seneca) to refer to the durative structures of a human life, *constitutio*, also has a significant forensic sense essentially the same as *status*. Cf. *Inv.* 1.8; *Auct. Her.* 1.11.

and time, then, I argue, a philosophical exercise of grief creates in *voluntas* a “discernment” of the different forms of temporality that touch upon human life universally. Importantly, this “discernment” does not collapse or conflate these temporalities but maintains, by means of the dissociative experience on which it is based, their distinction.

As a way of approaching this general, human *voluntas*, we must return to M.’s explication of Chrysippus’ innovations on Stoic therapy.<sup>135</sup> In the discussion of Chrysippean treatment, M. diagnoses the desire for solitude (*solitudo*) as a clear symptom of the rootedness of *aegritudo*, which should instruct the consoler to focus on removing the ancillary belief that mourning is an obligation. As we saw in the example of Artemisia, M.’s incorporation of an aspect of his author’s own experience of grief into his argument might seem to indicate, first, that Cicero’s desire for solitude was, in fact, a manifestation of a melancholic (i.e., non-normative) response and, second, as would be suggested by Englert’s reading, that in the *Tusculans* the author is now aware of this aberrance from the norm and is reflecting on his success at removing the beliefs that had caused it.<sup>136</sup>

Ex hoc evenit ut in animi doloribus alii solitudines captent, ut ait Homerus de Bellerophonte:

*Qui miser in campis maerens errabat Aleïs,  
Ipse suum cor edens, hominum vestigia vitans,*

et Nioba fingitur lapidea propter aeternum, credo, in luctu silentium; Hecubam autem putant propter animi acerbitatem quandam et rabiem fingi in canem esse conversam. Sunt autem alii, quos in luctu cum ipsa solitudine loqui saepe delectat, ut illa apud Ennium nutrix:

*Cupido cepit miseram nunc me proloqui  
Caelo atque terrae Medeai miserias.*

---

<sup>135</sup> For the longest continuous discussion on Chrysippus’ emphasis on the belief in a “duty” (*officium*) to grieve and its consequences, see 61-71. Chrysippus’ innovation is discussed above, section IV.

<sup>136</sup> On Cicero’s expressions of a desire for solitude following Tullia’s death, see above, Ch. 1, sections I and II. Although Englert does not comment on this resonance in the *Tusculans*, he begins his consideration of Cicero’s grief from his desire for solitude, see 2017: 41-51.

Because of this [feeling of obligation] some people seek out lonely places when their minds are in pain, as Homer says of Bellerophon:

*Wretchedly he wandered lamenting throughout the Aleian plain  
Eating his heart out alone and avoiding the footsteps of men*

And Niobe is rendered in stone, I believe, to represent her eternal silence in grief, while they think Hecuba is imagined to have been turned into a dog because of a certain bitterness and fury of the soul. There are other mourners who often take pleasure in conversing with solitude itself, like the nurse in Ennius:

*A desire has seized me now in my misery to speak  
with heaven and earth about the miseries of Medea.*<sup>137</sup>

The speaker of the dialogue here criticizes, on the one hand, “some people” who, when their minds are in pain (*in animi doloribus alii*), seek out solitude (*solitudines captent*)<sup>138</sup> and avoid, like Bellerophon, the presence of other people (*hominum vestigia vitans*).<sup>139</sup> These people, in their solitary stubbornness and silence, are likened to Niobe who, according to M., is transformed into stone precisely because of her unwillingness to vocalize and expel her grief at losing her children (*propter aeternum...in luctu silentium*).<sup>140</sup> This first group of solitaries represents the extremity of melancholia: all of their energies are focused inwards, calcifying their grief and consuming their own vitality (*suum cor edens*).

Yet M. also specifically targets those mourners who “take pleasure in conversing with solitude itself” (*quos in luctu cum ipsa solitudine loqui saepe delectat*). This paradoxical formulation strikingly recalls Cicero’s own association between *solitudo* and *sermo* (*ad Att.*

---

<sup>137</sup> *Tusc.* 3.63.

<sup>138</sup> On Cicero’s use of the plural *solitudines*, “solitudes,” as “lonely places,” cf. *de Rep.* 6.20 and *de Div.* 2.45 where the noun is modified by the clarifying adjectives *vastae* and *desertae*. With more ambiguity, see also *ad Fam.* II.16(154); *ad Att.* XI.9(220), XII.23 (262; discussed above, Ch. 1, section II), and XIII.16(323).

<sup>139</sup> For the translation, see *Il.* 6.201-2. Bellerophon is a pariah figure in the *Iliad* who grieves after becoming “hated by all the gods” (κεῖνος ἀπήχθετο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν, 6.200).

<sup>140</sup> M.’s view of Niobe recollects Achilles’ depiction of her in his speech to Priam at *Il.* 24.602-17, continuing the Homeric resonance of the passage.

XII.15) and the descriptions of his philosophical and writerly endeavor as conversation in or with solitude.<sup>141</sup> Thus, Cicero's speaker—the product of his own desire to “speak with solitude itself” (*cum ipsa solitudine loqui*)—delivers a rebuke to his creator. In this peculiar plaiting of the therapeutic and incorporative strands in the text's treatment of grief, the self-awareness of M.'s relationship with his author is thrown into ironic relief: without Cicero's desire to converse with solitude, there could be no character M. to chastise his author about time spent talking to solitude. M.'s critique of the melancholic's desire to speak with solitude is the direct result—even the “transcript” of—Cicero's own conversation with *solitudo*.

M.'s choice of a passage from Ennius' *Medea Exul* as an example of speaking with solitude complicates this textual interaction further.<sup>142</sup> In this context, the quotation is striking, and in an attempt to understand why he introduces it to support his point I raise two questions: first, in M.'s implication that this line is related to a “conversation with solitude,” are we meant to understand the nurse in Ennius' *Medea* as being alone on stage or addressing someone else? And, second, what is the connection between “speaking with solitude” and speaking “to heaven and earth”? With regard to the first question, Ennius' *Medea Exul* is usually thought to adhere closely to the plot of Euripides' *Medea*.<sup>143</sup> In this case, M.'s citation of the line, which in its recontextualized application might seem to indicate that the Nurse is delivering these lines as a soliloquy, clashes with the staging of the Euripidean play.<sup>144</sup> In the Euripidean version, of which

---

<sup>141</sup> On the connection between *solitudo* and *sermo*, See above, Ch. 1, section II.

<sup>142</sup> The Ennian citation is fr. 91 Goldberg-Manuwald = 106 Jocelyn.

<sup>143</sup> For a proposed reconstruction of the prologue, from which this quotation would be drawn, see Rosato 2005: 48-9. Cf. the comments in Goldberg and Manuwald 2018: 92-3.

<sup>144</sup> Although it seems untenable as a reading, *if* we are meant to understand the Nurse in M.'s recontextualized rendering as delivering a kind of soliloquy, it is notable that this does not remove the

this line is a faithful rendering,<sup>145</sup> the Nurse (Τροφός) is speaking onstage to the Teacher (Παιδαγωγός). Thus, in the reflection of this line back on Cicero’s experience, M. is assimilating his author to Medea’s Nurse, who expresses a desire to an onstage (but offstage in the *Tusculans*) Teacher that she wants to leave his presence and converse with nature.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, it is notable that the Nurse, unlike Bellerophon or Niobe, is not grieving over her own personal predicament or of the death of a relative. Instead, she is expressing her concern over her “mistress’s fate” (δεσποίνης τύχας, Eur. *Med.* 58), which places the Nurse in the position of the consoler more than mourner.<sup>147</sup> M.’s choice of Ennian quotation, therefore, emphasizes the division of Cicero’s *persona* in the *Tusculans*, which is articulated especially by the offstage presence of the Teacher. Additionally, by extending the intertextual relation back from Ennius’ play back to Euripides’ *Medea*, M. literarily introduces the layering of voices within his discussion of solitude in a manner that mimics Cicero’s conception of *solitudo* as a convergent moment in which many presences meet, especially as a consolatory response to grief.

---

underlying multiplicity of voices and texts that are achieved through the dramatic quotation: as a theatrical device, a soliloquy is far from a purely solipsistic and indulgent exercise in navel gazing because it establishes a direct connection between the innermost thoughts of a character and the audience. A soliloquy is solitary only in form; in function, it is a meeting and a focalization of various perspectives and voices.

<sup>145</sup> ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐς τοῦτ’ ἐκβέβηκ’ ἀλγηδόνοσ / ὄσθ’ ἴμερός μ’ ὑπῆλθε γῆ τε κούρανῶ / λέξαι μολούση δεῦρο δεσποίνης τύχας, Eur. *Med.* 56-8.

<sup>146</sup> With reference to this division between the role of Nurse and Teacher as two archetypal figures of concern and care for the plight of Medea and her family, it is notable that in many interpretations the figure of M. is primarily thought of as a teacher to the student A. (see esp. Gildenhard 2007 *passim*). Thus in delivering this quotation in a rebuke to his author, M. is using the Ennian/Euripidean intertext to claim the position onstage of Παιδαγωγός, reflecting back and critiquing the Nurse’s/Cicero’s melancholic response from a pedagogic perspective.

<sup>147</sup> In the various versions of the drama, Medea’s Nurse usually holds a peripheral role in the events of the drama, yet functions as a character that can articulate and focalize for the audience Medea’s emotional struggles and frustrations in an empathetic manner. On the connection between the nurse and Medea’s interiority in the tradition (esp. Seneca), see Henry and Walker 1967: 173.

These textual indications of the multiplicity of solitude are rendered succinctly in the content of the quotation, which speaks to the second question: what is the relationship between a “conversation with solitude” and the Nurse’s explicit desire? Again, contrary to what the context might seem to demand, the Nurse does not say that she wishes to speak with *solitude* about her own grief. Rather she expresses her desire to converse “with heaven and earth” about Medea’s lamentable situation (*Cupido cepit miseram nunc me proloqui / Caelo atque terrae Medeae miserias*). Through the reference, therefore, M. draws an equation between solitude and the whole universe (*caelo atque terrae*), thereby realizing in his apparent critique of his author’s solipsistic and solitary proclivity the very empathetic and universal access that Cicero claims for his writerly pursuits in solitude. To put it simply, conversation with solitude is conceived of as speaking with nature, the elements, the heavens, the order of the world.

M.’s explicit intention in introducing these examples is to indicate the kind of self-indulgent behavior in which mourners engage from the perspective of the normative ideal. In the Chrysippean view from which he is presently speaking a “conversation with solitude” is not a part of a therapeutic process, but is an expression of—and even an indulgence in—a misplaced belief in the propriety of mourning: “They do all these things believing, in their pain, that they are right true and obligatory” (*haec omnia recta, vera, debita putantes faciunt in dolore*, 64). Yet the peculiarities of M.’s example of speaking with solitude and Cicero’s own associations between solitude and literary production offer us instead an image of what the outcome of a philosophical exercise of grief might look like: what if, Cicero’s text asks, we could converse with solitude—that is, “with heaven and earth”—not as the manifestation of a pathological need to grieve, but as an act of true volition and ethical choice? The *Tusculans* themselves might be taken as the outcome of such a conversation: the emotional and intellectual will that produces



them transforms a *sermo cum solitudine* from a melancholic indulgence into philosophical contemplation of the unthinkable aspects of human existence, time, and experience.<sup>148</sup>

The recuperation of will (*voluntas*) is precisely what is at stake in M.'s Chrysippean concern for the feelings of obligation that attach themselves to mourning.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, he refers to this type of pathological grieving as “willful wretchedness” (*miseria voluntaria*, 3.32).<sup>150</sup> To expel this *miseria*, therefore, means to recover one's *voluntas* for oneself and to turn it toward other, non-pathological, emotions, actions, and goals. Yet M. stresses that the misattribution of

---

<sup>148</sup> In M.'s consideration of Stoic therapy, the importance of *voluntas* is not only evident in overcoming the passions, but also for the defending the possibility that the sage can turn his judgement and properly functioning reason toward a true grasp of and rational control over emotional impulses. For Cicero's explicit discussion of the “consistencies” (*eupatheia* or *constantia*), see 4.10-14; cf. Inwood 1985: esp. 173-5; Brennan 1998: esp. 31-5 and 54-7; Graver 2002: 134-39; and Thorsrud 2008. Stoic *eupatheia* are movements of the rational mind that are analogous to yet categorically different from the irrational movements caused by the passions. It is notable, however, that the Stoics do *not* theorize a corresponding consistency to the passion of distress. There is no “present evil” for the Stoic sage that can ever be grasped through the proper functioning of his reason. See Graver 2002: 137, “the consistencies are directed only at those objects or states of affairs which are either genuinely good in Stoicism...or in the case of caution [the consistency of an impending evil] genuinely bad... This interpretation is confirmed by the absence of any consistency directed at present evils, since genuine evils (i.e., moral failings in the self) are excluded by definition from the best human life. To such commonly supposed evils as bereavement or poverty, as to all indifferents, the wise person will have no response except for the short-lived and morally insignificant ‘pre-emotion’ which is produced without assent.” This intentional gap in Stoic theory might provide another conceptual access point for understanding Cicero's transformation of grief into philosophy through *voluntas*. I am not suggesting that M. explicitly argues for a corresponding *eupatheia* for distress, but that this gap helps to orient the divergent perspectives that he offers on the relation between *voluntas* and grief: through these divergences the text opens up an understanding of grief as an exercise of volition in a way that would be impossible for the Stoics.

<sup>149</sup> On the contentions surrounding Cicero's use of *voluntas* and its connection to a post-Augustinian notion of “will,” see esp. Begley 1988, who argues for continuity between Cicero and Augustine and arrives at the definition: “a desire or inclination arising from within, undetermined by natural temperament, external compulsion, or the demands of an obligation.” On the relationship between Cicero's and Augustine's *voluntas*, see esp. Byers 2006: 187-8 and, with a greater focus on Augustine, Frede 2011: 153-74. See Dihle 1982: 132-134 (w. extensive bibliography at n.66) for an attempt to catalogue the Greek terms translated by Cicero with *voluntas*.

<sup>150</sup> Similar uses, which Graver 2002: 112 argues are renderings of the Stoic tag “what is up to us” (τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν), are found at 3.64, 66, 71, 80, 83; cf. the use of *voluntas* at 4.12 to translate βούλησις as one of the *eupatheiai*; compare further, however, 4.34, 65, 76, 79, 82, 83. Cicero expands the semantic range of *voluntas* to cover a variety of Greek terms, see esp. Begley 1988 *passim*.

*voluntas* in “willful wretchedness” is deeply ingrained in human social interaction. In particular, the speaker repudiates the tendency to use grief to police the expression of emotions in others: he calls out for particular blame “mothers and teachers” who “punish children not only with words, but even with whips, if in the midst of domestic grief they do or say anything a bit too cheerfully, and force them to weep” (*pueros vero matres et magistri castigare etiam solent, nec verbis solum, sed etiam verberibus, si quid in domestico luctu hilarius ab iis factum est aut dictum, plorare cogunt*, 64). These forms of punishment condition us to feel the obligation to mourn more than to recognize our own *voluntas*, and thus a more consistent connection between our emotions and experience.

In addition to this societal tendency to exert external control over an individual’s emotional responses, M. also emphasizes that a self-imposed dedication to “wretchedness” also perverts the *voluntas*, and can, furthermore, prevent the individual from recognizing and responding to the demands of his circumstance. Drawing again a quotation from drama—this time Roman comedy<sup>151</sup>—M. contends that a retrospective clarity follows grief, which reveals this impotence:

Ipsa remissio luctus cum est consecuta intellectumque est nihil profici maerendo, nonne res declarat fuisse totum illud voluntarium? Quid ille Terentianus ipse se poeniens, id est, ἑαυτὸν τιμωρούμενος? *Decrevi tantisper me minus iniuriae, / Chreme, meo gnato facere, dum fiam miser.* Hic decernit ut miser sit.

When sorrow has ceased finally and there follows a realization that nothing was accomplished in grieving, does not the truth of the matter demonstrate that it is entirely a matter of will? What does the self-punishing character—in Greek, ἑαυτὸν τιμωρούμενος—say in Terence? *Chremes, I have decided for the moment that I will do my son less harm so long as I am miserable.* He thus resolves to be miserable.

---

<sup>151</sup> On M.’s frequent use of Roman comedy and especially Terence in *Tusc.* 3, see Caston 2015: 143-6; she does not, however, discuss this passage.

For M. the example of Terence's anhedonic character demonstrates that an individual's stubborn belief in the duty to "feel wretched" perverts the will and disguises the fact that grief is, in fact, a function of judgement (*res declarat fuisse totum illud voluntarium*). Furthermore, the dramatic context to which the quote belongs demonstrates that such self-imposed wretchedness causes the individual to ignore the connections between his feelings and circumstance.<sup>152</sup> The anger of the speaker, Menedemus, had previously caused his son to run away from home, and, now, the range of emotion—frustration, sorrow, remorse—that he feels after his son's departure has all been turned inwards as an intentional miserableness (*Hic decernit ut miser sit*). Yet none of this wretchedness changes Menedemus' situation, and, in Terence's play, in fact, will go on to create the confusion and misunderstandings that drive the plot. Whether maintained by external or internal forces, therefore, the sense of obligation to feel and indulge in wretchedness coopts an individual's *voluntas*. This cooptation becomes especially evident when "sorrow has ceased finally" (*Ipsa remissio luctus cum*) without having effectively responded to or altered the reality of the individual's present condition (*nihil profici maerendo*).

According to M.'s application of Chrysippean therapy, therefore, the removal of a belief in the obligation to mourn helps to restore volition to the mourner and enables him to see the misapprehension on which his grief is based. In particular, this restoration manifests itself as a certain relationship to circumstance and time: "It is therefore in our power to cast out pain,

---

<sup>152</sup> This is another instance of significant recontextualization through quotation. Notably here M. seems to construe the comment of Terence's comic character Menedemus as a sincere reflection of his thought process. In the context of the play, Menedemus is expressing remorse to his neighbor Chremes that his inability to live with his son's choice of mistress has caused his son to run away from home to join the army. The comment reflects the fact that he is now prepared to settle for living with the low-born lover in exchange for his son's return. Of course, this resolution to be miserable is the source for the comedy of manners that unfolds in the play. For the source, see Ter. *Heaut.* 147-8; Cicero also quotes this passage at *de Fin.* 5.28.

whenever you want, in accommodation to the time/circumstance/opportunity. Or, since the matter is entirely in our power, is there any time to which we cannot accommodate ourselves for the sake of laying aside anxiety and distress?” (*Ergo in potestate est abiicere dolorem, cum velis, tempori servientem. An est ullum tempus—quoniam quidem res in nostra potestate est—cui non ponendae curae et aegritudinis causa serviamus?* 66). The rejection of a misplaced sense of duty to be *miser* and the recovery of *voluntas* thus enables the mourner to realize a relation of opportuneness to the demands of the moment. Importantly, this recovery of *voluntas* is not a matter of “control” over events—*tempus* remains an unalterable given—but is constituted in our ability to “accommodate ourselves to *any* time/circumstance/opportunity” (*an est ullum tempus...cui non...serviamus?*) by “laying aside anxiety and distress” (*ponendae curae et aegritudinis causa*).

As an example of this opportune relationship to *tempus* that the recovery of *voluntas* allows, M. veers suddenly into the political realm.<sup>153</sup> When Pompey was “subsiding under his wounds” (*concidentem vulneribus*, 66),” those watching from their ship felt only their own fear and “did nothing else at that time but encourage the rowers and secure their own safety by flight” (*nihil aliud tum egisse nisi ut remiges hortarentur et ut salutem adipiscerentur fuga*). It was only after they arrived at Tyre that they began to understand and express their pain, sorrow, and remorse (*postea quam Tyrum venissent, tum adflictari lamentarique coepisse*).<sup>154</sup> The explicit lesson that M. draws from this story buttresses his ideal argument: “Therefore fear was able to drive away distress from them, shall reason not be able to do the same from the sage?” (*Timor*

---

<sup>153</sup> On this anecdote, cf. Dio 42.3-4, Livy *Ep.* 112.

<sup>154</sup> On range of emotions intended by the combination of *adflictari* and *lamentari*, cf. *Tusc.* 2.32, 3.83-4, and 4.16.

*igitur ab his aegritudinem potuit repellere, ratio ab sapienti viro non poterit?*).<sup>155</sup> Interestingly, however, this explicit lesson does not comment on the relationship between *voluntas* and *tempus*, the point for which the exemplum is introduced as support. Certainly, from a Chrysippean perspective, the role that fear (*timor*) plays in suspending the observers' feelings of grief until after the fact proves that the belief in an obligation to mourn is circumstantial and, therefore, always subject to reason (*ratio*). Read from a more partisan perspective, however, the story can be understood to comment implicitly on the observers' *inability* to respond effectively and in accordance to the "true"—i.e., politically necessary—demands of the occasion: to intervene rather than run away and, perhaps, prevent or alter the disastrous circumstances of Pompey's death. In this sense, if they had been able to reassert their misplaced *voluntas* at the time of the event—a misplacement for which they will later mourn uselessly—then perhaps that event would not have taken place or, at least, their emotional response to it would have affected the outcome of the event differently and more in line with their political commitments.

However we understand the precise point of this anecdote, it is clear that from M.'s normative, therapeutic perspective, the resolution of grief for the individual reconstitutes *tempus* as a field in which *voluntas* can be applied effectively and in accommodation to the needs of the occasion. I turn, therefore, to consider what role "will" might play in Cicero's melancholic and philosophical exercise of grief. In a transitional moment, marked again by a reference to Cicero's *Consolatio*,<sup>156</sup> M. moves from his explication of Chrysippean therapy to consider, in opposition,

---

<sup>155</sup> Mss. *ac sapientia vera*: corr. Bentley.

<sup>156</sup> For the reference, see 70; as elsewhere, M. refers to the *Consolatio* in order to introduce a series of exempla, in this instance regarding men who outlived and had to bury their sons while holding prominent political office: esp. Quintus Maximus and Marcus Cato.

Crantor's more permissive understanding of human grief.<sup>157</sup> From this new and divergent position, M. swiftly calls into question the entire Stoic premise that grief is a matter of judgement and belief by asking, "Who is so out of their mind as to grieve by their own will?" (*quis tam demens, ut sua voluntate maereat?*). And, further recalling Crantor's position, he says, "It is Nature that brings a sorrow...that must be given in to. For it presses and attacks and cannot be resisted."<sup>158</sup> The outcome of Cicero's philosophical exercise of grief lies in between and as a preservation of the disjunctive combination of these two positions: to mourn as an exercise of philosophy is to "give into" the irresistible grief that is "Nature's" and to do so as a normatively impossible or "out of mind" (*demens*) exercise of *voluntas*.

Acting through and in service of the divergences and dissociated frames of Cicero's text, therefore, this form of *voluntas* offers the means by which melancholic responses to suffering and loss can be transformed by philosophy into an *empathetic* and humanistic expression of grief. This expression of grief, as the philosophical manifestation of a melancholic experience, is not particular in its object—not bound exclusively to the individual death of a loved one—but rather is constituted by the variety and totality of human experiences of loss. In fact, this possibility of grief as an exercise of *voluntas* may be the basis on which humanity can lay claim to the sympathy and solidarity that enables us to talk about human being in its relationship to

---

<sup>157</sup> Crantor appears in book 3 as the primary representative of the Academic and Peripatetic approach to grief, see 12-3 for the introduction. Notably Crantor also wrote an *On Grief* that Cicero seems to have consulted in the first weeks after Tullia's death (see *Att.* 12.14[251]) and there is evidence in the later tradition that he "followed" Crantor in his *Consolatio ad se* (see Pliny *N.H. pref.* 22, Jer. *Ep.* 60). M., in fact, refers to Crantor's text by the title "Consolation" at *Tusc.* 1.115. For a collection of fragments from this lost work and comments on its importance in the ancient consolatory tradition more generally, see Graver 2002: 187-201. Cf. Scourfield 2013 for further discussion of the tradition.

<sup>158</sup> 71, *Natura adfert dolorem, cui quidem Crantor, inquiunt, vester cedendum putat. Premit enim atque instat nec resisti potest.*

nature. Concluding his rejection of the Epicurean approach to grief, M. issues a statement that we can take as encapsulating what this humanistic grief might look like:

Nam et necessitas ferendae condicionis humanae quasi cum deo pugnare prohibet admonetque esse hominem, quae cogitatio magno opere luctum levat, et enumeratio exemplorum, non ut animum malevolorum oblectet, adfertur, sed ut ille, qui maeret, ferendum sibi id censeat, quod videat multos moderate et tranquille tulisse. Omnibus enim modis fulciendi sunt, qui ruunt nec cohaerere possunt propter magnitudinem aegritudinis.

For the need of bearing the human condition prevents us from, as it were, contending with god and reminds us that we are human. Contemplation of this greatly lightens sorrow, and the listing of examples is given not to satisfy the mind of the wicked, but so that the one who is in mourning might understand that he must bear his burden which, he sees, has also been borne by many others with moderation and calmly. For we must prop up in every way those who are collapsing and not able to hold together because of the enormity of their grief.<sup>159</sup>

Aside from enumerating the areas in which M.'s approach differs from the Epicureans, we see the elements that Cicero identifies in a humanistic understanding of grief and mourning.<sup>160</sup> First and foremost, grief is never singular. A philosophical expression of grief is not defined by cultural norms or by personal emotion, but by “bearing the human condition” (*necessitas ferendae condicionis humanae*). Consideration of this *condicio humana*, in turn, sublates or “lightens” an individual’s sense of grief over a particular loss (*luctum levat*) and creates a solidarity and empathy among humanity—a solidarity, however, that also serves as an “admonishment” or “warning” to remain human (*admonetque esse hominem*).<sup>161</sup> This act of “bearing” (*ferendae*), in fact, clarifies the placement of humans with respect to “god” and

---

<sup>159</sup> 3.60-1.

<sup>160</sup> On the importance of this passage for Cicero’s project the *Tusculans*, see Caston 2015: 147-8.

<sup>161</sup> On the admonition against theomachy contained in this call for human solidarity, see Kamerbeek 1948: 272; cf. *de Sen.* 5, “What is it to go to war with the gods like the Giants other than to fight against nature” (*quid est enim aliud Gigantum modo bellare cum diis, nisi naturae repugnare?*).

reminds us of the shared experiences that conjoin humanity.<sup>162</sup> The final ethical imperative to “prop up in every way those who are collapsing and not able to hold together because of the enormity of their grief” (*Omnibus enim modis fulciendi sunt, qui ruunt nec cohaerere possunt propter magnitudinem aegritudinis*) seeks to transform the individual experience of sorrow into an opportunity to solidify and cement, as it were, the inextricably connected and interdependent bulwark of humanity.

Yet our understanding of this passage is ultimately dependent on how we define the *condicio humana*.<sup>163</sup> I think it is best to read back to book 1, in which, as noted above,<sup>164</sup> the phrase is used as part of the material argument to describe the temporal “agreement” between humanity and nature, which allows for humanity to “use” natural chronology as the time of life. Thus, “the need of bearing the human condition” is concerned with negotiating the undecidability of the relationship between human existence and nature, and especially how humanity comes to have a share in the time of nature. Grief and mourning can and should produce a sense of human identity. The solidarity created thereby may be helpful for alleviating the individual pangs of suffering and loss. But what is truly at stake in a conceptualization of grief as an exercise of will is an ability to confront productively and assertively the different forms of existence—the different strata of time—that contact with death reveals. The *condicio humana* is variable, changeable, and entirely determined by nature. Bearing up to it is thus a

---

<sup>162</sup> Note that in this passage M. is specifically defending the practice of using exempla to treat grief, which others—notably Carneades (see 59)—criticize for “bringing comfort to malicious people by rehearsing the evils of others” (*nam illam quidem orationem ex commemoratione alienorum malorum ad malevolos consolandos esse accommodatam*, 60). M. rejects this effect of Schadenfreude in favor of a more genuine human solidarity produced through exemplarity.

<sup>163</sup> On the history of the phrase, see Balmer 1994.

<sup>164</sup> See section III. On this specific phrase in *Tusc.*, see also 1.15; 3.34, 59; cf. *de communi condicione vitae et propriae*, 3.77; *condicio lexque vitae*, 4.62.



matter of coming to terms with the divergent temporalities within which humanity has its existence. Therefore, it is perhaps even less a matter of human solidarity than it is of guiding humanity to a realization of and a reconciliation with the shifting ground on which it stands.

In the contemporary context of climate change and the mounting certainty that we are living through a new global extinction event, new meaning can be given to Cicero's subordination of individual suffering to human grief and his demonstration that the transformation of grief into philosophy produces a form of discernment by which humanity can embrace its place within the divergent temporal strata of nature.<sup>165</sup> The implications of Cicero's argument for our world can be traced in an essay by James Hatley that questions what "virtue" means in the face of the possibility of human extinction:

What then of our responsibilities to creation in a time of mass species extinction?...One's first responsibility would be to nurture in oneself and others a renewed virtue of what could be termed temporal and prayerful discernment, which would involve the cultivation of sensitivity to the diverse temporal boundaries against which one's creatureliness, one's solidarity with all other living entities and the early womb that gestates them, finds its particular shape(s). In doing so, we should come to recognize more fully how our responsibilities to the living world engage us not only in personal and historical temporalities but also in ones that are geogenetic and zoogenetic. Indeed, we should not be unwilling to imagine how the very malleability of our own genetic heritage is already carrying our future progeny beyond the time of the human in a manner we are unable to discern or to control. Only by carefully attending to qualitatively distinctive and ethically impossible temporal frameworks will we gain

---

<sup>165</sup> This connection between Cicero's grief and the forms of melancholic mourning that are occasioned by climate change is also made, in a more poetic mood, by Butler 2018: 16, "Looking out on Rome from the Capitol in those final years of the Republic, Cicero already saw what Poggio and Byron would see: a wasteland. And at Astura? Gazing out on the Tyrrhenian Sea, perhaps Cicero contemplated the apparent alternative of a world unmarked by ruin. Such, in any case, are Byron's thoughts, surveying the same vista at the end of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and unwittingly thinking his way forward to what our warming planet may well look like, once human time comes fully to an end: "The shores of empires, changed in all save thee— / Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they? / Thy waters wasted them while they were free, / And many tyrants since; their shores obey / The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay / Has dried up realms to deserts:—not so thou, / Unchangeable save to they wild waves' play— / Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow— / Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now."

greater clarity about how our actions might become engaging of and caring for the earthly.<sup>166</sup>

Hatley draws from recent scientific work on chronology in order to envision a human subjectivity that is aware of its relation to a series of temporalities: not just personal and historical senses of time, but also “geogenetic” and “zoogenetic” timeframes. While the specificity of Hatley’s consideration of time obviously outstrips Cicero’s two temporalities—subjective duration and the time of nature—both thinkers share an underlying idea. Hatley’s “virtue of temporal discernment” arises from a confrontation with the mass extinction of species (humanity included) to produce a “sensitivity to the diverse temporal boundaries against which one’s creatureliness, one’s solidarity with all other living entities and the early womb that gestates them, finds its particular shape(s).” Similarly, we can see in Cicero’s transformation of grief into philosophy a potential to discover the grounds for human solidarity, but, even more than that, an ability to “discern” and embrace between the temporal conditions that determine the shapes and qualities of human life. Cicero’s melancholic grief at the loss of Tullia, himself, and the Republic is joined with the universality of Hatley’s sorrow for the extinction of species; both thinkers envision an ethical exercise of their grief. In this philosophical transformation of grief and the expansion of temporal frames in which the ethical subject can operate, perhaps there is also, as M. contends, a restoration of will—the will to think and act in accordance to and with an awareness of all times that define human existence.

---

<sup>166</sup> 2012: 17.

## Chapter 4. The Future of Failure.

By the term ‘futural’, we do not here have in view a “now” which has *not yet* become ‘actual’ and which sometime *will be* for the first time. We have in view the coming [Kunft] in which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, comes towards itself. Anticipation makes Dasein *authentically* futural, and in such a way that the anticipation itself is possible only in so far as Dasein, *as being*, is always coming towards itself—that is to say, in so far as it is futural in its Being in general....As authentically futural, Dasein *is* authentically as “*having been*”. Anticipation of one’s uttermost and ownmost possibility is coming back understandingly to one’s ownmost “been.” Only so far as it is futural can Dasein *be* authentically as having been. The character of “having been” arises, in a certain way, from the future.

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (325-26, II.3)

Both my own and non-mine, a possibility of myself but also a possibility of the other, of the Beloved, my future does not enter into the logical essence of the possible. The relation with such a future, irreducible to the power over possibles, we shall call fecundity. Fecundity encloses a duality of the Identical. It does not denote all that I can grasp—my possibilities; it denotes my future, which is not a future of the same—not a new avatar: not a history and events that can occur to a residue of identity, an identity holding on by a thread, an I that would ensure the continuity of the avatars. And yet it is my adventure still, and consequently my future in a very new sense, despite the discontinuity.

Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (267-68)

### I. Failed Futures

The question of how to measure the success or failure of a life looms large over Cicero’s intellectual labors under Caesar’s dictatorship. His consideration of this question in letters and dialogues offers a unique opportunity to examine the relationship that Cicero himself saw between his actions as a statesman and his writings in which he debates the nature of the philosophical life and the possibility of attaining happiness. In this chapter, I argue that Cicero recognized in profound ways the failures<sup>1</sup> of his own life and sought to address them through philosophy. The manner of this address, however, is not one of face-saving amelioration,

---

<sup>1</sup> On the application of this category to Cicero’s experience, see below, section II.

political “spin,” or an imposition of literary success over an underlying political failure.<sup>2</sup> Rather, I contend in this chapter, Cicero’s philosophical work aims at persisting in and holding open the heterogeneity of failure, thereby emphasizing the ways in which his present is tied to and produced by an unknowable future. In particular, I argue that he reorients the ancient debate surrounding the *genera vitae* by drawing attention to the limits of eudaimonistic ethics and adds futural complexity to the ideal of the philosophical life by emphasizing the “incompleteness” (*ateleia*) of philosophy’s defining activity, *contemplatio*. Returning to the philosophical problem from which this dissertation began—the *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum*—I demonstrate further that Cicero locates the conditions of his personal failures within the breaking down of intergenerational time at the end of the Republic. By contextualizing *contemplatio* within this crisis of diachrony, Cicero envisions a mode of living for the philosopher that inhabits the proliferation of heterogeneous futures caused by the temporal disjointedness of his *aetas*.<sup>3</sup>

In order to begin to sketch the connection between failure and the future that Cicero’s writing discloses, it is necessary to reexamine how he separates conceptions of the time of life (*aetas*) from the ethically composed life (*vita*). As we saw in the cradle argument of *de Finibus*, both of these categories pertain to the bounded structures within which humans exist and, especially in Piso’s Antiochean interpretation, a *vita* can be understood to consist entirely of *aetates progredientes*. Yet the distinction between the two will matter especially in this chapter, which looks beyond the boundaries of the individual to the lifetime’s placement in a series. The semantic range of *aetas* conjoins a singular lifetime, a particular stage of life, and an “age”

---

<sup>2</sup> This is often the interpretation of modern readers. See below, section II.

<sup>3</sup> For the relationship between *vita* as an ethical structure and *aetas* as the time through which life is lived, see the Intro., section III; Ch. 1, esp. sections IV and V; and below.

comprised of separate and diachronically sequential lives; thus, *aetas*, as discussed above, is best understood in Cicero's writing as a marker of the temporal sedimentation or arrangement that enables human life.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, a *vita* is properly the substance of a life—it is a manner, mode, or course of life, which has character and narrative, and can be judged accordingly.<sup>5</sup> In Cicero's thought these concepts are often complementary in describing the form of human temporality. When considering the future, however, the dissociation between the temporal and ethical structure of life comes into sharp focus.

Cicero frames the nexus of *vita* and *aetas*, and their relationships to the future in one of the philosophically-rich letters that he writes to Aulus Manlius Torquatus in the first weeks of 45 BCE.<sup>6</sup> The latter, a Pompeian partisan from an old aristocratic family, had left Rome during the civil war and was now, after Pompey's death but prior to Caesar's final defeat of his heirs, living in exile in Athens.<sup>7</sup> In these first days of the new year—the first, it must be stressed, to be determined by the recently instituted Julian calendar<sup>8</sup>—before Tullia's death, before the end of

---

<sup>4</sup> See above, Intro., section III.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the distinction in Greek between βίος and αἰών, discussed above Intro., section III. See also the different understandings of the *status vitae* considered in Ch. 1, sections IV and V. Only the Antiochean conception of the *vita* is temporally durative.

<sup>6</sup> On the dating of the correspondence with Aulus Torquatus (*ad Fam* VI.1-4[242-245]), see Shackleton Bailey ad loc., “The state of suspense in Rome is consonant with early January 45.” On this Torquatus, see Mitchell 1966. The letters addressed to him appear to be among the last that Cicero composed before Tullia's death. On Cicero's use of philosophical discourse in his correspondence generally, see Griffin 1995 and McConnell 2014.

<sup>7</sup> The “Battle of Munda” (17 March 45 BCE) is usually regarded as the end of open conflict in the Caesarian civil war. See the post-Caesarian *Comm. de Bello Hispan.* 27-42; App. 2.103-5. On the political circumstances surrounding the defeat of the Pompeian resistance, see, e.g., Murphy 1986; Rawson 1992: esp. 437-61; Sirianni 1993.

<sup>8</sup> On the significance of the Julian calendar in a global historical perspective, see Feeney 2007; on Cicero's own reaction to this transformation of traditional Republican chronology, see Plut. *Caes.* 59 with Holleman 1978: 498, “[Cicero's] reaction to the Julian calendar, though ringing as a shout of triumph,

open conflict, and before Cicero had more than conceived of his philosophical trajectory for the next months, he opens this correspondence with a prediction about the future: “even though it is always difficult to speak about the future, still it is sometimes possible for a guess to land near the mark, especially when the nature of the matter makes it possible to foresee the outcome. For we seem to understand well enough now that the war will not last long” (*De futuris autem rebus etsi semper difficile dicere, tamen interdum coniectura possis propius accedere cum est res eius modi cuius exitus provideri possit. Nunc tantum videmur intellegere, non diuturnum bellum, ad Fam. VI.4[244]*). In face of the true inexpressibility (*semper difficile dicere*) of the future (*de futuris...rebus*), Cicero ventures to predict, correctly, the imminent collapse of the last vestiges of the Pompeian opposition. His guess, in this case, is able to “land near the mark” (*propius accedere*) especially in this case because the “nature of the matter” (*res eius modi cuius*) makes its “outcome” (*exitus*) evident from the present. The proximity of this knowable future to the present, in fact, manifests it as an “outcome” in the first place: an *exitus* is a departure, a “going out” from a place or time.

The knowability and expressibility of this proximate future becomes especially relevant when Cicero considers how his own life intersects with the historical circumstance in which he finds himself. After elaborating on his prediction of defeat and death for Torquatus’ friends and allies, Cicero addresses how they should manage their grief at this moment. In comments that will only gain significance after Tullia’s death, he lists aspects of Torquatus’ and his own life in which they might find solace despite the political maelstrom: the knowledge of “right intent”

---

reveals at the same time at least his misgivings about that human being who from sheer perversity, from *peccandi libido* (*Off.* 2.84), went so far as to conquer the sky and order up the constellations.”

(*conscientiam rectae voluntatis*, 2), the respite of literature, and, most of all, the passage of time (*non tantum litterae... quantum longinquitas temporis*).<sup>9</sup> “Next,” he says,

Deinde, quod mihi ad consolationem commune tecum est, si iam vocer ad exitum vitae, non ab ea republica avellar qua carendum esse doleam, praesertim cum id sine ullo sensu futurum sit. Adiuvat etiam aetas et acta iam vita, quae cum cursu suo bene confecto delectat tum vetat in eo vim timere quo nos iam natura ipsa paene perduxerit.

There is that form of consolation which I share with you: if I were now summoned to the end of life, I would not be snatched from a Republic that I would be sorry to be without, especially since the coming time will be without any sense. My age also helps and a life already lived, which at once delights because its course was run well and also forbids me to fear any violence in that event to which nature herself has nearly already brought me.<sup>10</sup>

The *exitus* that Cicero is able to foresee regarding the end of the war is now recast as the *exitus* of his own life (*ad exitum vitae*). The correspondence between Cicero’s own predicted death and the collapse of a form of the Republic that he “would be sorry to be without” (*qua carendum esse dolea[t]*) provides consolation especially in light of his “age” (*aetas*) and a “life already lived” (*acta iam vita*). In this collocation of the two words that Cicero uses for human time, their difference is foregrounded: *aetas* stands for the accumulation of time that makes the proximity to death evident from the present. *Vita* is the shape of a life as—or after—it is lived; it is the activity of life that “has been completed” (*acta*). A *vita* gives pleasure (*delectat*) when its “course has been run well” (*cursu suo bene confecto*) and the experiences that comprise it allow Cicero to face his impending death without fear (*vetat...timere*) since, through them, he can understand that “violence” (*vis*) and “nature herself” (*natura ipsa*) will both lead to the same end

---

<sup>9</sup> On the importance of “will” or “intent” (*voluntas*) and time for Cicero’s experience of grief, see Ch. 3, sections IV and V.

<sup>10</sup> *Ad Fam.* VI.4.4.

(*perduxerit*).<sup>11</sup> The end of Cicero's life (*ad exitum vitae*) thus coincides with the collective outcome (*exitus*) of the war and the Republic, and this final mutuality provides Cicero a feeling of consolation and fitting closure.

In this letter from the first days of the first Julian year, therefore, we find Cicero expressing the end—the completion of his political activity, his “right intent,” his *vita act(iv)a*—in such final terms that his own life takes on the image of the historical impasse through which he is living. Considering the proximity of death that Cicero sees to his life at this juncture, the question that we must ask of his philosophical texts that he wrote following this moment is: what happens for the life that continues to be lived after its *vita* has been completed? That is, if Cicero conceives of his *vita* as *iam acta*, what form of temporal existence is left for him in the coming months? Is it, in other words, possible to live a bare *aetas* without the narrational and ethical structuration of a *vita*? In this letter, the answer to this question seems to be simply, no. The only further future accessible to Cicero writing at this moment is a time “without sense” (*id sine ullo sensu futurum sit*)—a death without any continued connection to the world or to the diachrony of time. As in Heidegger's temporality of care (*Sorge*),<sup>12</sup> Cicero sees the coming of death as a consummation of the “uttermost and ownmost possibility” of his *vita*.<sup>13</sup> For Heidegger, the futural orientation or “anticipation” of Dasein's “coming towards itself,” in fact, produces the

---

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Shackleton Bailey: ad loc., “Cicero did not, of course, believe himself secure from a violent death...but after a long and meritorious career it should, he says, have no terrors for him.”

<sup>12</sup> On the concept of care (*Sorge*), which Heidegger initially derives from Hyginus' fable of *Cura* (§220 in Grant 1960) and from Seneca *Ep.* 124, see Heidegger 1962: 243(I.6), “Man's *perfectio*—his transformation into that which he can be in Being-free for his ownmost possibilities (projection)—is ‘accomplished’ by ‘care.’ But with equal primordially ‘care’ determines what is basically specific in this entity, according to which it has been surrendered to the world of its concern (thrownness). In the ‘double meaning’ of ‘care,’ what we have in view is a *single* basic state in its essentially twofold structure of thrown projection.” See also Wheeler 2018, esp. 2.2.7.

<sup>13</sup> See epigraph above.



“coming back...to one’s ownmost been. Only so far as it is futural can Dasein *be* authentically as having been.” Thus, there is no *aetas* without *vita*; the potentiality-for-Being of Dasein lies exclusively in its future—i.e., death—which in turn produces its past. The narrative of a life that is lived authentically as anticipation of Dasein’s “always coming towards itself” contains within itself all the possibilities of the time of that life.<sup>14</sup>

As I argue throughout this chapter, however, the failures that Cicero experiences and grapples with in his dialogues transform this understanding of the ethical *vita* as the source of futural possibility. Certainly, the *vita* as an ethical denomination and cohesive narrative structure remains an important object of inquiry, especially as it relates to the eudaimonism of the Hellenistic schools and his discussions of the Republican tradition of memorialization through *gloria*.<sup>15</sup> Yet, by extending and developing a skeptical approach to the judgement of a life, Cicero’s dialogues display a countervailing tendency to look for ways in which the future orientation of human time can be tied not exclusively to the “well-lived life” but to the bare temporality of the *aetas*. In this configuration, which is realized through Cicero’s reconsideration of the philosopher’s form of life, the future does not belong to the possibilities—and failures—of

---

<sup>14</sup> On this interpretation of the temporality of care, see Lin 2013: 37, “As long as we are futural we have possibilities, and the horizon of choices and possibilities available to us as futural includes also the possibility to return to our past and reinterpret the choices we have made. However, we can come-back to what we have-been, reinterpret our past, only as long as we are futural, that is as long as we have possibilities, since once our possibilities end, we actually no longer exist. The momentousness of the future lies also in Dasein’s ‘being-toward-death.’ ‘Being-toward-death’ is not the unavoidable termination of Dasein’s life, but is the anticipatory appropriation of death to its own existence that makes Dasein finite...It is only through anticipating death that Dasein is able to understand itself as a possibility rather than as an actualized, fallen, ontical, being. If Dasein turns its attention to its death, it does not understand time as a public sequence of ‘nows’, but rather as its own, and since Dasein is finite so is its time. Through the acknowledgement of the mineness (Jemeinigkeit) of my death the corresponding thought is revealed to me: only I can live my life, and only I can be responsible for the meaning that my life has for me.”

<sup>15</sup> Discussed below, sections III.i and IV.

the present *vita*. Rather, much like Levinas' fecundity, this understanding of the future is "irreducible to the power over possibilities"—that is, it embraces the incompleteness and faults of the present as products of an unknowable and discontinuous temporal horizon.<sup>16</sup> By holding open the future of the *aetas*, Cicero aims to liberate the present from "a history and events that can occur to a residue of identity, an identity holding on by a thread," and consider, instead, the unbound possibilities of the future of failure.

In the next section of this chapter, I examine more generally how Cicero conceives of the *genera vitae* and how the conflicting biographical judgements of his life have been used to decipher, often incompletely, his philosophical intent. In section III, I consider in detail Cicero's treatment of the philosophical life and its characteristic activity of *contemplatio*. In the first part of this section (III.i), I survey Cicero's treatment of the inconclusive relationship between contemplation, happiness, and the consummation of the philosophical life found in Hellenistic eudaimonism. Working in the second part (III.ii) from the Platonic connection between contemplation and truth, I argue that Cicero's skeptical approach to philosophical activity creates a potential form of life that is fundamentally atelic and anachronous. In section IV, I return to the problem of *vis et mutatio* and contend that, by locating the anachrony of the philosopher's life within the breakdown in intergenerational time in the late Republic, Cicero envisions a future for the *aetas* that is distinct from the *vita*. Finally, in section V, I consider more closely this future of the *aetas* by weighing two modes of diachronic continuity evident in *de Senectute*: paternity and fecundity. Sections II and III thus treat the nature and limitations of the *vita* as a way of understanding human futurity, whereas sections IV and V are concerned with the future of the *aetas*.

---

<sup>16</sup> On Levinas' "fecundity," see below, section V.

## II. The *Vita Contemplativa* as a Failure of the *Vita Activa*?

The final book of the *Tusculans* begins with a bid to liberate philosophical life from conventional Roman narratives that undermine its coherence and characterize it as the outcome of a failed life in politics.<sup>17</sup> Against contemporary Roman ignorance and dismissal of philosophical life, the narrator emphasizes its ancient roots, which stretch back to a time long before there was a word to describe *philosophia*: “this error, I think, and this darkness obscures the minds of the uninstructed because they are not able to look back far enough into the past nor do they understand that those who were first to provide the means of human life were themselves philosophers” (*sed, ut opinor, hic error et haec indoctorum animis offusa caligo est, quod tam longe retro respicere non possunt nec eos, a quibus vita hominum instructa primis est, fuisse philosophos arbitrantur*, 5.6).<sup>18</sup> The “uninstructed” or, simply, “ignorant” (*indoctorum*) disregard philosophy as of recent and foreign origin, and as of little or no importance in the functioning of society. Their error is caused by an inability “to look back far enough” (*tam longe retro respicere non possunt*) to see, as the narrator proposes, that “philosophy,” with or without that name, offers nothing less than the very means of human existence—a human way of life (*vita hominum*). The content of this ancient instruction, while perhaps lost to unmediated access in the present, is nonetheless still available to those who know how to look back.

---

<sup>17</sup> On the pre-Roman development of the slippery oppositions between *bios philosophikos* and *bios politikos* or *bios theoretikos* and *bios praktikos* in Greek culture (and specifically the Athenian political milieu), see e.g., Connor 1971: esp. 196-97; Donlan 1980; Scholz 1998; and Jordović 2018. On the application of these categories in contemporary philosophy, see, e.g., Taminioux 1996 on Hannah Arendt. For the Roman context, see below.

<sup>18</sup> On this association of prehistoric wisdom with the activity of philosophy, see esp. the “anthropological” section of M.’s ideal argument, *Tusc.* 1.62, where he cites Pythagoras as regarding the act of “the man who assigned a name to everything” to be one of “supreme wisdom” (*qui primus, quod summae sapientiae Pythagorae visum est, omnibus rebus imposuit nomina*). Cf. also esp. Sen., *Ep.* 90.

Cicero commences, therefore, to look back—first, to the time prior to, and then to the very moment of philosophy’s naming. The narrator tells a story, the source of which he attributes to Heraclides Ponticus, “the student of Plato and a learned man of the first degree” (*auditor Platonis Ponticus Heraclides, vir doctus in primis*), about a meeting between Pythagoras and Leon, the ruler of Phlius. In this fable, Leon is so impressed with Pythagoras’ “talent and eloquence” (*ingenium et eloquentiam*) that he asks Pythagoras what the art (*ars*) is in which he was instructed. Pythagoras replies that he has no knowledge of any art, but rather is a “philosopher” (*at illum artem quidem se scire nullam, sed esse philosophum, 5.8*). In awe at this new name, Leon asks Pythagoras to explain what he means:<sup>19</sup>

Pythagoram autem respondisse similem sibi videri vitam hominum et mercatum eum, qui haberetur maximo ludorum apparatu totius Graeciae celebritate; nam ut illic alii corporibus exercitatis gloriam et nobilitatem coronae peterent, alii emendi aut vendendi quaestu et lucro ducerentur, esset autem quoddam genus eorum, idque vel maxime ingenuum, qui nec plausum nec lucrum quaerent, sed visendi causa venirent studioseque perspicerent, quid ageretur et quo modo, item nos quasi in mercatus quandam celebritatem ex urbe aliqua sic in hanc vitam ex alia vita et natura profectos alios gloriae servire, alios pecuniae, raros esse quosdam, qui ceteris omnibus pro nihilo habitis rerum naturam studiose intuerentur; hos se appellare sapientiae studiosos—id est enim philosophos; et ut illic liberalissimum esset spectare nihil sibi adquirentem, sic in vita longe omnibus studiis contemplationem rerum, cognitionemque praestare.

Pythagoras then responded to him that the life of humans seemed to him to be similar to the market which was held along with the splendor of the greatest games before the throng of all Greece. For, there, some men, whose bodies had been trained, sought the glory and fame of a crown, others were drawn by the prospect of gain and profit of buying and selling, but there was also a certain type, and one possessing the greatest inborn quality, who were seeking neither applause nor profit, but came for the sake of seeing and looked ardently upon what was happening and how. Likewise, we, as if we had come from another city to some thronged market, in the same way had come into this life from another kind of life, some to be slaves to ambition, some to money; but there were some few, who considering all other things of no consequence were gazing

---

<sup>19</sup> This fable is also told at D.L. VIII.1.8: καὶ τὸν βίον εἰκέναι πανηγύρει· ὡς οὖν εἰς ταύτην οἱ μὲν ἀγωνιούμενοι, οἱ δὲ κατ’ ἐμπορίαν, οἱ δὲ γε βέλτιστοι ἔρχονται θεαταί, οὕτως ἐν τῷ βίῳ οἱ μὲν ἀνδραποδώδεις, ἔφη, φύονται δόξης καὶ πλεονεξίας θηραταί, οἱ δὲ φιλόσοφοι τῆς ἀληθείας. On Heraclides and the variant versions of this story, see Gottschalk 1980: 23-36. For the relationship between this variant and Cicero’s, see also below, ns. 21, 22, 23, and 103.

ardently on the nature of things; and these men were called “devoted to wisdom” (this is the meaning of *philosopher*); and, just as at the market it was most honorable to look on, seeking nothing for oneself, so in life the contemplation and consideration of things far surpasses all other pursuits.<sup>20</sup>

In Pythagoras’ analogy of the *mercatus*,<sup>21</sup> the third type (*genus*) of life is defined against the others. The first class, the “athletes,” seek *gloria* and *nobilitas* as guaranteed by a mark of victory—the *corona*. The second class, the “merchants,” are driven by a desire for the reward of money (*emendi aut vendendi quaestu et lucro*). The members of the third class, by contrast, hope for no recognition or gain for themselves individually (*nec plausum nec lucrum quaerent*). In their pursuit, they display the “greatest inborn quality” (*maxime ingenuum*).<sup>22</sup> Yet this pursuit is simply and emphatically to *look*:<sup>23</sup> they pass among the “throng” of society (*Graeciae*

---

<sup>20</sup> *Tusc.* 5.9.

<sup>21</sup> Cicero’s translation of πανήγυρις, a “general festival” or “general assembly,” which was held in the Greek world around important religious holidays and athletic events; on the Greek tradition, see, e.g., Ligt and Neeve 1988: 392-400; Dillon 2013. Note how Cicero’s translation *mercatus* foregrounds the economic rather than religious or “cultural” aspect of such an event, of which there was no equivalent in Roman society; on the importance of Cicero’s version for our understanding of this phenomenon, see Nightingale 2004: 17-18. On issues of translation in this story, see also below, ns. 23 and 103.

<sup>22</sup> Note the run of related words connecting “character,” “status,” and “type”: *ingenium* (5.8) / *ingenuum* / *genus*. Is the third group noble or free (*ingenuum*) because they are born (*genus*) that way or do they belong to a “type” (*genus*) because of their talent and disposition (*ingenium*)? In Diogene’s version the first two groups are described as “servile” (ἀνδραποδώδεις), which implies that the third group is “free.” Cicero picks this post-Socratic characterization of philosophers as “free” up in his definition, but by introducing these puns emphasizes the question of the source of that freedom. On the characterization of the philosophers in Diogenes’ version as “hunters” of truth, see below, n.103.

<sup>23</sup> There is another interesting issue of translation here: does Cicero’s choice of *visere* to translate the Greek θεωρεῖν (cf. in D.L. above n.19) affect the pursuit of the philosopher? The Greek verb has a basic meaning of “to be a spectator at an event” and so “to consider,” “to contemplate” (LSJ A.II-III), and a θεωρία refers to “being a spectator at a festival or game” (LSJ A.II). Thus, the use of this vocabulary in the Pythagorean fable throughout its Greek variations is culturally overdetermined: cf. Dillon 2013: xv, “Nothing was allowed to interrupt the worship at these festivals and shrines: when Xerxes invaded Greece in 480, the Olympic festival and its contests continued, and the Greeks ‘watched’ the athletic and equestrian events. Kleomenes II attacked the city of Argos during the Nemean festival when the city was full of the ‘festival crowd and spectators.’” For the wide-reaching implications of *theoria* in the Greek philosophical tradition, see esp. Nightingale 2004 *passim*. The Latin *visere* means “to come and see,” “to visit” (L&S II.A-B), which is supplemented by *studioseque perspicerent* in order to draw the Latin closer

*celebritate*) only “for the sake of seeing” (*visendi causa*) and “look on ardently” (*studioseque perspicerent*).<sup>24</sup> They observe “what was happening and how” (*quid ageretur et quo modo*). These pronouns *quid* and *quo* are, by necessity, placeholders—their content may change, but their form remains the object of vision. We are meant to understand this action as being analogous to the philosopher’s occupation. The philosopher “comes into this life from another kind of life” as if into “some thronged market” (*in mercatus quandam celebritatem ex urbe aliqua sic in hanc vitam ex alia vita*) to spend his time “gazing ardently on the nature of things” (*rerum naturam studiose intuerentur*) and in “contemplation and consideration” of nature (*contemplationem rerum, cognitionemque*). Therefore, the philosopher is, most simply, one who *looks*.

Perhaps the best way to distinguish between these three forms of life—the athletic, the mercantile, and the philosophical—is the question of their goals or marks of completion.<sup>25</sup> Both athletic and mercantile lives are governed by explicit marks of completion. The presence of a victorious crown or profit from a sale offers a clear measure of success upon the consummation of the activities that define these modes of life, whereas the absence of these tokens unambiguously spells a failure to achieve this consummation. An athlete cannot be an athlete without a crown, just as a merchant cannot remain a merchant for long without turning a profit.

---

to the Greek. Yet in neither case can the Latin approach the underlying cultural associations of the Greek verb. Even with Cicero’s supplements, how much gets lost in this translation?

<sup>24</sup> On the opposition of philosophical activity to “busyness” (*celebritas*) in Cicero’s thought, see above, Ch. 1, sections II and III.

<sup>25</sup> For my purpose at this point in the argument, this distinction should be held apart from the question of “usefulness,” e.g., that is suggested by Diogenes’ description of the philosophers as “hunters of truth” (θηραταί, οἱ δὲ φιλόσοφοι τῆς ἀληθείας). I discuss below the various “uses” that Cicero considers in relation to philosophical activity. Here, I am interested only in establishing the absence of a mark of completion in relation to the other two types.

The third *genus*, on the other hand, comes to the *mercatus* for neither “applause nor profit,” but simply “for the sake of seeing” (*qui nec plausum nec lucrum quaerent, sed visendi causa venient*). In this pursuit there is no extrinsic mark or token which indicates the completion of a task. There is, certainly, an internal quality or intensity (*studium, ingenium*) that characterizes the philosopher’s pursuit; this quality, however, does not easily provide a normative measure of completion or incompleteness, success or failure.

According to this anecdote, therefore, far from being a perverted form of *vita activa*, the philosophical life possesses its own coherent activity and place in the world. It is furthermore distinct from and in some way superior (*liberalissimum*) to other modes of life because it lacks an extrinsic mark, which would allow it to be judged as completed and regulated as such socially. Given this distinction and the philosophical life’s apparent differentiation from more immediately social forms of living that make up the “throng” (*celebritas*) of the market, how can we know when the philosopher has completed his task of looking? What marks the success or failure, the completion or incompleteness, of this characteristic activity?

These questions become important beyond purely “theoretical” considerations when we consider the public trajectory of Cicero’s life—both politically and with regard to his role as *paterfamilias*—and the general tendency among commentators from antiquity onwards to consider Cicero a “failure” in these realms.<sup>26</sup> Although, as we have already seen, Cicero possesses the conceptual resources with which to diagnose the infelicitous state of his life—e.g., in the recognition of his *vita* as *iam acta*—it is important to note that the notion of “failure” is a modern interpretative imposition. Cicero’s Latin lacks a single word that can easily convey the

---

<sup>26</sup> On the state of political and economic ruin in which Cicero finds himself in 46-4 BCE, see, e.g., Plut. *Cic.* 39-41; cf. Dixon 1986; Claassen 1996; Treggiari 1998; Wilcox 2005.

range of meanings governed by “failure” with its characteristic denotation of “wanting an achievement,” which comes to entail a “moral lapse.”<sup>27</sup> The Latin words that might be used, such as *defectio* or *vitium*, communicate either a failure to fulfill a certain measure or refer exclusively to a moral fault without an additional sense of incompleteness. In neither case does the word refer to a totalized condition of failure.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of this lexical difficulty, failure remains a useful category of experience with which to interrogate Cicero’s writings because from within the texts there is clearly an interest in the relationship between incompleteness and the possibilities of an ethical life, such as the attainment of happiness. As I discuss below, this interest is most prominent in Cicero’s treatment of the Hellenistic ethical philosophies.

Additionally, failure is an important interpretative category because of its pervasiveness in critical judgements of Cicero’s life in relation to his literary output. There has been a prominent trend throughout the long reception history of the dialogues that regards them as reflective of the shortcomings of the author’s active life, especially the failure of his political aims. These political failures, in turn, tend to be interpreted in light of his subsequent concern over publicly taking on the mantle of philosopher. To an extent, this connection is undeniable. Cicero, in the voice of his autobiographical narrator, insists frequently in the prefaces of the *philosophica* that he approaches his writerly endeavor to educate his fellow citizens (*doctiores cives mei*) with the same “effort, enthusiasm, and concern” (*opera, studio, labore*) that he used to handle “the juridical and political actions (*forensibus operis*), concerns (*laboribus*), and dangers

---

<sup>27</sup> See *OED* 1a & b; 2.

<sup>28</sup> Yet Cicero is clearly interested in the relation between these two concepts at this period; see, e.g., *de Sen.* 29, “although that very failure of strength is brought about more often by the faults of youth than by old age” (*etsi ipsa ista defectio virium adulescentiae vitiis efficitur saepius quam senectute*).



(*periculis*)” of the former public role to which he “had been appointed by the Roman people.”<sup>29</sup> By drawing an equivalence between his former work as a political actor, sanctioned by governmental processes of the Republic, and his current, solitary intellectual work—indeed, by characterizing philosophical writing *as* work (*opera, labor*)—Cicero invites us to consider his whole life as dedicated to a single effort, not divided into distinctive phases. This performatively autobiographical assertion, however, raises as many questions as it answers, especially surrounding the relationship between the different aspects of Cicero’s life: how are the political and the philosophical related? What is the nature of the work that can be accomplished in both modes of life? Does Cicero ever succeed in completing it?

Rather than seeing the continuity that Cicero himself stresses in his autobiographical claims about his writerly intent, many readers throughout the centuries have responded by reifying the distinction between political and intellectual activity in his life.<sup>30</sup> These responses are informed largely by an inconcinnity in ancient judgements of Cicero-the-writer as opposed to Cicero-the-“man of action.” By the time of Quintilian there was a strong tradition, probably begun even in Cicero’s own lifetime, that regarded him as the unparalleled master of Latin style. Quintilian’s judgement that Cicero’s name had become synonymous with eloquence (*nomen...eloquentiae*, 10.1.112) emphasizes Cicero’s writerly achievements without drawing attention to the failures of his life, preferring instead to isolate his stylistic virtues as laudable in

---

<sup>29</sup> *de Fin.* 1.10, *Ego vero, quoniam forensibus operis, laboribus, periculis non deseruisse mihi videor praesidium in quo a populo Romano locatus sum, debeo profecto, quantumcumque possum, in eo quoque elaborare ut sint opera, studio, labore meo doctiores cives mei.*

<sup>30</sup> For foundational work that resists this approach to the relation between politics and philosophy in Cicero’s life, see, e.g., Kretschmar 1938; Grilli 1953; André 1966; Boyancé 1970: esp. 89-134. For proponents of this approach, see below.

their own right.<sup>31</sup> Yet already Quintilian's appraisal of Cicero was reacting against an opposed and equally well-established strain of judgement, evident, for instance, in Seneca the Younger's dismissiveness of Cicero as a model for the "working philosopher," that regarded Cicero with disdain, in particular for his political ineffectiveness and his perceived personal weakness.<sup>32</sup> These two contrasting judgements—of literary success and political failure—become increasingly intertwined, as readers of Cicero attempt to make sense of the complexities of his life. By the time of Augustine the contradictions of Cicero's biography had become so solidified as to be converted into a commonplace,<sup>33</sup> which will be invigorated once again by Petrarch and other Renaissance humanists as they grapple with the rediscovery of Cicero's letter collection and the ensuing reopening of old wounds and historical perplexities.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> On Quintilian, see esp. *Inst. Orat* 10.1.105ff. with Bishop 2019: 1-7.

<sup>32</sup> On the near-contemporaneous judgements of Cicero's political achievements, see Kurczyk 2006: esp. 76-103. For Seneca's sentiments, which probably can be traced back to his father, see, e.g., *de Brev. Vit.* 5, "How tearful the words he uses in a letter written to Atticus, when Pompey the elder had been conquered, and the son was still trying to restore his shattered arms in Spain! 'Do you ask,' he said, 'what I am doing here? I am lingering in my Tusculan villa half a prisoner.' He then proceeds to other statements, in which he bewails his former life and complains of the present and despairs of the future. Cicero said that he was 'half a prisoner.' But, in very truth, never will the wise man resort to so lowly a term, never will he be half a prisoner—he who always possesses an undiminished and stable liberty, being free and his own master and towering over all others. For what can possibly be above him who is above Fortune?" (*Quam flebiles uoces exprimit in quadam ad Atticum epistula iam uicto patre Pompeio, adhuc filio in Hispania fracta arma refouente!* "Quid agam," inquit, "hic, quaeris? Moror in Tusculano meo semiliber." *Alia deinceps adicit, quibus et priorem aetatem complorat et de praesenti queritur et de futura desperat. Semiliberum se dixit Cicero. At me hercules numquam sapiens in tam humile nomen procedet, numquam semiliber erit, integrae semper libertatis et solidae, solutus et sui iuris et altior ceteris. Quid enim supra eum potest esse qui supra fortunam est?*, trans. Basore). On the reception of Cicero in the early Empire in general, see Dressler 2015 and Keeline 2018.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g., *Conf.* 3.4, where Augustine praises Cicero's "speech, which almost all admire, but not so his heart" (*cuius linguam fere omnes mirantur, pectus non ita*); cf. *Contr. Ac.* 3.18. It often seems odd that Augustine so frequently reproduces this cliché, since he almost invariably refers to the deep and transformative impact Cicero's *Hortensius* had on his study of philosophy and his conversion to Christianity.

<sup>34</sup> See esp. Petrarch's series of "Letters to Cicero," in Abbott 1897: e.g., 321, "Do thou in turn, wherever thou art, listen to this one word, which is inspired by true love for thee, a word not now of advice but of

In the modern era of scholarship, this divergence in the biographical judgement of Cicero has influenced two schools of thought concerning the relationship between Cicero's political and intellectual labors: first, there are those who, following Drumann and Mommsen in the 19th century, viewed Cicero with such personal distaste that they largely denied significance to his literary and philosophical endeavors beyond an impotent form of consolation for his political ineffectiveness.<sup>35</sup> This extreme view was cemented in the mainstream of Anglophone scholarship by Ronald Syme, who expressed the sentiment in no uncertain terms: "Political failure, driving him back on himself, had then sought and created consolations in literature and in theory: the ideal derived its shape from his own disappointments."<sup>36</sup> Although this position has somewhat fallen out of favor, in large part due to shifts in contemporary political attitudes, its influence can still be felt in the more cynical interpretations of Cicero's philosophical intent. For example, in an echo of Syme, which is softened only by her conditional phrasing, Catherine Steel clearly articulates this position: "Cicero's actions, at least as a public figure, could be seen ultimately not

---

regret, which one of the after world who is most devoted to thy memory has given utterance to not without tears. Thou who wert ever restless and full of anxiety, or that thou mayest hear again thine own words, O headstrong and unfortunate old man, why hast thou plunged into so many struggles and quarrels which would profit thee in no wise whatsoever?" On Petrarch and Cicero, see McLaughlin 2015.

<sup>35</sup> On Mommsen's appraisal, which emphasizes the precarious position of Cicero outside of the aristocracy, see, e.g., 1904 (vol. 5): 168, where he refers to Cicero as "notorisch ein politischer achselträger." He also thought very poorly of Cicero's literary merit: e.g., "Als Schriftsteller dagegen steht er vollkommen ebenso tief wie als Staatsmann. [ . . . ] Eine Journalistennatur im schlechtesten Sinne des Wortes, an Worten, wie er selber sagt, überreich, an Gedanken über alle Begriffe arm" (vol. 3: 619). For Drumann's extensive and complex antipathy toward Cicero and its legacy in Germanic scholarship, see, for a contemporary response, esp. Boissier 1897: 23-78. Cf. Zielinski 1908: esp. 280-88; Weil 1962; Altman 2015; Begemann 2015.

<sup>36</sup> 1939: 144, see further, "Fanatic intensity seems foreign to the character of Cicero, absent from his earlier career: there precisely lies the explanation. Cicero was spurred to desperate action by the memory of all the humiliations of the past...He knew how little he had achieved for the Republic despite his talent and his professions, how shamefully he had deserted his post..."; for a rebuttal of Syme, see Altman 2016: xxx-xxxi.

to have achieved their ends, and his failures demonstrate either that the brilliance of his writings was an irrelevance, or that they were in fact not as effective as their subsequent critical reputation—with the exception of his poetry—would suggest...In [any] case Cicero used writing to impose a form of success upon a situation which was, actually or potentially, one of failure.”<sup>37</sup> According to this more contemporary version of the 19th century German historicist position, Cicero turns to write philosophy out of a self-interested need to “impose a form of success” upon his personal shortcomings and political failures.

The other school of thought concerning the relationship between Cicero’s philosophy and his political activity can more properly be grouped under Woldemar Görler’s “Ersatzbeschäftigung” thesis.<sup>38</sup> This interpretation shares a similar initial biographical judgement to the more extreme view: that Cicero is to be regarded as a failed politician first, and a writer or philosopher second. This approach, however, finds in the *philosophica* a purpose beyond self-interested consolation. In its most common form, this purpose has been political—whether with specific reference to Caesar or in a more general sense.<sup>39</sup> Yelena Baraz offers a summary of this position: “Writing and the writing of philosophy in particular, became not a facet of his political life, but rather an alternative way of being in politics, a substitution that he struggled to construct as viable.”<sup>40</sup> In another mode, Caroline Bishop’s recent work applies a similar approach to Cicero’s self-promotional and autobiographical impulses. She argues that Cicero’s literary works

---

<sup>37</sup> 2005: 115.

<sup>38</sup> Görler 1990: 158. See above, Ch. 1, section II.

<sup>39</sup> This approach is based in the same Germanic historicist tradition, especially through the work of, e.g., Strasburger 1938 and Bringmann 1971; cf. Altman 2015 for a critical analysis of this tradition.

<sup>40</sup> Baraz 2012: 9. For readings that unearth more specific opposition to Caesar, see e.g., Strasburger 1990; Goldenhard 2007; and Lefèvre 2008.

are an attempt to overcome political failures in order to achieve success outside of politics, by attaining the status of a literary classic: “Another consequence of Cicero’s turn to intellectual labour as a substitute for politics is that the eternal fame he had once assumed would result from his glorious political career (especially as preserved in his own written works that illuminated and glorified it) was now more likely to result from the writing itself.”<sup>41</sup> These recent permutations of the Ersatzbeschäftigung thesis attempt to recuperate Cicero’s intellectual labors, but they are fundamentally based on a distinction between the political and writerly pursuits of his life, which can, in turn, be traced back to the originally conflicting ancient biographical judgements.

The limits of the Ersatzbeschäftigung thesis to explain Cicero’s own claims about his philosophical project have not gone unnoticed. For instance, commenting on Cicero’s letters from the early 40s, Baraz contends, “Just as he tried to incorporate philosophy as much as possible into his practice as an active statesman, and gestured towards a whole-hearted acceptance of the contemplative life in times of political difficulties, so in the post-civil war period, when he is debarred from politics, he is yet unable to resign himself to ‘pure’ philosophy. The political ends up permeating everything he does....It reflects his desire to reject the divisive view and bring the two spheres, politics and philosophy, together in a harmonious whole.”<sup>42</sup> Baraz sees Cicero as essentially a political actor, whose turn to intellectual activity under Caesar cannot be considered “pure” since “the political ends up permeating everything he does.” Consequently, even as she notes Cicero’s “desire” to bring politics and philosophy into a “harmonious whole,” she nevertheless denies this desire by explaining his entire project under

---

<sup>41</sup> Bishop 2019: 6.

<sup>42</sup> 2012: 76-77.

the rubric of politics. For Baraz, Cicero can only ever be a politician, and thus a failed politician, whose turn to philosophical activity is ultimately an admission of this failure.

With opposite result, William Altman also notes the limits of the *Ersatzbeschäftigung* thesis to account for the way in which Cicero presents his life's work as a unified effort. In particular, he criticizes the central idea that Cicero should be considered a politician first, and that his turn to philosophy is necessarily the result of his political failure:

“It is perfectly true that it was a political defeat—the complete and total victory of Caesar over the Republic—that made it possible for Cicero to do nothing else but think and write. But just as it takes years of political preparation to be in a position of influence from which to benefit the Republic in its hour of need, so also did it take years of contemplation (cf. *contemplans ea quae extra sunt*) to take advantage of the enforced *otium* that Caesar's dictatorship created for Cicero. Cicero did not turn to philosophy because his politics had failed; he turned to politics in the first place because Plato's philosophy had long since won the undying approbation of his innermost self.”<sup>43</sup>

While Altman's focus on Cicero's “revival of Platonism” is his own emphatic contribution to the field of Ciceronian philosophy,<sup>44</sup> his essential point is an important one: any view that considers the political as the principal type of life that Cicero leads is overlooking the longevity and seriousness of his engagement with philosophy.<sup>45</sup> Thus, whereas Baraz considers Cicero's life pursuit as unified only under the rubric of politics, Altman defends the position that his life's work is principally philosophical, with his political action a manifestation of philosophical contemplation and belief.

While Baraz and Altman both address the pervasive and contradictory judgements underlying the *Ersatzbeschäftigung* thesis, the problem that I see in this common view arises less

---

<sup>43</sup> 2016: xxx-xxxii.

<sup>44</sup> See *ibid.*: 27-123.

<sup>45</sup> In addition to Altman 2016, see esp. André 1966; Görler 1990; Lévy 2012.

from issues of biography and more from within the philosophical debates of the texts themselves.<sup>46</sup> What is at stake in the appraisal of Cicero's life is not simply whether he should be remembered as a failed politician, a politician who overcame his failure through his intellectual ability, or a philosopher who dabbled ineffectually in politics. At the heart of this biographical disagreement is a series of questions about the nature of the human experience of failure—whether it can be overcome, whether there exists a form of life that is insulated from it, and what, in essence, it means to fail *in life*. Furthermore, these are not simply hermeneutic questions for us to ask of Cicero's life and work; they are also the same questions that Cicero himself asks when he subjects the *genera vitae* to philosophical analysis and critique. What all of these biographical approaches to Cicero's philosophical writings overlook are the ways in which he ensures that they do not “impose a form of success” upon failure, but rather, through them, seeks to *inhabit* that failure through inquiry, to complicate the consideration of success and failure, and, finally, to offer up failure itself as the product of the unknowable future.

### III. A Life Beyond Failure

I turn now to consider more closely how Cicero conceives of philosophical life and the role that the characteristic activity of “contemplation and consideration” (*contemplatio cognitioque*), familiar from the Pythagorean fable, plays in it.<sup>47</sup> In the first part of the section, I

---

<sup>46</sup> It is notable that many of the scholars cited in this section as proponents of the Ersatzbeschäftigung thesis focus their analysis on Cicero's pragmatic presentation of his work—especially by means of the prologues—rather than on the content of the dialogues themselves. The limitations of this approach are sometimes acknowledged, see e.g., Bishop 2019: 15 n.55: “It should be noted that I am not suggesting that the Greek authors Cicero adapted into Latin meant nothing more to him than models on which he could build his own canonicity. Though discussion of this aspect of his adaptations is largely outside the scope of this study, it is clear that he engaged deeply with Plato, Aristotle, and Demosthenes, and adapted them because *he thought there was real benefit in such adaptations for Roman readers*” (my emphasis). For my purposes, the latter bears more interpretative weight than the former.

<sup>47</sup> Following a prevalent Academic strain of intellectual history, Cicero traced his understanding of the characteristic philosophical activity, defined as the “observation” or “consideration” of nature, to pre-

examine Cicero's skeptical treatment of the equation between the consummation of life and happiness that the Hellenistic schools inherited from the Aristotelian model of philosophical *theoria*. In doing so, I propose that Cicero offers an understanding of philosophy's characteristic activity as, in Aristotelian terms, atelic—that is, lacking an internal perfection and functioning as part of an ongoing process. I then ask, in the second part of the section, if Cicero's practice of *contemplatio* is atelic and processual, what is the external goal or aim that it seeks or produces? In answer to this question, I consider the relationship between Cicero's *contemplatio* and the Platonic model of *theoria*, which aims at “seeing” truth. I contend ultimately that Cicero extends his skeptical treatment of philosophical activity also to Platonic *theoria* in order to envision a mode of living for the philosopher that is defined not as much by the present act of seeing, but by the inhabitation of the *ateleia* or failure of observation as the manifestation of an unknowable future horizon. In Cicero's philosophical life, *contemplatio* becomes an activity not done for its own sake, nor to realize happiness or truth in the present life, but for the sake of something—an event, a change, a form of life—that has not yet, and may never, come about.

### III.i. Contemplation, Completion, and Happiness

Aristotle's conception of philosophy as the pursuit of a *vita contemplativa* or *bios theoretikos* informs much of the Hellenistic debate concerning the possibilities of a life.

---

Socratic philosophy; see, e.g., *Tusc.* 5.10. Jaeger 1960 [1928] argued that this form of historical argumentation may be an anachronistic retrojection of the Academy's *Lebensideal* onto the pre-Socratics; for critiques of this position, which emphasize the importance of the observation of nature for the Ionian philosophers, cf. Festugière 1950: 20-44; Gottschalk 1980; Nightingale 2004: 29-34. Regardless of its ultimate provenance, the forms of the *vita philosophica* and the role of *contemplatio* in Cicero's dialogues are most notably of Platonic and Aristotelian articulation: on Platonic *theoria*, see, e.g., Reeve 1988: 81-117; Nightingale 2004: 94-138; and on Aristotle, Lear 2004: 175-208; Nightingale 2004: 187-251. The relationship between *theoria* and the eudaimonistic ethics of the Hellenistic schools has often been seen as a source of contention. On these debates, see esp. Bénatouil and Bonazzi, eds. 2012 *passim*. For my purposes, I am less interested in the historicity of the different arguments among the Greek schools and more in Cicero's representation of them.



Establishing a series of distinctions in *Metaphysics* IX, Aristotle characterizes the activity of “theorizing” or “seeing” as an “actualization” (ἐνέργεια).<sup>48</sup> This means that, before coming to the question of the “theoretical” life, Aristotle has constructed a metaphysical basis for the characteristic activity of the philosopher as one that has no external limit (πέρας), but contains its own end (τέλος) or “complete condition...at any moment of its duration—it is an ‘entelechy.’”<sup>49</sup> Contemplation is thus conceived of as an end in itself and not a means to an end, a form of “actuality” not of becoming. In *Nicomachean Ethics* X, then, Aristotle formulates the character of a life that partakes in this *energeia*. He defines the theoretical life in relation to other forms of life that have the potential to be virtuous and happy, especially the political life.<sup>50</sup> By comparison, the activity of a life spent in intellectual observation is superior (κρατίστη τε γὰρ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἢ ἐνέργεια) to that offered by politics because it is based on an exercise of “the mind” (ὁ νοῦς), is the “most continuous” (συνεχεστάτη), and permits of pleasures that are “marvelously pure and permanent” (θαυμαστάς ἡδονάς...καθαριότητι καὶ τῷ βεβαίῳ), which are all the more secure because contemplation is “self-sufficient” (αὐτάρκεια).<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> For the Aristotelian definitions, see esp. *Metaphys.* IX.6 (1048b18-36).

<sup>49</sup> Nightingale 2004: 201. By contrast, Aristotle defines “motions” (*kineseis*), such as walking or building, as a means to an end, not supplying their own end—so, therefore, *ateles*: “For it is not the same thing which at the same time is walking and has walked, or is building and has built, or is becoming and has become...But the same thing at the same time is seeing and has seen, is thinking and has thought” (οὐ γὰρ ἅμα βαδίζει καὶ βεβάδικεν, οὐδ’ οἰκοδομεῖ καὶ ᾠκοδόμηκεν, οὐδὲ γίγνεται καὶ γέγονεν...ἐώρακε δὲ καὶ ὄρᾳ ἅμα τὸ αὐτό, καὶ νοεῖ καὶ νενόηκεν, 1048b31-34; trans. Tredennick).

<sup>50</sup> As Nightingale 2004: 189 points out, *theoria* for Aristotle constitutes less a “form of life” comparable to activities of the practical *bioi* and more of “the actualization of *nous*, which is the divine part of man; it is the pure noetic activity that gods engage in, and is only done ‘for its own sake.’” All the same, Aristotle introduces the theoretical life in *Eth. Nic.* X by contrasting it with practical ways of living and by describing the conditions of leisure and happiness that are its embodied aspects.

<sup>51</sup> See *ibid.*: 209 for the ideological implications of this formulation.

But perhaps even more important for Aristotle’s argument, and certainly for the whole Hellenistic tradition and Cicero’s response to it, is his contention that, contrary to active forms of life, contemplation exists as the ultimate end for human life itself, and thus is “identical to or coextensive with happiness”:<sup>52</sup>

δόξαι τ’ ἂν αὐτὴ μόνη δι’ αὐτὴν ἀγαπᾶσθαι· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀπ’ αὐτῆς γίνεται παρὰ τὸ θεωρῆσαι, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν πρακτικῶν ἢ πλεῖον ἢ ἕλαττον περιποιούμεθα παρὰ τὴν πρᾶξιν. δοκεῖ τε ἡ εὐδαιμονία ἐν τῇ σχολῇ εἶναι· ἀσχολούμεθα γὰρ ἵνα σχολάζωμεν καὶ πολεμοῦμεν ἵν’ εἰρήνην ἄγωμεν...εἰ δὴ τῶν μὲν κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς πράξεων αἱ πολιτικαὶ καὶ πολεμικαὶ κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει προέχουσιν, αὗται δ’ ἄσχολοι καὶ τέλους τινὸς ἐφίενται καὶ οὐ δι’ αὐτὰς αἰρεταί εἰσιν, ἢ δὲ τοῦ νοῦ ἐνέργεια σπουδῆ τε διαφέρειν δοκεῖ θεωρητικὴ οὕσα καὶ παρ’ αὐτὴν οὐδενὸς ἐφίεσθαι τέλους, ἔχειν τε ἡδονὴν οἰκείαν (αὕτη δὲ συναύξει τὴν ἐνέργειαν), καὶ τὸ αὐτάρκες δὴ καὶ σχολαστικὸν καὶ ἄτρυτον ὡς ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τῷ μακαρίῳ ἀπονέμεται, τὰ κατὰ ταύτην τὴν ἐνέργειαν φαίνεται ὄντα· ἡ τελεία δὴ εὐδαιμονία αὕτη ἂν εἴη ἀνθρώπου, λαβοῦσα μῆκος βίου τέλειον· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀτελές ἐστὶ τῶν τῆς εὐδαιμονίας.

Also the activity of contemplation may be held to be the only activity that is loved for its own sake: it produces no result beyond the actual act of contemplation, whereas from practical pursuits we look to secure some advantage, greater or smaller, beyond the action itself. Also happiness is thought to involve leisure; for we do business in order that we may have leisure, and carry on war in order that we may have peace...If then among practical pursuits displaying the virtues, politics and war stand out pre-eminent in nobility and grandeur, and yet they are unleisured, and directed to some further end, not chosen for their own sakes: whereas the activity of the intellect is felt to excel in serious worth, consisting as it does in observation, and to aim at no end beyond itself, and also to contain a pleasure peculiar to itself, and therefore augmenting its activity: and if accordingly the attributes of this activity are found to be self-sufficiency, leisuredness, such freedom from fatigue as is possible for man, and all the other attributes of blessedness: it follows that it is the activity of the intellect that constitutes complete human happiness—provided it be granted a complete span of life, for nothing that belongs to happiness can be incomplete.<sup>53</sup>

For Aristotle, *theoria* is the only (αὐτὴ μόνη) activity for human life that is pursued as an end in itself. Unlike politics or war, which must be directed towards attaining a further end—as war is fought for the sake of peace (πολεμοῦμεν ἵν’ εἰρήνην ἄγωμεν)—contemplation is “loved for

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.: 218.

<sup>53</sup> *Eth. Nic.* X.5-7 (1177b). Trans. Rackham.

itself” (δι’ αὐτήν ἀγαπᾶσθαι). The manifestation of this self-reflexivity in the life of the theoretician is given the specific name of “leisure” (ἐν τῇ σχολῇ). This state of “leisuredness” and “freedom from fatigue” (καὶ σχολαστικὸν καὶ ἄτρυτον), which is the end for which other activities strive, is for *theoria* the condition of its activity. According to Aristotle, therefore, the activity of intellectual contemplation “constitutes complete human happiness” (ἡ τελεία δὴ εὐδαιμονία αὕτη ἂν εἴη ἀνθρώπου)—that is, it constitutes the “consummation” or “end” (τελεία) of happiness for human forms of life. This climax of the argument comes with a caveat, however, that in order to achieve consummation (τελεία), this activity must be extended throughout the “complete span of life” (“the span of life up until its end,” μῆκος βίου τέλειον),<sup>54</sup> since “nothing that belongs to happiness can be incomplete” (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀτελές ἐστι τῶν τῆς εὐδαιμονίας). Thus, for Aristotle, the essential features of the philosopher’s life spent in *theoria* are its completeness (τελεία, τέλειον) and its coextension with human happiness.<sup>55</sup> The point of its self-reflexivity and self-sufficiency is to realize the utmost possibility of human life—filling the lifetime with happiness up until its very end. By crafting this definition, Aristotle ensures that happiness is likewise defined by antonymy to *incompleteness*. Happiness must be a state that allows nothing to be ἀτελές.

---

<sup>54</sup> On the nature of this *bios teleios*, see *Eth. Nic.* I.16 (1098a), “Moreover, to be happy takes a complete lifetime; for one swallow does not make spring, nor does one fine day; and similarly one day or a brief period of happiness does not make a man supremely blessed and happy” (ἔτι δ’ ἐν βίῳ τελείῳ· μία γὰρ χελιδὼν ἕαρ οὐ ποιεῖ, οὐδὲ μία ἡμέρα· οὕτω δὲ οὐδὲ μακάριον καὶ εὐδαιμόνα μία ἡμέρα οὐδ’ ὀλίγος χρόνος, trans. Rackham). Cf. Irwin 1985: 104-6; Farwell 1995.

<sup>55</sup> On the relationship to happiness, see also the analogy between sight and pleasure earlier at *Eth. Nic.* X.4 (1174b): “Now the act of sight appears to be perfect at any moment of its duration; it does not require anything to supervene later in order to perfect its specific quality. But pleasure also appears to be a thing of this nature” (δοκεῖ γὰρ ἡ μὲν ὄρασις καθ’ ὄντιν οὖν χρόνον τελεία εἶναι· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐνδεής οὐδενός, ὃ εἰς ὕστερον γενόμενον τελειώσει αὐτῆς τὸ εἶδος· τοιοῦτω δ’ ἔοικε καὶ ἡ ἡδονή). On the connections between the perfection of pleasure and that of happiness, see González 1991.

In tracing the influence of this formulation on Cicero's dialogues, we can see how he exploits the connections between completion and happiness drawn by Aristotle's definition to interrogate the inconclusiveness of Hellenistic eudaimonism. Cicero's presentation of Stoic and Epicurean ethics across the dialogues demonstrates that, while they preserve the association between the consummation of human life and happiness, they conceive of *contemplatio* specifically—and philosophical activity more generally—as an atelic process.<sup>56</sup> For the Hellenistic schools, philosophical activity is aimed always at producing an end outside itself: in particular, *virtus* or *voluptas*. By treating these atelic philosophical processes in a skeptical mode, Cicero's own representation of philosophical activity puts the ends of the Hellenistic schools into a dialectical relationship with one another.<sup>57</sup> Cicero's approach to the eudaimonism of post-Aristotelian ethics, therefore, is doubly atelic: it both demonstrates the inconclusiveness of the Stoic and Epicurean identification of happiness with the consummation of life and it shows how the atelic philosophical activities through which these schools realize their *fines* are bound to a further, and also inconclusive, process.

---

<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., Rorty 1980: 386 for the characterization of philosophical theorization as a *kinesis* rather than, as it is for Aristotle, an *energeia*.

<sup>57</sup> As we saw in Ch. 1 and 2, Cicero frequently employs skeptical *divisiones* within his individual dialogues in order to show up the inconclusiveness of Hellenistic eudaimonism. The explicit presentations of this type of meta-argument are found at *de Fin.* 2.33-43, 4.49-50, 5.16-22; cf. *Luc.* 138-41. See also Lévy 1992: 335-444; Algra 1997. A similar skeptical approach can be seen at the macro-level across Cicero's life and work. While a full consideration of this lifelong pursuit lies beyond the scope of this section, it is notable that even within the writing of 45-4 we find a fluctuation of opinion or the movement of situational approvability that characterizes a skeptical *divisio*. The foundation for such a biographical study is readily available, see, e.g., Kretschmar 1938; Görler 1990, etc.

In Cicero's most elaborate defense of Stoic ethics from the final book of the *Tusculans*, M. introduces *contemplatio*, understood specifically as an "investigation" (*indagatio*)<sup>58</sup> into the natural world, as an important tool for attaining invulnerable virtue.<sup>59</sup> By returning to a pre-Aristotelian, pre-Socratic understanding of *theoria*<sup>60</sup> M.'s Stoic mode emphasizes how observation of the world stands not as the consummation, but at the beginning of a longer sequence of activities that define the philosophical life.<sup>61</sup> Asking his interlocutor to "imagine a man preeminent in the best abilities" and to "play in our minds for a moment with this depiction" (*Sumatur enim nobis quidam praestans vir optimis artibus isque animo parumper et cogitatione fingatur*, 5.68), M. lays out a course of philosophical education that would bring his ideal pupil to the fulfillment of his potential. After deciding to pursue a study of the "threefold offspring of the mind" (*triplex ille animi fetus*), he embarks on the first of philosophy's *logoi*: physics (*in cognitione rerum positus et in explicatione naturae*). The study of physics arises from the

---

<sup>58</sup> A rare word in classical Latin, occurring in Cicero to refer to the investigation of truths; see *Luc.* 127-8 (addressed below), *Off.* 1.15 (*indagatio atque inventio veri*); cf. Vitruvius' application of the word to specific mathematical and physical inquiries (*de Arch.* 5.3, 5.5).

<sup>59</sup> In Cicero's presentation of Stoic philosophy, he tends to downplay the role of *contemplatio*. In keeping with the emphasis of the school, he prefers to present *cognitio rerum* as an exercise of logic, not natural observation. For a more characteristic presentation, see *de Fin.* 3.17-8, where he uses the term *cognitiones rerum* alongside *comprehensiones* and *perceptiones* to translate the basic Stoic epistemological term, κατάληψις. This is not to say that the Stoic model of philosophical activity is irreconcilable with *theoria*, only that in Cicero's presentation this reconciliation is not emphasized except in the present passage; on the Stoic basis for this depiction of *theoria*, see esp. Forschner 2002. On Stoic *theoria* more generally, see esp. Sen. *de Otio* with Graver 2012; and Inwood 2009.

<sup>60</sup> On the relationship between this pre-Socratic understanding of *theoria* and later applications, see above, n.47.

<sup>61</sup> Although this passage demonstrates that an investigation of nature can be understood as part of a Stoic education and, as Forschner 2009 argues, some of its specific formulations can be traced to Zeno, there is a notable confluence of influences in M.'s description: cf. esp. the shared diction with Lucretius (n.64 and 66 below) and also a closely parallel passage at *Tusc.* 1.61-3, where the "discovery and conceptualization" (*inventio atque cogitatio*) of "hidden matters" (*occulta*) is attributed explicitly to the philosophical heritage of Pythagoras and Plato. On this aspect of Stoic *theoria* in Seneca, see Graver 2012: esp. 98-100.

wondrous joy (*gaudium*) that the philosophical student feels spending his nights “discovering the movements and rotations of the whole universe and seeing the innumerable stars adhering to motion of the vault of heaven.”<sup>62</sup> From this impulse to observe, M. contends,

Inde est indagatio nata initiorum et tamquam seminum, unde essent omnia orta, generata, concreta, quaeque cuiusque generis vel inanimi vel animantis vel muti vel loquentis origo, quae vita, qui interitus quaeque ex alio in aliud vicissitudo atque mutatio, unde terra et quibus librata ponderibus, quibus cavernis maria sustineantur. qua omnia delata gravitate medium mundi locum semper expetant, qui est idem infimus in rotundo.

...was born the whole investigation into the beginnings and, as it were, seeds from which everything arose, was propagated and consolidated: what was the origin of every type of thing, whether inanimate or animate, mute or speaking, what is life, what is death, what is the change and transformation of one thing into another, from where the earth came to be and by what weights it is balanced, and by what caverns the seas are upheld, by what force of gravity all things are carried to the center of the universe, which is just like the lowest place in a sphere.<sup>63</sup>

The ideal student’s journey through philosophy commences fittingly where, M. contends, philosophy itself begins. The study of the movements of the universe allows the *praestans vir* to understand the “the seeds from which everything arose, was propagated, and consolidated” (*seminum, unde essent omnia orta, generata, concreta*),<sup>64</sup> enabling him to discover the “origin of every type of thing” (*quaeque cuiusque generis...origo*). Consideration of origins also creates a general understanding of change (*ex alio in aliud vicissitudo atque mutatio*)<sup>65</sup>—including life and

---

<sup>62</sup> *Quo tandem igitur gaudio adfici necesse est sapientis animum cum his habitantem pernoctantemque curis! ut, cum totius mundi motus conversionesque perspexerit sideraque viderit innumerabilia caelo inhaerentia cum eius ipsius motu congruere certis infixis sedibus...*

<sup>63</sup> *Tusc.* 5.69.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *Lucr.*, who uses Cicero’s wording here to refer to similar phenomena: *semina*, e.g., 1.59, 1.169, 1.176 etc; *concretus* < *concerno*, e.g., 1.1019, 5.466 etc. Yet here the *semina* seem to refer explicitly to the Stoic σπερματικοὶ λόγοι, from which the world begins anew after the *ekpurōsis*; on this process, see Long and Sedley 1987: i.274-79 (46).

<sup>65</sup> On this particularly Ciceronian collocation, see above *Intro.*, section I. Cf. with the variant *commutatio*, *de Orat.* 3.225, *de Rep.* 1.45; *Tusc. Disp.* 1.68, *de Nat. De.* 1.52, 1.100 (both of these usages are

death (*vita...interitus*)—as well as a more granular familiarity with the organization of the universe, including the “weights” (*libata*) by which the earth is balanced, how the seas remain in place,<sup>66</sup> and the shape of the “universe” (*mundus*) as a whole. M.’s argument thus maintains the connection between philosophical activity and a form of contemplation. Yet this activity is conceived not as the consummation of the philosophical life but as the first step in an ongoing education. It is in itself incomplete and aims ultimately to enable the student to progress to “the art of living” (*in ratione vivendi*).<sup>67</sup>

In M.’s Stoic argument, only this further pursuit of the “art of living” offers the *praestans vir* the possibility of a happiness that consists in living in accordance with virtue, which is equivalent to living in agreement with nature.<sup>68</sup> Instead of, like Aristotle, attempting to ensure happiness by proposing *theoria* as an entirely self-reflexive and self-sufficient activity that constitutes its own circumstance in the form of leisure, the Stoics argue that happiness can only be secure if it is based, not on this specific activity, but in attainment of unassailable virtue. As M. argues in support of this position against the Peripatetic, “In my opinion, virtuous men are also supremely happy. For if a man is confident of the goods that he has, what does he lack for living happily?...Yet a man who adopts the threefold division of goods [i.e., a Peripatetic or Antiochean] inevitably lacks confidence...No one can be happy without a good which is secure,

---

specifically concerning astronomy). On the connection between this passage and Cicero’s interest in the *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum*, see below, section IV.

<sup>66</sup> For an elaboration of this theory, see *de Nat. De.* 2.116; for a competing theory, cf. *Lucretius* 5.261-272, 6.608-638.

<sup>67</sup> *Tusc.* 5.68; the mss. for this phrase are corrupt. This is Wesenberg’s correction, cf. Pohlenz *in ratione bene vivendi*.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. e.g., *Stobaeus* 2.77 = Long and Sedley 1987: i.394 (63A).

stable, and lasting.”<sup>69</sup> Speaking as a Stoic, M. rejects an Aristotelian *Lebensideal* and the division of goods on which it is constructed: since contemplation is an activity of the intellect, it involves the goods of the mind, yet at the same time it is contingent, from the Stoic perspective, on the “indifferents” of circumstance in the presence or absence of leisure and freedom from disturbance. Following the Stoics, M. ties happiness exclusively to virtue, thereby logically freeing the attainment of happiness from the circumstances of a life. The self-sufficiency and completeness that Aristotle locates in the contemplative life, the Stoics place in the only good that is “secure, stable, and lasting” (*stabili et fixo et permanente bono*).

On the form of the philosophical life, therefore, the Stoics take a broader view. To live in accordance with nature as a human being inevitably involves considerations of community and the determining factors of a shared life.<sup>70</sup> M.’s defense of the Stoic position in the final book of the *Tusculans* and Cicero’s own dedication to public life would seem to indicate that he himself found these arguments, at certain times and in certain states of mind, persuasive or compelling. Yet this situational “approvability” should not be confused for the conclusion of an inquiry. The strong defense of Stoic eudaimonia in the *Tusculans* indicates only the continuation of an ongoing investigation into the post-Aristotelian framework that conjoins the perfection and completeness of a life with the attainability of happiness. It is especially significant in this regard that one of Cicero’s most clearly stated formulations of the skeptical prerogative occurs at the

---

<sup>69</sup> *Sed mihi videntur etiam beatissimi: quid enim deest ad beate vivendum ei, qui confidit suis bonis? ...At diffidat necesse est qui bona dividit triperdito...Atque nisi stabili et fixo et permanente bono beatus esse nemo potest*, 5.40

<sup>70</sup> Cf. the old Stoic doctrine, attributed to Chrysippus by D.L. VII.121: “The wise person will engage in politics if nothing hinders him” (Πολιτεύσεσθαί φασι τὸν σοφὸν ἂν μὴ τι κωλύῃ, 7.121). The emphasis on Stoic dedication to community is especially evident in the theory of *oikeiosis* (on which, see above, Ch. 1, section IV) and in the later Stoics, e.g., Marc. Aurel., 5.16.



climax of the argument in *Tusc.* 5 in M.'s response to a request from A. to consider the Stoic ideal in relation to the other schools: "Let us therefore employ our freedom, which is allowed for us alone among the philosophical schools, concerning these things of which our speech itself makes no judgement, but instead considers all the parts, in order that the question might be decided by others on its own bases without invoking any particular authority."<sup>71</sup> Any consideration of Cicero's advocacy of a *virtus*-oriented political life—or his choice to pursue such a life—must be made in relation to this skeptical process. The *incompletion* of Cicero's own inquiry into how best his life might be led is made evident, in particular, by his frequent expressions of a thwarted desire to live, not a life of political *ambitio*, but a quietist life as adduced by Epicurean ethics.<sup>72</sup> Cicero's engagement with the positions of these two schools, therefore, is best understood within the context of a skeptical and inconclusive inquiry into happiness as the consummation of the possibilities of a *vita*.

In a parallel to his depiction of a Stoic education in the *Tusculans*, Cicero's presentation of the Epicurean system locates contemplation of the natural world at the beginning of an ongoing process of philosophical activity aimed at securing the school's *finis: voluptas*.<sup>73</sup> In Torquatus' summary of Epicureanism, for instance, he challenges other philosophies' reliance on

---

<sup>71</sup> *Utamur igitur libertate, qua nobis solis in philosophia licet uti, quorum oratio nihil ipsa iudicat, sed habetur in omnis partis, ut ab aliis possit ipsa per sese nullius auctoritate adiuncta iudicari*, 5.83. Note the particular emphasis on letting others decide the question.

<sup>72</sup> On this pattern in Cicero's life, see esp. Kretschmar 1938; André 1966; Lévy 2012.

<sup>73</sup> On the relationship between Epicureanism and *theoria* in general, see Grilli 1953: 48-89. Cf., however, Bénatouïl and Bonazzi 2012: 2-14, who argue for a much stronger continuity of *theoria* among all the Hellenistic schools. For a more recent perspective on Epicurean *theoria*, see esp., Erler 2012.

dialectic, claiming that it “has no bearing on living well nor in improving the incisiveness of thought.”<sup>74</sup> Instead, he explains,

In physicis plurimum posuit. ea scientia et verborum vis et natura orationis et consequentium repugnantiumve ratio potest perspicere. omnium autem rerum natura cognita levamur superstitione, liberamur mortis metu, non conturbamur ignoratione rerum, e qua ipsa horribiles existunt saepe formidines. denique etiam morati melius erimus, cum didicerimus quid natura desideret. tum vero, si stabilem scientiam rerum tenebimus, servata illa, quae quasi delapsa de caelo est ad cognitionem omnium, regula, ad quam omnia iudicia rerum diriguntur, numquam ullius oratione victi sententia desistemus.

[Epicurus] located [these guides] especially in physics. Through this knowledge we can understand the meaning of words, the nature of speech, and the laws of consistency and contradiction. Moreover, by our understanding of universal nature we are freed from superstition and fear of death, no longer being disturbed by our ignorance of the world, from which terrible fears often arise with no other basis. Finally, we will become better civilized after we learn what nature desires. Only then, if we hold fast a well-established knowledge of the world, preserving the canon, which, as it were, fell from heaven to be understood by all, against which all our judgements are measured, will we be able to persist in our belief, never being conquered by the eloquence of any man.<sup>75</sup>

Torquatus locates the bedrock of the Epicurean system in a “knowledge” (*scientia*) or “understanding” of the nature of the world (*omnium...rerum natura cognita*). Thus, as with the Stoic use of *cognitio rerum* in *Tusc.* 5, we find inquiry into nature as the key component of an ongoing philosophical development that is used to defend the school’s *finis*. In the Epicurean mode, this basis of philosophical activity entirely supplants logic in order to provide a non-dialectical “canon” (*regula*) by which the practitioner can stand firm in his knowledge against the “eloquence” of the other schools.<sup>76</sup> Yet the more fundamental use of contemplation for

---

<sup>74</sup> *In dialectica autem vestra nullam existimavit esse nec ad melius vivendum nec ad commodius disserendum vim.*

<sup>75</sup> *de Fin.* 1.63.

<sup>76</sup> On the Epicurean “canon” (*κανών*, *regula*) as an alternative formulation to philosophical logic, see D.L. X.30-5. The essential idea is that “our sensations and preconceptions and our feelings are the standards of

Epicurean ethics is the liberation “from superstition and fear of death” (*levamur superstitione, liberamur mortis metu*) that Torquatus tells us comes with an “understanding of universal nature” (*omnium autem rerum natura cognita*).<sup>77</sup> This liberation, in turn, allows the Epicurean to be a more “civilized” or “moral” person (*morati melius erimus*) because he will understand “what nature desires” (*quid natura desideret*)—i.e., pleasure. The *tranquillitas* that results from this process of liberation through natural inquiry constitutes the circumstances of the sage’s *beata vita* and cements the post-Aristotelian association between happiness and the consummation of life in the Epicurean context.<sup>78</sup> Torquatus’ formulation of a philosophical life thus converts aspects of Aristotle’s *Lebensideal*, especially in its equation of happiness with the enjoyment of leisure and an untroubled retirement from obligation, for the Epicurean’s own chosen life-pursuit.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, however, the philosophical activity of *cognitio rerum*, for the Epicurean as for the Stoic, is conceived of as a means to a further end, not as an end in itself.

---

truth” (κριτήρια τῆς ἀληθείας εἶναι τὰς αἰσθήσεις καὶ προλήψεις καὶ τὰ πάθη, D.L. X.31). Cf. Long and Sedley 1987: i.87-97 (17-18).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *KD* 11-12, “Were we not upset by the worries that celestial phenomena and death might matter to us, and also by failure to appreciate the limits of pains and desires, we would have no need for natural philosophy...Hence without natural philosophy there is no way of securing the purity of our pleasures,” (εἰ μὴθὲν ἡμᾶς αἰ τῶν μετεώρων ὑποψία ἠνώγλουν καὶ αἰ περὶ θανάτου, μὴ ποτε πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἦ τι, ἔτι τε τὸ μὴ κατανοεῖν τοὺς ὄρους τῶν ἀλγηδόνων καὶ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, οὐκ ἂν προσεδεόμεθα φυσιολογίας...ὥστε οὐκ ἦν ἄνευ φυσιολογίας ἀκεραίους τὰς ἡδονὰς ἀπολαμβάνειν). Note that the purity of the pleasures achieved by Epicurus through the exercise of *φυσιολογία* recalls the “marvelously pure and permanent pleasures” (θαυμαστάς ἡδονὰς...καθαρεϊότητα καὶ τῷ βεβαίῳ) that Aristotle locates in contemplation. Yet the philosophical contemplation that Aristotle holds as the end of happiness in itself is converted into a means through which pleasure can be attained and secured. In the pursuit of an undisturbed life outside of conventional social activities, Epicurus appropriates the form of Aristotle’s contemplative life, while repurposing its content—philosophical speculation (*φυσιολογία*)—to a further end.

<sup>78</sup> For Torquatus’ account of Epicurean tranquillity and its relation to the *beata vita*, see esp. 1.40-4; 71-2.

<sup>79</sup> On the relationship between Aristotelian *theoria* and Epicurean *physiologia*, see esp. Erler 2012: 48-55.

Cicero's opposition to Epicurean ethics arises particularly from the popularity of the school among the Roman political elite.<sup>80</sup> His anti-Epicurean persona specifically takes aim at the Garden's apparent rejection of public service in the manner of the *mos maiorum* in favor of a self-interested, pleasure-oriented life apart from politics.<sup>81</sup> For instance, in the Ciceronian speaker's response to Torquatus in *de Fin.* 2, he sarcastically asks, "What do you wish to earn, when soon you will enter into a magistracy and you will address the meeting (for you will need to pronounce how you will administer justice, and perhaps even, since it will occur to you, you will say something about your ancestors and the *mos maiorum*)—what, therefore, will you earn by saying that you will perform all the duties of the magistracy for the sake of pleasure and that you have done nothing in life except for the sake of pleasure?"<sup>82</sup> Cicero protests that the choice of *voluptas* as the ultimate end of life destroys the viability of a political life for an Epicurean in the Roman context. Torquatus is presented with the scenario of standing in front of a *contio* and, while recalling his noble, stalwart ancestors, pledging his adherence to pleasure as the guiding principle of his life. In keeping with the tendencies of the skeptical *divisio*, Cicero thus locates

---

<sup>80</sup> On the complexity of Cicero's anti-Epicureanism, see Howe 1951; Maslowski 1974; Lotito 1981; Lévy 2003a; Hanchey 2013. On Epicureanism at Rome, see e.g., Griffin 1989; Sedley 2009; for literary approaches via Lucretius, see Fowler 1989; Auvray-Assayas 2003; Schiesaro 2009.

<sup>81</sup> It is clear that this is not the best understanding of Epicurus' teaching on the preferability of an undisturbed life, but rather Cicero's own polemical position. Epicureanism more likely counseled its adherents to avoid public life when such a life would place undue obstacles and discomfort in their path. In the case of the many well-born, prominent, and already active Epicureans, however, no such injunction would necessarily be forthcoming. On this issue, see esp. Fish 2011 and Armstrong 2011. The basis for Cicero's rejection of Epicurean ethics seems to have been based more in how he saw the pursuit of *voluptas* being applied in the consumption-centered lifestyles of the ruling elite; see esp., Howe 1951; Lotito 1981: 84-93; and Hanchey 2013.

<sup>82</sup> *quid enim mereri velis, iam cum magistratum inieris et in contionem ascenderis—est enim tibi edicendum quae sis observaturus in iure dicendo, et fortasse etiam, si tibi erit visum, aliquid de maioribus tuis et de te ipso dices more maiorum—quid merearis igitur, ut dicas te in eo magistratu omnia voluptatis causa facturum esse, teque nihil fecisse in vita nisi voluptatis causa?*, *de Fin.* 2.74.

the Epicurean teaching of withdrawal from public life more fundamentally in Torquatus' choice of *summum bonum*, while at the same time contextualizing that choice in an explicitly Roman public context. Confronted with this “clear” absurdity, Torquatus, and Cicero's readers, are meant to understand the immediate incompatibility of an ethics of pleasure with a Roman public life.

Cicero's perspective on private *otium* or philosophical *tranquillitas* as the circumstance of a happy life, however, muddies the picture of the stalwart anti-Epicurean. Throughout his life prior to his return to philosophy in the mid-40s, Cicero frequently expresses a thwarted desire to live a philosophical life in *otium*.<sup>83</sup> As Carlos Lévy points out, this tension is especially evident in the frequent comparisons that Cicero draws between his own choice of life and that of Atticus—the well-positioned and socially respected Roman Epicurean.<sup>84</sup> This desire is not simply on the order of an envious wish, but one that Cicero addresses in philosophical terms: for instance, in an early letter from their collected correspondence, Cicero juxtaposes his own political ambition (*ambitio*), which led him in pursuit of honors (*ad honorum studium*), to Atticus' philosophical reason (*ratio*), which led him to honest leisure (*ad honestum otium*).<sup>85</sup> As Lévy also notes with respect to the relationship between Cicero's youthful studies and his later return to philosophy under Caesar, “la situation qui prévalait lorsque Cicéron terminait ses études, n'était pas très différente...de celle provoquée par la guerre civile et la victoire César, le

---

<sup>83</sup> On Cicero's expressions of this desire for *otium*, see e.g., Boyancé 1941; Görler 1990; and Gildenhard 2007: 37-9; 43-49; 52-69 for a more political perspective.

<sup>84</sup> On Atticus' Epicureanism, see, e.g., Lindsay 1998; Shearin 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Ad Att. I.17(17).5, *Neque ego inter me atque te quicquam interesse umquam duxi praeter voluntatem institutae vitae, quod me ambitio quaedam ad honorum studium, te autem alia minime reprehendenda ratio ad honestum otium duxit*; cf. Lévy 2012: 58-9.

tout évoquant une circularité, une coïncidence, qui ne semble pas avoir été remarquée, entre le jeune homme assidu aux leçons de Philon et le vieil homme qui se remettait à la philosophie.”<sup>86</sup>

Because of this circularity of circumstance, the *otium* that is forced upon Cicero by Caesar’s dictatorship causes him to confront, in a manner similar to the period of his youthful education, the choice of political or philosophical life. In the reopening of the question of the *genera vitae* in Cicero’s writings of the period, we find the continuation of a lived inquiry, driven by his own doubt, into the possibility and paths to happiness as the consummation of the *vita*.

This is not to say, however, that Cicero simply adopts the *otium*-filled lifestyle of Atticus in his old age. As noted above, Cicero never ceases to designate his philosophical activity as a type of *labor*. Yet within the dialogues of 45-4, especially those following the *Tusculans*, we find elaborations on an Epicurean-influenced approach to the happy life, focused especially on the virtues of *tranquillitas* and *societas*.<sup>87</sup> In one of the most strongly stated of these defenses in *de Amicitia*, a text fittingly dedicated to Atticus, Laelius argues in favor of a life passed in private friendship<sup>88</sup> that “is a condition in which all the qualities that humans believe desirable come together: honor, glory, peace of mind, enjoyment. If they are present, life is happy. If they are missing, it cannot be” (*haec est, inquam, societas, in qua omnia insunt, quae putant homines expetenda, honestas, gloria, tranquillitas animi atque iucunditas, ut et, cum haec adsint, beata*

---

<sup>86</sup> Lévy 2012: 59-60.

<sup>87</sup> See, e.g., his recuperation of the Roman Epicurean, Titus Albucius, a frequently cited negative exemplum, at *Tusc.* 5.108-9; cf. *de Fin.* 1.8-10. On this feature of the late dialogues more generally, see Kretschmar 1938: 119-52 with a focus on *Off.*; and Maso 2015: 207-14 with a focus on *de Am.*

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Philod. *On Property Management* (PHerc. 1424 xxiii 23-30), where Philodemus claims that the very best way for a philosopher to support himself is “to get in return for philosophical discourses shared with men receptive of them a grateful [friend], but with all reverence, as happened to Epicurus” (πρῶτον δὲ | καὶ κάλλιστον ἀπὸ λόγων | φιλο[κό]φρων ἀνδράσιν δεκτικοῖς μεταδιδομέν[ων] ἀντιμεταλαμβάνειν εὐχάριστο[ν] φίλου, [ἀλλ]ὰ μετὰ σεβασμοῦ | παντ[ός], ὡς ἐγένετ’ Ἐπικρο[ύ]ρωι).

*vita sit et sine his esse non possit*).<sup>89</sup> It is clear from this formulation that Cicero does not seek to co-opt a dogmatically Epicurean approach; the presence of *gloria* in Laelius' list of otherwise recognizably Epicurean virtues—*tranquillitas animi atque iucunditas*—indicates the non-dogmatic complexity of Laelius' argument. Yet such a reading of the late dialogues demonstrates clearly that there was, for Cicero, a reopening of the question of the *genera vitae* caused by the enforced *otium* of Caesar's dictatorship. In this clearing of the personal and political significance that had accrued around his own youthful choice to pursue political *ambitio* in the manner of the *mos maiorum*, Cicero reconsiders the alternative that he had rejected 40 years previously.

Cicero's skeptical treatment of Hellenistic eudaimonism, both within specific dialogues and in his lifelong pursuit as a whole, demonstrates the inconclusiveness of this way of structuring the possibilities of a life. Following Aristotle's association of philosophical activity with the consummation of human happiness, the Hellenistic schools seek to justify and shape ethics as an "art of living" (τέχνη περὶ τὸν βίον)<sup>90</sup> that, without the basis of Aristotelian *theoria*, will nevertheless ensure the successful attainment of happiness from within the human lifespan. As Aristotle warns, however, "nothing that belongs to happiness can be incomplete" (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀτελές ἐστὶ τῶν τῆς εὐδαιμονίας); and so, these eudaimonistic arguments, by interpreting philosophical activity as an ongoing atelic process, open up a problem of teleological judgement for the philosophical life: the realization of *virtus* or *voluptas* and the concomitant attainment of

---

<sup>89</sup> *de Am.* 84. On this passage, see Maso 2015: 209. For Epicurus on friendship, cf. *VS* 23; 52; 56-7; for Cicero's explicit presentation of Epicurean friendship see *de Fin.* 1.66-68. For debates about the nature of Epicurean friendship in this period beyond Cicero's depiction, see, e.g., O'Connor 1989; O'Keefe 2001; Armstrong 2011.

<sup>90</sup> On the origin of this tag, which Cicero's Torquatus attributes to the Epicureans (*beatae vitae disciplinam*, *de Fin.* 1.72), but modern scholars generally locate in a Platonic or Stoic context, see, e.g., Schmid 1991: 25-32, 58-68; Sellars 2003.

happiness mark the fulfillment of the possibilities of life, while a lack of happiness comes to entail an ethical failure. Even Laelius' tranquil *beata vita* is structured around this goal, although it shifts the burden of judgment from the public to the private sphere: consummation of his chosen form of life is the presence of *honestas, gloria, tranquillitas animi, and iucunditas*—"when they are present, life is happy. If they are missing, it cannot be." By locating the post-Aristotelian association between the consummation of a life and happiness within a further incomplete and ongoing process of investigation, Cicero's lifelong engagement with the *genera vitae* thus demonstrates not only the inconclusiveness of the Hellenistic schools' attempts to secure the coherence of a happy life, but also the dialectical dependence of their arguments on each other and on the circularity of circumstance. In the recurrence of the question—what makes a successful life?—and the variously persuasive answers that Cicero considers and lives out we can see the conceptual impasse that arises at the end of the eudaimonist approach to the consummation of a life.

### III.ii. Contemplation, Incompletion, and Truth

Cicero's presentation of Stoic and Epicurean ethics makes evident a formal agreement in these schools' characterization of philosophical activity. In particular, Cicero's parallel interpretation of the Stoic and Epicurean approaches to physics accentuates how they divorce *cognitio rerum* from *contemplatio*.<sup>91</sup> In other words, in Cicero's interpretation of Hellenistic ethics we find philosophy's characteristic activity understood exclusively as an atelic process, counterposed to Aristotle's metaphysical identification of *theoria* as an entelic "actualization" (*energeia*). The Hellenistic schools conceive of the study of nature as instrumental in attaining

---

<sup>91</sup> It should be reemphasized that this division is within Cicero's presentation and not necessarily reflective of the principles and practices of the Hellenistic schools.



the ends favored by their own school. Cicero's own skeptical approach to philosophical activity, in turn, redoubles its kinetic constitution: the dialectic into which he introduces the atelic philosophical activity of the Hellenistic schools is *itself* atelic. Furthermore, this doubling means that, just as the Stoics and Epicurean schools employ philosophical activity to attain a further end, so Cicero's philosophy should *also* aim at something beyond itself. Yet, if this goal, which Cicero's philosophical activity seeks to realize, is emphatically not contained in the Hellenistic *finis bonorum*, it becomes more difficult to articulate precisely what this end might be.

The most obvious answer to this question comes from the Platonic tradition: the end toward which philosophical activity and life strives is truth. As Andrea Nightingale demonstrates, *theoria* in Plato's dialogues is consistently likened to a "journey to 'see Being.'"<sup>92</sup> Rather than interpreting this analogy as an empty literary metaphor, Nightingale offers an understanding of Platonic *theoria* in which the activity of speculation is conjoined with the practice of dialectic to describe the defining feature of the philosopher's life.<sup>93</sup> For Plato, she argues, "The activity of theorizing takes place in the context of a personal life that is historically specific. But, at the same time, the particular person is an immortal soul whose life on earth is

---

<sup>92</sup> Nightingale 2004: 107.

<sup>93</sup> See e.g., in the analogy of the Cave, *Rep.* VII.532b-c, "[And dialectic is] the release from bonds, and the turning away from shadows to the images and to the light of the fire and then the ascent out of the cave into the sunlight and, there, the inability to look at the plants and animals and the light of the sun, though one can see the phantasms of these reflected in water and the shadow of real things, not the shadows of images cast by a light which is quite different from the true sun. All this labor in the disciplines we have mentioned [including dialectic] has the power to lead the best part of the soul up to the vision (*thean*) of the best among realities" (ἡ δὲ γε, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, λύσις τε ἀπὸ τῶν δεσμῶν καὶ μεταστροφή ἀπὸ τῶν σκιῶν ἐπὶ τὰ εἶδωλα καὶ τὸ φῶς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ καταγείου εἰς τὸν ἥλιον ἐπάνοδος, καὶ ἐκεῖ πρὸς μὲν τὰ ζῷα τε καὶ φυτὰ καὶ τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς ἔτι ἀδυναμία βλέπειν, πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἐν ὕδασι φαντάσματα θεῖα καὶ σκιάς τῶν ὄντων, ἀλλ' οὐκ εἰδώλων σκιάς δι' ἑτέρου τοιούτου φωτός ὡς πρὸς ἥλιον κρίνειν ἀποσκιαζομένας—πᾶσα αὕτη ἡ πραγματεία τῶν τεχνῶν ἃς διήλθομεν ταύτην ἔχει τὴν δύναμιν καὶ ἐπαναγωγὴν τοῦ βελτίστου ἐν ψυχῇ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ἀρίστου ἐν τοῖς οὐσι θέαν, trans. Nightingale, with discussion 2004: 108-9).

but one chapter in its lengthy history. The philosophic theorist, then, acts at the interface between time and eternity, the personal and the transcendental.”<sup>94</sup> In short, *theoria*, in conjunction with the τέχνη of dialectic, enables the human *philosophos* to attain a clearer “vision” of the eternal Forms, and to “return” to his own specific, temporal world with a better understanding of its nature and a more virtuous way of living in it.<sup>95</sup> A Platonic *bios philosophikos* would thus be formed around the completion of a “roundtrip journey” to see those truths that are beyond its particularity and historical specificity, which nonetheless touch on its embodied life.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Cicero conceives of an approach to truth not as a transcendental journey, but in the finitude of human experience through doubt.<sup>96</sup> It is undeniable, however, that there remains in his method a Platonic influence that connects dialectic, contemplation, and truth. For example, in his argument against Lucullus, the Ciceronian speaker describes what the three major divisions of philosophy mean for the Academic skeptic. In a formulation that recalls both the Stoic and Epicurean applications discussed above, Cicero argues that, for the Academic, contemplation is at the heart of physics and, therefore, stands at the beginning of all philosophical activity:

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.: 95.

<sup>95</sup> On this “return” to the earthly realm and to the city specifically, see esp. *Rep.* V-VII; cf. Nightingale 2004: 123-38. As Nightingale argues, for Plato there is no real distinction between “active” and “contemplative” lives as there is for Aristotle. Rather, there is a contingent distinction, familiar also from treatments of Cicero’s own life, between *political* and *philosophical* lives, which interact with the relations of the world and the requirements of social organization in different ways. For an extensive argument that Cicero leads a philosophical life in this Platonic sense, conjoining speculation with virtuous civic engagement, see Altman 2016: 239-84.

<sup>96</sup> There is a further debate concerning interpretation of Plato’s dialogues themselves as to how “transcendental” we should understand Platonic truth to be and, furthermore, how “clear” or “direct” we should conceive of the philosopher’s vision of the Forms. For the purpose of clarity in my argument, I adopt a dogmatic perspective on Platonic *theoria* in order to draw out a distinction, but the continuities between Plato’s and Cicero’s conceptions of philosophical activity are clear throughout. On the more “skeptical” interpretations of Plato’s *theoria*, see esp. Nightingale 2004: 98-100, 105-7.

Nec tamen istas quaestiones physicorum exterminandas puto. Est enim animorum ingeniorumque naturale quoddam quasi pabulum consideratio contemplatioque naturae. Erigimur, elatiores fieri videmur, humana despiciamus, cogitantesque supera atque caelestia haec nostra ut exigua et minima contemnimus. Indagatio ipsa rerum cum maximarum tum etiam occultissimarum habet oblectationem. Si vero aliquid occurrit quod veri simile videatur, humanissima completur animus voluptate. Quaeret igitur haec et vester sapiens et hic noster, sed vester ut adsentiat credat adfirmet, noster ut vereatur temere opinari praeclareque agi secum putet, si in eius modi rebus veri simile quod sit invenerit.

And yet I don't think that such physical investigations should be dismissed. The observation or contemplation of nature provides the natural food, so to speak, for our minds and intellects. We rise up, we seem uplifted, we look down on human affairs, and, by thinking about lofty and celestial matters, we scorn our own affairs as small and petty. The process of investigation into the greatest (if also most hidden) matters has its own delight; and if we come across something that strikes us as truth-like, our minds are suffused with a thoroughly human pleasure. So both your wise person and ours will investigate these questions, but yours to assent, believe, and affirm, ours with the fear of forming rash opinions and the thought that things are going wonderfully for him if he finds something truth-like in questions of this sort.<sup>97</sup>

In the Academic mode as in the Stoic and Epicurean,<sup>98</sup> *contemplatio* is associated explicitly with its pre-Aristotelian and pre-Socratic roots in the realm of natural science. The philosopher should commit himself to “the observation and contemplation of nature” (*consideratio contemplatioque naturae*), a combination of activities that we find in nearly identical form in Pythagoras' fable (*sic in vita longe omnibus studiis contemplationem rerum, cognitionemque praestare*). Yet, through an explicit Platonic quotation, we can see the influence of the theoretical “journey” on Cicero's skeptical activity: as the dedicated study of the physical world, *contemplatio* orients the gaze of the philosopher heavenward (*cogitantesque supera atque caelestia*), which allows him

---

<sup>97</sup> *Luc.* 127-8; trans. Brittain.

<sup>98</sup> In the comparison between these passages (*Luc.* 127-8, *Tusc.* 5.69, and *de Fin.* 1.63), note also the explicit relationship between physics and ethics. This relationship is here described as a process of sustenance and growth: observation of the natural world provides the “natural food, so to speak, for our minds and intellects” (*animorum ingeniorumque naturale quoddam quasi pabulum*). On this closeness of physics and ethics in Stoic *theoria*, see Graver 2012: 84-6.

“to look down on” the stuff of human life (*humana despiciamus...nostra ut exigua et minima contemnimus*). Likewise, in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, through contemplation the incarnate soul recalls “those things which it once saw, when it journeyed with the god [before it was born], lifting up its vision to the things which are really real and disregarding those things which we now say are real” (ἀνάμνησις ἐκείνων ἃ ποτ’ εἶδεν ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχῇ συμπορευθεῖσα θεῶν καὶ ὑπεριδοῦσα ἃ νῦν εἶναί φαμεν, 249c). In Cicero’s translation of ὑπεριδοῦσα with *despiciamus* to describe the vantage point of contemplation, he preserves an aspect of the transcendental detachment familiar from the Platonic narrative of *theoria*.<sup>99</sup>

The commitment to “the process of investigation” (*indagatio*) in this passage also extends a Platonic relationship between *contemplatio* and dialectic.<sup>100</sup> Yet it is in the nature of skeptical dialectic that we confront the problem with simply ascribing “truth” as the aim of Cicero’s philosophical activity. The “investigation” of nature fulfills an irreducibly human desire to uncover “the greatest (if also most hidden) matters” (*Indagatio ipsa rerum cum maximarum tum etiam occultissimarum habet oblectationem*). Consequently, while simultaneously allowing the philosopher to “look down on” the human lot, *contemplatio* also connects him to a pleasure that is the most quintessentially human (*humanissima...voluptate*). This *humanissima voluptas* of the skeptical *contemplatio* is achieved, not through direct sight, but through a sense of proximity to truth (*Si vero aliquid occurrit quod veri simile videatur, humanissima completur animus voluptate*). Because of the process of skeptical dialectic, furthermore, this proximity will never be fixed or certain. While the Antiochean sage rashly assents to his perception and opinion (*vester ut adsentiat credat adfirmet*), the skeptical sage, instead, *fears* assent and finds pleasure

---

<sup>99</sup> Cf. also Lucretius’ use of *despicere* in similar contexts, 2.9 and 4.18.

<sup>100</sup> On the word *indagatio*, see above, n.58.

simply in a sense that truth is not far away (*noster ut vereatur temere opinari praeclareque agi secum putet, si in eius modi rebus veri simile quod sit invenerit*). This fear of rash certainty and the deferral of “true” discovery in favor of what is *veri simile* complicates the question of any external endpoint which contemplation might seek to realize—to say nothing of a form of life structured around the *ateleia* of this combined form of investigation. “Assent” or “affirmation”—the confirmation of truth—from an Antiochean perspective serves as a mark of successful consummation for philosophical activity; but, from the skeptical perspective, it is feared and perpetually deferred.

For the skeptic, the completion of philosophical activity is never certain and certainty is not the mark of success for the philosophical life. Since, for the skeptic, “nothing is able to be known” (*sciri nihil possit, Luc. 74*), the skeptical sage achieves the pleasure of *contemplatio* in his perseverance through the incompleteness of his inquiry—a form of failure according to the normative Antiochean perspective—oriented only by a sense of proximity to the ungraspable truth. Likewise, in Cicero’s formulation of the deferral of doubt, “we live from day to day...and so we alone are free” (*nos in diem vivimus...itaque soli sumus liberi, Tusc. 5.33*). The skeptic carries nothing from “day to day” except the deferral of uncertainty afforded by *probabilitas*.<sup>101</sup> This characterization of the relation between skeptical dialectic and contemplation complicates the assignment of a Platonic model of *theoria* to Cicero’s philosophical activity.<sup>102</sup> If *contemplatio* takes the form of a deferral of seeing rather than the sight of truth itself, can we

---

<sup>101</sup> See Ch. 2, sections III-V.

<sup>102</sup> Indeed, there is an evident lack of a vocabulary of sight in this account of *contemplatio* in the *Lucullus* as opposed, e.g., to the Pythagorean fable with which it shares other similarities. The focus is rather on an empirical and proto-scientific mode of “inquiry” and “discovery” (*Quaeret, invenerit*)—processes that necessarily strive toward a felicitous outcome, even if it is only in the direction of verisimilitude. On the relationship between this articulation and the later Pyrrhonist interpretation of *theoria*, see Spinelli 2012.

consider truth to be the aim for the sake of which Cicero's philosophical life is lived? It is telling in this regard that if we return to Cicero's formulation of the philosophical life in the Pythagorean fable, we find a notable absence of any indication that truth is the end toward which the vision of the spectators is aimed.<sup>103</sup> As discussed above, the mode of life of those who come to the market for the sake of seeing is contrasted to the other two forms of life by a lack of extrinsic mark that indicates the consummation of their activity. They are said simply to be "looking ardently upon what was happening and how" (*studioseque perspicerent, quid ageretur et quo modo*). The potentially endless iterability of these pronouns (*quid...et quo modo*), like Cicero's mode of living "from day to day," frees the philosophers from reaching a limit of their activity. The philosophers distinguish themselves in life only through the "study and contemplation of nature," and "seek nothing for themselves" (*spectare nihil sibi acquirentem*).<sup>104</sup>

Cicero's skeptical presentation of the philosopher's activity both rejects the Aristotelian model that conjoins *theoria* with the consummation of life in happiness and complicates the Platonic model that envisions *theoria* as access to transcendental truth from within human time. In the place of these two modes of philosophical activity, Cicero emphasizes above all the ongoing process and development of observation, as one object of vision gives way to another over time. If this activity of philosophical "seeing" neither manifests an external goal nor is

---

<sup>103</sup> This absence is all the more notable because it is in direct contrast to the variant version of this fable found in Diogenes Laertius (see above, n.19), where the "moral" that Diogenes draws is that "servile men are born as hunters of fame or wealth, but philosophers are born as hunters of truth" (οἱ μὲν ἀνδραποδάδεις, ἔφη, φύονται δόξης καὶ πλεονεξίας θηραταί, οἱ δὲ φιλόσοφοι τῆς ἀληθείας). Rather than adopting this simple parallelism, Cicero avoids ascribing any external goal—even truth—to the philosophical activity that would mimic the aims of the other classes.

<sup>104</sup> We can perhaps understand this as the point at which Cicero's skeptical presentation of the philosopher's activity folds back on itself. Entelic *energeia* and atelic *kinesis*, like virtue and pleasure, always exist in dialectical relation to one another.

constituted by an entelic perfection, how can we understand its relation to the endlessly reiterable object of contemplation? In a passage from *Tusculans* 1, we find again the emphatically atelic and peculiarly disembodied function of looking with which Pythagoras identifies the philosophers at the market. In this context, the function is attributed to the deceased soul, which, after becoming separated from its body by death, rises up through the dense, moist atmosphere until it “comes to a stop and makes an end of ascending” (*insistit et finem altius se efferendi facit*) in a region of lightness and heat which mirrors the soul’s own nature.<sup>105</sup> In this state of equilibrium, which comprises the “natural home” (*naturalis...sedes*) of souls, it exists in a wholeness and perfection (*nulla re egens*) that is unimaginable for earthly life:

Cumque corporis facibus inflammari soleamus ad omnis fere cupiditates eoque magis incendi, quod iis aemulemur, qui ea habeant quae nos habere cupiamus, profecto beati erimus, cum corporibus relictis et cupiditatum et aemulationum erimus expertes; quodque nunc facimus, cum laxati curis sumus, ut spectare aliquid velimus et visere, id multo tum faciemus liberius totosque nos in contemplandis rebus perspicendisque ponemus, propterea quod et natura inest in mentibus nostris insatiabilis quaedam cupiditas veri videndi et orae ipsae locorum illorum, quo pervenerimus, quo faciliorem nobis cognitionem rerum caelestium, eo maiorem cognoscendi cupiditatem dabant. haec enim pulchritudo etiam in terris ‘patritam’ illam et ‘avitam,’ ut ait Theophrastus, philosophiam cognitionis cupiditate incensam excitavit. praecipue vero fruentur ea, qui tum etiam, cum has terras incolentes circumfusi erant caligine, tamen acie mentis dispicere cupiebant.

Etenim si nunc aliquid adsequi se putant, qui ostium Ponti viderunt et eas angustias, per quas penetravit ea quae est nominata

*Argo, quia Argivi in ea delecti viri*

*Vecti petebant pellem inauratam arietis,*

aut ii qui Oceani freta illa viderunt, ‘Europam Libyamque rapax ubi dividit unda,’ quod tandem spectaculum fore putamus, cum totam terram contueri licebit eiusque cum situm, formam, circumscriptionem, tum et habitabiles regiones et rursum omni cultu propter vim frigoris aut caloris vacantis? nos enim ne nunc quidem oculis cernimus ea quae videmus.

Since we usually are enflamed by the fires of the body toward nearly every desire and we burn even more because we envy those who have the things that we desire to have,

---

<sup>105</sup> *Quam regionem cum superavit animus naturamque sui similem contigit et agnovit, iunctis ex anima tenui et ex ardore solis temperato ignibus insistit et finem altius se efferendi facit, Tusc. 1.43.* With this whole passage, cf. Pl. *Phd.* 108e-114c.

certainly we will be happy when, with our bodies left behind, we will be free of desires and jealousies. As now we do, when we are unburdened of cares, we wish to look at something and to see, this we will do then much more freely and we will place our whole being in the contemplation and observation of things, because by nature there is in our minds a certain insatiable desire to see truth and the very borders of those places, to which we will have arrived, will grant us as much an easier consideration of celestial matters, as it will make our desire of considering greater. For even on earth this beauty first aroused that “fathers’ and grandfathers’” philosophy, as Theophrastus calls it, which was sparked by a desire of considering. And they will especially enjoy these things who even then, when they lived on earth besieged by darkness, nevertheless desired to look through it with the gaze of the mind.

For now, if people think it is really something when they have seen the mouth of Pontus and the very narrows, through which that ship passed, which was named *Argo*, because on it chosen Argive men sailed out in search of the ram’s golden fleece,

or those, who have seen the straits of Ocean, “where the rapacious wave divides Europe and Libya,” what, in the end, do they think the spectacle will be, when it will be possible to gaze at once upon the whole earth, both its placement, shape, circumference, as well as its habitable zones and, elsewhere, those which are vacant of any cultivation because of the force of cold and heat? For we do not even now perceive with our eyes, those things which we see.<sup>106</sup>

The posthumous journey of the soul crosses both the boundary of death and a subsequent physical limit that separates the earth from its “natural home.” Once the soul has “made an end” (*finem...facit*) to its heavenly journey and arrived on “the very borders of those places” (*orae ipsae locorum illorum*), it will have crossed the point of aporia that marks the end of life. Both Aristotle’s consummation of happiness (*profecto beati erimus*) and the Platonic vision of truth (*veri videndi*) are here situated beyond the limits of human life. Passing this ultimate limit enables the soul to attain a perfect and completely disembodied faculty of sight: since “we do not even now perceive with our eyes” (*nos enim ne nunc quidem oculis cernimus*)—with the corporeal organs of sight—but rather with the *animus* itself, after the *animus* has been freed from the *corpus*, what will be left is the pure function of *seeing*. The isolated, imperfect, and necessarily sequential sight-seeing of people who visit “the mouth of Pontus” or the “straits of

---

<sup>106</sup> *Tusc.* 1.44-46.



Ocean” will be replaced by a total and synoptic gaze that arises neither from the individual soul nor the object of gaze, but from the “insatiable desire of seeing truth” (*insatiabilis quaedam cupiditas veri videndi*).<sup>107</sup> During life, corporeal desires and jealousies inflame the body and cause it to be always in motion, searching for satisfaction (*Cumque corporis facibus inflammari soleamus ad omnis fere cupiditates eoque magis incendi, quod iis aemulemur, qui ea habeant quae nos habere cupiamus*). This desire, on the contrary, because it arises from the *animus* and not the body, remains perfectly insatiable even, or especially, after death. Even as the soul attains a synoptic vision of the universe, its being is sustained by the perfect insatiability of its desire to see the truths that it is seeing. In fact, this loop of insatiable desire becomes the very condition of the soul’s posthumous existence, maintained in the physical equilibrium of the region and through the pleasure afforded by its spectrality—its ability to see all, without ever being seen.

By situating the consummation of happiness and the attainment of a truly synoptic vision beyond the ends of life, Cicero challenges both the eudaimonism of post-Aristotelian ethics and an understanding of the Platonic *bios philosophikos* as a journey from within life to see truth. In its place we find the philosopher’s life characterized as the earthly instantiation of a spectral haunting. By recognizing the similarities between the Pythagorean characterization of the philosopher as the one who comes to the market *visendi causa* and Cicero’s description of the

---

<sup>107</sup> Cicero develops this concept of an *insatiabilis cupiditas* of the mind elsewhere, cf., *Tusc.* 5.70 (discussed below) and *de Fin.* 4.12, where an “insatiable pleasure” is afforded by the study of nature and from “observing things,” “when we are able to live honestly and freely devoid of all business” (*inest in eadem explicatione naturae insatiabilis quaedam e cognoscendis rebus voluptas, in qua una, confectis rebus necessariis, vacui negotiis honeste ac liberaliter possimus vivere*). This is a more classical formulation of *contemplatio*. The significance of *Tusc.* 1.44 is that this activity is transferred from *vita* to *mors*. On *synopsis* as the outcome of dialectic, see *Pl. Rep.* VII.537c and *Phdr.* 265d.

soul's posthumous existence *videndi cupiditate*,<sup>108</sup> we are confronted with the uncanny resemblance of the disembodied soul and the philosopher's form of life. Indeed, as Cicero says, the souls of former philosophers will find the most enjoyment of all once they have attained the vision of the disembodied soul (*praecipue vero fruuntur ea, qui tum etiam, cum has terras incolentes circumfusi erant caligine, tamen acie mentis dispicere cupiebant*).<sup>109</sup> The one who desires to see truly in life *enjoys* the very unsatisfiability of the soul's desire to see, which is realized fully only after death. If, therefore, for Aristotle the philosopher undertakes *theoria* for its own sake, thereby fulfilling the conditions of happiness from within a life and for Plato the journey of *theoria* is undertaken for the sake of returning to earthly life having glimpsed truth, for Cicero *contemplatio* is done for the sake of something that has not yet come to pass and may not *ever* occur during or after an individual's own lifetime. At the same time, however, it is still done *for* that thing.

This vision of the world of the living ringed on all sides by the disembodied souls of the dead, whose only existence is a function of seeing, recalls the spectral experience that Cicero depicts in the Academy.<sup>110</sup> In that experience of *solitudo*, Cicero and the other characters of *de Finibus* have the fleeting perception that their moment is being shared by the deceased remnants of the past. In the *Tusculans*, however, Cicero imagines how this sensation of a spectral haunting is produced by the intensity of the gaze with which the dead watch the world. In his work on

---

<sup>108</sup> In addition to the lexical similarities in the vocabulary of vision (e.g., *spectare*, *visendi* / *videndi*, *perspicerent* / *perspiciendis* etc.), cf. the use of *caligo* (5.6, 1.45) to describe the general incapacity of human perception on earth and Cicero's mention of Theophrastus at 1.45 as the recipient of the "fathers' and grandfathers'" philosophy (*'patritam' illam et 'avitam'*)—i.e., pre-Socratic, "natural" philosophy, which Cicero associates also with Pythagoras.

<sup>109</sup> For the strong Platonic echoes of this sentiment, see esp. *Phd.* 67d and *Tusc.* 1.30-1 with Gould 1968: 140.

<sup>110</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section III.

“hauntology,” Jacques Derrida describes the importance of sight for understanding the phenomena of haunting and proposes a temporality of the specter that is created by its disembodied sight.<sup>111</sup> For Derrida, the specter is precisely the Thing that sees without being seen. A ghost achieves a total vision, without itself being an object of sight. He further connects this “spectral asymmetry” with a temporal anachrony: “This Thing meanwhile looks at us and sees us not see it even when it is there. A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity. It desynchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony. We will call this the visor effect: we do not see who looks at us.”<sup>112</sup>

By means of this “visor” effect, Derrida frames the connection between observation and temporality. For the “Thing” looking on without being seen time is maintained in seamless continuity by the persistence of its gaze; it “sees us not see it even when it is there,” thereby maintaining a constancy of observation even when we, the objects of sight, are unaware of it. On the other hand, for those who are the object of sight, yet who cannot see the observer, there is a temporal anachrony latent in this asymmetry: any action that we take in the present will have been seen by the specter whether we perceive it or not, until that indeterminate point in the future when we will see it again. As in Cicero’s experience in the Academy, the sudden awareness of the presence of a specter produces in the experience of the living a profound sense of temporal unevenness and anachrony. The existence, therefore, in M.’s vision of the afterlife, of a

---

<sup>111</sup> See 1993: 10, “*What is a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? ... Repetition and first time, but also repetition and last time, since the singularity of any first time makes of it also a last time. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a hauntology. This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being.... It would harbor within itself... eschatology and teleology themselves*” (emphasis orig.).

<sup>112</sup> 1993: 6.

“universal” visor effect, wherein the souls of all the deceased circle the earth, watching synoptically without being seen, emphasizes the anachronous temporality of all earthly beings. By participating in the deferral of *contemplatio* during life, the philosopher adopts this anachrony as the temporality of his earthly existence, looking on events as constituted by the indeterminate future moment at which they will have been seen beyond the “visor.”

If, therefore, the consummation of the *vita contemplativa* is, in fact, a *mors contemplativa*, what can be said about any normative judgment, any telos—any consideration of success or failure—during life? Can the philosopher’s *vita*, which resembles death, ever be marked for success or failure? The universal visor effect that Cicero imagines separating the disembodied souls of the deceased and the living ensures the continuation of a total “spectral asymmetry” and a belated “anachrony.” If only the dead can *see* in any true sense of the word, the defining activity of the philosopher’s life is one of deferral, doubt, and *ateleia*—a dedication to and an adoption of the anachronous temporality of the dead from within life. This anachrony confounds the notion of a coherent, completable *vita*. Cicero’s treatment of the philosophical life and its activity of *contemplatio* thus provides us with an understanding of what it means to inhabit a condition of failure: to recognize the immanence of *ateleia* in the activity of observation and to structure a form of life around that immanence. In the philosophical productivity of this form of life, we should not see an imposition of “a form of success,” but a proliferation of the futures of failure.

#### IV. The Failures of an Age

In Cicero’s letter to Aulus Torquatus, he envisions that his “life has already been lived” (*vita iam acta*) and he foresees nothing in the coming time but a death without sense (*id sine ullo sensu futurum sit*). Within the framework of the dialogues, the temporality of the *vita* that this

letter represents is elaborated in the philosophical narratives by which a life attains its potential for perfection in happiness or truth. The future orientation of this *vita* looks forward to the consummation of its *finis*, which, like Heidegger's temporality of Dasein, is only authentic when it anticipates the coming-to-be of one's ownmost "having been." The future of the *vita* produces its past in a manner that circumscribes its relation to itself as the source of potentiality and futurity. As we have seen, however, Cicero interrogates the *vita*—and especially the philosopher's *vita*—by emphasizing the profound *ateleia* of the philosopher's characteristic activity. The endlessness of a life dedicated to observation has distinct implications for its temporality, reorienting its timeframe from the unfolding of the *vita* as an experience of consummation, to one constituted by its anachronous relationship to an indeterminate future beyond the boundary of *vita / mors*. Cicero's philosophical life is lived not for the future of its own perfection, but for the sake of a future moment that its life may never, in fact, touch upon. In his skeptical treatment of the philosopher's life, Cicero thus raises the possibility of a future for the *aetas*—for that accumulation or sedimentation of human time that is not subject to the ethical structuration of happiness or truth and narratives of fulfillment. The reorientation of the philosopher's *vita* allows Cicero to more directly confront the future of the *aetas* and the failures that are produced by its heterogeneity.

We can understand Cicero's approach to this heterogeneous future of the *aetas* by reconsidering the philosophical problem from which this dissertation began: how human experience intersects with change and transformation over time—the *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum*.<sup>113</sup> In this section, I consider two distinct solutions to this question that arise in the *Tusculans* and in the final ethical dialogue that Cicero writes before Caesar's death,

---

<sup>113</sup> See Intro., section I.

*Cato Maior de Senectute (de Sen.)*. I first return to M.'s description of the philosophical education of the *praestans vir* in *Tusc. 5* in order to explicate a "theoretical" relationship between past, present, and future as determined by the causal necessity of reason. In the ideal argument of the *Tusculans*, M. locates in *contemplatio* an ability to understand change and transformation over time from the perspective of divine logic—creating in the experience of the philosopher a symmetry between the eternal processes of nature and the unfolding of his own life. Second, and in contrast to this recognizably Stoic position, I consider the "genealogical" diachrony that is at work in *de Sen.* This later text shows a profound awareness of the breakdown in intergenerational time that accompanied the collapse of the Republic. In response to this breakdown, Cicero explores in this dialogue the constitutive indeterminacy of the future for the continuity between past and present. In *de Sen.*, therefore, we find Cicero establishing the importance of the future for reconstituting the broken relationship between past and present. In doing so, Cicero's philosophy works to liberate the *aetas* not only from the ethical structures of the *vita* but also from the deterministic continuity of causes that continuously "flow from eternity into eternity" (*ab aeterno tempore fluentibus in aeternum, Tusc. 5.70*).

As we have seen, *Tusculans 5* is dedicated to M.'s argument in favor of the Stoic position that virtue alone is sufficient for happiness. As also discussed above, this ideal argument is best understood, both within the dialogue itself and across Cicero's works, as a part of an ongoing process of inquiry into the ethical purpose and consummation of the *vita*. It is notable, therefore, that at the heart of M.'s narrative about the philosophical education of the *praestans vir*, we find *contemplatio* defined not only as the means by which the philosopher might understand the constitution of his own life, but, more fundamentally, how that life is related to universal sequences and continuities of time. Through *contemplatio*, M. contends, the philosophical pupil

can attain an understanding of origin, change, and structure in nature, which he likens to grasping Stoic notions of determinism and the reason of the “divine mind” (*divina mens*):<sup>114</sup>

Haec tractanti animo et noctes et dies cogitanti existit illa a deo Delphis praecepta cognitio, ut ipsa se mens agnoscat coniunctamque cum divina mente se sentiat, ex quo insatiabili gaudio completur. Ipsa enim cogitatio de vi et natura deorum studium incendit illius aeternitatem imitandi, neque se in brevitate vitae collocatum putat, cum rerum causas alias ex aliis aptas et necessitate nexas videt, quibus ab aeterno tempore fluentibus in aeternum ratio tamen mensque moderatur. Haec ille intuens atque suspiciens vel potius omnes partes orasque circumspiciens quanta rursus animi tranquillitate humana et ceteriora considerat!

To the mind going over and considering these things night and day there comes an understanding of the precept from the god of Delphi, that the mind should know itself and feel how it is conjoined with the divine mind, from which realization it enjoys an insatiable joy. For consideration of the power and nature of the gods inflames a desire to imitate their immortality. He no longer thinks that he has been limited to the brevity of its lifespan, when he sees that the causes of things are fit together and bound by necessity, and their succession from eternity into eternity is governed by reason and mind. Gazing on these things and looking up or, rather, looking around at all the parts and regions, how with how much more tranquility does he turn back to consider the things that are human and close by!<sup>115</sup>

By observing the order and sequence of the world constantly “night and day” (*et noctes et dies*), M. suggests, the *praestans vir* will arrive at an understanding of his own mind (*ipsa se mens agnoscat*) and how it is joined with the “divine mind” (*coniunctamque cum divina mente*). It is in this recognition of symmetry between particular and general that such *contemplatio* produces its characteristic “insatiable joy” (*insatiabili gaudio*) and allows the student to apply his understanding of nature to his own life and character.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, this symmetry, which

---

<sup>114</sup> This passage picks up where the argument left off above, pg. 276.

<sup>115</sup> 5.70. The details of this passage regarding the Delphic injunction and the divine mind mark the difference between this and Cicero’s other presentations of the role of *contemplatio* for philosophy (cf. also *de Nat. De.* 2.91-132, *Tusc.* 1.62-70). See Douglas 1990 ad loc.

<sup>116</sup> Note that here, however, we find that the *gaudium* is *insatiabile* rather than a *cupiditas insatiabilis*. As “joy” rather than “desire,” *gaudium* avoids the problematic associations of “lack” and “absence” that maintains the postmortem souls in their spectral observation of the world.

produces an active drive to “imitate the immortality [of the gods]” (*studium...illius aeternitatem imitandi*),<sup>117</sup> enables the *vir* to look beyond the “brevity of his own lifespan” (*in brevitae vitae*) to understand his own place not just within the determined sequence of cause and effect (*rerum causas alias ex aliis aptas et necessitate nexas*), but even in the succession “from eternity into eternity” (*ab aeterno tempore...in aeternum*). Thus, as in *Tusc.* 1.44, we find a close correspondence between a synoptic vision of the universe and a comprehension of the diachronic sequences that constitute the temporal flux within which a human lifetime arises. Yet, unlike in *Tusc.* 1, where this synopsis is accomplished only after death, thereby producing an asymmetry between these eternal sequences and human life, M. envisions here a sage who is able to overcome this spectral asymmetry and realize, through imitation within the confines of a human lifetime, the coherence between *aetas* and *aeternitas*.

At the climax of the ideal argument of the *Tusculans*, therefore, we find Cicero offering a solution to the philosophical problem that he proposes in his letter to Nigidius Figulus in the late fall of 46 BCE. Almost a year after he writes to Nigidius about the ineluctable “force and transformation of all experiences and times” (*vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum, ad Fam.* IV.13[225].2-3) that has completely overturned his world—and just around the time that his friend dies, still in exile—we find Cicero articulating by means of an ideal philosophical argument that, through *contemplatio*, the *praestans vir* can attain a total understanding of “the change and transformation of one thing into another” (*quaeque ex alio in aliud vicissitudo atque mutatio, Tusc.* 5.69) according to the divine logic of causation. This power enables the philosophical student to conceive of his life as a consummate structure, not according to any

---

<sup>117</sup> On this drive to emulate eternity, cf. Pl. *Th.* 176c and Luciani 2010: 380-88. For the idea of imitating god in Aristotle, see esp. Lear 2004: 72-92. Cf. Intro., section II for a discussion of Luciani’s reading of Cicero’s ethics which is based on this passage.



previous plans or desires he may have had but set and determined by the pattern of divine fate. And, even beyond this understanding of his own *vita*, such recognition also allows him to navigate the relationship between his particular experience and the eternal cycles of the universe “from eternity into eternity” (*ab aeterno tempore fluentibus in aeternum*). By recognizing the correspondence between eternity and human time, and acting upon this correspondence through imitation, M. argues that the tumult and disorderliness of human experience can be overcome. In its place, the experience of the sage will be one of cosmic order in accordance with causal consequentiality.

Yet it is important to remember that, as with Cicero’s lifelong inquiry into the attainability of happiness, this ideal argument is only one piece of an ongoing investigation into the relationship between diachrony and human experience. For Cicero, as he is writing in the late summer of 45, this theoretical explanation of consequentiality and the causal connections that it relies upon can only enhance the need for a philosophical account of the *breakdown* in diachronic sequences through which he is living. The ideal philosophical perspective of the *Tusculans* thus gives way to a renewed search for an explanation of the *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum* that more satisfactorily reflects Cicero’s experience. This evident turn in Cicero’s thought after the *Tusculans*, which looks to the *aetas* for a different understanding of futurity, may certainly be explained by his lack of Stoic wisdom. Cicero remained, after all, a “great holder of opinions” (*ego vero ipse et magnus quidem sum opinator, Luc. 66*) and so, perhaps, could never come to see that his life and his Republic were the best in the best of all possible worlds. Yet we might also understand his shift toward the future of the *aetas* following the *Tusculans* as an outcome, however partial, of his exhaustive skeptical treatment of the *vita* as

a way of understanding human time.<sup>118</sup> If the *vita* is not a reliable source of happiness or truth, perhaps a new concept is needed to understand the human relation to time. Indeed, even viewed from the Stoic perspective of the infinite sequence of causes, there is no *vita*, but only *aetas*, flowing from “eternity into eternity” (*ab aeternitate in aeternum*), in a sequence that does not divide into segments; nor is the life of one man a separate whole from the whole of the 10,000 year cycle of cosmic destruction and rebirth.<sup>119</sup>

Such a cosmic perspective, however, is also not conclusively forthcoming from Cicero in the last days of the Republic. Cicero sees the *aetas* not only as a way to think through the teleological problems of the *vita*, but also the diachronic and intergenerational failures of his historical moment. Cicero explicitly confronts this diachronic failure in *de Sen.*, a short dialogue written in the months after the *Tusculans* and just prior to the renewed upheaval caused by Caesar’s assassination.<sup>120</sup> Above all, this text is concerned with the features of the *aetas* as a distinct form of human temporality and the relevance of philosophy to “every time of life” (*omne tempus aetatis*). In terms of density, the word *aetas* appears much more frequently in *de Sen.* than in any of the other dialogues of 45-4 and is singled out in preference to the otherwise more

---

<sup>118</sup> On this shift, see, e.g., the incomplete *de Universitate*, discussed above Intro., section I. For the prominence of *aetas* in the post-*Tusculan* dialogues, see, e.g., *de Nat. De.* 1.6, 1.11, 1.51, 1.66, 1.81, 2.5, 2.52, 2.64, 2.70, 3.11; on *de Sen.*, see below; *de Am.* 4, 33, 69, 74, 87, 101, 104; *de Div.* 1.37, 2.5, 2.88, 2.117, 2.141.

<sup>119</sup> On the Stoic theories of *ekpurōsis* and the indestructibility of the *kosmos*, see Long and Sedley 1987: i.274-79. For Cicero’s treatment of the Platonic “Great Year,” see esp. *de Nat. De.* 2.51; cf. Pl. *Tim.* 39d. Notably these issues of the relation between cosmic and human time are prominent in *de Nat. De.* and *de Div.*, the major theological dialogues that Cicero began writing after *Tusc.* 5. The continuation of my project into these dialogues is a task for another time.

<sup>120</sup> On the dating see Cicero’s correspondence (*ad Att.* XIV.21[375]) from May 11 along with the list from *Div.* 2.3, which places *de Sen.* between *de Nat. De.* (autumn 45) and *Div.*, which was itself completed partially before (bk. 1) and after (bk. 2) the Ides of March. *De Sen.*, therefore, is likely the last of the dialogues from the period of Caesar’s dictatorship to be completed in full prior to the coup. For full consideration, see Powell 1988: 267-68. and Marinone 1997: 232, 235.

common *vita*.<sup>121</sup> As a dialogue about “age” specifically rather than the ethical life generally, this focus is not surprising. The semantic play to which the dialogue subjects *aetas*, however, indicates that the prevalence of the word is not simply thematic, but philosophically productive. Cicero employs a broad range of meanings, often bringing contrastive uses to bear on one another in the same passage: for instance, in a series of exempla about Cyrus, Lucius Metellus, and Nestor, Cicero reuses the word to describe the final moment of life (*extremo tempore aetatis*), Cato’s stage of life (*aetatique nostrae*), and a “generation” of humanity (*aetatem hominum*).<sup>122</sup> Taken together this semantic focus transforms the dialogue into an exploration of *aetas* as a distinct way of accessing human temporality and experience.

Furthermore, by putting the main speech of *de Sen.* into the mouth of the venerable Republican spokesman, Cato the Elder, Cicero casts into the past the fantasy of a “gentle and pleasant old age” (*mollem etiam et iucundam senectutem*, 2). The fantasy that this dialogue represents is made patently clear in the preface, which both negotiates the significance of Cato as a *persona* and the incongruity between the depiction of old age in the text with the current circumstances of Cicero’s life. To begin with, this dialogue marks the end of a string of works dedicated to Brutus and forms a diptych with *de Amicitia*,<sup>123</sup> that are addressed to Atticus on topics specifically suited to their life-long friendship. This choice helps to emphasize the

---

<sup>121</sup> In *de Sen.* the rate of occurrence for *aetas* is 53/8500, whereas *vita* is 44/8500; cf. the *Tusc.* where the word *aetas* only appears 23x across all 5 books (approx. 42500 words total) but *vita* has roughly the same rate of occurrence as in *de Sen.* For a selection of the semantic range in *de Sen.*, see for “a stage of life,” e.g., 5; for the “passage” of a lifetime, 4, 21, 33; for an inhabited “quality” of time, 6, 20, 40, 48; for the durative whole of a “lifetime,” 9, 62; for “age” specifically, 9, 38, 50; for the “moment” of death, 9, 30, 50; for a “generation,” 31.

<sup>122</sup> *De Sen.* 30-31.

<sup>123</sup> *De Am.*, however, was written following Caesar’s assassination. See Marinone 1997: 232-35 for dating.

importance of *aetas* for the work—both in the sense of the old “age” which they share, but also in the sense of a “generation” through which they have lived together. Additionally, unlike every other dialogue from this time, Cicero does not present the conversation contained therein as the transcription of a real encounter, but rather makes explicit the writerliness of his composition by discussing within the dialogue itself his selection of *personae*:<sup>124</sup> “I have attributed this whole conversation not to Tithonus, like Aristo of Ceos—for there is too little authority in myth—but to the elder Marcus Cato so that the speech might have more authority.”<sup>125</sup> Cicero’s emphasis on the “authority” (*auctoritas*) of Cato as a mouthpiece, as opposed to a mythological figure like Tithonus, stands out against his own contemporaneous warnings against accepting philosophical arguments on the *auctoritas* of their proponents.<sup>126</sup> In this instance, however, Cicero looks to Cato for a particular form of authority, which cannot be found in his present, but exists only in the past.

The specific type of *auctoritas* for which Cicero looks to the figure of Cato is discussed explicitly within the dialogue itself.<sup>127</sup> Cato is depicted in the text as enjoying an old age that

---

<sup>124</sup> In a way, this admission in the prologue is a continuation of the frequent discussions in the letters on the suitability of Cicero’s choice of *personae*; see e.g., *Att.* XIII.16, 19, 32 on the *Academica* (discussed above Ch. 2, section IV). It is interesting that in this case, Cicero chooses to reproduce this aspect of their correspondence publicly (assuming that their letters were not yet in circulation). Cf. also *ad Quint.* III.5.1.

<sup>125</sup> *De Sen.* 3, *Omnem autem sermonem tribuimus non Tithono, ut Aristo Ceus, parum enim esset auctoritatis in fabula, sed M. Catoni, quo maiorem auctoritatem haberet oratio.* On Cicero’s indebtedness and deviation from this named Greek source, see Powell 1988: 269-72.

<sup>126</sup> See, e.g., *Tusc.* 5.83 (discussed above) or *de Nat. De.* 1.10, “Those who want to know what I myself think on any particular question are being more curious than is necessary; for it is not the weight of authority so much as that of reason that should be looked for in an argument” (*qui autem requirunt quid quaque de re ipsi sentiamus, curiosius id faciunt quam necesse est; non enim tam auctoritatis in disputando, quam rationis momenta quaerenda sunt*).

<sup>127</sup> On Cicero’s long-standing relationship with Cato as a model whose *auctoritas* can in some way be stripped from the quality of his speech or thought, see esp. the discussion between “Marcus” and

combines a dedication to intellectual activity, agricultural pursuits, the pleasures of friendship with younger generations, and, significantly, continued relevance to the governance of the Roman state. As he does often in his speech, Cato offers a cultural explanation for the seemingly perfect old age that he inhabits by recalling the famous exemplum of Valerius Corvinus.<sup>128</sup> Cato reminds his young interlocutors,

Marcum quidem Valerium Corvinum accepimus ad centesimum annum perduxisse, cum esset acta iam aetate in agris eosque coleret, cuius inter primum et sextum consulatum sex et quadraginta anni interfuerunt. Ita quantum spatium aetatis maiores ad senectutis initium esse voluerunt, tantus illi cursus honorum fuit; atque huius extrema aetas beatior quam media, quod auctoritatis habebat plus, laboris minus. Apex est autem senectutis auctoritas.

We are told that Marcus Valerius Corvinus lived until his hundredth year, and he continued, even after his prime of life was over, to work in his fields. There were forty-six years between his first and sixth consulships. Thus as much span of life as our ancestors thought would reach up to the beginning of old age, so much was the time of his public career. But his final age was even happier than the middle, because he had more influence and his labor was less. The best thing in old age is indeed influence.<sup>129</sup>

Corvinus functions for Cato, and for Cicero, as a consummate figure of the *aetas*. Not only did he live until his “hundredth year” (*ad centesimum annum perduxisse*), he spent all of those years actively working in his fields, even after his “prime of life was over” (*acta iam aetate*).<sup>130</sup> In the public sphere, his career (*cursus honorum*) stretched over “as much span of life” (*spatium aetatis*) as Roman conventional wisdom—the “ancestors” (*maiores*)—assigned to the entirety of

---

“Atticus” at *Brut.* 68 and 294. For a reading of Cicero’s assumption of Cato’s *auctoritas* as in competition with Cato the Younger’s own relation to his ancestor, see Craig 1986; Blom 2010: 155.

<sup>128</sup> On this exemplum, cf. Val. Max. 8.13.1 (a nearly verbatim quotation of Cicero’s version) and Pliny *NH* 7.157.

<sup>129</sup> *De Sen.* 60-61.

<sup>130</sup> Notice the shift in idiom from *vita iam acta* (*ad Fam.* VI.4, discussed above, section I) to *acta iam aetate* (on which, see *Tusc.* 1.94, discussed Intro., section III and Ch. 3, section III). Unlike Cicero’s *vita* in his letter to Torquatus, for Corvinus, even after his “prime” is over, there is still more *aetas* to live.

a life from birth to the onset of old age (*ad senectutis initium*).<sup>131</sup> And, when arriving at the “final age” (*extrema aetas*), he found that it was “happier than the middle because he had more influence and his labor was less” (*beatior quam media, quod auctoritatis habebat plus, laboris minus*). His “influence” (*auctoritas*) was thus the *apex* of his old age in the metaphoric sense, attested only here in classical Latin, of a “crowning achievement,” a “summation” of his *aetas*—an accumulation of time that is uniquely his, yet also the result of a culturally sanctioned and supported movement through the stages of life.<sup>132</sup> In Cicero’s composition of Cato’s speech, therefore, Corvinus functions as the model of *aetas* to which his choice of *persona* aspires; the *auctoritas* of Cato’s *aetas* emulates the *auctoritas* of Corvinus’ *aetas*, which, in turn, is subtended by the assemblage of cultural practices and institutions that enabled them both to achieve such a perfect *senectus*.<sup>133</sup>

Cicero’s defensive comments about the suitability of his choice of Cato thus aim to lay claim to this type of “influence” or “authority” of the Republican past, while at the same time allowing him to free that *auctoritas* from the intellectual interests and rhetorical features of the historical Cato. He suggests to his audience, “If [Cato] should seem to debate more learnedly than he himself was accustomed to in his own books, let this be attributed to the Greek literature which it is well known he was consumed by in his old age” (*qui si eruditius videbitur disputare quam consuevit ipse in suis libris, attribuito litteris Graecis, quarum constat eum perstudiosum*

---

<sup>131</sup> Interestingly, the Roman notion that *senectus* begins at 46 was, at the time of Cato, due to the fact that this was the age of discharge from the army. By the time of Cicero’s composition, this bit of conventional wisdom had been calcified into an archaism; see Powell 1988: ad loc.

<sup>132</sup> An *apex* is originally “an olive-twig tied round with wool, placed in the cap of the *flamines*.” See Powell 1988: ad loc for the uniqueness of the metaphor.

<sup>133</sup> Cato goes on to discuss other prominent exempla of the *auctoritas* enjoyed in old age by Republican statesmen, e.g., Lucius Caecilius Metellus, Publius Crassus, Marcus Lepidus, as well as his frequent reference points: Paulus, Scipio Africanus, and Fabius Maximus (61).

*fuisse in senectute*, 3).<sup>134</sup> The rich irony of this statement simultaneously brings the historical Cato into Cicero's *persona* and emphasizes the temporal gap that separates them. While he urges his reader to suspend disbelief in Cato's overly erudite speech (*eruditius*) because of the Censor's famous zeal for Greek learning in his own old age,<sup>135</sup> Cicero slyly employs the archaizing form of the "future" imperative (*attribuito*) precisely to make this appeal. This verb form is so common in Cato's surviving writings<sup>136</sup> that it is hard to miss this imitation of the antiquity of Cato's expression and thought at the same time that Cicero is encouraging us to overlook it.<sup>137</sup> Cicero confirms the uneasy meeting of past and present by asserting summarily just before launching into the dialogue, "Why should I say more? From now on the speech of

---

<sup>134</sup> See also a similar defense of the use of Republican authorities in philosophical dialogues at *Luc.* 5-7. Whereas Cicero's concern over the suitability of his choice in that instance led him to completely revise his dialogue, however, in *de Sen.* he seems to relish in the ironic contrast that his selection of *persona* allows him. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Cicero's use of the comparative *eruditius* can also be interpreted to suggest that if Cato *had* lived longer in his dedication to Greek learning, he might have arrived at the level of erudition that Cicero affords him. Cicero is thus not "imposing" style and knowledge upon Cato, but rather "bringing him up" to a state of learning and eloquence that remains, at least within the fantasy world of the dialogue, part of the Censor's own *aetas*.

<sup>135</sup> A common facet of Cicero's characterization of Cato, which he also attributes to Cato the Younger, his grandson. See e.g., *Brut.* 63-69; cf. *de Fin.* 3.6-7. Cf. Plut. *Cato* 2. For the development of Cato as a *persona* throughout Cicero's oeuvre, see Powell 1988: 19-22; Blom 2010: 154-58.

<sup>136</sup> As a representative passage, cf. *de Ag. Cult.* 8, *stercilinum magnum stude ut habeas; stercus sedulo conserua: cum exportabis, purgato et comminuito: per autumnum euehito. circum oleas autumnitate ablaqueato et stercus addito. frondem populneam, ulmeam, querneam caedito per tempus: eam condito non peraridam, pabulum ouibus. item faenum cordum, sicilimenta de prato, ea arida condito. post imbrem autumnum, rapinam, pabulum lupinumque serito.* By contrast, the form rarely appears in Cicero's writing and only in specific contexts for elevated rhetorical effect (e.g., *In Verr.* 2.216), in quotation of legal language (e.g., *In Verr.* 2.143) or in his very early public speeches (e.g., *Pro Sext. Rosc.* 74, 93).

<sup>137</sup> The significance of this form in this context is severely downplayed by Powell 1988: ad loc., "The second person imperative in *-to* is slightly archaic, slightly formal and less peremptory than the ordinary imperative. It is traditionally called the 'future imperative,' and is often used, as here, when there is a dependent clause in the future tense, though it clearly has nothing to do with the future in form." Powell offers one comparandum (*de Or.* 2.14, *si cupidius factum existimas, Caesari attribues*), which only helps to accentuate the peculiarity of the form's appearance here. By contrast, I contend both that its connection to Cato's style is foregrounded and that the futurity of the whole clause is significant.

Cato himself will lay out my whole opinion about old age” (*sed quid opus est plura? Iam enim ipsius Catonis sermo explicabit nostram omnem de senectute sententiam*). The future tense of this statement (*attribuito, explicabit*) embraces both the past speech of Cato himself (*ipsius Catonis sermo*) and Cicero’s present “whole opinion about old age” (*omnem de senectute sententiam*).

Yet this futurity belies the problem in Cicero’s adoption of Cato as a straightforward *persona*. Rather than simply being able to transmit the *auctoritas* of the past into the present, Cicero must acknowledge that he is unable, at the moment, to speak—with or without *auctoritas*—to his present. The dialogue, in fact, begins with the erasure of the present and its deferral into an undetermined moment in the future. After gesturing to Atticus’ “self-control” (*moderationem animi tui*) and “even temper” (*aequitatem*) ensured by his Epicureanism and gently teasing him for the “human feeling” (*humanitatem*) and “wisdom” (*prudentiam*) that he brought home from Athens along with his cognomen (*non cognomen solum Athenis deportasse*), the narrator worries, “nevertheless I suspect that you are sometimes disturbed quite seriously by these same circumstances which are troubling me” (*Et tamen te suspicor eisdem rebus quibus me ipsum interdum gravius commoveri*). Cicero, however, does not address his dialogue to these present circumstances: “A consolation for them is too immense a task and must be deferred until another time” (*quarum consolatio et maior est et in aliud tempus differenda*). This deferral of a “consolation” for the present into an undetermined future (*in aliud tempus*) complicates the underlying timeframe of the whole work. Cicero’s *sententia* concerning a venerable and successful old age that Cato’s *sermo* voices is conceived not as a remedy for the present moment, but as its deferral until the future moment at which the diachrony of intergenerational time will have been restored. Or, to put it differently, this indeterminate future moment provides the



conditions of possibility for the realization of a continuous meeting of past and present that Cicero's dialogue can only imagine and render in a fictional form.

Thus, the temporal mechanism of this short dialogue is remarkably complex: written with an awareness of the failure of intergenerational time, it aims to activate the indeterminacy of the future in order to reconstitute the continuity between past and present. Within Cato's speech, this mechanism of the dialogue is displayed in Cicero's recurrent use of two different types of literary anachrony: first, as he is fond of doing throughout his dialogues,<sup>138</sup> Cicero makes his characters betray the knowledge of hindsight from the time of composition as a foreshadowing from the dramatic time. For instance, when Laelius reassures Cato that both he and Scipio will be grateful to him for imparting his wisdom, he says, "Indeed, Cato, we will be most grateful to you—so long as I can still speak for Scipio—if, since we hope to become old men (at any rate we wish it), you will teach us very far in advance by what means we will most easily bear the burdens of age" (*Atqui, Cato, gratissimum nobis, ut etiam pro Scipione pollicear, feceris, si, quoniam speramus, volumus quidem certe, senes fieri, multo ante a te didicerimus quibus facillime rationibus ingravescentem aetatem ferre possimus*, 6). This seemingly innocuous statement of gratitude contains a prophetic reference to the "future." The choice to put this statement in the mouth of Laelius, who specifically worries about speaking for Scipio (*ut etiam pro Scipione pollicear*), gestures to the discrepancy in their longevity: since Scipio will die before Laelius, there will be a point at which he will no longer be able to speak for his friend—or, rather, as Cicero goes on to dramatize in *de Amicitia*,<sup>139</sup> he will be left as the only one who

---

<sup>138</sup> E.g., his character's "proleptic" references to Atticus's cognomen at *de Fin.* 5.4, discussed above, Ch. 1, section III.

<sup>139</sup> See esp. *de Am.* 5.

*can* speak for his friend. The convoluted syntax of the conditional protasis, *si, quoniam speramus, volumus quidem certe, senes fieri*,<sup>140</sup> further foreshadows not only the historical Scipio's untimely demise, but also Cicero's own dramatization of Laelius' old age, which will be lived without his friend.

In addition to this form of anachrony, which looks forward to a past future, Cato's own speech is heavily laden with a rhetorical device that, on the surface, claims to establish genealogical continuities between the past and the dramatic present. These claims become anachronous when they are carried into the discontinuous and deferred present of the time of composition, bringing to the fore the breakdown of intergenerational time into which the dialogue is written. This rhetorical device is at its simplest a claim in the first-person speech of Cato to have lived with and known historical figures: for instance, when he claims to have "loved Quintus Fabius Maximus, the man who recovered Tarentum, like an age-mate, although he was old and I was young" (*Ego Q. Maximum, eum qui Tarentum recepit, senem adulescens ita dilexi, ut aequalem*) or when he refers to Ennius as "my friend" (*noster familiaris*, 10).<sup>141</sup> These claims of intimacy with prominent Romans of the "greatest generation" of the Republic—the same type of generational intimacy (*aequalis, familiaris*) that Cicero and Atticus share—while perhaps sanctioned by the historical Cato's experience,<sup>142</sup> in the world of the dialogue is used relentlessly to establish the continuity between the past and the dramatic present—a

---

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Powell 1988: ad loc., who characterizes Laelius' *lapsus* as a "correction" which means that *speramus* is grammatically "forgotten."

<sup>141</sup> On the historical relationship between Cato and Ennius, see Nep. *Cato* 1.4, who claims that Cato brought the poet from Sardinia to Rome. Ennius is invoked frequently in the dialogue; see 1, 14, 16, 50, 73 for direct quotations.

<sup>142</sup> See Powell 1988: ad loc., "There is no reason to doubt the truth of Cicero's idea that Cato as a young man attached himself to Fabius Maximus."

continuity that is simultaneously ruptured by the deferral of the present moment of composition.<sup>143</sup>

These gestures of continuity can also be extended from Cato's experience to those of Laelius and Scipio in increasingly complex genealogical figures. For example, after citing Ennius again, Cato urges Laelius and Scipio to recall their own connections of living memory to the poet: "You should both be able to recall him distinctly, for only 19 years after his death the present consuls, Titus Flaminius and Manius Acilius, were elected. He died only in the consulship of Caepio and Philippus (for the second time), when I, at 65, spoke in favor of the Voconian Law with a loud voice and strong lungs" (*quem quidem probe meminisse potestis; anno enim undevicesimo post eius mortem hi consules, T. Flaminius et M'. Acilius, facti sunt; ille autem Caepione et Philippo iterum consulibus mortuus est, cum ego quinque et sexaginta annos natus legem Voconiam magna voce et bonis lateribus suasi*, 14).<sup>144</sup> This genealogical figure not only draws the memory of Ennius into the lives of the younger generation of Scipio and Laelius, but also establishes a correspondence between this intergenerational time and the chronology of the state. By making repeated reference to the consuls and to his own legislative activities, Cato emphasizes the interconnectedness of the time-keeping practices of the Republic and the diachronic continuity of its aristocracy. The seamless continuation of this temporal and

---

<sup>143</sup> The density of this figure—which we might call a “claim to living memory”—is indeed relentless: in addition to the examples discussed here, see e.g., 15, 16, 19, 21, 27-8, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, etc.

<sup>144</sup> In another sense, this genealogical dating is important for the diachronic continuity for *de Sen.* because it is this particular death notice that allows modern scholars to establish precisely a dramatic date of 150 BCE for the dialogue. See Powell 1988: 16-17 and ad loc.

political assemblage within the world of the dialogue stands in ironic contrast to the discontinuity and deferral of Cicero's own present.<sup>145</sup>

These two forms of literary anachrony—the foreshadowing of a past future and the establishing of a discontinuous genealogical continuity—come together in a passage that Cato addresses to Scipio. This passage also demonstrates the importance that Cicero's dialogue forges for the future as the constitutive timeframe for intergenerational diachrony. In opposition to “those who deny that old age can be spent in useful activity” (*qui in re gerenda versari senectutem negant*, 17), Cato compares the elder statesman to the pilot (*gubernatorem*) of a ship, whose usefulness comes not from “climbing the masts” (*malos scandant*) or “running along the gangways” (*per foros cursent*), tasks more suitable to younger sailors, but from his experience, authority, and judgment (*consilio auctoritate sententia*) with which he guides the ship.<sup>146</sup> As an example of this utility of old age, Cato remarks on the pressure that he continues to exert on the Senate to destroy Carthage.<sup>147</sup> At this moment he, pointedly, turns to Scipio:

Quam palmam utinam di immortales, Scipio, tibi reservent, ut avi reliquias persequare, cuius a morte tertius hic et tricesimus annus est, sed memoriam illius viri omnes excipient anni consequentes. Anno ante me censorem mortuus est, novem annis post meum consulatum, cum consul iterum me consule creatus esset.

How I hope that the immortal gods will preserve you, Scipio, so that you might follow in the footsteps of your grandfather! It has been thirty-three years since his death, but each

---

<sup>145</sup> The genealogical nature of this figure of continuity foregrounds not only the breakdown of intergenerational time due to Caesar's dictatorship and his literal reconfiguration of chronology (see above n.8), but also points to Cicero's own status as a *novus homo*, without direct ancestors to call his own within the Roman aristocracy. As Lydia Spielberg suggests, Cicero's choice of Cato as his own direct *persona* may be the result of his attempt to create a lineage of orator-*cum*-philosophers for himself. On this thesis, see also Blom 2010: 35-59. On Cicero's class status and his literary production more generally, see also Bishop 2019: esp. 17-26 and 259-300; for an interesting argument that ties Cicero's class and literary endeavors to the size of his *familia urbana*, see Garland 1992.

<sup>146</sup> On this extended metaphor, which reappears throughout the dialogue, see Sjöblad 2009: 125-129.

<sup>147</sup> This passage is the earliest source for Cato's famous hostility to Carthage; cf. [Livy] *Periocha* 48-49; Plut. *Cato* 26-27. On his demand *Carthago delenda est*, see Thurlemann 1974 and O'Gorman 2004.

of the following years will receive and pass on the memory of that man. He died the year before I was censor, nine years after I was consul, during which period in office he was elected consul for the second time.<sup>148</sup>

This genealogical and chronological nexus demonstrates Cato's interest in establishing the continuity between the figures of the past and the dramatic present. He marks the passage of time since the elder Scipio's death (*cuius a morte tertius hic et tricesimus annus est*) and indicates the points of contiguity between their lives and careers (*Anno ante me censorem mortuus est, novem annis post meum consulatum, cum consul iterum me consule creatus esset*). The primary thrust of the comment, however, is to induce Scipio to recognize the *potential* continuities between his adoptive grandfather's life and his own.<sup>149</sup> Of course, Cicero's readers know that Scipio will, in fact, be preserved "by the immortal gods" long enough to "follow in the footsteps of his grandfather" (*di immortales, Scipio, tibi reservent, ut avi reliquias persequare*), but from the internal time of the dialogue this is another example of ironical prolepsis.

What is slightly different about this example of the technique, which makes it relevant for thinking about Cicero's conceptualization of intergenerational time as a whole, is that, unlike the example of Laelius' foreshadowing of Scipio's death, Scipio is here given agency over the continuity of diachrony. The accomplishments of Scipio the Elder are only "remains" or "relics" (*reliquiae*) of a former time—they have no necessary constituting force. It remains, therefore, up to Scipio to "follow in the footsteps" (*persequare*)<sup>150</sup>—to imitate, certainly, but also "to take up and beyond"—these remnants of a former time. We, of course, know that he *did* in fact do this;

---

<sup>148</sup> *De Sen.* 19.

<sup>149</sup> For Aemilianus Paulus' adoption into the Scipiones, see Diod. 31.27. On Cato's relationship to the younger Scipio's biological and adoptive families, see Astin 1956; on the adoption from a cultural and religious perspective, see Rawson 1973.

<sup>150</sup> On *sequi*, see Ch. 2, section III.

yet, because of the ironical foreshadowing, Scipio the Younger's actions are represented as occurring in the future. These future actions will establish the continuity between the relic of the past and the admonition of the present. As Cato puts it clearly in reference to the whole existence of a Republican tradition of memorialization, "each of the following years will receive and pass on the memory of that man" (*sed memoriam illius viri omnes excipient anni consequentes*). The future is the source of diachronic continuity promised by *memoria*. "Each of the following years" (*omnes...anni consequentes*) will be responsible for constituting and reconstituting the relationship between past and present.

If there is any hope, this passage indicates, for reestablishing the continuities that separate the time of the dialogue from the time of composition, Cicero must not look to the past but to the future. The genealogical continuity of the *aetas* at work in this text is thus counterposed to the theoretical consequentiality of *Tusculans 5*. The *praestans vir*, who, through a synoptic understanding of nature from within his *vita*, is able to conceive of diachrony as a chain of cause and effect flowing from past to present and into the future. In this way, the sage can comprehend the *vicissitudo atque mutatio ex alio in aliud* in human experience from the perspective of the divine mind and causal necessity. By contrast, in *de Senectute* Cicero works from the deferral and failure of the present in order to arrive at an understanding of diachrony that is produced, not by the logically determined relationship between past and present, but from the constitutive actions of the future. By deferring the present into an indeterminate future moment (*in aliud tempus*), Cicero's dialogue envisions the future-past conditions under which he might be able to achieve the dignified old age that Cato represents—and the intergenerational continuities from which that *aetas* will have been constituted.

## V. The Future of an Age

In this final section, I examine more closely the futurity that is at stake in *de Senectute*. This dialogue and its particular use of Cato as an authoritative figure presents two distinct conceptualizations of the future, which I will refer to as “paternity” and “fecundity.” On the one hand, drawing on traditional Roman forms of patrilineal inheritance, Cato, as we have already seen, envisions the continuity between the future and the past as one of paternity.<sup>151</sup> The father creates in the son an identity of his traits, character, and goals, through which the son may realize the potentialities of the past from the future. Although the son may be empowered to act upon this identity, nevertheless, the constitutive power of the future lies in this paternal inheritance. On the other hand, in Cato’s discussion of agriculture and the human cultivation of the natural world we can locate another model of futurity that possesses commonalities with Levinas’ “fecundity.”<sup>152</sup> Rather than being based in the reproduction of identity, this mode of reproduction

---

<sup>151</sup> On the culture of Roman paternity, see Flower 1996; Gunderson 2003: esp. 191-226; on maternal succession, see Crook 1986. On Levinas’ use of paternity as an initial step towards fecundity, see Levinas 1991: 267, “Paternity remains a self-identification, but also a distinction within identification—a structure unforeseeable in formal logic. Hegel in the writings of his youth was able to say that the child *is* the parents, and in *Weltalter* Schelling was able for theological needs to deduce filiality from the identity of Being. Possession of the child by the father does not exhaust the meaning of the relationship that is accomplished in paternity, where the father discovers himself not only in the gestures of his son, but in his substance and his unicity. My child is a stranger (Isaiah 49), but a stranger who is not only mine, for he *is* me.” On this Levinasian understanding of paternity, which should not be taken to be the same as the Roman notion, see Oliver 2001.

<sup>152</sup> I am working with Levinas’ explication of these concepts from *Time and Eternity*, which undergo transformation in later works. For Levinas there is not an opposition between “paternity” and fecundity, but rather a transformative relationship; see, e.g., 1991: 268, “The relation with the child—that is, the relation with the other that is not a power, but fecundity—establishes relationship with the absolute future, or infinite time...In power the indetermination of the possible does not exclude the reiteration of the I, which in venturing toward this indeterminate future falls back on its feet, and, riveted to itself, acknowledges its transcendence to be merely illusory and its freedom to delineate but a fate. The diverse forms Proteus assumes do not liberate him from his identity. In fecundity the tedium of this repetition ceases; the I is other and young, yet the ipseity that ascribed to it its meaning and its orientation in being is not lost in this renouncement of self. Fecundity continues history without producing old age.”

partakes of the Other in order to liberate futurity from identity.<sup>153</sup> As Levinas contends, fecundity “does not denote all that I can grasp—my possibilities; it denotes my future, which is not a future of the same—not a new avatar...And yet it is my adventure still, and consequently my future in a very new sense, despite the discontinuity.”<sup>154</sup> Similarly, in Cato’s view of the farmer’s relationship to nature, the reproductive and generative processes of cultivation are both dependent on and discontinuous with the person of the cultivator. Understood philosophically, Cato’s farmer thus offers an alternative mode of relation to the future than the one offered by Roman paternity. After Brutus’ decision to “live up to his name,” we know very well which of these forms of futurity reestablished itself following Cicero’s composition of this dialogue. Yet it is important to consider the coexistence of these futures in a text written just before the events of March 44 altered, once again, Cicero’s perception of his present.

Cato’s injunction to the younger Scipio to follow in and overtake (*persequare*) the traces of his adoptive father participates in the conventional system of Republican patrimony in which individuals from the same family—often sharing the same names—are viewed socially as recurrences of a type.<sup>155</sup> These Scaevolae, Pisones, Bruti, and Scipiones create a diachronous

---

<sup>153</sup> On alterity in Levinas’ philosophy of time, see Chanter 2001: esp. 58-60 on the feminine; Lin 2013: 79-132 for intersubjective time.

<sup>154</sup> Cited above as epigraph.

<sup>155</sup> On the extraordinary power of this cultural phenomenon, see Plut. *Brut.* 9 who records that, prior to the assassination of Caesar, “Brutus was exhorted and incited to the undertaking by many arguments from his comrades, and by many utterances and writings from his fellow citizens. For instance, on the statue of his ancestor, the Brutus who overthrew the power of the kings, there was written: ‘O that we had thee now, Brutus!’ and ‘O that Brutus were alive!’ Besides, the praetorial tribunal of Brutus himself was daily found covered with such writings as these: ‘Brutus, art thou asleep?’ and ‘Thou art not really Brutus!’” (Βρούτον δὲ πολλοὶ μὲν λόγοι παρὰ τῶν συνήθων, πολλαῖς δὲ φήμαις καὶ γράμμασιν ἐξεκαλοῦντο καὶ παρώρων ἐπὶ τὴν πρᾶξιν οἱ πολῖται. τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀνδριάντι τοῦ προπάτορος Βρούτου τοῦ καταλύσαντος τὴν τῶν βασιλείων ἀρχὴν, ἐπέγραφον· “εἶθε νῦν ἦς, Βρούτε,” καὶ “ὄφελε ζῆν Βρούτος.” τὸ δ’ αὐτοῦ Βρούτου βῆμα στρατηγούντος εὕρισκετο μεθ’ ἡμέραν ἀνάπλεων γραμμάτων τοιούτων· “Βρούτε καθεύδεις;” καὶ “Οὐκ εἶ Βρούτος ἀληθῶς;”; trans. Perrin). This belief was bound up with Roman ancestor



chain of repetition and variation through which the Roman aristocracy reproduced itself for generations. Cicero's representation of this mode of traditional patrilineal inheritance in *de Senectute* helps to emphasize the importance of the future for establishing the continuity between present and past, thereby lending agency to future generations. Yet, as Cato repeatedly demonstrates, the ultimate importance of paternity lies in enabling and structuring the continuity of the chronology of the state through its familial lineages. Scipio should complete the task of Scipio because they are, with regard to the continuation of the state, diachronically distinct instantiations of the same life. Indeed, Scipio the Younger's adopted status within the family from which he derives his name and purpose only accentuates this basis: the identification between father and son—or, rather, adoptive grandfather and grandson—is not based purely on biological relation, but on a similarity of character, which can be molded and shaped into the form required by the state.<sup>156</sup>

In order to explain how this type of futurity operates, Cato comments on the motivations of those who choose to fulfill their paternal identities. Cato contends, above all, that the fulfillment of an inherited identity and struggle on behalf of the paternal lineage is a way in

---

worship, on which see the description of the funeral procession of *imagines* for Republican aristocratic families at Polyb. 6.53 with Flower 1996: 209-222. Polybius specifies that “when any illustrious member of the family dies, they carry these masks to the funeral, putting them on men whom they thought as like the originals as possible in height and other personal peculiarities. And these substitutes assume clothes according to the rank of the person represented... These representatives also ride themselves in chariots, while the fasces and axes, and all the other customary insignia of the particular offices, lead the way, according to the dignity of the rank in the state enjoyed by the deceased in his lifetime; and on arriving at the Rostra they all take their seats on ivory chairs in their order” (ἐπάν τε τῶν οἰκείων μεταλλάξῃ τις ἐπιφανῆς, ἄγουσιν εἰς τὴν ἐκφορὰν, περιτιθέντες ὡς ὁμοιοτάτοις εἶναι δοκοῦσι κατὰ τε τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὴν ἄλλην περικοπήν. οὗτοι δὲ προσαναλαμβάνουσιν ἐσθῆτας... αὐτοὶ μὲν οὖν ἐφ’ ἀρμάτων οὗτοι πορεύονται, ῥάβδοι δὲ καὶ πελέκεις καὶ τᾶλλα τὰ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς εἰωθότα συμπαρακεῖσθαι προηγείται κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἐκάστῳ τῆς γεγενημένης κατὰ τὸν βίον ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ προαγωγῆς, ὅταν δ’ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐμβόλους ἔλθωσι, καθέζονται πάντες ἐξῆς ἐπὶ δίφρων ἐλεφαντίνων).

<sup>156</sup> See, e.g., Rawson 1973: 165, who describes how Scipio after adoption intentionally combined traditional aspects of both the Aemilii and Scipiones.

which the individual's life can attain a relation of consequence with posterity through memorialization—a relation that can be summed up by the single word, *gloria*. Once again addressing Scipio, Cato explains the aim that is shared by all those participants in Rome's paternal future:

Nemo umquam mihi, Scipio, persuadebit aut patrem tuum Paulum, aut duos avos Paulum et Africanum, aut multos praestantes viros, quos enumerare non est necesse, tanta conatos quae ad posteritatis memoriam pertinerent, nisi animo cernerent posteritatem ad ipsos pertinere. Anne censes, ut de me ipse aliquid more senum glorier, me tantos labores diurnos nocturnosque domi militiaeque suscepturum fuisse, si eisdem finibus gloriam meam quibus vitam essem terminaturus? Nonne melius multo fuisset otiosam aetatem et quietam sine ullo labore et contentione traducere?

No one will ever convince me, Scipio, that your father Paulus, or your two grandfathers Paulus and Africanus, or the many other outstanding men, whom it is not necessary to enumerate, would have attempted so many things which would matter to the memory of posterity, unless they perceived in their mind that posterity would matter to them. Or, do you think, if I might boast a bit in the manner of the old, that I would have undertaken so many struggles day and night at home and in foreign service, if I myself thought that my glory would share the same boundaries as my life? Would it not have been much better for me to have passed the time of my life in peaceful leisure without any struggle or effort?<sup>157</sup>

Drawing Scipio's attention to both his biological and adoptive lineages—the Pauli and the Scipiones—Cato summarizes the motivation of these and “the many other outstanding men” (*multos praestantes viros*) who have made up the paternal inheritance in which he now urges Scipio to take part. These men, he explains, never would have “attempted so many things which would matter to the memory of posterity, unless they perceived in their mind that posterity would matter to them” (*tanta conatos quae ad posteritatis memoriam pertinerent, nisi animo cernerent posteritatem ad ipsos pertinere*). In this echo of one of M.'s arguments for the immortality of the soul, Cato envisions participation in the paternal legacy of “posterity” (*ad posteritatem memoriam*) as a way of ensuring that that legacy will continue and extend to one's own life

---

<sup>157</sup> *De Sen.* 82.

(*posteritatem ad ipsos pertinere*).<sup>158</sup> The repeated verb *pertinere* describes both the character of the actions that qualify these men for the memorialization of later generations and the faithful maintenance of their legacy carried out by their future avatars, who will preserve this continuity with their predecessors.<sup>159</sup>

As Cato turns from Scipio's future to the actions of his own life, the mask separating speaker and author seems to wear thin. Claiming to "boast in the manner of the old" (*de me ipse aliquid more senum glorier*), Cato poses a set of questions that apply equally to the historical moment of the old Censor and to Cicero's current circumstances at the time of composition: "do you think...that I would have undertaken so many struggles day and night at home and in foreign service (*tantos labores diurnos nocturnosque domi militiaeque*), if I myself thought that my glory would share the same boundaries as my life (*vita*)? Would it not have been much better for me to have passed the time of my life in peaceful leisure without any struggle or effort?" In Cicero's fantasy, the answer to these questions is foreclosed. There is no doubt for the character Cato, speaking at the dramatic date, that the consummation and perfection of the *vita* lies in the paternal future. Only by dedicating himself to the "struggles day and night at home and in foreign service," will he partake of the memorialization and immortality—what he "boastingly" (*glorier*) refers to as his "glory" (*gloriam meam*)—promised by Rome's paternal lineage.<sup>160</sup> His certainty is so complete that he conceives of this immortality in a concrete and writerly form,

---

<sup>158</sup> Cf. esp. *Tusc.* 1.30-5 and 91 where Cicero uses similar phrasing, especially with the verb *pertinere*; and for the philosophical use of *pertinere* generally, see *de Fin.* 1.14, 2.83, 2.100; *Tusc.* 1.1, 24 etc. For a discussion of the relation between Cicero's usage of this verb and the Epicurean symmetry arguments, see see Ch. 3, section III.

<sup>159</sup> This verb is used elsewhere in *de Sen.* only in Cato's praise of the life of the farmer (24-25, discussed below; and 56).

<sup>160</sup> On Cicero and *gloria*, a topic to which he dedicated a now lost work in the summer of 44, see Sullivan 1941, Habinek 2000: 267-277.

looking forward to his post-mortem existence in which he will see and live with not only Scipio's and Laelius' fathers, and all those others whom he has known, "but those also of whom I have heard and read and myself written about" (*sed illos etiam, de quibus audivi et legi et ipse conscripsi*, 83).<sup>161</sup> Indeed, this afterlife, which exists somewhere between literary and literal immortality, is the future promised to a *vita acta* according to the *mos maiorum*—to have one's identity enmeshed in a tradition of memorialization and resurrection in the characters and actions of posterity.

Yet, if we think about Cato's questions posed, instead, by Cicero at the time of composition, the certainty of Cato's belief in the afterlife of the *gloria vitae* is stripped away. In particular, this transposition of Cato's words into the world of early 44 BCE reinvigorates the urgency of his seemingly disdainful query, "Would it not have been much better for me to have passed the time of my life (*aetas*) in peaceful leisure without any struggle or effort?" For Cato, there is no future for the *aetas*—that is, the time of life spent not according to the requirements of paternity, but in "leisure" and "relaxation" (*otiosam aetatem et quietam sine ullo labore et contentione*). For Cicero, however, who at this moment fears that he has been debarred from the future of the *gloria vitae* and whose present moment is failing to reproduce the continuity of paternal identity, the possibility of a future for the *aetas* opens up. The bivalence of these questions depending on the time at which the speaker asks them undermines Cato's performance of certainty in the promises of paternity, and instead emphasizes the deferral of the present in which Cicero is writing.

The deferral through which *de Senectute* is written is thus essentially a crisis of paternity and the continuity of the *gloria vitae*. As Cicero's frequent address to Brutus throughout his

---

<sup>161</sup> On this image of the afterlife as a gathering of ancestors and friends, see Pl. *Apol.* 41a; *Tusc.* 1.98.

dialogues foregrounds, the period of Caesar's tyranny is one in which members of the ruling aristocracy struggled to find a way to fit into the roles that their names and family characters promised they would fulfill.<sup>162</sup> The expulsion and death of the heirs of this tradition—several of whom are rendered in Cicero's own dialogues: Cato the Younger, Torquatus, Piso—as a consequence of the civil war raises a serious question as to whether this paternity can still operate—whether the future of the old dynasties will continue to reconstitute the passage of the past into the present according to the memorialization so easily available to Cato at the dramatic time of the dialogue. Even in the world of the dialogue, this anxiety about identity and lineage is rendered succinctly by Cato's repeated reference to the loss of his son.<sup>163</sup> Considering the relationship between author and *persona* that Cicero forges with Cato, this recent loss of a child is certainly made to stand in for the death of Tullia, but can also be read from the time of composition as the recent death of Cato's great-grandson or, more generally, the demise of so many aristocratic scions in the civil war—in short, the ruling class of the Republic itself.<sup>164</sup>

In light of this anxiety, it is notable that we can find in the *de Senectute* an alternate form of futurity or, what we might call more accurately with Levinas, “fecundity,” which relies not on the reproduction of identity but rather on the fecund proliferation of life after the model of the farmer. In keeping with Cicero's depiction of Cato according to his literary interests,<sup>165</sup> a

---

<sup>162</sup> See, e.g., *Tusc.* 1.88; see above, Ch. 3, n.91.

<sup>163</sup> See 68 and 84, where he is named; his marriage to the daughter of Lucius Paulus, Scipio's biological father, is also hinted at in 15. This M. Cato died just before taking office as praetor in 152; cf. *de Am.* 9; *Tusc.* 3.70.

<sup>164</sup> On the identification of this death with Tullia, see Powell 1988: ad 68, “Cicero in writing this was no doubt thinking of his own recent loss of Tullia.” Exempla of fathers outliving their children are prominent in the dialogue, as they are in *Tusc.* via the *Consolatio*: see, *de Sen.* 12 and 35; *Tusc.* 3.70.

<sup>165</sup> Cicero has Cato quote from his own works at 62 and 75. See Powell 1988: ad 51, “It was not unnatural to make Cato the Elder thus speak in praise of an occupation which he clearly held in high esteem.”

substantial portion of *de Senectute* is devoted to farming, viticulture, animal husbandry, and the general human capacity for cultivation and care of the natural world. Of course, in Cicero's hands these topics lack even the scant practical application that they may have had in Cato's own treatises.<sup>166</sup> Yet Cicero finds in Cato's interest in the cultivation of nature a rich philosophical vein and metaphor for a particular kind of relationship to the future. In particular, this conceptualization of the future eschews the paternal model of *gloria vitae* that Cato elsewhere advocates and, instead, draws from the generative potential of the *aetas*—a proliferation of futures based not on the reproduction of identity, but on the cultivated effluence of heterogeneous life.

In his account of the pleasures that are still available to old age, Cato selects for special attention “the Roman farmers in the Sabine field, my neighbors and friends, who are hardly ever absent from their fields when there is important work to be done, such as sowing, harvesting, storing up the crops (*possum nominare ex agro Sabino rusticos Romanos, vicinos et familiares meos, quibus absentibus numquam fere ulla in agro maiora opera fiunt, non serendis, non percipiendis, non condendis fructibus*).<sup>167</sup> In considering the unfailing attentions of these elderly farmers for their crops, Cato muses,

Quamquam in aliis minus hoc mirum est—nemo est enim tam senex qui se annum non putet posse vivere—sed idem in eis elaborant, quae sciunt nihil ad se omnino pertinere:  
*serit arbores, quae alteri saeculo prosint,*  
ut ait Statius noster in Synephebis. Nec vero dubitat agricola, quamvis sit senex, quaerenti cui serat respondere, ‘dis immortalibus, qui me non accipere modo haec a maioribus voluerunt, sed etiam posteris proderere.’

---

<sup>166</sup> On Cicero's application of agricultural terminology (“precisely correct”), see White 1970: 38; but cf. Finley 1981: 168-169. On the practical (or not) application of Cato's *de Agricultura*, see Olson 1945, Reay 2005.

<sup>167</sup> *De Sen.* 24.

Although this is hardly surprising for those plantings [which they know will matter to them]<sup>168</sup>—for no one is so old that he does not think he can live another year—even still, they lavish the same care on those which they know will never matter directly to them at all:

*He plants trees to benefit another age,*  
as our [Caecilius] Staius says in his “Young Comrades.” Nor will a farmer hesitate, even if he is old, to respond to the question, “for whom do you plant?”: “For the immortal gods, who have willed not only that I receive these from former generations, but also that they should benefit later ones.”<sup>169</sup>

In the figure of the farmer, Cato identifies a philosophical relation to the future. The traditional wisdom of agriculture, summarized by the poetic line, “He plants trees to benefit another age” (*serit arbores, quae alteri saeculo prosint*),<sup>170</sup> offers a strong model of futurity that is explicitly differentiated from paternity and the reproduction of identity.<sup>171</sup> In contrast to Cato’s contention that Scipio’s ancestors—and all others who participate in the inheritance of paternity—acted in order to maintain their relevance to posterity and the relevance of posterity to them (*ad posteritatis memoriam pertinerent...posteritatem ad ipsos pertinere*), farmers care for plantings “which they know will never matter directly to them at all” (*quae sciunt nihil ad se omnino pertinere*).<sup>172</sup> This essential feature of the farmer’s relation to the future affects their perception and sense of intergenerational time: unlike the Roman ancestors who act in order to embody posterity—to transform their own *vitae* according to the requirements of the state in exchange for

---

<sup>168</sup> On this grammatical prolepsis, see Douglas 1988: ad loc. and below n.172.

<sup>169</sup> *de Sen.* 24-5.

<sup>170</sup> This line is also cited at *Tusc.* 1.31; on the spelling and scansion of the fragment (Caec. Stat. *com.* 210 Ribbeck), see Powell 1988: ad loc.

<sup>171</sup> Considering the comparison that my argument draws between this aspect of *de Sen.* and Levinas’ philosophy, it is important to note the comparanda from the Jewish tradition cited by Powell 1988: ad loc., esp., *Midrash Rabbah* on Leviticus 25.5, “an anecdote in which the Emperor Hadrian is surprised at a centenarian planting trees.”

<sup>172</sup> The grammatical prolepsis, *in aliis...in eis elaborant quae sciunt...*, accentuates the certainty of their knowledge that the trees they plant will have no personal benefit or bearing on them.

*gloria*—the farmer is here presented as a caretaker of the benefits of posterity, even given his certain knowledge (*sciunt*) that his actions as caretaker will *not* pertain to him *at all* (*nihil ad se omnino pertinere*).<sup>173</sup>

In order to emphasize this point, Cato envisions another scenario<sup>174</sup> in which an old farmer is asked “for whom do you plant?” (*quaerenti cui serat*) to which the reply is, “For the immortal gods, who have willed not only that I receive these from former generations, but also that they should benefit later ones” (*dis immortalibus, qui me non accipere modo haec a maioribus voluerunt, sed etiam posteris prodere*). The “immortal gods” communicate the constitutive power of an indeterminate future onto the present of the farmer. Just as these nameless divinities “willed” that the farmer would receive the future benefit of the countless and diffuse actions of the past generations, so they maintain a continuity of benefit via the future of his own actions for the generations that come later. The farmer acts in the present without knowledge of the precise impact that his actions will have but trusts that, through the continuity promised by the “immortal gods,” they will have been beneficial to the future moment upon which they are ultimately bestowed. The nature of this benefit is emphatically not one of identity or paternity, but rather is imparted by these impersonal and naturalized divinities who maintain the futural continuity of the *aetas* through the heterogenous forms of life under cultivation.

---

<sup>173</sup> On this use of *pertinere* in relation to the farmer’s life, cf. 56, “My opinion, at any rate, is that no life can be happier [than the farmer’s] not only because of the duty performed, which benefits the entire human race, but because of the pleasure that I talked about before and the fulfillment and abundance of all the things which pertain to the sustenance of humans and the reverence of the gods” (*Mea quidem sententia haud scio an nulla beatior possit esse, neque solum officio, quod hominum generi universo cultura agrorum est salutaris, sed et delectatione quam dixi, et saturitate copiaque rerum omnium, quae ad victum hominum, ad cultum etiam deorum pertinent...*).

<sup>174</sup> The connection is not made clear, but it is possible this exchange is drawn from the same play *Synephebi* by Caecilius Statius; this play is also cited at *de Fin.* 1.4 and *de Nat. De.* 1.13.



In the farmer, therefore, Cicero/Cato locates an alternative mode of relation with the future that is based not on paternal glory or the possibilities of the *vita*, but on the cultivation of the benefits of the *aetas*. As also indicated in Levinas' notion of fecundity, however, even in this discontinuous relation to the future there remains a strand of continuity: as Levinas says, even without the "residue of identity," the future is "my adventure still, and consequently *my* future in a very new sense, despite the discontinuity." Cato's lengthy excursus on the "art of cultivation" (*ars agricolarum*, 52)<sup>175</sup> offers a view of the farmer's responsibility for and continuity with the benefits of posterity. In this centerpiece of Cato's speech, Cicero incorporates many obscure and technical words, gathered in part from Cato's own writings on agriculture, which creates a literary *locus* that mirrors the actions of the farmer. In this pairing of agriculture and literature, I suggest, Cicero envisions his art as a writer as sharing a similar relation to the future as the art of the farmer: the cultivation and preservation of the heterogenous futures of the *aetas*.

In contrast to an identity-based paternity, a fecund relation to the future critically involves an interaction with the Other—not simply a reproduction of the Same. In the case of Cato's farmer, this Other is represented by the earth. Cato expounds first on the "pleasures of the farmer" (*voluptates agricolarum*, 51), which he claims are not impinged at all by old age (*nec ulla impediuntur senectute*) and are "well-suited" or even "very similar to the life of a wise man" (*ad sapientis vitam proxime videntur accedere*). After defending the character of the pleasures garnered from a life of cultivation, Cato embarks on a sensuous depiction of agricultural generation, which is framed by a banking metaphor:

Habent enim rationem cum terra, quae numquam recusat impendium<sup>176</sup> nec umquam sine usura reddit quod accepit, sed alias minore, plerumque maiore cum fenore; quamquam

---

<sup>175</sup> This excursus is the longest sustained topic in the speech: 51-60.

<sup>176</sup> *Impendium* coni. Manutius for mss. *imperium*.

me quidem non fructus modo, sed etiam ipsius terrae vis ac natura delectat. Quae cum gremio mollito ac subacto sparsum semen exceptit, primum id occaecatum cohibet, ex quo occatio quae hoc efficit nominata est; deinde tepefactum vapore et compressu suo diffundit et elicit herbescentem ex eo viriditatem, quae nixa fibris stirpium sensim adolescit culmoque erecta geniculato vaginis iam quasi pubescens includitur.

[The pleasures of agriculture] keep their account with the earth, who never refuses a deposit, nor does she ever return the principal without interest accrued, whether at a low or a high percent. But I don't just enjoy the fruits, but also the power and nature of the very earth. She takes the scattered seed in her softened and fertilized belly and at first keeps it hidden (from this act of hiding we get our word for "harrowing"). Then she cradles the seed made warm by her moisture and enlarges it and draws from it a green stalk, which, supported by the fibers of its roots bit by bit grows until it now, as if reaching maturity, stands erect in its jointed stalk and is enclosed by its sheath.<sup>177</sup>

Through his personification of the earth as a banker who "never refuses a deposit" (*numquam recusat impendium*) and gives a fair rate of return, Cato emphasizes the productivity of the farmer's interaction with nature. The necessary human activity required to ensure generation is evident in the passive participles *mollito ac subacto...sparsum*. The metaphoric connotation of these actions used to describe the preparation of the earth's "belly" or "womb" (*gremio*) range from the sensual to the violent: with *mollire*, to "soften" or "restrain," often being used by Cicero to describe the pleasing or calming (or effeminizing) effects of voices and gestures, but *subigere*, in combination with the overt feminization of *gremium*, striking a stronger image of agriculture as a kind of masculine subjugation.<sup>178</sup> Yet this initial assertion of human action or even an attempt to "subdue" feminized nature is insufficient for the gestation and birth of new life. Indeed, Cato says that what he takes pleasure in is not simply the "profits" or "fruits" (*fructus*)—

---

<sup>177</sup> *De Sen.* 51.

<sup>178</sup> On the phrase *gremium terrae*, see *TLL* 6.2.2321-23; for the full personification of Mother Earth to which this image refers, cf. Pl. *Menex.* 238a, Lucr. 1.250-51, Cic. *de Nat. De.* 2.83, Verg. *Georg.* 2.325-26, etc. For Cicero's use of *mollire*, see, e.g., *de Leg.* 2.38 and, esp. in reference to "calming" the [waves of] the sea, *de Or.* 3.161-67. For *subigere*, see Powell 1988: ad loc, "*subigere* is the normal agriculture term for making the ground suitable for cultivation...Here, however, the conjunction with *gremio* is striking, and suggests a more definite image of the earth as female."

those aspects of nature in which the actions of humanity are most immediately “invested”—but in the “power and nature of earth herself” (*ipsius terrae vis ac natura*). This “power and nature” exists independent of humanity’s intervention and, in fact, even provides humans with some of its agricultural forms and functions: Cato proposes an etymological relation between nature’s “hiding” of the seed (*semen...occaecatam*) with the name and practice of “harrowing” (*occatio*).<sup>179</sup> In the end, it is the natural process caused by moisture and heat that brings the stalk of grain “as if reaching maturity” (*quasi pubescens*) to fruition. Cato thus presents agriculture as a mode of reproduction that relies on the independent and native powers of the earth—a dynamic Other into which the farmer must enter into a mutual relation in order to partake in the growth of life and generation of the future.

Cato maintains this relationship between cultivator and nature even in the more labor intensive forms of agriculture, such as viticulture, arboriculture, husbandry, and apiculture.<sup>180</sup> He envisions these agricultural practices, even when they are as invasive as splicing, grafting, or pruning, to be a way of relating to generation and the future through the careful propagation of heterogenous, discontinuous forms of life.<sup>181</sup> These forms of life may carry into the future the

---

<sup>179</sup>On this “fanciful” *figura etymologica*, see Powell 1988: ad loc.; cf. Varro *RR.* 1.31. On the use of technical agricultural vocabulary, see below.

<sup>180</sup> On these specialized techniques, see 52-54.

<sup>181</sup> See, e.g., 52, “The vine which by nature is crestfallen and, unless it is propped up, is carried to the earth, will raise itself by its hand-like tendrils and embrace whatever supports it has. And, as it is twining its way with its meandering and twisting course, the skill of the farmers, by trimming it with a knife, will check it so that its shoots do not become woody and so that it does not spread out all its parts too far” (*Vitis quidem quae natura caduca est et, nisi fulta est, fertur ad terram, eadem, ut se erigat, claviculis suis quasi manibus quidquid est nacta complectitur, quam serpentem multiplici lapsu et erratico, ferro amputans coercescet ars agricolarum, ne silvescat sarmentis et in omnes partes nimia fundatur*). In this image it is hard to tell exactly where the vine ends and the farmer begins: the vine’s tendrils are “like hands” (*quasi manibus*), which then become the impersonal “skill of the farmers” (*ars agricolarum*) that trim back the wandering tendrils. The vine also verges on becoming other plant and animal forms of life

benefit of the farmer's skill, as the viticulturist's care for a vine might improve the taste of its grapes, yet the farmer acts not out of a delight in the self-interested usefulness of his craft (*utilitas*), but in the pleasure of cultivation and nature herself (*cultura et natura ipsa*).<sup>182</sup> Thus the farmer's relation to the future is at every point opposed to the paternity of the *mos maiorum*: any continuity that exists for the farmer himself lies not in the preservation of his identity via the eternal glory of his actions, but in the anonymous benefits that his skillful care will have bestowed upon the heterogeneous forms of life under his cultivation. In these discontinuous and branching futures, the farmer partakes in fecundity for which he bears responsibility, even if the realization of its potentialities will in no way pertain to him.

As we see in his word choice and etymological interest, Cicero's composition of Cato's speech on agriculture is intensively literary. Not only does he incorporate technical and specific vocabulary (e.g., *occatio*, *malleolus*, *viradices*, *repastinationes*), which transforms this speech into a *locus* of Roman agricultural writing, especially in dialogue with Cato's own work and the contemporaneous treatise by Varro,<sup>183</sup> Cicero makes explicit the connection between agriculture and the Greek literary tradition. Cato cheekily jokes that, although the "learned Hesiod" wrote on agricultural topics, the Greek poet never bothered to write about manure—unlike Cato himself.<sup>184</sup> He praises Homer for extolling the peaceful and consoling virtues of farm life in the

---

(*serpentem...silvescat*) in a proliferation of future life. Cf. the continuity between vines and humans at *de Fin.* 5.39; see above, Ch. 1, n.117.

<sup>182</sup> 53, *Cuius quidem non utilitas me solum, ut ante dixi, sed etiam cultura et natura ipsa delectat: adminiculorum ordines, capitum iugatio, religatio et propagatio vitium, sarmentorum ea, quam dixi, aliorum amputatio, aliorum immissio.*

<sup>183</sup> On agricultural writing as a tradition and *locus* of debate over Roman identity, see Reay 2005; Spencer 2010; Doody 2017.

<sup>184</sup> 54, *Quid de utilitate loquar stercorandi? Dixi in eo libro...De qua doctus Hesiodus ne verbum quidem fecit, cum de cultura agri scriberet.*

depiction of Laertes and singles out Xenophon as a writer who treats agricultural topics with the respect and elaboration they deserve.<sup>185</sup> Through this intensive literary treatment of agriculture, Cicero, calling again on the *auctoritas* of Cato as his predecessor in Roman letters, proposes a similarity between the farmer's and the writer's relations to the future. Just as the farmer acts not out of the expectation of *gloria* or the fulfillment of paternal identity, but in order to convey benefit to the future by means of his cultivation of heterogeneous forms of life, so the writer should approach his texts not as the instantiation of his identity—the reproduction of the Same—but as a conduit of benefit through which the future will be able to determine its own continuity to the past. In Cato's farmer, therefore, we can glimpse another mode in which Cicero hoped his writings would create his legacy—not as a recuperation of the glory that he failed to gain as a statesman, but as the product of a fecund and unknowable future from which the failures of his present could be, finally, redeemed.

---

<sup>185</sup> See, e.g., his quotation of a story told by Xenophon's Socrates about Cyrus the younger (cf. *Oecon.* 4.20-25): when Cyrus, a "Persian king, outstanding in intelligence and the glory of rule" (*Persarum regem, praestantem ingenio atque imperi gloria*), was asked by a visiting Spartan, Lysander, who had planted the trees that he had been admiring for their height (*proceritates*) and "quincunx" orderliness (*directos in quincuncem ordines*), Cyrus replied, "But I planned all of this. These are my rows, my arrangement. Many of these very trees were planted with my own hand" (*atqui ego ista sum omnia dimensus, mei sunt ordines, mea discriptio; multae etiam istarum arborum mea manu sunt satae*, 59).

## Conclusion

As Cicero inadvertently crossed another boundary in the time of his life, the assassination of Caesar caused, yet again, his thought to shift. The distance between Cicero's state of mind before and after the Ides of March can be observed readily in the letters that he writes to Atticus following the event, which blend shock and hope with a baseline of resignation: "But let all the consequences fall on our heads, the Ides of March are our consolation. Our heroes achieved all that lay with themselves most gloriously and magnificently. What is left to do requires men and money, and we have none. So much from me to you" (*Sed omnia licet concurrant, Idus Martiae consolantur. Nostri autem ἥρωες, quod per ipsos confici potuit, gloriosissime et magnificentissime confecerunt; reliquae res opes et copias desiderant, quas nullas habemus. haec ego ad te, Att. XIV.4[358]*). With the "consolation" (*consolantur*) of the Ides and the *gloria* of the "heroes" affirmed (*gloriosissime et magnificentissime*), Cicero turns to face "all the consequences" (*omnia*) with a renewed faith in the political project of his life—despite his lack of "men and money" (*opes et copias*). Yet, within the philosophical writings that Cicero continued to produce in the final months of his life, threads of continuity remain. In the opening of the third book of *de Officiis*—the last of his *philosophica* written before his own brutal murder—Cicero returns to consider *solitudo*, perhaps not as a substitute for aristocratic *otium*, but still as its supplement: in his discussion of Scipio Africanus, who was "never less alone than when he was alone" (*nec minus solum, quam cum solus esset, 3.1*), *solitudo* comes to offer an alternative configuration to the opposition between public and private life that will always be accessible to those who are dedicated to study, literature, and philosophy.

As I have argued, Cicero's philosophy written during Caesar's dictatorship can be understood generally as an "ethics of time" or, better, and an "ethics of *the times*." But what

happens when those times, once again, change? How much of the fecund relationship to the future that is envisioned in *de Senectute* remains in the paternalistic address of *de Officiis*? What function can the melancholic grief of the *Tusculans* serve in the triumphant (and lost) *de Gloria*? The answer to these questions will, of course, depend on how we approach these texts. This, after all, is the one point that subtends Cicero's philosophical writings at every turn: it is up to us what to make of them. If we accept the *vis et mutatio omnium rerum atque temporum* as the stuff of philosophy, then philosophy is a tool for confronting and investigating the obscurity and deferral that haunts human experience at all times. Such inquiry is useful even, or especially, when its outcome is inconclusive, and we are compelled by "the times" to return to the starting point.

## Bibliography

- Abbott, Frank. 1897. "Petrarch's Letters to Cicero." *The Sewanee Review* 5.3: 319-27.
- Abraham, Nicolas and Maria Torok. 1994. *The Shell and the Kernel*. Trans. Nicholas Rand. Chicago.
- Algra, Keimpe. 1997. "Chrysippus, Carneades, Cicero: the ethical *divisiones* in Cicero's *Lucullus*." In Inwood and Mansfeld, eds.: 107-39.
- Algra, Keimpe, Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, Malcolm Schofield, eds. 1999. *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. Cambridge.
- Allen, James. 1994. "Academic Probabilism and Stoic Epistemology." *CQ* 44: 85–113.
- . 1997. "Carneadean argument in Cicero's Academic books." In Inwood and Mansfeld, eds.: 217-56.
- . 2012. "Carneades." In Edward Zalta, ed.: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/carneades/>>
- Allen, R.E. 1959. "Anamnesis in Plato's *Meno* and *Phaedo*." *The Review of Metaphysics* 13.1: 165-74.
- Altman, William. 2015. "Cicero and the Fourth Triumvirate: Gruen, Syme, and Strasburger." In Altman, ed.: 215-246.
- . 2016. *The Revival of Platonism in Cicero's Late Philosophy*. *Platonis aemulus and the Invention of Cicero*. London.
- Altman, William, ed. 2015. *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Cicero*. Leiden.
- André, Jean-Marie. 1966. *L'otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine des origines à l'époque augustéenne*. Paris.
- Annas, Julia. 1980. "Truth and Knowledge." In Schofield et al., eds.: 84-104.
- . 1993. *Morality of Happiness*. Oxford.
- Annas, Julia, ed. and Raphael Woolf trans. 2001. *Cicero. On Moral Ends*. Cambridge.
- Annas, Julia and Gábor Betegh, eds. 2016. *Cicero's De Finibus. Philosophical Approaches*. Cambridge.
- Armstrong, David. 2011. "Epicurean virtues, Epicurean friendship: Cicero vs the Herculaneum papyri." In Fish and Sanders, eds.: 105-28.



- Astin, A. E. 1956. "Scipio Aemilianus and Cato Censorius." *Latomus* 15.2: 159-80.
- Auvray-Assayas, Clara. 2003. "Lucrèce et Cicéron sur la poétique de la traduction: Note au *de Rerum Natura* I, 116-145/I, 921-950." In Monet, ed.: 165-70.
- . 2006. *Cicéron*. Paris.
- Bachelard, Gaston. 1932. *L'intuition de l'instant. Etude sur la Siloë de Gaston Roupnel*. Paris.
- . 1969. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston.
- . 2000. *The Dialectic of Duration*. Trans. Mary McAllester Jones. Manchester.
- Balbuza, Katarzyna. 2014. "The Idea of *aeternitas* of State, City and Emperor in Augustan Poetry." *Klio* 96.1: 49-66.
- Balmer, H.P. 1994. "Conditio humana." In Gert Ueding, Gregor Kalivoda, Heike Mayer, Franz-Hubert Robling eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik. Band 2: Bie-Eul*. Tübingen: 337-48.
- Balsdon, J. P. V. D. 1939. "Consular Provinces under the Late Republic, I. General Considerations." *JRS* 29.1: 57-73.
- . 1939a. "Consular Provinces under the Late Republic, II. Caesar's Gallic Command." *JRS* 29.2: 167-83.
- Baltussen, Han. 2013. "Cicero's *Consolatio ad se*: Character, Purpose and Impact of a Curious Treatise." In Baltussen, ed.: 67-92.
- Baltussen, Han, ed. 2013. *Greek and Roman Consolations. Eight Studies of a Tradition and its Afterlife*. Swansea.
- Baraz, Yelena. 2012. *A Written Republic. Cicero's Philosophical Politics*. Princeton.
- Barnes, Jonathan. 1997. "Logic in *Academica* I and the *Lucullus*." In Inwood and Mansfeld, eds.: 140-60.
- Badiou, Alain. 2007. *The Century*. Trans. Alberto Toscano. Cambridge.
- . 2016. *Pocket Pantheon. Figures of Postwar Philosophy*. Trans. David Macey. London.
- . 2018. *L'immanence des vérités*. Paris.
- . 2018a. *Lacan: Anti-Philosophy 3. The Seminars of Alain Badiou*. Trans. Kenneth Reinhard and Susan Spitzer. New York.

- Begemann, Elisabeth. 2015. "Damaged Go(o)ds: Cicero's Theological Trinity in the Wake of German Historicism." In Altman, ed.: 247-80.
- Begley, Carol Lindsay. 1988. *Voluntas* in Cicero. (Dissertation). UNC Chapel Hill.
- Bénatouïl, Thomas. 2016. "Structure, standards, and Stoic moral progress in *De Finibus* 4." In Annas and Betegh, eds.: 198-220.
- Bénatouïl, Thomas and Mauro Bonazzi. 2012. "ΘΕΩΡΙΑ and ΒΙΟΣ ΘΕΩΡΗΤΙΚΟΣ from the Presocratics to the End of Antiquity: An Overview." In Bénatouïl and Bonazzi, eds.: 1-14.
- Bénatouïl, Thomas and Mauro Bonazzi, eds. 2012. *Theoria, Praxis and the Contemplative Life after Plato and Aristotle*. Leiden.
- Benvéniste, Émile. 1937. "Expression indo-européenne de l'Éternité." *Bulletin de la Société linguistique de Paris*. XXXVIII: 103-12.
- Bergson, Henri. 1910. *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Trans. F.L. Pogson. London.
- Berns, Gisela. 1976. "Time and Nature in Lucretius' 'De Rerum Natura.'" *Hermes* 104.4: 477-92.
- Bett, Richard. 1989. "Carneades' Pithanon: A Reappraisal of its Role and Status." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. Vol. 7: 59-94.
- Bishop, Caroline. 2019. *Cicero, Greek Learning, and the Making of a Roman Classic*. Oxford.
- Blank, David. 1986. "Socrates' Instructions to Cebes: Plato, 'Phaedo' 101d-e." *Hermes* 114.2: 146-63.
- Blom, Henrietta van der. 2010. *Cicero's Role Models. The Political Strategy of a Newcomer*. Oxford.
- Boissier, Gaston. 1897. *Cicero and His Friends*. Trans. A. D. Jones. London
- Bollanseé, Jan. 1999. *Hermippos of Smyrna and His Biographical Writings. A Reappraisal*. Leuven.
- Boyancé, Pierre. 1941. "Cum dignitate otium." *Revue des Études Anciennes* 43.3/4: 172-91.
- . 1944. "L'apothéose de Tullia." *Revue des Études Anciennes* 46.1/2: 179-84.
- . 1967. Cicéron et la vie contemplative. *Latomus* 26.1: 3-26.

- Brachtendorf, Johannes. 1997. "Cicero and Augustine on the Passions." *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 43: 289-308.
- Brennan, Tad. 1996. "Reasonable Impressions in Stoicism." *Phronesis* 41.3: 318-34.
- . 1998. "The Old Stoic Theory of Emotions." In Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, eds., *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*. Dordrecht: 21-70.
- Brill, Sara. 2016. "Greek Philosophy in the Twenty-first Century." *Oxford Handbooks Online*. <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935390.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935390-e-70>.
- Bringmann, Klaus. 1971. *Untersuchungen zum späten Cicero*. Göttingen.
- Brittain, Charles. 2001. *Philo of Larissa. The Last of the Academic Sceptics*. Oxford.
- , trans. 2006. *Cicero's On Academic Scepticism*. Indianapolis.
- . 2008. "Arcesilaus." In E. Zalta, ed.: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/arcesilaus/>.
- . 2016. "Cicero's sceptical methods: the example of the *De Finibus*." In Annas and Betegh, eds.: 12-40.
- Brittain, Charles and John Palmer. 2001. "The New Academy's Appeals to the Presocratics." *Phronesis* 46.1: 38-72.
- Broughton, Janet. 2002. *Descartes's Method of Doubt*. Princeton.
- Brouwer, René. 2014. *The Stoic Sage. The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood and Socrates*. Cambridge.
- Brown, Norman. 1959. *Life Against Death. The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History*. Middletown, CT.
- Brunschwig, Jacques. 1986. "The cradle argument in Epicureanism and Stoicism." In Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker, eds., *The Norms of Nature. Studies in Hellenistic Ethics*. Cambridge: 113-44.
- . 1988. "Sextus Empiricus on the *kritērion*: The Skeptic as conceptual legatee." In Dillon and Long, eds.: 145-75.
- Brunt, P. A. 1988. *The Fall of the Roman Republic and Related Essays*. Oxford.
- Burkert, Walter. 1965. "Cicero als Platoniker und Skeptiker." *Gymnasium Heidelberg* 72: 176-200.

- Burnyeat, Myles. 1982. "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 13: 19-50.
- . 1997. "Antipater and self-refutation: elusive arguments in Cicero's *Academica*." In Inwood and Mansfeld, eds.: 277-310.
- . (Unpublished). "Carneades was no probabilist."
- Burnyeat, Myles, ed. 1983. *The Skeptical Tradition*. Berkeley.
- Butler, Judith. 1995. "Melancholy gender—refused identification." *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 5.2: 165-80.
- Butler, Shane. 2018. "Cicero's Grief." *Arion* 26.1: 1-16.
- Byers, Sarah. 2006. "The Meaning of *Voluntas* in Augustine." *Augustinian Studies* 37.2: 171-89.
- Cameron, Sharon. 2007. *Impersonality*. Chicago.
- Cappello, Orazio. 2016. "Everything You Wanted to Know About Atticus (But Were Afraid to Ask Cicero): Looking for Atticus in Cicero's *ad Atticum*." *Arethusa* 49.3: 463-87.
- . 2019. *The School of Doubt: Skepticism, History and Politics in Cicero's Academica*. Leiden.
- Caston, Ruth. 2015. "*Pacuvius hoc melius quam Sophocles*: Cicero's Use of Drama in the Treatment of the Emotions." In Douglas Cairns and Laurel Fulkerson, eds., *Emotions Between Greece and Rome*. London: 129-148.
- Catrein, Christoph, ed. 2004. *Kleine Schriften zur hellenistisch-römischen Philosophie von Woldemar Görler*. Leiden.
- Chanter, Tina. 2001. *Time, Death, and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger*. Stanford.
- Charles, David. 2000. *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence*. Oxford.
- Charlesworth, Martin Percival. 1936. "Providentia and Aeternitas." *Harvard Theological Review* 29.2: 107-32.
- Claassen, Jo-Marie. 1996. "Documents of a Crumbling Marriage: The Case of Cicero and Terentia." *Phoenix* 50.3/4: 208-32.
- Connor, Walter Robert. 1971. *The New Politicians of Fifth Century Athens*. Princeton.

- Cooper, John. 1975. *Reason and the Human Good in Aristotle*. Cambridge, MA.
- . 2004. *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good*. Princeton.
- Coussin, Pierre. 1983 [1929]. “The Stoicism of the New Academy.” Trans. Jonathan Barnes and Myles Burnyeat. In Burnyeat, ed.: 31–63.
- Craig, Christopher. 1986. “Cato’s Stoicism and the Understanding of Cicero’s Speech for Murena.” *TAPA* 116: 229-239.
- Crook, J.A. 1986. “Women in Roman Succession.” In B. Rawson, ed.: 58-82.
- Dante Alighieri. 2011. *The Divine Comedy vol. iii: Paradiso*. Ed. and trans., Robert M. Durling. Oxford.
- Degani, Enzo. 1961. *Aiôn da Omero ad Aristotele*. Padova.
- Degraff, Thelma. 1940. “Plato in Cicero.” *CPhil* 35.2: 143-53.
- DeHart, Scott. 1995. “The Convergence of Praxis and Theoria in Aristotle.” *JHP* 33.1: 7-27.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 2002. *Bergsonism*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York.
- DellaNeva, JoAnn. 2015. “Following their Own Genius: Debates on Ciceronianism in 16th-Century Italy.” In Altman, ed.: 357-76.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1988. *Memoires for Paul de Man*. New York.
- . 1993. *Aporias*. Trans. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford UP.
- . 1997. *The Politics of Friendship*. Trans. George Collins. London.
- Descartes, René. 1996. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Trans. John Cottingham. Cambridge.
- Diels, Hermann. 1888. “XXVI. Zu Aristoteles’ Protreptikos und Cicero’s Hortensius.” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 1.4: 477-97.
- Dihle, Albrecht. 1982. *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*. Berkeley.
- Dillon, John and A. A. Long, eds. 1988. *The Question of ‘Eclecticism.’ Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*. Berkeley.
- Dillon, Matthew. 2013. *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece*. New York.
- Dixon, Suzanne. 1986. “Family Finances: Terentia and Tullia.” In B. Rawson, ed.: 93-120.

- Donlon, Walter. 1980. *The Aristocratic Ideal in Ancient Greece: Attitudes of Superiority from Homer to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* Lawrence, KS.
- Doody, Aude. 2017. "The Authority of Writing in Varro's *De re rustica*." In Jason König and Greg Woolf, eds., *Authority and Expertise in Ancient Scientific Culture*. Cambridge: 182-202.
- Dorandi, Tiziano. 1997. "Gli *Academica* quale fonte per la storia dell'Accademia." In Inwood and Mansfeld, eds.: 89-106.
- Dörrie, Heinrich. 1978. "*Summorum Virorum Vestigia*: Das Erlebnis der Vergangenheit bei Cicero *leg.* 2, 4 und *fin.* 1-8." *Grazer Beiträge*, Band 7: 207-20.
- Douglas, A.E. 1990. *Cicero: Tusculan Disputations II & V*. Warminster.
- . 1995. "Form and Content in the *Tusculan Disputations*." In Powell, ed.: 197-218.
- Dressler, Alex. 2015. "Cicero's Quarrels. Reception and Modernity from Horace to Tacitus." In Altman, ed.: 144-71
- . 2016. *Personification and the Feminine in Roman Philosophy*. Cambridge.
- Drogula, Fred. 2015. *Commanders and Command in the Roman Republic and Early Empire*. Chapel Hill.
- Dyck, Andrew. 2008. "Rivals into Partners: Hortensius and Cicero." *Historia* 57.2: 142-73.
- Eden, Kathy. 2015. "Cicero's Portion of Montaigne's Acclaim." In Altman, ed.: 39-55.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. 2003. *Selected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller*. Rowe, John Carlos, ed. Boston.
- Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. 1990. *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis*. Aarhus.
- Englert, Walter. 2017. "*Fanum* and Philosophy: Cicero and the Death of Tullia." *Ciceroniana Online* I.1: 41-66.
- Erler, Michael. 2012. "ἀπλανής θεωρία. Einige Aspekte der Epikureischen Vorstellung vom βίος θεωρητικός." In Bénatouïl and Bonazzi, eds.: 41-56.
- Erskine, Andrew. 1997. "Cicero and the expression of grief." In Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill, eds., *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*. Cambridge: 36-47.

- Étienne, Robert. 1986. "Aeternitas Augusti - Aeternitas Imperii. Quelques aperçus." In *Les grandes figures religieuses: fonctionnement pratique et symbolique dans l'Antiquité. Actes du Colloque international (Besançon, 25-26 avril 1984)*. Besançon: 445-54.
- Farwell, Paul. 1995. "Aristotle and the Complete Life." *HPQ* 12.3: 247-63.
- Feeney, Denis. 2007. *Caesar's Calendar. Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*. Berkeley.
- Festugière, André-Jean. 1950. *Contemplation et vie contemplative selon Platon*. Paris.
- . 1971. "Le sens philosophique du mot αἰών." In *Études de philosophie grecque*. Paris: 245-52.
- Fine, Gail. 2000. "Descartes and Ancient Skepticism: Reheated Cabbage?" *The Philosophical Review* 109.2: 195-234.
- Finlayson, James Gordon. 2010. "'Bare Life' and Politics in Agamben's Reading of Aristotle." *The Review of Politics* 72: 97-126.
- Finley, Moses. 1981. "The Elderly in Classical Antiquity." *G&R* 28.2: 156-71.
- Fish, Jeffrey. 2011. "Not all politicians are Sisyphus: what Roman Epicureans were taught about politics." In Fish and Sanders, eds.: 72-104.
- Fish, Jeffrey and Kirk Sanders, eds. 2011. *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*. Cambridge.
- Flower, Harriet. 1996. *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture*. Oxford.
- Forschner, Maximilian. 2002. "Theoria and Stoic Virtue: Zeno's Legacy in Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* V." In Theodore Scaltsas and Andrew S. Mason, eds., *The Philosophy of Zeno*. Larnaca: 259-90.
- Foucault, Michel. 1986. *The Care of the Self*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York.
- Fowler, D. P. 1989. "Lucretius and Politics." In Griffin and Barnes, eds.: 120-50.
- Fox, Matthew. 2007. *Cicero's Philosophy of History*. Oxford.
- Frampton, Stephanie. 2016. "What to do with Books in the *De Finibus*?" *TAPA* 146: 117-47.
- Frede, Michael. 1984. "The sceptic's two kinds of assent and the question of the possibility of knowledge." In Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Philosophy in History*. Cambridge: 255-78.
- . 2011. *Free Will. Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought*. Berkeley.

- Freud, Sigmund. [1915] 1957. "Mourning and Melancholia." In J. Strachey ed. and trans., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. XIV*. London: 243-58.
- Fuhrmann, Manfred. 1992. *Cicero and the Roman Republic*. Oxford.
- . 2000. "Cicero im 19. Jahrhundert." In Michele C. Ferrari, ed., *Gegen Unwissenheit und Finsternis: Johann Caspar von Orelli (1787-1849) und die Kultur seiner Zeit*. Zurich: 101-17.
- Garcea, Alessandro. 2019. "Nigidius Figulus' Naturalism: Between Grammar and Philosophy." In Giuseppe Pezzini and Barnaby Taylor, eds., *Language and Nature in the Classical Roman World*. Cambridge: 79-102.
- Garland, Andrew. 1992. "Cicero's *Familia Urbana*." *G&R* 39.2: 163-72.
- Gawlick, Günter and Woldemar Görler. 1994. "Cicero." In Hellmut Flashar, ed., *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie: die Philosophie der Antike, vol. 4/2: die Hellenistische Philosophie*. Basel: 991-1168.
- Giancotti, Francesco. 1959. "Profilo interiore del 'de finibus.'" *Atti del i Congresso internazionale di Studi ciceroniani. Vol. I*: 223-44.
- Gildenhard, Ingo. 2007. *Paideia Romana. Cicero's Tusculan Disputations*. Cambridge.
- Gill, Christopher. 2016. "Antiochus' Theory of *Oikeiosis*." In Annas and Betegh, eds.: 221-48.
- Giusta, Michelangelo. 1984. *M. Tulli Ciceronis Tusculanae Disputationes*. (Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum Paravianum). Turin.
- Glucker, John. 1978. *Antiochus and the Late Academy*. Göttingen.
- . 1988. "Cicero's Philosophical Affiliations." In John Dillon and A.A. Long, eds., *The Question of 'Eclecticism.'* Berkeley: 34-69.
- . 1995. "*Probabile, Veri Simile*, and Related Terms." In Powell, ed.: 115-44.
- . 1997. "Socrates in the Academic books and other Ciceronian works." In Inwood and Mansfeld, eds.: 58-88.
- Goldberg, Sander and Gesine Manuwald, eds. and trans. 2018. *Fragmentary Republican Latin, Vol 2: Ennius. Dramatic Fragments and Minor Works*. Cambridge MA.
- Goldschmidt, Victor. 1979. *Le système Stoïcien et l'idée de temps*. Paris.
- González, Francisco. 1991. "Aristotle on Pleasure and Perfection." *Phronesis* 36.2: 141-59.



- Görler, Woldemar. 2004 [1990]. "Cicero zwischen Politik und Philosophie." In Catrein, ed.: 158-71.
- . 1995. "Silencing the Troublemaker: *De Legibus* 1.39 and the Continuity of Cicero's Scepticism." In J.G.F. Powell, ed.: 85-113.
- . 2004 [1996]. "Zum literarischen Charakter und zur Struktur der *Tusculanae Disputationes*. In Catrein, ed.: 212-39
- . 1997. "Cicero's Philosophical Stance in the *Lucullus*." In Inwood and Mansfeld, eds.,: 36-57.
- Gorman, Robert. 2005. *The Socratic Method in the Dialogues of Cicero*. Stuttgart.
- Gottschalk, H.B. 1980. *Herakleides of Pontus*. Oxford.
- Gould, Richard. 1968. *Cicero's Indebtedness to the Platonic Dialogues in Tusculan Disputations I*. (Dissertation). Princeton.
- Grant, Mary. 1960. *The Myths of Hyginus*. Lawrence, KS.
- Graver, Margaret. 2002. *Cicero on the Emotions*. Tusculan Disputations 3 & 4. Chicago.
- . 2012. "Seneca. and the *Contemplatio Veri: De Otio* and *Epistulae Morales*." In Bénatouïl and Bonazzi, eds.: 75-100.
- Green, Jeffrey. 1975. "Montaigne's Critique of Cicero." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36.4: 595-612.
- Griffin, Miriam. 1989. "Philosophy, Politics, and Politicians at Rome." In Griffin and Barnes, eds.: 1-37.
- . 1995. "Philosophical Badinage in Cicero's Letters to his Friends." In Powell, ed.: 325-46.
- . 1997. "Composition of the *Academica*. Motives and Versions." In Inwood and Mansfeld, eds.: 1-35.
- Griffin, Miriam and Jonathan Barnes, eds. 1989. *Philosophia Togata I. Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*. Oxford
- Grilli, Alberto. 1953. *Il problema della vita contemplativa nel mondo greco-romano*. Milan.
- . 1962. *M. Tulli Ciceronis Hortensius*. Milan.
- Grillo, Luca. 2015. *Cicero's De Provinciis Consularibus Oratio*. Oxford.

- Groarke, Leo. 1984. "Descartes' First Meditation: Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed." *JHP* 22.3: 281-301.
- . 1990. *Greek Scepticism: Anti-Realist Trends in Ancient Thought*. Montreal.
- Gunderson, Erik. 2003. *Declamation, Paternity, and Roman Identity: Authority and the Rhetorical Self*. Cambridge.
- Gurd, Sean. 2007. "Cicero and Editorial Revision." *CA* 26.1: 49-80.
- Habinek, Thomas. 1994. "Ideology for an Empire in the Prefaces to Cicero's Dialogues." *Ramus* 23.1-2: 55-67.
- . 2000. "Seneca's Renown: *Gloria, Claritudo*, and the Replication of the Roman Elite." *CA* 19.2: 264-303.
- Hacking, Ian. 1975. *The Emergence of Probability*. Cambridge.
- Hadot, Ilsetraut. 1969. *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung*. Berlin.
- Hanchey, Dan. 2013. "Cicero, Exchange, and the Epicureans." *Phoenix* 67.1/2: 119-34.
- Hankinson, R.J. 1999. "Explanation and Causation." In Algra et al., eds.: 479-512.
- Hatley, James. 2012. "The Virtue of Temporal Discernment: Rethinking the Extent and Coherence of the Good in a Time of Mass Species Extinction." *Environmental Philosophy* 9.1: 1-22.
- Hegel, G.W.F. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford.
- . 2002. *Off the Beaten Track*. Eds. and trans., Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge.
- Henry, Denis and Bessie Walker. 1967. "Loss of Identity: *Medea Superest?* A Study of Seneca's *Medea*." *CPhil.* 62.3: 169-81.
- Hoenig, Christina. 2018. *Plato's Timaeus and the Latin Tradition*. Cambridge.
- Holleman, A. W. J. 1978. "Cicero's Reaction to the Julian Calendar (PLUT., *Caes.* 59): January 4th (45)." *Historia* 27.3: 496-98.
- Hope, Valerie and Janet Huskinson, eds. 2011. *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman*

- Death*. Oxford.
- Howe, Herbert. 1951. "Amafinius, Lucretius, and Cicero." *AJP* 72.1: 57-62.
- Hunt, Terence. 1998. *A Textual History of Cicero's Academici Libri*. Leiden.
- Inwood, Brad. 1985. *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*. Oxford.
- . 1990. *Rhetorica Disputatio: The Strategy of de Finibus II*. *Apeiron* 23.4: 143-64.
- . 2009. "Why Physics?" In Richard Salles, ed., *God and Cosmos in Stoicism*. Oxford: 201-23.
- . 2016. "The Voice of Nature." In Annas and Betegh, eds.: 151-70.
- Inwood, Brad and Jaap Mansfeld, eds. 1997. *Assent and Argument. Studies in Cicero's Academic Books*. Leiden.
- Irwin, T.H. 1985. "Permanent Happiness: Aristotle and Solon." In Julia Annas, ed., *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy. Vol. 3*. Oxford: 89-124.
- Jaeger, Mary. 2002. "Cicero and Archimedes' Tomb." *JRS* 92: 49-61.
- Jaeger, Walter. 1960 [1928]. "Über Ursprung und Kreislauf des philosophischen Lebensideals." In *Scripta Minora I*. Rome: 347-93.
- Jordović, Ivan. 2018. "Bios Praktikos and Bios Theôrêtikos in Plato's *Gorgias*." In Alessandro Stavru and Christopher Moore, eds., *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue*. Leiden: 369-85.
- Kamerbeek, J.C. 1948. "On the Conception of ΘΕΟΜΑΧΟΣ in Relation with Greek Tragedy." *Mnemosyne* 4.1: 271-83.
- Keeline, Thomas. 2018. *The Reception of Cicero in the Early Roman Empire*. Cambridge.
- Keizer, Helena Maria. 2010. *Life Time Entirety. A Study of ΑΙΩΝ in Greek Literature and Philosophy, the Septuagint, and Philo*. (Dissertation). University of Amsterdam.
- Kendeffy, Gábor. 2015. "Lactantius as Christian Cicero, Cicero as Shadow-like Instructor." In Altman, ed.: 56-94.
- Kennedy, Miles. 2011. *Home. A Bachelardian Concrete Metaphysics*. Bern.
- Kennedy, Steven. 2010. *M. Tulli Ciceronis Tusculanarum Disputationum de libro primo Commentarius*. (Dissertation). University of Exeter.

- Keyt, David. 1978. "Intellectualism in Aristotle." *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter* 87.
- Knapp, Charles. 1927. "An Analysis of Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, Book I." *PhilQ* 6.1: 39-56.
- Koch, Bernhard. 2006. *Philosophie als Medizin für die Seele. Untersuchungen zu Ciceros Tusculanae Disputationes*. Stuttgart.
- Kretschmar, Marianne. 1938. *Otium, studia litterarum, Philosophie und βίος θεωρητικός im Leben und Denken Ciceros*. Leipzig.
- Kumaniecki, Kasimierz. 1968. "Die verlorene Consolatio des Cicero." *Acta Classica Univ. Scient. Debrecen* IV: 27-47.
- Kurczyk, Stephanie. 2006. *Cicero und die Inszenierung der eigenen Vergangenheit*. Cologne.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1977. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London.
- . 1992. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VII (1959-60). The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Dennis Porter. New York.
- Leach, Eleanor Winsor. 1993. "Absence and Desire in Cicero's 'De Amicitia.'" *CW* 87.2: 3-20.
- . 1999. "Ciceronian 'Bi-Marcus': Correspondence with M. Terentius Varro and L. Papirius Paetus in 46 BCE." *TAPA* 129: 139-79.
- Lear, G. Richardson. 2004. *Happy Lives and the Highest Good: An Essay on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Princeton.
- Lefèvre, Eckard. 2008. *Philosophie unter der Tyrannis. Ciceros Tusculanae Disputationes*. Heidelberg.
- Legrand, Louis. 1931. *Publius Nigidius Figulus. Philosophe, Néo-pythagoricien, orphique*. Paris.
- Lennox, James. 2009. "Bios, Praxis and the Unity of Life." In Sabine Foellinger, ed., *Was ist "Leben"? Aristoteles' An-schauungen zur Entstehungsweise und Funktion von Leben*. Stuttgart: 239–59.
- . 2010. "Bios and Explanatory Unity in Aristotle's Biology." In David Charles, ed., *Definition in Greek Philosophy*. Oxford: 329–55.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 1991. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht.

- Lévy, Carlos. 1992. *Cicero Academicus: Recherches sur les Académiques et sur la philosophie cicéronienne*. Paris.
- . 2003. “Cicero and the *Timaeus*.” In Gretchen Reydam-Schils ed., *Plato’s Timaeus as Cultural Icon*. Notre Dame: 95-110.
- . 2003a. “D’Amalfino à Cicéron. Quelques remarques sur la communication de L. Canfora.” In Monet, ed.: 51-6.
- . 2012. “Cicéron et le Problème des genres de vie: Une Problématique de la *Voluntas*?” In T. Bénatouïl and M. Bonazzi eds.: 57-74.
- Ligt, L. de and de Neeve, P. W. 1988. “Ancient Periodic Markets: Festivals and Fairs.” *Athenaeum* 66: 391-416.
- Lin, Yael. 2013. *The Intersubjectivity of Time: Levinas and Infinite Responsibility*. Pittsburgh.
- Lindsay, Hugh. 1998. “The Biography of Atticus: Cornelius Nepos on the Philosophical and Ethical Background of Pomponius Atticus.” *Latomus* 57.2: 324-36.
- Long, A. A. and David Sedley. 1987. *The Hellenistic Philosophers. Vol. 1 & 2*. Cambridge.
- Longo Auricchio, Francesca. 2004. “Philosophy’s Harbor.” In David Armstrong, Jeffrey Fish, Patricia Johnston, and Marilyn Skinner, eds., *Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans*. Austin: 37-42.
- Lotito, Gianfranco. 1981. “Modelli etici e base economica nelle opere filosofiche di Cicerone.” In Andrea Giardina and Aldo Schiavone, eds., *Società Romana e Produzione Schiavistica. Vol. III: Modelli etici, diritto e trasformazioni sociali*. Bari.
- Luciani, Sabine. 2006. “D’αἰών à *aeternitas*: le transfert de la notion d’éternité chez Cicéron.” *Ars Scribendi* 4: 1-14.
- . 2010. *Temps et Éternité dans l’Oeuvre Philosophique de Cicéron*. Paris.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1996. *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*. Trans. J.B Atkinson and David Sices. DeKalb, IL.
- Madvig, Nicolaus. 1877. *M. Tulli Ciceronis. De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum. Libri Quinque*. Heidelberg.
- Mansfeld, Jaap. 1999. “Theology.” In Algra et al., eds.: 452-78.
- Marconi, Giampietro. 1994. “*Tanta vis admonitionis inest in locis* (Cic. *de Fin.* 5.2).” *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 36.1/2: 281-305.

- Marinone, Nino. 1997. *Cronologia ciceroniana*. Bologne.
- Martelli, Francesca. 2013. *Ovid's Revisions. The Editor as Author*. Cambridge.
- . 2016. "Mourning Tulli-a: The Shrine of Letters in *ad Atticum* 12." *Arethusa* 49.3: 415-37.
- Marx, Karl. 1988. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Trans. Martin Milligan. Amherst, NY.
- Maslowski, Tadeusz. 1974. "The Chronology of Cicero's Anti-Epicureanism." *Eos* 62: 55-78.
- Maso, Stefano. 2015. *Grasp and Dissent. Cicero and Epicurean Philosophy*. Turnhout.
- McConnell, Sean. 2014. *Philosophical Life in Cicero's Letters*. Cambridge.
- McLaughlin, Martin. 2015. "Petrarch and Cicero: Adulation and Critical Distance." In Altman, ed.: 19-38.
- Michel, Alain. 1983. "Cicéron et la tragédie: les citations de poètes dans les livres II-IV des *Tusculanes*." *Helmantica*, 34: 443-54.
- Mihai, Constantin-Ionuț. 2014. "Reconstructing Cicero's *Hortensius*. A Note of Fragment 43 Grilli." *Philologica Jassyensia* 10.1: 451-56.
- Miller, Dana. 2003. *The Third Kind in Plato's Timaeus*. Göttingen.
- Miller, Paul Allen. 2015. "Cicero Reads Derrida Reading Cicero. A Politics and a Friendship to Come." In Altman, ed.: 175-97.
- Mitchell, J.G. 1966. "The Torquati." *Historia* 15: 23-25.
- Moles, J.L. 1988. *Plutarch. The Life of Cicero*. Warminster.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo. 1984. "The Theological Efforts of the Roman Upper Classes in the First Century B.C." *CP* 79.3: 199-211.
- Mommsen, Theodor. 1904. *Römische Geschichte* (9 vols.). Berlin.
- Monet, Annick ed. 2003. *Le Jardin Romain: Épicurisme et poésie à Rome. Mélanges offerts à Mayotte Bollack*. Paris.
- Mooney, Joseph, trans. 1916. *The Minor Poems of Vergil: Comprising the Culex, Dirae, Lydia, Moretum, Copa, Priapeia, and Catalepton*. Birmingham.
- Morel, Pierre-Marie. 2016. "Cicero and Epicurean Virtues." In Annas and Betegh, eds.: 75-92.

- Murphy, Paul. 1986. "Caesar's Continuators and Caesar's *Felicitas*." *CW* 79.5: 307-17.
- Nagel, Thomas. 1970. "Death." *Nous* 4.1: 73-80.
- Nicgorski, Walter. 1978. "Cicero and the Rebirth of Political Philosophy." *The Political Science Reviewer* 8: 63.
- . 2016. *Cicero's Skepticism and His Recovery of Political Philosophy*. Notre Dame.
- Nicgorski, Walter, ed. 2012. *Cicero's Practical Philosophy*. Notre Dame.
- Nightingale, Andrea. 2004. *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge.
- Norris, Christopher. 2012. *Derrida, Badiou, and the Formal Imperative*. London.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 1987. "The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions." *Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 20.2: 129-77.
- . 1994. *The Therapy of Desire. Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton.
- Obdrzalek, Suzanne. 2006. "Living in Doubt: Carneades' *Pithanon* Reconsidered." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. Vol. 31: 243-79.
- . 2012. "From Skepticism to Paralysis. The *Apraxia* Argument in Cicero's *Academica*." *Ancient Philosophy* 32.2: 369-92.
- O'Brien, Denis. 1995. "Temps et éternité dans la philosophie grecque." In Dorian Tiffeneau, ed., *Mythes et représentations du temps*. Paris: 59-85.
- O'Connor, David. 1989. "The Invulnerable Pleasures of Epicurean Friendship." *GRBS* 30.2: 165-86.
- O'Gorman, Ellen. 2004. "Cato the Elder and the Destruction of Carthage." *Helios* 31: 99+. *Gale Literature Resource Center*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A127009576/LitRC?u=uclosangeles&sid=LitRC&xid=f9983000>. Accessed 21 Feb. 2020.
- O'Keefe, Tim. 2001. "Is Epicurean friendship altruistic?" *Apeiron* 34.4: 269-306.
- Oliver, Kelly. 2001. "Paternal Election and the Absent Father." *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas*: 224-40.
- Olshewsky, Thomas. 1976. "On the Relations of Soul to Body in Plato and Aristotle." *JHP* 14.4: 391-404.

- Olson, Lois. 1945. "Cato's Views on the Farmer's Obligation to the Land." *Agricultural History* 19.3: 129-32.
- Orgeolet, Diane. 1978. "Évocation de Jean Psichari vivant." *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 2: 180-97.
- Parfit, Derek. 1984. *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford.
- Pauli, Adolph. 1958. "Letters of Caesar and Cicero to Each Other." *CW* 51.5: 128-32.
- Petersson, Torsten. 1963. *Cicero. A Biography*. New York.
- Pieper, Christoph. 2014. "Memoria Saeptus: Cicero and the Mastery of Memory in His (Post-) Consular Speeches." *Symbolae Osloenses* 88: 42-69.
- Pohlenz, Max. 1911. "Die Personenbezeichnungen in Ciceros Tusculanen." *Hermes* 46.4: 627-29.
- Pohlenz, Max, ed. 1918. *Tusculanae disputationes*. Leipzig.
- Polito, Roberto. 2012. "Antiochus and the Academy." In Sedley, ed.: 31-54.
- Poncelet, Roland. 1957. *Cicéron. Traducteur de Platon. L'expression de la pensée complexe en latin classique*. Paris.
- Powell, J. G. F. 1987. "Review: The *Tusculans* (M. Giusta: M. Tulli Ciceronis Tusculanae Disputationes. Turin: Paravia, 1984. & A.E. Douglas: Cicero: Tusculan Disputations I, edited with translation and notes. Warminster, Wilts.: Aris & Phillips, 1985)." *The Classical Review* 37.1: 29-34.
- . 1988. *Cicero Cato Maior de Senectute*. Cambridge.
- Powell, J. G. F., ed. 1995. *Cicero the Philosopher*. Oxford.
- Ramelli, Ilaria and David Konstan. 2007. *Terms for Eternity: Aiônios and Aídios in classical and Christian texts*. Piscataway.
- Rawson, Beryl, ed. 1986. *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*. Ithaca, NY.
- Rawson, Elizabeth. 1973. "Scipio, Laelius, Furius and the Ancestral Religion." *JRS* 63: 161-74.
- . 1985. *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*. London.
- . 1992. "Caesar: Civil War and Dictatorship." In J.A. Crook, Andrew Lintott, and Elizabeth Rawson, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History IX: The Last Age of the Roman Republic 146-43 B.C.* Cambridge: 424-67.



- Reay, Brendon. 2005. "Agriculture, Writing, and Cato's Aristocratic Self-Fashioning." *CA* 24.2: 331-61.
- Reeve, C.D.C. 1988. *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic*. Princeton.
- Richardson, W. J. 1963. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. The Hague.
- Rickels, Laurence. 2011. *Aberrations of Mourning*. Minneapolis.
- Ridley, Ronald. 1981. "The Extraordinary Commands of the Late Republic: A Matter of Definition." *Historia* 30.3: 280-97.
- Rorty, Amélie. 1980. "The Place of Contemplation in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*." In Amélie Rorty ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Berkeley: 377-94.
- Rosato, Claudio. 2005. *Euripide sulla scena latina arcaica: la "Medea" di Ennio e le "Baccanti" di Accio*. Lecce.
- Rutherford, R.B. 1995. *The Art of Plato*. Cambridge, MA.
- Sambursky, Shmuel. 1956. *The Physical World of the Greeks*. Trans. Merton Dagut. London.
- Sauerland, Uli, Jan Anderssen, and Kazuko Yatsushiro. 2005. "The Plural is Semantically Unmarked." In Stephan Kepser and Marga Reis, eds., *Linguistic Evidence. Empirical, Theoretical, and Computational Perspectives*. Berlin.
- Schierl, Petra. 2015. "Roman Tragedy—Ciceronian Tragedy? Cicero's Influence on Our Perception of Republican Tragedy." In George Harrison, ed., *Brill's Companion to Roman Tragedy*. Leiden: 45-62.
- . 2017. "Seneca's Tragic Passions in Context: Transgeneric Argumentation in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*." *Maia* 69.2: 297-311.
- Schiesaro, Alessandro. 2007. "Lucretius and Roman Politics and History." In Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*. Cambridge: 41-58.
- Schmid, Wilhelm. 1991. *Auf der Suche nach einer neuen Lebenskunst. Die Frage nach dem Grund und die Neubegründung der Ethik bei Foucault*. Frankfurt.
- Schmidt, Otto. 1893. *Der Briefwechsel des M. Tullius Cicero von seinem Prokonsulat in Cilicien bis zu Caesars Ermordung*. Leipzig.
- . 1899. *Ciceros Villen*. Leipzig.

- Schmitt, Charles. 1972. *Cicero Scepticus. A Study of the Influence of the Academica in the Renaissance*. The Hague.
- Schofield, Malcolm. 1999. "Academic Epistemology," In Algra et al., eds.: 323–51.
- . 2002. "Academic Therapy: Philo of Larissa and Cicero's Project in the *Tusculans*." In Gillian Clark and Tessa Rajak eds., *Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World*. Oxford: 91-110.
- . 2012. "The Neutralizing Argument: Carneades, Antiochus, Cicero." In Sedley, ed.: 237-249.
- Schofield, Malcolm, Myles Burnyeat, and Jonathan Barnes, eds. 1980. *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*. Oxford.
- Scholz, Peter. 1998. *Der Philosoph und die Politik. Die Ausbildung der philosophischen Lebensform und die Entwicklung des Verhältnisses von Philosophie und Politik im 4. und 3. Jh. v. Chr.* Stuttgart.
- Scott, Dominic. 1987. "Platonic Anamnesis Revisited." *CQ* 37.2: 346-66.
- Scourfield, J.H.D. 2013. "Towards a Genre of Consolation." In Baltussen, ed.: 1-36.
- Seager, Robin. 1972. "Cicero and the Word *Popularis*." *CQ* 22.2: 328-38.
- Sedley, David. 1980. "The Protagonists." In Malcolm Schofield et al., eds.: 1-19.
- . 1983. "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism." In M. Burnyeat, ed.: 9-30.
- . 2009. "Epicureanism in the Roman Republic." In James Warren, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*. Cambridge: 29-45.
- . 2012. "Antiochus as a historian of philosophy." In Sedley, ed.: 80-103.
- . 2012a. "Cicero and the *Timaeus*." In Malcolm Schofield, ed., *Aristotle, Plato, and Pythagoreanism in the First Century BC*. Cambridge: 187-205.
- Sedley, David, ed. 2012. *The Philosophy of Antiochus*. Cambridge.
- Sellars, John. 2003. *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy*. London.
- Setaioli, Aldo. 2001. "El Destino del Alma en el Pensamiento de Cicerón (con una apostilla sobre las huellas ciceronianas en Dante)." *Anuario Filosófico* 34: 487-526.
- Shackleton Bailey, D. R. 1965-1970. *Cicero's Letters to Atticus. Vols. I-VII*. Cambridge.

- . 2001. *Cicero: Letters to Friends. Vols. I-III*. Cambridge, MA.
- Sharpe, Matthew. 2015. "Cicero, Voltaire, and the *Philosophes* in the French Enlightenment." In Altman, ed.: 329-56.
- Shearin, W.H. 2012. "Haunting Nepos: *Atticus* and the Performance of Roman Epicurean Death." In Brooke Holmes and W.H. Shearin, eds., *Dynamic Reading. Studies in the Reception of Epicureanism*. Oxford: 30-51.
- Sirianni, Frank. 1993. "Caesar's Peace Overtures to Pompey." *L'Antiquité Classique* 62: 219-37.
- Sjöblad, Aron. 2009. *Metaphors Cicero Lived By: The Role of Metaphor and Simile in De Senectute*. Lund.
- Solmsen, Friedrich. 1981. "The Academic and the Alexandrian Editions of Plato's Works." *Illinois Classical Studies* 6.1: 102-11.
- Spencer, Diana. 2010. *Roman Landscape: Culture and Identity*. Cambridge.
- Spinelli, Emidio. 2012. "Beyond the Theoretikos Bios: *Philosophy and Praxis in Sextus Empiricus*." In Bénatouïl and Bonazzi, eds.: 101-17.
- Steel, Catherine. 2005. *Reading Cicero. Genre and Performance in Late Republican Rome*. London.
- Strasburger, Hermann. 1938. *Caesars Eintritt in die Geschichte*. Munich.
- . 1990. *Ciceros philosophisches Spätwerk als Aufruf gegen die Herrschaft Caesars*. Zürich.
- Striker, Gisela. 1980. "Sceptical Strategies." In Schofield et al., eds.: 54-83.
- Stull, William. 2012. "Reading the *Phaedo* in *Tusculan Disputations* 1." *CPhil* 107: 38-52.
- Sullivan, Francis. 1941. "Cicero and Gloria." *TAPA* 72: 382-91.
- Syme, Ronald. 1939. *The Roman Revolution*. Oxford.
- Taminiaux, Jacques. 1996. "*Bios politikos* and *bios theoretikos* in the Phenomenology of Hannah Arendt." Trans. Dermot Moran. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 4.2: 215-32.
- Tarán, Leonardo. 1979. "Perpetual Duration and Atemporal Eternity in Parmenides and Plato." *The Monist* 62.1: 43-53.

- Taylor, C.C.W. 1980. "“All Perceptions are True.”" In Schofield et al., eds.: 105-24.
- Taylor, Lily Ross. 1937. "On the Chronology of Cicero's Letters to Atticus, Book XIII." *CP* 32.3: 228-40.
- . 1962. "Forerunners of the Gracchi." *JRS* 52: 19-27.
- Thompson, Homer. 1966. "Activity in the Athenian Agora 1960-1965." *Hesperia* 35.1: 37-54.
- Thorsrud, Harald. 2008. "Cicero's Adaptation of Stoic Psychotherapy." *Annaeus* 5: 171-88.
- . 2012. "Radical and Mitigated Skepticism in Cicero's *Academica*." In Nicgorski, ed.: 133-51.
- Thurlemann, Silvia. 1974. "Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam." *Gymnasium* 81: 465-75.
- Tieleman, Teun. 2003. *Chrysippus' On Affections*. Leiden.
- Tracy, Catherine. 2009. "The People's Consul: The Significance of Cicero's Use of the Term 'Popularis.'" *Illinois Classical Studies* 34: 181-99.
- Traverso, Enzo. 2018. *Left-Wing Melancholia. Marxism, History, and Memory*. New York.
- Treggiari, Susan. 1991. *Roman Marriage. Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian*. Oxford.
- . 1998. "Home and Forum: Cicero between 'Public' and 'Private.'" *TAPA* 128: 1-23.
- . 2007. *Terentia, Tullia and Publilia: The Women of Cicero's Family*. New York.
- Tsouna-McKirahan, Voula. 1996. "Conservatism and Pyrrhonian Skepticism." *Syllecta Classica* 6: 69-86.
- Vogt, Katja. 2012. *Belief and Truth: A Skeptic Reading of Plato*. Oxford.
- Walde, A. and Hofmann, J.B. 1938. *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Heidelberg.
- Walters, Brian. 2013. "Cicero's *Silva* (A Note on *Ad Atticum* 12.15)." *CQ* 63.1: 426-30.
- Warren, James. 2001. "Socratic Suicide." *JHS* 121: 91-106.
- . 2001a. "Lucretius, Symmetry Arguments, and Fearing Death." *Phronesis* 46.4: 466-91.
- . 2004. *Facing Death: Epicurus and his Critics*. Oxford.

- . 2009. “Removing fear.” In James Warren, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*. Cambridge: 234-48.
- . 2013. “The Harm of Death in Cicero’s First *Tusculan Disputation*.” In James Stacey Taylor ed., *The Metaphysics and Ethics of Death*. Oxford: 44-70.
- . 2016. “Epicurean Pleasure in *De Finibus*.” In Annas and Betegh, eds.: 41-74.
- Wassmann, Herbert. 1996. *Ciceros Widerstand gegen Caesars Tyrannis: Untersuchungen zur politischen Bedeutung der philosophischen Spätschriften*. Bonn.
- Weil, Bruno. 1962. *2000 Jahre Cicero*. Zürich.
- Weiss, Roslyn. 2012. *Philosophers in the Republic: Plato’s Two Paradigms*. Ithaca, NY.
- Wheeler, Michael. 2018. “Martin Heidegger.” In Edward N. Zalta ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/heidegger/>>.
- White, K. D. 1970. *Roman Farming*. London.
- White, Stephen. 1995. “Cicero and the Therapists.” In Powell, ed.: 219-46.
- Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Ulrich von. 1920. *Platon*. Berlin.
- Wilcox, Amanda. 2005. “Sympathetic Rivals: Consolation in Cicero’s Letters.” *AJP* 126.2: 237-55.
- Williams, G.D. 1995. “Cleombrotus of Ambracia: Interpretations of a Suicide from Callimachus to Augustine.” *CQ* 45: 154-69.
- Woolf, Raphael. 2015. *Cicero. The Philosophy of a Roman Sceptic*. London.
- Zalta, Edward. 2012-2019. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/>.
- Zehnacker, Hubert. 1985. “Officium consolantis: The Duty of Consolation in the Correspondence of Cicero from the Battle of Pharsalus to the death of Tullia.” *Revue des études latines* 63: 69-86.
- Zeyl, Donald and Barbara Sattler. 2019 “Plato’s *Timaeus*.” In Zalta, ed.: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/plato-timaeus/>.
- Zielinski, Tadeusz. 1908. *Cicero im Wandel der Jahrhunderte*. Leipzig.