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Cicero's Plato*

Summary – The essay explores the relation of Cicero to Plato. First, Cicero interprets Plato fundamentally as a sceptic (and so in a way radically different from Middle and Neoplatonism); secondly, Cicero is proud of the superiority of the Roman culture in various respects; thirdly, Cicero vies with the dialogues written by Plato. The essay shows how even more than the explicit statements on Plato, the indirect criticism in the conception of Cicero's dialogues sheds light on his relation to Plato. Cicero's insistence on Plato's Pythagoreanism must be taken very seriously, since it does not fit well with his general view of Plato.

It is an inevitable consequence of the universality and complexity of Plato's philosophy as well as of the literary form in which it is represented that almost all interpreters focus on partial aspects of his complete philosophy. This is true also of modern readers, but even more so of those before the development of modern hermeneutics. Thus, studying their Plato interpretation sheds often at least as much light on them as on their subject.¹ Among all ancient interpreters of Plato, Cicero can claim to deserve a special interest for three reasons. I do not include among them the fact that for Cicero Plato enjoys an almost divine position – in a letter to Atticus (4, 16, 3) he is called “*deus ille noster*”; for such a position is granted Plato already earlier and in an even more radical form by Middle and Neoplatonists. I have in mind, first, the peculiar historical moment in the development of the Academy, which Cicero witnessed in his lifetime.² It is – in the terminology coined still in antiquity,³ but alien to Cicero who does not distinguish more than two Academies – the transition from the fourth to the fifth

* I thank Matt Mendham for correcting my English and the participants of the conference, organized by Walter Nicgorski, on ‘Cicero's Practical Philosophy’ in October 2006 at the University of Notre Dame for many valuable criticisms of my lecture.

¹ I may refer to my essay: *Platonism and Its Interpretations. The Three Paradigms and Their Place in the History of Hermeneutics*, in: Eriugena, Berkeley, and the Idealist tradition, ed. S. Gersh and D. Moran, Notre Dame 2006, 54–80.

² See A. Weische, *Cicero und die neue Akademie*, Münster 1961. A recent introduction to the epistemology of Arcesilaus and Carneades can be found in M. Schofield, *Academic epistemology*, in: *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. K. Algra-J. Barnes-J. Mansfeld-M. Schofield, Cambridge 2005, 323–351. On Philo see C. Brittain, *Philo of Larissa. The last of the Academic Sceptics*, Oxford 2001.

³ S. E. P. I 220.

Academy, from Philo of Larissa, among Cicero's various teachers the one with the most lasting influence,⁴ to Antiochus of Ascalon, whom Cicero had heard in Athens in 79/78 BC in the Ptolemaic gymnasium, since the Academy had been destroyed in the Mithridatic war.⁵ (A visit of its ruins, in which M. Pupius Piso almost believes he sees Plato, starts the fifth book of *De finibus bonorum et malorum*.) This transition is so momentous, because Antiochus prepares Middle Platonism, while Philo at the beginning of his career taught the skepticism of the second and the third Academy of Arcesilaus and Carneades. Later, even if he modified his skeptical stance, Philo continued to reject Stoicism, which Antiochus wanted to amalgamate with Plato and Aristotle's tenets, rendering this project more plausible by his claim that in truth Stoic ethics was heavily dependent on that of Polemo.⁶ No doubt the discontinuity between fourth and fifth Academy is stronger than that between second and third or between third

⁴ Brut. 89,306: *totum ei (sc. Philoni) me tradidi*. Philo was the most lasting influence on Cicero, even if it is possible that the late Cicero returned to Philo after an Antiochean phase. De or. 3,18,67 and Leg. 1,13,39 with their apparent distance from academic skepticism, but also Ac. post. 4,13 und Nat. 1,3,6 may speak for this theory. On this difficult issue see J. Glucker, Cicero's philosophical affiliations, in: The Question of Eclecticism. Studies in later Greek Philosophy, ed. J.M. Dillon-A. A. Long, Berkeley 1988, 34–69, who criticizes the position, e. g., of W. Burkert (Cicero als Platoniker und Skeptiker, Gymnasium 72 [1965], 175–200), according to which Cicero was always loyal to Philo. Glucker's position (as well as the similar of P. Steinmetz, Beobachtungen zu Ciceros philosophischem Standpunkt, in: Cicero's Knowledge of the Peripatos, ed. W. W. Fortenbaugh-P. Steinmetz, New Brunswick-London 1989, 1–22) is criticized by W. Görler, Silencing the Troublemaker: De Legibus 1. 39 and the Continuity of Cicero's Scepticism, in: Cicero the Philosopher, ed. J.G.G. Powell, Oxford 1995, 85–113. A plausible compromise is suggested by A. A. Long in his splendid essay: Cicero's Plato and Aristotle, *ibid.* 37–61,41f.: Cicero was a Philonian academic in his epistemology, but he regarded Antiochus' philosophy as the most plausible. – On Antiochus' criticism of Philo in the Sosos, see J. Glucker, Antiochus and the late Academy, Göttingen 1978, 1–97.

⁵ Fin. 5,1,1 and Brut. 91,315: *cum venissem Athenas, sex mensis cum Antiocho veteris Academiae nobilissimo et prudentissimo philosopho fui*. See also Brut. 97,332 on Antiochus' brother and his successor as scholarch of the Academy, Aristus: *hospes et familiaris meus*. Also Atticus was Antiochus' pupil; at Leg. 1,21,54 he even claims that Antiochus almost alienated him from Epicureanism: *qui me ex nostris paene convellit hortulis, deduxitque in Academiam perpauculis passibus*.

⁶ Fin. 4,2,3 and 4,6,14 seem to point to Antiochus; see G. Luck, Der Akademiker Antiochos, Bern-Stuttgart 1953, 21f. Of course, Antiochus was not the only figure that prepared Middle Platonism; see H. Dörrie, Die Erneuerung des Platonismus im ersten Jahrhundert vor Christus, in: *Platonica Minora*, München 1976, 154–165. Also important is Cicero's friend, the Neopythagorean Nigidius Figulus, whom Cicero probably planned to introduce as interlocutor in a dialogue using his translation of the Timaeus (1,1). But I do disagree with Dörrie's remark that Cicero considered the Timaeus as being outside of the Platonic tradition (156), for, as we will see, Cicero understood Plato as both a Socratic and a Pythagorean.

and fourth respectively. We could say: It is comparable to the changes that occurred between the first and second Academy, between Plato and his immediate pupils on the one hand and Arcesilaus on the other. But this, of course, would be challenged by Cicero – or, to be more careful, by the later Cicero. For although Cicero is familiar with Antiochus' theory that there is a break between the Old Academy, to which Antiochus reckoned Speusippus, Xenocrates, Polemo, Crantor and even Aristotle,⁷ and the later skeptics, the latter according to Cicero may rightly claim to be Plato's heirs: *hanc Academiam novam appellant, quae mihi vetus videtur, si quidem Platonem ex illa vetere numeramus*.⁸ Cicero's image of Plato must be interpreted in the context of Antiochus' challenge of the new, skeptical Academy, and even if Cicero's Plato appears to most modern readers anachronistically Hellenistic, one has to recognize that his image seemed to enable Cicero to bridge the gap that may otherwise arise not only between Plato and the later Academic skeptics, but between Plato and his most important teacher, Socrates.

Second, Cicero appropriates Plato in the context of the development of a peculiarly Roman philosophy. Despite his congenital vanity Cicero knew, I believe, that he did not have the philosophical originality of Plato, but in his three dialogues that vie most directly with the Platonic models – the *De oratore*, *De re publica* and *De legibus* – he claims, partly explicitly, partly implicitly, to add something new, exquisitely Roman, to the philosophical constructions of his hero. There is no question that Plato belongs to a very different philosophical caliber than his Roman imitator and translator – Cicero is mainly an orator, and far more than in a coherent philosophical system he is interested, even in his philosophical writings, in defeating his interlocutors by whatever arguments may do. He often heaps examples on examples without much sense for their logical structure; non sequiturs and confusions of different issues are frequent; and even inconsistencies between his various works are not rare,⁹ partly of course due to the different sources he paraphrases. Nevertheless, one should not overlook Cicero's enormous originality in creating a Latin philosophical language¹⁰ as

⁷ De or. 3, 18, 67 and Fin. 5, 3, 7.

⁸ Ac. post. 12, 46. Already 4, 13 Cicero endorses Philo's thesis, challenged by Antiochus, that in fact there is only one academy.

⁹ See Tusc. 5, 11, 32, where this reproach is leveled against Cicero by his interlocutor, familiar with the immediately antecedent *De finibus*, which challenged Stoicism, with which now the fifth book of the *Tusculanae disputationes* seems to agree. On the passage see K. Büchner, *Cicero*, Heidelberg 1964, 388ff. – Cicero is aware of the risk of inconsistency in speeches, which he thinks increases when several persons co-author one (*Brut.* 57, 208f.). His defense of the organic nature of the speech is clearly influenced by Pl. *Phdr.* 264b f.

¹⁰ On that, see the classic work by R. Poncelet, *Cicéron traducteur de Platon*, Paris 1957.

well as in building a home for philosophy in a culture that had traditionally been inimical to it, because it had been mainly concerned with state building and imperialist expansion. Plato cannot claim something analogous, for he could rely on a philosophical tradition almost two centuries old in his own language. Roman plastic does not have the aesthetic perfection of Greek statues, but the realism of Roman portraits is something new and amazing. Similarly one might find in Cicero's Roman transformation of Platonic models not only a flattening, but also some new insights that point into the future – a realism in politics, e. g., still alien to Cicero's model.¹¹ But even if Cicero had only been a translator and mediator, his place in the history of philosophy would still remain an honorable one: Without him, Latin would not have become the language of world philosophy, which it remained for 1800 years. Even if Cicero confesses in a letter to Varro that they had never had in real life those conversations ascribed to them in the *Academici libri*,¹² the discussion at the beginning of this dialogue on whether writing philosophy in Latin is reasonable may well mirror the different natures of the two intellectuals. Cicero's Varro thinks that it is a bad idea to translate philosophy from Greek into Latin, since those interested in philosophy would continue to read the Greek original, while those uninterested would ignore also the Latin translations, and he mentions the bad Latin works by the early Roman epicureans Amafinius and Rabirius. It is symptomatic that he insists specifically on the lack of a Latin geometrical language, which would be necessary to express a philosophy of nature not as materialistic as that of the Epicureans.¹³ But Cicero – who translated a central part of the *Timaeus*¹⁴ – disagrees: In fact

Particularly illuminating are his discussions of how Cicero obviates Latin's lack of many Greek propositions and of the definite article (52ff., 139ff.). See also J.G.F. Powell, *Cicero's Translations from Greek*, in: *Cicero the Philosopher* (above, n. 4), 273–300.

¹¹ This approach has been defended, e. g., by J. Mančal, *Zum Begriff der Philosophie bei M. Tullius Cicero*, München 1982.

¹² *Fam.* 9, 8, 1.

¹³ *Ac. post.* 2, 4ff.

¹⁴ 27d–47b. We find also translations – sometimes very free ones – from the *Apology* (40c ff.) in the *Tusculanae disputationes* 1, 41, 97ff., from the *Menexenus* (247e f. – a proto-Stoic passage) in the *Tusculanae disputationes* (5, 12, 36), from the *Phaedo* (115c ff.) in the *Tusculanae disputationes* 1, 43, 103, from the *Republic* (562c ff., 571c ff.) in *De re publica* 43, 66f. and in *De divinatione* 1, 29, 60f., from the *Phaedrus* (245c ff., 250d, 278e f.) in *De re publica* 6, 25f., 27f. (repeated in *Tusculanae disputationes* 1, 23, 53f.), *De finibus* 2, 16, 52 and in *Orator* (13, 41), from the *Laws* (653a, 955e ff., 958d f.) in *De finibus* 5, 21, 58, *De legibus* 2, 18, 45 and 27, 67, from the *Seventh Letter* (326b f.) in *Tusculanae disputationes* 5, 35, 100. Quotes and allusions can be found in *Fin.* 2, 2, 4 (*Phdr.* 237b), 2, 14, 45 (*Ep.* 9, 358a), 2, 28, 92 (*Ep.* 7, 326b f.), *Tusc.* 1, 26, 64 (*Ti.* 47a f.), 1, 31, 75 (*Phd.* 80e and 67d); *Tusc.* 1, 29ff., 71ff. is a paraphrase of *Phd.* 80a ff. and a cento of other passages in that dialogue. Some fragments of Cicero's translation of the *Protagoras* have

both those who know and those who ignore Greek will appreciate his translations, as they are thankful for Ennius's, Pacuvius's and Accius's works.¹⁵ In the preface to the first book of *De finibus* Cicero defends a similar position, adding that the Latin language is even richer than the Greek, at least since it has gained the possibility to imitate the latter.¹⁶ He probably wants his readers to realize that it was also his own contribution that enriched it, not only, but also, in the philosophical realm. Indeed, Latin owes Cicero words as important as *qualitas*, *evidentia* and *essentia*.¹⁷

Third, Cicero's position among ancient interpreters of Plato is unique, because he still uses the form of the dialogue. Even if the later Middle and Neoplatonic commentators show a remarkable awareness of the literary laws of the genre dialogue (think of Albinus and the anonymous author of the *Prolegomena in Platonis philosophiam*), they – or to be more precise: the pagans among them – don't use it themselves, and thereby they betray a profound distance from one of the most important sources of Plato's philosophy. On the contrary, the two ancient philosophers of whom most dialogues have been preserved are – Plato and Cicero. Not all of Cicero's dialogues are great artworks, but the three mentioned above doubtless are. The subtlety with which Cicero imitates and develops further Platonic devices is again and again amazing, and it has to be considered in addressing the topic of Cicero's Plato. For, like artists, philosophers relate to each other not only via their explicit statements, but also by the transformation of their models: Vergil shows us what he thought, approved and disapproved of Homer by his poetic choices in the *Aeneid*, even if he did not write an explicit treatise on his predecessor. Needless to say, such transformations may be to the worse; but they have to be noticed before we can evaluate them.

These three reasons justify Quintilian's assertion that Cicero was *Platonis aemulus*.¹⁸ Of course, he did not match his model, but nobody else has ever succeeded in doing so. Cicero has certainly overrated himself, but this, as well as the further fact that earlier times, too, often overrated him, does not give our

been preserved by Priscian (the beginning words, e. g., *inst. gramm.* 6, 11, 63). – Cicero does not seem to regard any Platonic letter as spurious.

¹⁵ *Ac. post.* 3, 10.

¹⁶ *Fin.* 1, 3, 10. See also 3, 15, 51 and *Tusc.* 2, 15, 35. On the difficulty of finding a Latin equivalent of Greek words see *Fin.* 2, 4, 13, on the coining of new words, see *Fin.* 3, 1f., 3ff. Cicero knows that sometimes one needs two Latin words to translate one Greek one (*Fin.* 3, 4, 15 and 16, 55), and he approves the use of latinized Greek words (3, 2, 5; 4, 15 and 10, 35).

¹⁷ *Ac. post.* 7, 25; *Ac. pr.* (= *Luc.*) 6, 17; *Sen. epist.* 58, 6. On the Latinization of Stoic terminology see G. Nuchelmans, *Theories of the Proposition*, Amsterdam-London 1973, 105–118.

¹⁸ *Inst.* 10, 1, 123. Similarly *Lact. Div. Inst.* 1, 5, 16 and 3, 25, 1.

age the right to underrate him. No doubt those are right who point to the enormous differences between the two thinkers,¹⁹ the most striking of which is that Plato hides himself in his work, while Cicero is omnipresent. But it should not be turned against him, either, that he has granted us through his letters such ample views into his not always sublime soul. Partly it is a historical accident that so many of his letters have been preserved, and partly his frankness has shaped later developments at least as profoundly as his transformation of the Latin language. It may be a mixed blessing that people have become able to speak so intensely about themselves as Augustine or Petrarca, not to mention Rousseau; but Augustine and Petrarca knew what they owed to Cicero, who at the end of the *Brutus* offers a portrait of himself almost unheard of in earlier ancient literature.²⁰

In the following I want mainly to address Cicero's explicit statements on Plato, his intellectual life, his historical position as well as his philosophy. I will give a broad picture and thus inevitably avoid going into the detail of the different disciplines of the Platonic philosophy dealt with by Cicero (I). Second, I shall throw a glance at some features of Cicero's dialogues that vary considerably with regard to the Platonic models (II). Finally, I shall try to evaluate very briefly, with regard to its historical correctness, Cicero's image of Plato (III). It goes without saying that I am aware that such an evaluation presupposes my own glance on Plato and that it is therefore less likely to be shared by others. But since such personal limit applies to all of us, it cannot be an argument against attempting such an evaluation.

(I) In Cicero's view of the history of philosophy, only Socrates can compare with Plato.²¹ Socrates is called the father²² and the source and starting point of

¹⁹ See my own book: *Der philosophische Dialog. Eine Poetik und Hermeneutik*, München 2006, 94–100.

²⁰ On Cicero's self-image see J. Graff, *Ciceros Selbstauffassung*, Heidelberg 1963 and C. E. W. Steel, *Cicero, Rhetoric, and Empire*, Oxford 2001, 162–189.

²¹ Pythagoras, who is supposed to have coined the term 'philosophy' (*Tusc.* 5, 3, 8f.), comes next in the hierarchy of philosophers; cf. *Tusc.* 5, 10, 30. Aristotle is inferior in talent and diligence only to Plato (*Tusc.* 1, 10, 22), but inferior to him he remains (*Or.* 1, 5), even if nobody surpasses him in subtlety and education (*Ac. pr.* 46, 143). Since Cicero likes to distribute praise – Theophrast, e. g., is called the most elegant and erudite of all philosophers (*Tusc.* 5, 9, 24) –, I do not venture to claim that he has a consistent rank order in his many statements on the place of philosophers – or even of orators in the *Brutus*. In the latter case, however, his own priority is as indisputable as that of Plato among philosophers. And those philosophers who dissent from Socrates, Plato and their fellowship are called *plebei philosophi* (*Tusc.* 1, 23, 55).

²² *Fin.* 2, 1, 1: *Socrates, qui parens philosophiae iure dici potest.*

philosophy²³, because he brought philosophy down from the heaven by adding ethics to natural philosophy.²⁴ But only his pupil Plato can claim to be the full model of a philosopher; only he triggers an almost religious awe from Cicero: *Ego servo et servabo (sic enim adsuevi) Platonis verecundiam.*²⁵ This awe goes so far that Cicero is willing to submit to Plato's authority, even without arguments²⁶ – although he avers in the same work that his intellectual freedom rejects any claims of authority.²⁷ (Cicero might have thought that there was no real contradiction between the two statements, since he insists that the choice of an apt authority already presupposed wisdom;²⁸ he certainly believed that his option for Plato manifested his own intelligence.) In *De legibus* Cicero mentions that he praises that divine man, moved by some admiration, perhaps more frequently than necessary, but he is corrected by Atticus: He could never praise Plato either too strongly or too often.²⁹ Balbus in *De natura deorum* calls him *quasi quendam deum philosophorum*;³⁰ and Cicero quotes Panaetius who had spoken of Plato as *Homerum philosophorum*.³¹ Even in a speech directed to non-philosophers, Cicero characterizes Plato as *totius Graeciae facile doctissimum*.³² But Plato is a challenge for Cicero not only as a philosopher; he is also an

²³ De or. 1, 10, 42: *ab illo fonte et capite Socrate*. See also Tusc. 5, 16, 47: *princeps ille philosophiae*.

²⁴ Tusc. 5, 4, 10f.

²⁵ Fam. 9, 22, 5. *Tibi, homini Platonico* writes Quintus to his brother in the *Commentariolum* petitionis of 65 (12, 46), and in the long letter to P. Cornelius Lentulus Spinther of Dec. 54 Cicero speaks of Plato's authority for his own behavior: *ille Plato, quo ego vehementer auctore moveo* (Fam. 1, 9, 18).

²⁶ Tusc. 1, 21, 49: *ut enim rationem Plato nullam adferret – vide, quid homini tribuam – , ipsa auctoritate me frangeret*. Cicero and his interlocutor would even prefer to err with Plato (Tusc. 1, 17, 39; contrast Arist. EN 1096a16 – which is, of course, itself inspired by Plato, R. 595b). Needless to say, Cicero trusts that Plato has good arguments. While the Pythagoreans have only believed in the immortality of the soul, Plato is praised for having added proofs (*ibid.*).

²⁷ Tusc. 5, 29, 83: *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*. At Tusc. 5, 11, 33, Cicero sees in his eclecticism and probabilism the only way to maintain freedom: *nos in diem vivimus; quodcumque nostros animos probabilitate percussit, id dicimus, itaque soli sumus liberi*.

²⁸ Ac. pr. 3, 9: *statuere enim qui sit sapiens vel maxime videtur esse sapientis*.

²⁹ Leg. 3, 1, 1. Already 1, 5, 15 Atticus had said to Cicero: *Platonem illum tuum, quem tu admiraris, quem omnibus anteponis, quem maxime diligis*.

³⁰ Nat. 2, 12, 32. Cf. De or. 1, 11, 49: *divinitus*, Opt. gen. 6, 17: *divinus auctor Plato*, Tusc. 5, 12, 36: *ex hoc igitur Platonis quasi quodam sancto augustoque fonte*.

³¹ Tusc. 1, 32, 79.

³² Rab. Post. 9, 23. Cf. Leg. 2, 6, 14: *vir doctissimus ... Plato atque idem gravissimus philosophorum omnium*.

absolute master of style, even of opposite styles.³³ He exerts power on the emotions of his readers – Cotta weeps when reading the *Phaedo*.³⁴ For exactly this reason, his radical criticism of rhetoric has to be taken very seriously.³⁵ Even more than his political and legal ideas, his opinions on the relation between rhetoric and philosophy are a constant stimulus for Cicero. The rhetorical conversation of *De oratore* starts under a platanus that is explicitly compared by Scaevola with the platanus which was rendered immortal by Plato's *Phaedrus*,³⁶ and the main discussion of the *Brutus* begins by sitting down under the statue of Plato that adorns a meadow belonging to the garden of Cicero's Roman house.³⁷ In it, Plato is praised as the most fertile orator; Jupiter himself, as the philosophers say, would speak like him, if he spoke Greek. *Quis enim uberior in dicendo Platone? Iovem sic [ut] aiunt philosophi, si Graece loquatur, loqui.*³⁸ Walter Nicgorski is hence doubtless right when he writes: "Thus the very terms Cicero uses to refer to Plato and Socrates indicate his view that Plato is the exemplar and outstanding philosopher; he is *the* philosopher for Cicero. Plato appears to bring to near perfection whatever Socrates founds or initiates."³⁹

Why does Plato go beyond Socrates? That for a person as literate as Cicero, an oral author cannot have the same importance as the father of a literary genre, is obvious; in fact, it is Plato's written image of Socrates to which Socrates mainly owes his glory.⁴⁰ But even more important is the fact that Plato's intellectual range is greater than that of his most important teacher. Plato is not only a Socratic, but has integrated into his philosophy various other sources; his extensive travel activity was due to the desire to meet other teachers beyond Socrates. Again and again Cicero mentions Plato's journeys – did he identify with them due to his own cavalier tour to Greece, while Plato traveled in the opposite direction and came to Italy? It is desire for knowledge, i. e. curiosity

³³ Cf. Or. 3, 10: *ille non intelligendi solum sed etiam dicendi gravissimus auctor et magister*, and 19, 62: *longe omnium quicumque scripserunt aut locuti sunt exstitit et suavitate et gravitate princeps Plato*. Demosthenes is considered a regular auditor of Plato (4, 15; cf. De or. 1, 20, 89, Off. 1, 1, 4). Long (above, n. 4), writes: "Plato, as well as being the prince of philosophers, is an orator manqué and the supreme stylist." (58f.).

³⁴ Nat. 3, 33, 82.

³⁵ Or. 13, 42 Plato is called *exagitator omnium rhetorum*.

³⁶ De or. 1, 7, 28.

³⁷ Brut. 6, 24. The *consedimus* refers intertextually to Pl. Phdr. 229a7 and b2.

³⁸ Brut. 31, 121.

³⁹ Cicero's Socrates: Assessment of 'The Socratic Turn', in: Law and Philosophy – The Practice of Theory. Essays in Honor of George Anastaplo, edd. J. Murley-R. Stone-W. Braithwaite, Athens, Ohio 1992, 1, 213–233 (220). I owe much to this rich essay.

⁴⁰ De or. 3, 16, 60 and Tusc. 5, 4, 11. At De or. 3, 4, 15 the real Socrates is suspected to be even greater than the Platonic one; but see Der philosophische Dialog (above, n. 19), 70f. on that complex passage.

(reminding us modern readers of that of Ulysses so condemned by Dante in *Inf.* 26), that drove Plato, as well as Pythagoras and Democritus, till the end of the world: *A quibus propter discendi cupiditatem videmus ultimas terras esse peragratas.*⁴¹ After the death of Socrates, Plato, according to Cicero, traveled to Egypt to learn from the local priests mathematics and astronomy and then to Italy and Sicily, mainly in order to add Pythagorean knowledge to what he already had learned. He met Archytas in Tarent, Echecrates, Timaeus and Ario in Locri, and acquired the work of Philolaus.⁴² (It is noteworthy that Cicero does not mention Plato's stay in Megara, testified by Hermodorus,⁴³ even if he sees connections between Plato and the Megarians – but he regards Plato as the giving side.⁴⁴) Cicero praises Plato for having wanted to learn things that Socrates had repudiated: *ut, cum Socratem expressisset, adiungeret Pythagoreorum disciplinam eaque, quae Socrates repudiabat, addisceret.*⁴⁵ His unique love for his Attic teacher and the desire to ascribe to him every insight motivated him to weave together the grace and subtlety of Socrates with Pythagoras' obscurity and with the seriousness of so many disciplines: *itaque cum Socratem unice dilexisset, eique omnia tribuere voluisset, leporem Socraticum subtilitatemque sermonis cum obscuritate Pythagorae et cum illa plurimarum artium gravitate contexuit.*⁴⁶ Thus, Plato remains faithful to Socrates just by wanting to transcend him, and his faithfulness is paradoxically mirrored by the fact that he attributes a knowledge to his teacher that the historical figure did not have. The passage just quoted seems to deduce from Plato's motivation in learning and writing the consequence that the Platonic Socrates knows more than his historical namesake.

Cicero's claims about Plato's Pythagoreanism will have to be discussed later. His biographical remarks have to be taken seriously not only because he still had access to sources forever lost to us, but because, given his general view of Plato, it would have been more natural for him to suppress Plato's Pythagoreanism. This for two reasons. First, Cicero's knowledge of Plato is far from complete; he neither mentions nor quotes Plato's theoretical dialogues *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Parmenides* and *Philebus*;⁴⁷ nor does he ascribe an esoteric

⁴¹ *Fin.* 5, 19, 50. Cf. *Tusc.* 4, 19, 44. See the praise of intellectual curiosity at *Fin.* 5, 18, 49.

⁴² *Rep.* 1, 10, 16, *Fin.* 5, 29, 87, *Tusc.* 1, 17, 39.

⁴³ *Frg.* 4f. Isnardi Parente.

⁴⁴ *Ac. pr.* 42, 129.

⁴⁵ *Fin.* 5, 29, 87.

⁴⁶ *Rep.* 1, 10, 16. On Plato's universality, see *De or.* 1, 50, 217; 3, 6, 21 (with probable reference to *Epin.* 991e f. and *R.* 531c f.).

⁴⁷ See I. C. Orellius - I. G. Baierus, *Onomasticon Tullianum*, Zürich 1836–1838, 2, 464; K. Kumaniecki refers to *Sph.* 242d in his apparatus of the Teubner edition of *De oratore*; but Cicero's passage 3, 5, 20, in which Plato is not even named, is far too vague.

teaching to Plato.⁴⁸ Now most of these dialogues are related more to the Eleatic than to the Pythagorean moment in Plato's philosophy, but in the *Philebus* the Pythagorean influence is obvious, and one can hardly deny the more general point that in Plato's theoretical philosophy the Eleatic and the Pythagorean ideas form quite a unity – a unity which Cicero was hardly qualified to appreciate. Thus it is still more remarkable that he insists on Plato's Pythagoreanism, which he had studied on the basis of the *Timaeus*, whose unintelligibility he ascribes to the difficulties of the matters treated, not to a conscious stylistic mannerism as in the case of Heraclitus.⁴⁹

Second, in the struggles about the right interpretation of Plato, Cicero, as already mentioned, sides with Philo, and this entails that he sees Plato in the tradition of the skepticism ascribed to Socrates. In the *Lucullus*, the general and statesman friend of Antiochus compares Arcesilaus' philosophical work to Tiberius Gracchus' attempt at a political revolution and defends Socrates and Plato, who after the pre-Socratics achieved intellectual progress and should not be regarded as precursors of the skeptical Academy. For Plato left a completed philosophical discipline, present in the essentially identical Academic and Peripatetic school, while Socrates' claim to know nothing is interpreted as ironic, as a trick aimed at having interlocutors speak in order to confute them.⁵⁰ In his counter-speech, Cicero radically disagrees with this construction of the history of philosophy. In his eyes, Socrates and Plato, whom he claims to understand so well as if he had lived together with them, continue a pre-Socratic tradition of skepticism. Socrates' claim to know nothing (with the exception of just this insight) is alleged to be proven by many sources, and the repetition of this claim in so many Platonic dialogues according to Cicero demonstrates that Plato himself shared his teacher's skepticism; otherwise that repetition would be pointless.⁵¹ In the later version of the work, the *Academici libri*, Varro takes an intermediate position between Lucullus and the Cicero of the earlier dialogue. He depicts Socrates as a skeptic; in fact he connects his turn to practical philosophy with his conviction that there is no certain knowledge to be gained about nature and that, if there were, it would not have an impact on the morality of our life. Plato, however, according to Varro, overcame his teacher's skepticism. His two most talented pupils, Xenocrates and Aristotle, developed a systematic philosophy – an idea alien to Socrates –, which in its essential traits is identical, despite the institutional split between Academy and Peripatos. *Ita*

⁴⁸ He makes this distinction, however, with regard to the Peripatos: *Fin.* 5, 5, 12.

⁴⁹ *Fin.* 2, 5, 15.

⁵⁰ *Ac. pr.* 5, 15.

⁵¹ *Ac. pr.* 23, 74. I will analyse later the quality of Cicero's argument.

*facta est, quod minime Socrates probabat, ars quaedam philosophiae et rerum ordo et descriptio disciplinae. Quae quidem erat primo duobus ut dixi nominibus una; nihil enim inter Peripateticos et illam veterem Academiam differebat.*⁵² Cicero agrees with regard to Socrates and insists that Arcesilaus was a faithful pupil of Socrates, but he asserts that Plato does not interrupt the line connecting the two skeptics. For in his books he does not maintain anything, much is discussed pro and con, all is questioned and nothing certain is claimed.⁵³

Cicero's Philonic and – in his own interpretation – Socratic skepticism does not preclude the earnest striving for truth.⁵⁴ On the contrary: I cannot discuss here whether rightly or wrongly, but Cicero sincerely believed that his fallibilism alone guaranteed an open mind and taught one to listen to all arguments for or against a position. (The modern reader is reminded of Popper's critical rationalism.) Since no insight is definitive and there always remains the possibility of error, we should always continue to investigate pro and con. This attitude according to him is compatible with regarding, at least temporarily, a position as more likely or even certain for all practical purposes. Thus it is well known that he considered the Epicurean position on religious and ethical matters as most implausible – even if this did not prevent him from enjoying Atticus' friendship, who *perfectus Epicureus evaserat*.⁵⁵ Therefore Cicero does not shy away from ascribing to his skeptical Plato definite positions – as long as they are qualified as merely likely.

How does Cicero subdivide Plato's philosophy? His Varro ascribes to him the tripartition of philosophy into ethics, physics and logic, which enjoyed classical status in Hellenism;⁵⁶ and since already Xenocrates knows the division⁵⁷ and Aristotle seems to presuppose it,⁵⁸ we have very good reasons to believe that its attribution to Plato is correct. We have already seen that Cicero does not have a good knowledge of Plato's theoretical philosophy: His own concept of dialectic is post-Aristotelean and fails to recognize the metaphysical charge it has in Plato; dialectic is for Cicero, as for Zeno,⁵⁹ a concentrated form

⁵² Ac. post. 4, 17f. The identification of Xenocrates and Aristotle is challenged by Cicero at Ac. pr. 2, 44, 136.

⁵³ Ac. post. 12, 46.

⁵⁴ Cf. Tusc. 1, 4, 8: *haec est enim, ut scis, vetus et Socratica ratio contra alterius opinionem disserendi. nam ita facillime, quid veri simillimum esset, inveniri posse Socrates arbitrabatur.*

⁵⁵ Brut. 35, 131.

⁵⁶ Ac. post. 5, 19. Cf. Fin. 4, 2, 4.

⁵⁷ Frg. 82 Isnardi Parente.

⁵⁸ Top. 105b20f.

⁵⁹ SVF I 75.

of rhetoric.⁶⁰ One will not find in Cicero any complex treatment of the Platonic doctrine of ideas; Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was unknown to him.⁶¹ His translation of the *Timaeus* shows what difficulties he has to grasp the existence of intelligible entities. τῷ γὰρ τῶν νοουμένων καλλίστῳ (30d1f.) is rendered as *quod enim pulcherrimum in rerum natura intellegi potest* (4, 12). We should not exclude too hastily the possibility that Cicero uses a broad concept of *natura* (as Johannes Scotus Eriugena will do in *De divisione naturae* and as Plato himself had suggested Lg. 892b f.), but still C. Lévy may well be right when he writes: "Cicero ... confuses Plato's careful distinctions and associates nature with the noetic world, because it is almost impossible for him to admit that there is something beyond nature."⁶² Nevertheless, the concept of *idea* is regarded as Plato's distinct philosophical contribution and is mainly understood in a normative sense. Thus Cicero uses the Greek term ἰδέα, when in the *Orator* he looks for a perfect standard for oratory.⁶³ He argues that such a standard need not have existed in empirical reality,⁶⁴ and he compares it with the *idea* that Phidias must have had in mind when he created the statue of Zeus or Athena.⁶⁵ Here Antiochus' influence is likely, for it remains very probable that it was he who interpreted the Platonic ideas as concepts in the divine mind (and who would have used for this purpose the example of Greek statues).⁶⁶ Cicero

⁶⁰ Brut. 90, 309.

⁶¹ Cicero knew, of course, that Aristotle had criticized the doctrine of ideas (Ac. post. 9, 33), but there is no trace in his work of any familiarity with Andronicus' edition of Aristotle, even if he was acquainted with Tyrannion, who had been the first after a long time to study the Aristotelean manuscripts (Plu. Sull. 26; Str. 13, 1, 54), and even if he may have known (parts of) the *Rhetoric* (see W. W. Fortenbaugh, *Cicero's Knowledge of the Rhetorical Treatises of Aristotle and Theophrastus*, in: *Cicero's Knowledge of the Peripatos*, ed. W. W. Fortenbaugh - P. Steinmetz, New Brunswick - London 1989, 39–60). This makes it appear more likely that Andronicus' edition was published in the second half of the first century BC (cf. G. Reale, *Storia della filosofia antica*, Milano ⁸1991, 4, 21ff., who follows Düring against Moraux). But the argument is not cogent, for even if the *Metaphysics* and other theoretical works had already appeared, Cicero would have lacked the capacity to appreciate them. But I do not want to enter here into that *disputata quaestio*.

⁶² Cicero and the *Timaeus*, in: *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon*, ed. G. J. Reydamas-Schils, Notre Dame 2003, 95–110.

⁶³ He translates the word usually as *species* (Ac. post. 8, 30 and Tusc. 1, 24, 58).

⁶⁴ 2, 7: *qualis fortasse nemo fuit*.

⁶⁵ 2, 9: *ipsius in mente insidebat species pulchritudinis eximia quaedam, quam intuens in eaque defixus ad illius similitudinem artem et manum dirigebat*.

⁶⁶ This doctrine, alien to Plato, but common to Middle and Neoplatonists, can be found in Sen. Ep. 58 and 65 and has convincingly been traced to Antiochus by W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*, Berlin 1934, 17ff., 37ff., even if no fragment by Antiochus has been preserved that defends it.

connects with the ontological doctrine of the ideas Plato's epistemological rejection of sensualism,⁶⁷ and he mentions with sympathy the doctrine of recollection.⁶⁸

More room is accorded in Cicero's treatment to Plato's philosophy of nature. No doubt, Cicero believed he possessed an uncommon knowledge of natural phenomena, and if he compared himself with other Roman statesmen, his self-esteem probably was justified – think only of his Aratea. His contempt for the Epicurean rejection of Plato's interest in the quadrivium is obvious.⁶⁹ With reference to the *Timaeus*, Cicero takes it that the work teaches the non-eternity of the world.⁷⁰ He also mentions those interpreters who thought that Plato had defended – like Hicetas of Syracuse – a movement of the earth.⁷¹ Lévy has even suggested that Cicero's partial translation of the Platonic dialogue should have been integrated into a work discussing Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies of nature, conceived as a third part of a trilogy beginning with *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione*. It would have corresponded to the trilogy of *De finibus*, where after the criticism of Epicureanism and Stoicism the Academic position is defended.⁷² However that may be, the *De re publica* ends the discussion with a view of the cosmos, and in *De legibus* the political conversation is enframed by a somehow complementary nature⁷³ – in both cases Cicero pays tribute to a vision, so alien to modernity, but clearly linked to the Platonic model, of political life as something to be embedded in nature. In a certain tension with what he says about Socrates' turning away from natural philosophy, Cicero seems to recognize something morally ennobling in the contemplation of the natural order.⁷⁴ Still, mathematical activity is for him axiologically inferior to politics⁷⁵ – something Plato would hardly have accepted.

But it does not come as surprise that Plato is most important for Cicero in the realm of practical philosophy – of ethics, politics and rhetoric. Since the doctrine

⁶⁷ *Ac. pr.* 46, 142. See also *Or.* 29, 101.

⁶⁸ *Tusc.* 1, 24, 57 and *Cat.* 21, 78.

⁶⁹ *Fin.* 1, 21, 72. Cf. *Nat.* 1, 10, 24 and 1, 12, 30, where Velleius claims to have found arbitrary assertions and even inconsistencies in Plato's philosophy of nature and philosophical theology respectively.

⁷⁰ *Tusc.* 1, 28, 70. Cicero was obviously not familiar with the debate referred to by *Arist. Cael.* 279b32ff. According to Pseudo-Alexander, *In Arist. Metaph.* (819f. Hayduck), *Aristoteles* refers to *Xenocrates*.

⁷¹ *Ac. pr.* 39, 123. Those interpreters must have had *Ti.* 40b f. in mind. Cicero's skepticism encompasses both the astronomical and the hermeneutical fact.

⁷² Lévy (above, n. 62), 97f.

⁷³ See my detailed analyses in: *Der philosophische Dialog* (above, n. 19), 223–227.

⁷⁴ *Fin.* 4, 5, 11; *Tusc.* 5, 25, 70ff.

⁷⁵ *Fin.* 5, 3, 7: *ut ad minora veniam*.

of the soul is the basis of ethics, we find various statements regarding its tripartition.⁷⁶ Cicero accepts the Platonic idea that reason shall rule the passions – virtue is called *rationalis absolutio*.⁷⁷ He recognizes the four cardinal virtues,⁷⁸ and he defends at the same time the doctrine of the unity of the virtues.⁷⁹ The Platonic doctrine of the immortality of the soul is discussed and defended again and again, even if the first book of the *Tusculanae disputationes* utters doubts⁸⁰ and adds some arguments of Epicurean flavor that we should not be afraid of death, even if it were the end of the soul, because it would not concern us anymore.⁸¹ Probably Cicero thought that his skepticism with regard to this issue was in true Platonic tradition; he might have regarded Socrates' words in the Platonic *Apology* as a model for his double strategy.⁸² Cicero's issues in ethics are obviously influenced by the Hellenistic schools. He shares the eudaimonistic starting point;⁸³ but he rejects the hedonism of Epicureanism tout court.⁸⁴ In his arguments against hedonism the heroic self-sacrifice of noble Romans plays an important role, a favorite figure being Atilius Regulus.⁸⁵ Regulus, however, is declared against the Stoics to be less happy than Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, who enjoyed a peaceful death after having seen three of his sons become consuls.⁸⁶ Cicero does not see the potential contradiction between his embracing eudaimonism and recognizing that people may differ in happiness even if they do not differ morally; but this is not the place to analyze the problem in depth. His Regulus is a functional equivalent of Achill in Plato, with

⁷⁶ Tusc. 1, 10, 20; 4, 5, 10 and Ac. pr. 39, 124. Xenocrates' doctrine that the soul is an immaterial number (Frg. 165–212 Isnardi Parente) is dubbed by Cicero hardly intelligible at Ac. pr. 39, 124. Once Cicero discusses the fascinating, almost proto-Cartesian idea that a pure mind is conceivable (Fin. 4, 11, 27). He even adds (Tusc. 1, 22, 51) that a pure mind is easier to conceive than its presence in a body.

⁷⁷ Fin. 5, 14, 38.

⁷⁸ Off. 1, 5, 15.

⁷⁹ Fin. 5, 23, 66; Tusc. 2, 14, 32; 3, 8, 17.

⁸⁰ 1, 11, 24: *nescio quo modo, dum lego* (sc. *Phaedonem*), *adsentior, cum posui librum et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum coepi cogitare, adsensio omnis illa elabatur*.

⁸¹ 1, 34ff., 82ff., particularly 38, 91. – Cicero quotes 34, 84 Callimachus' epigram 23 on Cleombrotus, who committed suicide after reading the *Phaedo*.

⁸² 40c ff.

⁸³ Fin. 2, 27, 86.

⁸⁴ Cat. 13, 44 he calls pleasure *escam malorum* with explicit reference to Plato (Ti. 69d).

⁸⁵ Fin. 2, 20, 65. Cf. Off. 13, 39 and 28ff., 102ff. Since the story about Regulus' cruel death is not to be found in Polybius, most historians regard Cicero's account as a late legend. – One of Cicero's arguments against a hedonistic foundation of our moral intuitions – that nothing guarantees that bad people suffer from pangs of conscience (Fin. 2, 16, 53) – plays a role in Kant's rejection of eudaimonism; see: Über den Gemeinspruch A 220. I regard a direct influence as likely, for Kant knew his Cicero.

⁸⁶ Fin. 5, 27ff., 82ff.

whom Socrates compares himself in Plato's Apology.⁸⁷ It is symptomatic that Cicero does not mention the Platonic model; for he thinks that heroism is more peculiar to the Roman than to the Greek world.⁸⁸ Clearly, Cicero in the *Lucullus*⁸⁹ as well as in *De finibus*⁹⁰ wants to avoid the extremism – the paradoxes – of the Stoics and finds more common sense in the doctrine of the Academy. But in the *Tusculanae disputationes* he defends the doctrine that virtue is the only good and claims with dubious right Plato as its source by quoting passages from the *Gorgias* and the *Menexenus*.⁹¹ His rebuke of Antiochus as wavering between Academy and Stoa⁹² seems to fall upon his own head.

Cicero shares Plato's idea that human nature is essentially social and that we have duties towards our political community as well as towards our friends.⁹³ Particularly it is the rulers who have to sacrifice their interests to the public welfare and care for all parts of the commonwealth;⁹⁴ personal ambition is inappropriate.⁹⁵ Cicero was fascinated by Plato's theory that in an ideal state the philosophers should be the rulers, an ideal which he regarded as having been realized during his own consulate. For he must have himself in mind, when, in his famous letter to Quintus on the administration of Asia, he writes about Plato: *Hanc coniunctionem videlicet potestatis et sapientiae saluti censuit civitatibus esse posse. Quod fortasse aliquando universae rei publicae nostrae ... contigit ...*⁹⁶ At the same time, Cicero rejects the use of violence to achieve this end – and in doing so again follows Plato. In his letter to P. Cornelius Lentulus Spinther he quotes *Cri. 51b f.* and *Ep. 5, 322a f.* and insists that he wants to rely only on consensus – for Plato had never regarded the use of violence as justified: *cum persuaderi posse diffideret, cogi fas esse non arbitraretur.*⁹⁷ Even the laws,

⁸⁷ 28b ff. In general, self-sacrifice was a challenge for the eudaimonist ethics of the ancients. See *Arist. EN 1117b15ff.*, *Rh. 1358b38ff.* and *1366a33–1368a37.*

⁸⁸ *Fin. 2, 19, 62; 2, 21, 68* and *5, 22, 64.*

⁸⁹ *Ac. pr. 44f.*, 136f. Cicero is aware of the fact that the Stoics continue the Socratic tradition.

⁹⁰ Their criticism at *Fin. 4, 15, 42* might have influenced Kant's criticism of Plato (*Critique of Pure Reason, B8/A5*). Of course, Kant's transfer from the practical to the theoretical realm is decisive.

⁹¹ *Tusc. 5, 12, 34ff.* with reference to *Grg. 470d ff.* and *Mx. 247e f.*

⁹² *Ac. pr. 45, 137: ille noster est plane ut supra dixi Stoicus perpauca balbutiens.* L. Straume-Zimmermann - F. Broemser - O. Gigon's insertion of *Academica* after *perpauca* in their Artemis edition (1990) makes good sense.

⁹³ *Fin. 2, 14, 45* and *Off. 1, 7, 22* with reference to *Ep. 9, 358a.*

⁹⁴ *Off. 1, 25, 85* with likely reference to *R. 342e* and *420b.*

⁹⁵ *Off. 1, 25, 87* with reference to *R. 488b.*

⁹⁶ *1, 1, 10, 29.* Immediately before Cicero paraphrases *R. 473c ff.*

⁹⁷ *Fam. 1, 9, 18.* Earlier Cicero had mentioned Plato's opinion that the citizens of a state are modeled after the elites (*1, 9, 12; similarly Rep. 2, 42, 69, Leg. 3, 14, 31*), perhaps referring to *Lg. 711c.* But Shackleton Bailey points out that Cicero's memory possibly went astray,

which should be an expression of natural law, ought not to rely only on force, but must try to convince the citizens,⁹⁸ thus Cicero proposes a preamble to the laws according to the Platonic model.⁹⁹ A civic religion is for both thinkers necessary to give authority to the laws; pseudo-religious ideas about gods being accessible to bribes have to be eliminated for political reasons (which does not mean: only because of them).¹⁰⁰ The magistrates should be not only obeyed, but also loved.¹⁰¹ In order to form attitudes, an ample program of education is necessary. Cicero defends the idea – which Plato takes from Damo – that changes in music occasion political changes;¹⁰² and like his model, he clearly endorses censorship.¹⁰³ Interestingly enough, he thinks that the Roman state comes closer to this rational demand than the Attic democracy; and in general he believes that his own approach in *De re publica* is superior to the Platonic because it does not have to rely on a fiction,¹⁰⁴ but can point towards the Roman constitution as the historical realization of an ideal republic. One may find something proto-Hegelian in this conviction, even if Hegel points to the modern form of state in general, Cicero to the unique Roman Empire. But although Cicero's combination of a progressive philosophy of history with a political vision in *De re publica* is something new with regard to his model, he is aware of, and even finds comfort in, Plato's philosophy of history, which in the eighth and ninth book of the *Republic* teaches the law-like alternation of state forms.¹⁰⁵

Despite his reverence for Plato, Cicero repeatedly criticizes his master. He rejects, e. g., the demand for a community of property and wives,¹⁰⁶ even the

since a more similar passage can be found at Xen. *Cyr.* 8, 8, 5 (Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares*, ed. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Cambridge 1977, 1, 311). In fact, Cicero likes to quote from the *Cyropaedia* (see its praise at *Q. fr.* 1, 1, 8, 23; cf. *Leg.* 2, 22, 56, *Tusc.* 2, 26, 62 and 5, 34, 99).

⁹⁸ *Leg.* 2, 6, 14 with reference to *Pl. Lg.* 722b f. This is compatible with Cicero supporting the use of even brutal force by the state, e.g. to ward off attacks against the constitution. See F. Cauer, *Ciceros politisches Denken*, Berlin 1903, 114ff. and N. Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought*, Berkeley 1988, 185–193: Violence as a Political Instrument.

⁹⁹ *Leg.* 2, 7, 16 with reference to *Pl. Lg.* 722d ff.

¹⁰⁰ *Leg.* 2, 16, 41 with reference to *Pl. Lg.* 716e f.

¹⁰¹ *Leg.* 3, 1, 5 with reference to Charondas and *Pl. Lg.* 701b f. on the titanic nature of humankind.

¹⁰² *Leg.* 2, 15, 38 and 3, 14, 32. Cf. *Pl. R.* 424c ff. (and 400a), *Lg.* 700a ff.

¹⁰³ *Rep.* 4, 10, 10ff. See *Tusc.* 2, 11, 27 on the Platonic verdict on poets, who should be expelled from the ideal city, and 3, 2, 3.

¹⁰⁴ See *Rep.* 2, 1, 3: *finxero*, 2, 11, 22: *ingere*, 2, 29, 51: *depinxerit*, *De or.* 1, 52, 224: *finxit*, 1, 53, 230: *in illa commenticia Platonis civitate*.

¹⁰⁵ *Div.* 2, 2, 6. See also *Rep.* 1, 42f., 65ff. and 2, 25, 45.

¹⁰⁶ *Rep.* 4, 5, 5.

limitation of property inequalities defended in the Laws¹⁰⁷ cannot have pleased a man, for whom the Gracchi were always the symbol of social disorder and for whom the defense of the actual property distribution was an important, even if not the only task of the state. In *De divinatione* it is Quintus who quotes Plato more often than his brother. Probably Marcus wanted to contrast two ways of using Plato – a sober and a naïve one,¹⁰⁸ for the sources his dialogue figures quote and the ways in which they do it shed light on their character and their philosophical positions.¹⁰⁹ Cicero has integrated the Hellenistic ideal of *apatheia* more than his model: It is Quintus who has to tell his brother that, when he gives a speech, he is driven, like the poets, by a *furor* analogous to that described by Plato with regard to poets.¹¹⁰ Quintus mentions also the actor Aesopus. This is clearly an intertextual link to the earlier *Tusculanae Disputationes*, which Quintus proves either to have not read or not understood. For there Cicero develops a theory about actors and orators reminiscent of Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*. They only play emotions; they must not feel them themselves – orators even less than actors. *Oratorem vero irasci minime decet, simulare non dedecet. ... num aut egisse umquam iratum Aesopum aut scripsisse existimas iratum Accium? aguntur ista praeclare, et ab oratore quidem melius, si modo est orator, quam ab ullo histrione, sed aguntur leniter et mente tranquilla.*¹¹¹ It does not come as a surprise that also the erotic passion, particularly the homo-

¹⁰⁷ 743c ff.

¹⁰⁸ Contrast *Div.* 1, 36, 78 and 2, 31, 66. But see also 1, 25, 52, where Quintus quotes *Cri.* 44a f., and 1, 29, 60f., where he translates *R.* 571c ff. on dreams.

¹⁰⁹ See L. Spahlinger, *Tulliana simplicitas. Zu Form und Funktion des Zitats in den philosophischen Dialogen Ciceros*, Göttingen 2005, 129f.

¹¹⁰ *Div.* 1, 37, 80; Quintus refers to *Pl. Phdr.* 245a – and also to Democritus' related theory of inspiration (cf. *De or.* 2, 46, 194).

¹¹¹ *Tusc.* 4, 25, 55. Antonius in *De oratore* (2, 46, 191ff.) had defended the opposite theory. A. Michel, *Les rapports de la rhétorique et de la philosophie dans l'œuvre de Cicéron*, Louvain ²2003, 245ff. – who believes that Antonius speaks for Cicero, an assumption far from cogent – tries to reconcile the passages by saying that Cicero rejects in the *Tusculanae Disputationes* only the Peripatetic theory of passions, not the Platonic one. But the passages he quotes do not prove his point. *Tusc.* 1, 26, 64ff. discusses the divine origin of our (rational) soul, not enthusiasm; and *Tusc.* 4, 25, 55 *utile est enim uti motu animi, qui uti ratione non potest* speaks only about the emotions of the persons the orator is addressing, not about the orator's own emotions. No doubt, according to Cicero the orator has to address the emotions of the audience; he reproaches Publius Rutilius Rufus (the narrator of the *De re publica*) for not having done it (*De or.* 1, 53, 227ff., *Brut.* 30, 113ff.; Rutilius was a Stoic, but he could have quoted Socrates as model: *Pl. Ap.* 34d ff.; see *Tusc.* 1, 29, 71). But this does not entail that the orator must himself be really emotional. I follow M. Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions. Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4*, Chicago-London 2002, 168 who avers that Cicero now argues the Stoic against the Peripatetic position.

erotic one,¹¹² is suspect to Cicero – on this issue he sides even with Epicurus and shares Dicaearchus' accusations against Plato.¹¹³ Scipio rebukes only the Greek nations that practiced homosexuality, not his beloved Platon, and is therefore ironically teased by Laelius.¹¹⁴ The sharpest attack against Plato, however, comes in the field of rhetoric. On the one hand, Cicero adores the Phaedrus, whose setting he imitates both in *De oratore* and in *De legibus*.¹¹⁵ On the other, he dislikes the turn against rhetoric that characterizes the *Gorgias*. Socrates is regarded as responsible for the dissolution of the original unity of philosophy and rhetoric.¹¹⁶ Cicero, however, cannot help realizing that the *Gorgias* itself is an expression of an enormous rhetorical talent, and herein he recognizes a performative contradiction, as we would say today.¹¹⁷

(II) What distinguishes Cicero's dialogues from the Platonic ones, and what do they have in common? The first difference to strike our eye is, of course, that Cicero introduces himself as an interlocutor in most of his dialogues. Second, he writes prefaces to his dialogues, often to their single books. Both innovations he owes to Aristotle.¹¹⁸ The Peripatetic philosopher Praxiphanes is the inventor of the location of the Ciceronian dialogues – almost always in private villas (including their surroundings), never in public places. The interlocutors are, as in Plato, always male (Cicero has his figures not even use female masks). Their social range as well as their age is more restricted than in Plato – they are exclusively Roman gentlemen of the upper class, often elder statesmen, possibly consulares (Atticus being the most conspicuous exception). The fifth book of *De finibus* is set in Athens in 79 BC; Cicero was at the time 27, his brother Quintus

¹¹² Tusc. 4, 33, 70f.

¹¹³ Tusc. 4, 34, 71: *nostro Platone, quem non iniuria Dicaearchus accusat*. See Dicaearchus, Frg. 43 Wehrli. On Cicero's interest in Dicaearchus see Att. 2, 2, 1. – Cicero may have been influenced by Lucretius' negative view of eros. Certainly a basic difference from Plato, grounded in psychological as well as cultural factors, is that Cicero is a family man. See K. R. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family. Studies in Roman Social History*, New York - Oxford 1991, 177–204 on Cicero's family life.

¹¹⁴ Rep. 4, 4, 4 (the text is only partially preserved).

¹¹⁵ De or. 1, 7, 28 and 3, 61, 228ff. allude to Pl. Phdr. 229a and 278e ff., De Leg. 2, 3, 6 to 230b.

¹¹⁶ De or. 3, 16, 60f.

¹¹⁷ De or. 1, 11, 47 and 3, 32, 129. Cicero does not see that Plato is familiar with the idea of a philosophical rhetoric already in the *Gorgias*; see 480c, 502e, 504d5f., 508c1–3, 517a5, 527c3f. – Cicero discovers an analogous performative contradiction in Hieronymus of Rhodos, who criticizes Isocrates' peculiar prose rhythm in the same rhythm (Or. 56, 190). Ancient orators loved to point out performative contradictions; think only of Isocrates' *Against the Sophists* (5, 7) and *Antidosis* (14, 19, 43f., 199).

¹¹⁸ Att. 4, 16, 2.

23, his cousin Lucius Tullius Cicero still younger, but certainly an adult. Plato's *Lysis*, on the contrary, seems to be around 13. Also Cicero, however, includes very old people – Cato in *Cato* and Quintus Mucius Scaevola Augur in *De oratore*, whose function is explicitly compared to that of Cephalus in the Platonic *Republic*.¹¹⁹

The relation among Cicero's interlocutors is qualified as a polite, sometimes cordial friendship. Every homoerotic attraction, so typical for the Platonic dialogues, is alien to Cicero's dialogues, even in the case of Scipio and Laelius, who in *De re publica* and its sequel *Laelius* – in the latter, probably not by chance, Plato is not mentioned even once – are portrayed as paradigmatic friends. (This partly explains the popularity of the *Laelius* in 19th century classical education – the instructor did not have to utter ominous warnings against the Greek vice.) The relation between the interlocutors is far more symmetric than in the Platonic dialogues; even if Cicero cannot help satisfying his vanity again and again, he is not presented as the mastermind the Platonic Socrates seems to be. A favorite form of exchange is the alternation of long speeches. Even if the second speaker tries to confute claims of the former, the stichomythy-like elenchus of the Platonic dialogues is missing (with the *Tusculanae disputationes*, where the interlocutor remains anonymous, as the exception).¹²⁰ Cicero's dialogues usually do not end with a conversion – with the exception of the *Hortensius*, of which we only have fragments.

With regard to the dialogue forms used, Cicero authors both polyphonic dialogues like the *De oratore* and more monophonic dialogues in the aftermath of the *Timaeus*, where most is said by a single interlocutor as in the *Cato* and the *Laelius*. He writes dramatic dialogues like *De legibus*, but the majority is in the diegetic or narrative form.¹²¹ (The *Tusculanae disputationes* as well as the *Laelius* consciously shift the form.¹²²) He skillfully applies the device of iterated narration in *De re publica*, Plato's *Symposium* being the likely model. Myths do play a lesser role in his dialogues than in Plato's, but *De re publica* ends with one like the *Politeia*.¹²³ The transgression of the aesthetic illusion is not frequent

¹¹⁹ Att. 4, 16, 3.

¹²⁰ See R. Gorman, *The Socratic Method in the Dialogues of Cicero*, Stuttgart 2005, 179: "In Cicero's eyes, it seems that question-and-answer argument had a flaw so serious as to make it often unsuitable for the presentation of philosophical topics: Cicero felt that this type of discourse was psychagogically ineffective."

¹²¹ On that see: *Der philosophische Dialog* (above, n. 19), 166–186.

¹²² *Tusc.* 1, 4, 8, *Lael.* 1, 3 (probably inspired by Pl. *Tht.* 143b f.; see M. Ruch, *Le préambule dans les œuvres philosophiques de Cicéron*, Paris 1958, 319f.).

¹²³ Cf. *Macr. somn.* 1, 1, 8ff. It speaks for Cicero that he understood that the *μῦθος* of Pl. *Ti.* 29d means something different; he translates *εἰκότα μῦθον* as *probabilia* (*Tim.* 3, 8).

in either author, but they both apply it.¹²⁴ A completely new device, unprecedented by Plato, is what can be called the meta-dialogue, a dialogue treating another dialogue of the same author as fictional text – as *De legibus* and *De divinatione* do with *De re publica* and *De natura deorum*.

Let me point to some important changes with regard to those Platonic dialogues with which Cicero most intensely vies. What distinguishes the *De oratore* from the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*? With regard to the first, we have already seen that Cicero disapproves of the pragmatic contradiction he believes to have envisaged in his model – a masterpiece of rhetoric directed against rhetoric. He thus does not introduce like Plato an allegedly rhetorically unskilled moralist who debates with morally increasingly dubious orators, but worthy statesmen who are already committed orators. What is at stake is how much philosophical knowledge should be included in the ideal oratory. In Plato rhetoric shall be unmasked as valueless and even as leading to the perversion of our basic ethical beliefs if it is not based in a philosophical knowledge of the good. In Cicero, the value of rhetoric is presupposed, while it is its philosophical foundation that, given the Roman value system, has to be justified. Even more distant is the model of the *Phaedrus*. In Cicero, the topic of rhetoric has been disconnected from that of the erotic, and the asymmetry between Socrates and his utterly unequal interlocutor gives way to a charming interaction among gentlemen who are socially and intellectually more or less one another's equals. For despite his prominence, Crassus is not a Socrates. While Socrates' praise of Isocrates¹²⁵ is mirrored by Crassus' encomium of Hortensius,¹²⁶ *De oratore* does not offer any equivalent to Plato's scathing criticism of Lysias' erotic speech.

Analogously, in the discussion of the ideal state Cicero does not introduce private citizens, but experienced politicians. Cicero takes pride in the Roman synthesis of theory and praxis¹²⁷ – a unity alien to the Greeks with the exception of Demetrius Phalereus¹²⁸ – and sees his own existence as the culmination of this synthesis. While *De re publica* lacks anything comparable to the epistemology and metaphysics of Republic V–VII, it offers a combination of normative reflections and constitutional history. Similarly, in *De legibus* Roman positive law, namely the Twelve Tables, receive an attention of which Plato could not

¹²⁴ See my essay *Eine Form der Selbsttranszendierung philosophischer Dialoge bei Cicero und Platon und ihre Bedeutung für die Philologie*, *Hermes* 132 (2004), 152–166; English translation in: *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 26, No. 1 (2005), 29–46.

¹²⁵ 278e ff.

¹²⁶ 3, 61, 228ff.

¹²⁷ *Rep.* 1, 8, 13.

¹²⁸ *Leg.* 2, 26, 66; 3, 6, 14.

have regarded their Greek equivalent as worthy.¹²⁹ This does not prevent Cicero from giving in the first book of his work one of the most spirited defenses of natural law. While Plato deals with sacral law only in the tenth book of the *Laws*, Cicero addresses it already in the second – hardly because he was a more religious person than Plato, but because he recognizes the enormous social importance of it. His own laws are formulated in an archaizing language, because he believes that this would increase their authority.¹³⁰

Plato's *Republic* has its starting point in the challenge of normal morality by Thrasymachus. There is a functional equivalent to him in the *De re publica*, but there are three important differences. First, this crucial problem does not set the conversation off – it is discussed in the middle of the work, while Plato there offers his metaphysical foundation. Second, the role is entrusted to someone – L. Furius Philus – who in fact is a model of virtue and just because of that is regarded to be an apt *advocatus diaboli*.¹³¹ Thus there is no existential seriousness involved in his speech, even if Furius is, together with the pagan fideist Caius Aurelius Cotta, one of Cicero's most ambiguous and fascinating characters. Third, it becomes Furius's task to attack Roman imperialism. This seems to suggest that only moral cynics can criticize it – an attitude certainly alien to Plato, who belongs to the sharpest critics of Attic imperialism. His *Menexenus* is an ironic pamphlet against it,¹³² and it does not speak for the correctness of Cicero's interpretation that he mentions, without any awareness of the irony, the fact that the later Athenians used to recite this work annually, obviously supposing to praise themselves by doing so.¹³³ Cicero, after all, believes in Roman imperialism, even if his own administration of Sicily and Cilicia shows him committed to moral restraints for the imperial power.

Cicero is profoundly rooted in the traditions of his own culture, and thus he must value political success in a way different than Plato. Cicero never gave up his political ambition; Plato did so quite early on, definitively after the trial of Socrates.¹³⁴ And he did so because he did not believe in the future of Athens, whereas Cicero never lost his basic trust in Rome, her values and her mission. And while Plato had withdrawn from Attic politics, Cicero, who remains oriented towards Roman politics, has a painful awareness of the threat of civil war and death.¹³⁵ *De re publica* ends with allusions to Scipio's alleged murder,

¹²⁹ Cf. *Leg.* 2, 23, 59.

¹³⁰ *Leg.* 1, 7, 18.

¹³¹ *Rep.* 3, 5, 8.

¹³² *Der philosophische Dialog* (above, n. 19), 187ff.

¹³³ *Or.* 44, 151.

¹³⁴ *Ep.* 7, 324b ff.

¹³⁵ Perhaps with a feeling that not the same would be granted to him, Cicero writes about Plato's late and mild death (*Cat.* 5, 13).

De oratore is set at the eve of the outbreak of the civil war; Brutus and the *Academici libri* begin with hints to Caesar's dictatorship, De fato with such to the imminent war. Plato has conceived four dialogues around the death of Socrates, but it is the death of an individual, not the death of a state form cherished by their author, that is the focal point. At the same time, it is Cicero who has an optimistic vision of history. For the philosophy of history of Plato's Republic is characterized by decline, that of De re publica by progress as dominant category. (I abstract here from the more complex theory in the third book of Plato's Laws.) Cicero regarded his republic as endangered, but not as unsalvageable, and therefore he does not flee into a purely intelligible world as Plato did and later the Neoplatonists would do. For Cicero, writing philosophy is not an alternative to politics; it is politics pursued with the only means available to him. Even during his forced isolation due to Caesar's dictatorship he writes in the Brutus a passage that is radically unplatonic. Cicero has just mentioned Cotta and Sulpicius, who according to him and the opinion of all in their time enjoyed primacy: *ex his Cotta et Sulpicius cum meo iudicio tum omnium facile primas tulerunt*.¹³⁶ Atticus is annoyed by Cicero's appeal to the judgment of the people, since the judgment of the experts should count, not that of the multitude – an idea well-known from Plato.¹³⁷ But Cicero disagrees. Certainly he prefers the consensus of Brutus and Atticus to that of the people in their theoretical discussion on the qualities of orators; but in the case of his oratory he needs the approval of the people, *id enim ipsum est summi oratoris summum oratorem populo videri*.¹³⁸ Antimachus of Colophon, Cicero continues, was once reading from his poem, when all his audience left him with the exception of Plato. "I will continue to read," he is alleged to have stated, "Plato for me has the value of 100,000 persons."¹³⁹ As a poet he could act so, explains Cicero, but Demosthenes could not have acted like him.¹⁴⁰ Particularly an orator has to move his audience (which is more important than teaching and pleasing it),¹⁴¹ and since someone like M. Calidius failed in that, all his other merits were useless.¹⁴² This appeal to factual success is surprising, if one considers the famous claim of De

¹³⁶ 49, 183.

¹³⁷ Cf. Cri. 44c6f., d6f., 46c2ff., 47a f., 48a5ff., La. 184d5ff., Phd. 64b1ff.

¹³⁸ 50, 186.

¹³⁹ That trumps Heraclitus' ratio (DK 22 B 49) by the factor ten.

¹⁴⁰ 51, 191. Cicero concedes that the people may overrate an orator if they cannot compare him with others (52, 193), that the critic may rank competently orators equally approved by the people (54, 199), and he praises orators held in contempt by the people, but always only for certain limited virtues (76, 264; 82, 283).

¹⁴¹ See 93, 322: *animum eius, quod unum est oratoris maxime proprium, quocumque res postulare, impellere*.

¹⁴² 80, 276ff.

re publica that a tyranny is not a state at all; here factual success in wielding power is subjected to a normative standard, with which it has to comply if it shall be acknowledged ontologically.¹⁴³ The orator, on the contrary, seems to be free from such a standard; his being, one could say, consists in his appearance. One is tempted to ask whether Cicero desired to have the field in which his success had been most striking immunized against the challenge of the normative stance.

Cicero's affirmative attitude towards Roman history manifests itself not only in the second book of *De re publica*, but also in the *Brutus*, the faithful and even touching attempt to render justice also to the minor figures in Roman oratory. Why did Cicero choose the dialogue form, which was less natural for this purpose than for the dialectical one of *De oratore* (and which he wisely dropped in the *Orator*)? Certainly one reason was to have interlocutors who could both praise him¹⁴⁴ and prompt him to speak about himself.¹⁴⁵ This was particularly necessary, since he focuses mainly on orators who had already died when the conversation is supposed to occur.¹⁴⁶ (Caesar is the most notable exception.) Now the most dramatic passage in the work is where at the end of the conversation Atticus – who had already shown signs of impatience¹⁴⁷ – erupts into a long speech. He reproaches Cicero to have been ironic from the beginning, as is the Socrates of Plato's, Xenophon's and Aeschines' works. To deny to oneself wisdom and to ascribe it to others who claim it, fits Socrates very well, whatever Epicurus has said against it. But in a historical discourse like the one in which Cicero has engaged, irony is as inappropriate as it would be before a court. *Sed in historia, qua tu es usus in omni sermone, cum qualis quisque orator fuisset exponeres, vide quaeso, inquit, ne tam reprehendenda sit ironia quam in testimonio.*¹⁴⁸ But Cicero does not understand – or does he fake it? So Atticus has to become more direct. The orators treated by Cicero are so inferior to the model that now exists that Cicero must have been ironic himself when he claimed that

¹⁴³ 3, 31, 43; analogously on law Leg. 2, 5, 11. Still, Cicero both rejects the Stoic position with regard to public offices as exaggerated (Ac. pr. 44, 136: *neminem consulem praetorem imperatorem ... nisi sapientem*), and even in the *Brutus* distinguishes between *honos* and *honoris nomen* (81, 281).

¹⁴⁴ 13, 52; 19, 74; 32, 123f.; 40, 150; 42, 156f.; 44, 162; 51, 190; 72, 253; 73, 254f. (the highest eulogy: through Cicero Rome has equaled Greece); 76, 266.

¹⁴⁵ 65, 232f.

¹⁴⁶ The passage 65, 231 is very witty, because it only makes sense within the literary universe constituted by the *Brutus*, but not if one considers the work as a published book. – *Scribi* (*Brut.* 49, 181) is a slip, not intentional.

¹⁴⁷ 72, 251; 77, 269.

¹⁴⁸ 85, 292.

Crassus' speech on the *lex Servilia* had been his teacher.¹⁴⁹ *Haec germana ironia est.*¹⁵⁰ Cicero, however, rejects Atticus' interpretation that he had been εἰρων – an attitude, which, Atticus repeats, Cicero would share with no less figures than Socrates and Scipio Africanus (Aemilianus). On the one hand, we should certainly believe Cicero: First, he cherishes his predecessors as orators no less gratefully than early Roman laws and institutions; at least during his youth there were no better models.¹⁵¹ Second, his praise of Crassus had been conditional: *ut eo nihil ferme quisquam addere posset, nisi qui a philosophia, a iure civili, ab historia fuisset instructor.*¹⁵² Obviously this implied that progress was possible, but only on the basis of an education as broad as that claimed by Cicero himself. On the other hand, just because of such passages the reader has the feeling that Cicero is continuing to be ironic. He adjourns the discussion of the subject to another occasion¹⁵³ – with a technique familiar from Plato.¹⁵⁴ This seems to imply that, after all, there was a partial irony in his detailed account. Certainly, the earlier orators were worthy Cicero's study, both in his youth and recently during his historical work in family archives; but their value is ultimately derived from the fact that they prepared the telos of Roman rhetoric, Cicero's own speeches. And thus Cicero can end his *Brutus* with a presentation of his own person, which was the ironically hidden purpose of his long historical reflections.

(III) The passage shows that Cicero himself is able to be ironic, and thus we should be careful to accept too quickly his statement that Socrates cannot have been ironic, when he denies knowledge to himself. In fact, the two arguments *Ac. pr.* 23, 73 are quite weak, because in each case one of their premises is wrong. First, regarding the historical Socrates, the proposition is false that in no source Socrates ascribes knowledge to himself; even in the Platonic *Apology* he claims moral knowledge.¹⁵⁵ Second, Cicero's conditional is true that the Platonic Socrates would not have repeated Socrates' allegedly ironic statements so exclusively, if Plato himself had not taken them seriously. But, again, the minor premise is wrong – there are enough passages in which the Platonic Socrates claims to have knowledge. There is little doubt that he claims to have confuted other positions – something which Arcesilaus hardly did. As we have already seen, the Socratic *elenchus* is quite different from the method of holding

¹⁴⁹ 44, 164.

¹⁵⁰ 86, 296.

¹⁵¹ 87, 298.

¹⁵² 43, 161.

¹⁵³ 87, 297; 87, 300.

¹⁵⁴ See, e. g., *Prt.* 357b5f.

¹⁵⁵ 29b7f.; 37b8.

speeches pro and con, and furthermore the purpose with which Cicero uses the latter method seems to be incompatible with Arcesilaus'.¹⁵⁶ And even if Plato seems sometimes to share with Cicero a belief in a far-reaching fallibility of human knowledge, this does not prevent him from developing complex metaphysical speculations and from regarding himself as intellectually superior to all other philosophers. Plato was hardly less ironic than Cicero was in his self-esteem as orator in the *Brutus*. Thus, the main problem in the history of the Academy is the rise of Arcesilaus – he, not Antiochus, constitutes the decisive break.¹⁵⁷

But the main objection against Cicero's Philonic interpretation of Plato is that his knowledge of the *Corpus Platonicum* is not exhaustive – not to speak of the indirect tradition, the most important source of which is Andronicus' Aristotle edition, and the mathematical work done in the Academy, which Cicero would hardly have been able to grasp.¹⁵⁸ Plato's later theoretical dialogues were probably not read or at least not appropriated by Cicero – with the exception of the *Timaeus*. His interest in this work was quite exceptional in his time, and it is indeed a sign of a remarkable philosophical instinct that he felt the urge to go beyond the natural philosophies of his age to a work whose superior philosophical depth he must have sensed. In this context, it is important that Cicero insists on Plato's Pythagorean teachers. They do not fit well into the genealogy Socrates-Plato-Arcesilaus, and this speaks for the reliability of his information. I suggest to take particularly seriously his statement *Fin.* 5, 29, 87 about Plato's encounter with Echebrates, *Timaeus* and Ario in Locri. Of course it is tempting to regard this information as a construction based on Cicero's knowledge of the *Timaeus*, the *Phaidon* and *Ep.* 9, 358b.¹⁵⁹ But Ario cannot be explained in this way, nor can the connection of Echebrates and Locri – for *Phd.* 57a links Echebrates with Phleius, where, according to Diogenes, a Pythagorean school existed.¹⁶⁰ Could not this Echebrates have been a mediator between Pythago-

¹⁵⁶ G. Cambiano, *Cicerone e la necessità della filosofia*, in: *Interpretare Cicerone*, ed. E. Narducci, Firenze 2002, 66–81 sees in the positive finalization a basic difference between Cicero and Arcesilaos, a difference which Cicero overlooked (72).

¹⁵⁷ Important insights on possible connections between the Old Academy and Arcesilaus can be found in H. J. Krämer, *Platonismus und hellenistische Philosophie*, Berlin - New York 1971, 5ff.

¹⁵⁸ His interest in Archimedes' tomb as quaestor in Syracuse (*Tusc.* 5, 23, 64) was of antiquarian, not of mathematic nature. Middle and Neoplatonists from Theo to Proclus, however, recognized the importance of a serious study of mathematics in order to understand Plato.

¹⁵⁹ In fact, there are some absurd constructions and errors of memory in Cicero (*Fin.* 5, 5, 12, *Brut.* 12, 47) – but not many.

¹⁶⁰ *D.L.* 8, 46.

reans on the Greek continent and in Magna Graecia? Perhaps it was he who first introduced Plato to Pythagorean tenets and engendered in him the desire to travel to Italy.¹⁶¹

This, I concede, is speculation. But it speaks for the honesty of Cicero that he mentions one of the sources of Plato, which those who interpret him only as a Socratic tend to underrate even in the 21st century. The main reasons why Cicero's image of Plato deserves its place of honor among all the many and often conflicting images that were formed of him in the course of almost 2400 years, however, are the following.

First, Cicero understood clearly that Plato was superior to Hellenistic philosophy. By idealizing a philosopher from the distant past, he contributes to creating classicism. This does not mean that he was already able to penetrate into Plato's theoretical philosophy, as Middle and Neoplatonists would try to do (who in their turn underrated the political side of Plato's thought). Even his reading of Plato's practical philosophy is often biased by Hellenistic categories. He does not grasp that Plato founds his ethics in the doctrine of ideas. Cicero's love for Plato is – like that of many other Plato scholars – more that of a humanist than of a technical philosopher, and he never aims at writing a thorough commentary of a Platonic work.

Second, despite his admiration and love for Plato, he does not generically impute to him all that he himself regards as true – he criticizes, e. g., his communism and his theory of eros with greater objectivity than the later Platonists could bring forth. This has partly to do with the pride Cicero had as a Roman – he knew that his nation had achieved, especially in politics, institutions still inaccessible to the Greeks, even the greatest of them.

Third, Cicero, who was first of all a man with an extraordinary sense for language and its art, understood as probably no other person in the ancient world, and very few after him, the enormous literary creativity of Plato. He imitated him by writing some of the best dialogues in the history of philosophy. By doing so, he rendered one side of Plato's philosophy alive in a way precluded to all Neoplatonists, with the exception of that orator whom the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* had turned into a philosopher, Augustine.

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¹⁶¹ On the impact of Philolaus on Plato long before the Republic, see my essay: Platons Protreptikos. Gesprächsgeschehen und Gesprächsgegenstand in Platons *Euthydemus*, *RhM* 147 (2004), 247–275 (268ff.).