Judged by the conventional standard of the number of monographs, scholarly articles, and dissertations on Cicero's philosophy, regard for Cicero as a serious thinker or even a serious political thinker is indeed low. The number of such items appearing in America in the last generation can be tallied on one hand, or perhaps two, depending on how one would classify several marginal entries. A measure of Cicero's neglect can be found by simply comparing these items with the amount of public work being done, for example, on the political and moral thought of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, or Nietzsche. Are we simply witnessing a desirable winnowing, a sort of natural selection process, or are we being deprived in some ways by this neglect of Cicero?

Although one hears an occasional lament for the neglect of Cicero and the Romans in college curricula, humanities' programs, and political theory courses, this is not a sufficient basis on which to conclude that this curricular gap or the corresponding lacuna in scholarship is inadvertent and deeply or widely regretted. If anything, one suspects that some American scholars share the view that the case is closed on Cicero as a serious thinker and in fact has been for some time; the verdict against Cicero is in, and it appears to have the imposing quality of being the cumulative judgment of generations. Even in the eighteenth century David Hume could write as if it were a commonplace that "the abstract philosophy of Cicero has lost its credit," but "the vehemence of his oratory is still the object of our admiration." A form of that opinion expressed by Hume


often held sway even when Cicero was more widely studied, for then as still today he was solely or primarily appreciated as the great orator and rhetorician of Rome and the master prose writer of the Latin language. Cicero the stylist is valued; Cicero the statesman and political thinker is set aside, if not actively eschewed. In any judgment of his own, Cicero would not permit such a severance of form from substance. If he could perceive his own positions as empty and opportunistic as some have regarded them, he would then see his rhetoric, as a few critics have, as but shallow bombast.

The tradition of controversy surrounding Cicero and opposition to him is substantial and extraordinary. In its persistence and extent it seems to overshadow such traditions which one finds in the wake of every great thinker and historical figure. Martin Luther for one, himself a center of considerable controversy thought that Aristotle was a "blind" and "wretched" man, most of whose books but especially the Nicomachean Ethics should be discarded. Every age and place appears to have its detractors of Plato. Their opinions are often as outrageous as that of Luther on Aristotle, but such views have not generally commanded the authority and support that mark the criticisms of Cicero. Although the extent of the controversy around the person and work of more recent figures like Rousseau, Hegel, and Nietzsche may be comparable to that swirling around Cicero, they have not, because of their alleged impact on the modern world, lost access to the philosophers' forum as Cicero has.

It is incumbent on one who proposes to reintroduce Cicero for serious consideration as a political thinker to note the extent and nature of the criticisms directed at him. Even if the comparative neglect of Cicero during the rebirth of political philosophy in America over the last generation is not to be accounted for primarily by the long-standing hostility to Cicero, this opposition as an historical fact is likely again and again to present itself in one form or another as an obstacle to renewed interest in him. Furthermore the opposition can be instructive at times in calling attention to certain problematic aspects of Cicero's life and thought. But such is the state of the study of Cicero that it first seems appropriate to say something, elemental and brief though it be, about the life and works that generated such a hearty tradition of hostility and, it should be added, a like tradition of acclaim, although the latter

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presently seems dormant or dead, at least in the United States. Furthermore, so implicated with his active public life are his writings and, in turn, criticisms of those writings that the sensible convention of treating philosophical texts independent of biographical and psychological studies of the author must be relaxed in reapproaching Cicero.

Cicero (106-43 B.C.) lived and suffered through most of the century of factional strife and violence preceding the death of the Roman Republic. He was no mere citizen caught up in deteriorating political order; for much of that time, he was in the public eye and at key moments at the center stage of Roman politics. He saw himself, as have most observers then and now, as a great but ultimately frustrated defender of the Republic; some have charged, however, that his vanity and political ineptness contributed to the Republic’s demise. Except for such personal deficiencies that may have compounded his problems, the dispute over Cicero that has continued down through the ages seems to spring from certain polarities that Cicero tried to bring together. One was the old Republic and the Rome of his time, Cicero’s version of the ancients-moderns tension; the other was Greece and Rome, especially in the form of philosophy and politics.

Cicero was reared at Arpinum, a small town about seventy miles southeast of Rome. There his early education was conducted by his invalid father. His family did not belong to the patrician ruling circles of Rome, yet it was a family of some means and some ties to those circles. Marius, the hero of the popular party and its most notable leader before Julius Caesar, had also come from Arpinum.

4 Much of what follows on Cicero’s life is drawn from his own writings. In fact, Cicero’s writings not only supply substantial materials toward an autobiography but also offer much toward a modest history of his times. See for example W. K. Lacey and B. W. J. G. Wilson, Rea Publica (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) which is an account of Roman politics and society drawn almost entirely from Cicero’s writings. The most recent of a continuing stream of English biographies of Cicero are W. K. Lacey, Cicero and the End of the Roman Republic (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978) and Elizabeth Rawson, Cicero (London: Allen Lane, 1975). They each contain helpful and current bibliographical essays on Cicero, An older work that should be noted is T. Petersson, Cicero: A Biography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1920) [reprinted New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1963]). Plutarch’s account of Cicero is a sensible starting place for a second-hand account of Cicero’s life.
He had been the "savior" of Rome and its foremost leader during Cicero's youth, and he had reached this great distinction without a patrician background. This example was not lost on Cicero as he set his ambitions. At Arpinum as well as at Rome where his family moved after he was ten, Cicero was apparently nourished on the religious practices and customs of the Romans; he grew to love the greatness of Rome and the leading figures of her history. In the difficult times in which he found himself, Cicero aspired to political leadership, to statesmanship, and he sought these objectives through the power of oratory above all. The ebbing effectiveness of the old patrician-dominated order aided in opening to all Romans access to political power through oratorical ability. Cicero could rise as one of a "new breed," a "novus homo" as he was known, but he had to do it without the natural support of a ruling class that saw him as one of his own. Furthermore, winning support through oratory meant that one had to come to public attention through the contentions of civil and criminal trials. Cicero's path to office and leadership would not have been an easy one even in less troubled times; it was one wherein the making of enemies could hardly be avoided. Cicero must have been more than ordinarily ambitious to set such a goal and take such a path, but whether that ambition was "inordinate" in any way is not at all clear.

In his dialogue Brutus, Cicero described the various studies he undertook and the tireless efforts he made to attain the oratorical prominence which opened to him the door to political leadership. From the age of sixteen, he constantly watched and listened to the oratorical matches reaching then, at the very eve and throughout the Social War, generally unparalleled levels of intensity and excellence. He assiduously practiced at oratory and sought the guidance of prominent teachers of rhetoric before and after his first known public oratorical appearances on behalf of Quinctius in 81 B.C. (Pro Publio Quinctio), and, about a year later in the case that brought him wide public attention, on behalf of Roscius (Pro Sex to Roscio Amerino). Near the end of his life, when all the philosophical works we have were already completed and in the hands of the public, Cicero acknowledged in his major work on ethics De Officiis that the title "orator" is more justly his than that of "philosopher." This self-evaluation should not be grounds for dismissing him as a phi-

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6 Brutus 304-24.  
6 De Officiis i. 2.
losopher, for the major part of his studies and public efforts had gone toward oratorical achievement in the public service and he had already received widespread acclaim and public success through these efforts. Furthermore, following Plato, Cicero thought that wisdom, the fruit of philosophy, was a necessary ingredient of true oratorical achievement; never losing sight of the noble goal of uniting rhetoric and philosophy (power and philosophy), Cicero had, however, to struggle with the temporal and psychological tensions of not merely discussing such a goal but reaching for it in a tottering republic.

Next to his pursuit of rhetorical skill, the study of philosophy received the most attention in Cicero's years of immediate preparation for public life. Philosophy was a Greek pursuit in the eyes of the Romans, and it was held suspect just as earlier the art of rhetoric had been. The Romans had since captured rhetoric for their own as a manifestly useful endeavor. Yet Cicero was apparently seen by many as a strange Graecophile; he did not fit the Roman mold. He developed an early love for philosophy and a respect for what it could do for human life. This he later claimed never left him even as he was compelled by necessity and duty to turn ever more of his attention and energy to public life. During the early part of his public life, he submitted wholly and enthusiastically to the instruction of Philo who had been driven from Athens to Rome by the Mithridatic War and was leader of a philosophical movement known as the Academics. Cicero also invited Diodotus, the Stoic teacher, into his own home and received instruction from him.

When, in 79 B.C. with his place in the public eye well-established, Cicero left Rome for two years primarily to strengthen his health and to temper his tense, vehement rhetorical style, his first six months were spent at Athens under Antiochus. Cicero speaks of him as a most famous and very wise philosopher of the Old Academy and the best of teachers and guides. Antiochus is known for having founded a movement known as the "Old Academy." This was an attempt to move away from the skepticism associated with other Academics known as the New Academy and yet to retain the Socratic method of questioning all opinions and doctrines. The Old Academy sought to emphasize the positive elements of the Socratic teaching, elements shared by the Stoics, Peripatetics, and followers of Plato. Under Antiochus, Cicero tells us, he renewed the study of philosophy which, without complete interruption, he had continued since
his youth. Later in this same period, he studied under the Stoic Posidonius at Rhodes. In his later writings Cicero clearly associated himself with the Academics, but he made clear that this was not a commitment to the skepticism of debilitating indifference or indecision on important human questions. It was, rather, a commitment to a method of inquiry, dialectical and disputational exchange, which Cicero traced to Socrates himself and which, he believed, promised as much success as a human being could hope for in determining the probable or most likely answers to the important questions philosophy considers.

Shortly after his two years abroad, Cicero sought and won his first public office, a quaestorship in Sicily. He served with a distinction and honesty uncharacteristic of the Roman provincial officers of that time; his immediate reward was the manifest high regard and affection of the Sicilian people when he ended his tenure in that office. A few years later (70 B.C.) at the request of Sicilians, Cicero took the courageous step of accepting the prosecution of Verres, who was completing a term as governor of Sicily and was an unparalleled practitioner of the extortion and corruption then infesting the Roman, provincial public service. In prosecuting Verres, he accepted, against his own general advice, the unpopular role as prosecutor, and he spoke against a man and a set of practices that were associated with the traditionally powerful patrician families of the Senate. Cicero triumphed in this case and did so over Hortensius, the defense counsel and the acknowledged champion of Roman oratory. Primarily through this victory he came to be generally recognized as one of the very best speakers in Rome.

He continued in the next few years to ascend the ladder of offices (cursus honorum) which were formal requisites for the highest office in much the same way that an American politician is informally bound to serve in such offices as governor, mayor or senator before being considered qualified to aspire to the highest office. In 63 B.C. Cicero became one of the Roman consuls, and from this highest office in the then mightiest nation in the world, he exposed and denounced what he regarded as the Catilinarian conspiracy against the state. The expose brought him prominence as a statesman that matched his renown as a speaker. Cicero believed he had saved the state in the struggle with Catiline and his circle; whether that is true or not, one thing is sure—Cicero’s action drew him decisively into the swirl of political intrigue and enmity that dominated the ensuing years of precipitous decline for the Roman Republic.
When Pompey clashed with Caesar, Cicero favored Pompey but he favored the Republic and peaceful unity above them both. After Caesar triumphed in 49 B.C., Cicero remained his cautious opponent. In the end, Cicero lost his life in the Roman political struggles in which he engaged so passionately; his opposition to Mark Antony, eloquently expressed in the *Philippics*, became a political liability when Antony closed for a time the breach between himself and the young Octavius. Cicero's name finally appeared on one of the infamous Roman proscription lists. Plutarch reports that Cicero's severed head and hands were "fastened up over the Rostra, where orators spoke."

Compelled to live his adult years as the Republic tottered under the force of challenge upon serious challenge and then at last fell to the forceful Caesar, Cicero remarked how these events were denying him the leisure to pursue learning, especially philosophy. Such learning was his first love but was not, given the circumstances of his lifetime, perceived as his first duty. Only in the usually very brief interstices of an active public life did Cicero succumb to the attraction of literature and philosophy. In the last years of the Republic, however, and in those six years Cicero lived after its fall, the persuasive power of the orator in Roman life gave way to physical intimidation and violence. Cicero proclaimed himself silenced by the death of the Republic. In this time, he eagerly turned to philosophy, and in the last three years of his life, he wrote all but three of his philosophical writings.

Cicero's written legacy consists of speeches, letters, and philosophical writings. The speeches which he usually polished for publication after delivery and the letters which have been sometimes used to damage his reputation as statesman and philosopher span the period of his public life. The philosophical writings, here taken to include his works on rhetoric (*De Inventione, De Oratore, Brutus, Orator, De Optimo Genere Oratorum, De Partitione Oratoria,* and *Topica*), were all written, save for the *De Inventione*, after Cicero's politically active life was on the decline, within the last twelve or thirteen years of his death. His important dialogues *De Oratore* and *De Re Publica*, completed close to the period of his own public life.

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1 *De Inventione* is generally thought to have been composed around 90 B.C. Cicero apologized in the *De Oratore* (6.5) for this unfinished and rough work on rhetoric which he produced as a very young man. In the *De Inventione* (6.4-5), however, he already hit upon a life-long concern, the danger to a public man in an attraction to philosophy.
activity as orator and statesman, are the other two works done before a seeming flurry of philosophical writing in the last three years of his life.

Most of Cicero's philosophical writing is in the dialogue form. His dialogues, however, tend to be disputations rather than conversations, following more the form of the lost dialogues of Aristotle than those of Plato. Cicero turned to the dialogue under the immediate inspiration of Carneades (214-129 B.C.), a former leader of the Academics. Carneades and Cicero believed themselves to be following Socrates in seeking through dialogue to conceal their own opinions, to relieve others from error, and to seek always what appears most likely to be the truth. In accord with this understanding and the Academic method, a participant in a dialogue might uphold a position with which he did not ultimately agree in order to stimulate the truth-discovering process of exchange. This is the approach of Philus in Cicero's *De Re Publica* and apparently of Cicero himself on occasion. Despite his professed interest in concealing his opinion within the dialogue, Cicero's own opinion on many of the important questions taken up in his dialogues is revealed, as in the *De Oratore*, in the introductions that accompany these works. We are further able (though perhaps, in another way, put at a disadvantage) to know Cicero's own opinions, and to find the person in a dialogue who appears to speak for him, by our capacity today to read much of his correspondence and to take a synoptic view of most of his written work. Yet one of the characteristics of the Ciceronian dialogue is that contending positions are represented at their best. The "straw man" is not a feature of the Ciceronian dialogue, and Cicero seems in several of them, as in the *De Oratore*, to present an encounter over an issue that genuinely troubles him. Like those of Plato, Cicero's dialogues require attention to their dramatic details if a reader is to have access to the full richness of their teachings. It is especially to be noted that many of the participants in Cicero's dialogues are distinguished Roman public figures; they are usually found on a holiday from the business of the forum and are inclined or led, during their relaxing conversation, to discuss a matter not without utility to their active lives, such as the inquiry into the best regime in the *De Re Publica*.

It is noteworthy that the *De Re Publica*, rightly acknowledged as Cicero's chief work on political theory, is complemented at least in one obvious way by the *De Oratore*, Cicero's major rhetorical work.
The *De Oratore* treats as a fundamental theme the education of the perfect or finished orator (*perfectus orator*) or the true statesman; it happens that the *De Re Publica* points to a consideration of the true statesman in that the best regime *ever realized*, the Roman Republic, has been attained and is maintained through the successive and cumulative efforts of great statesmen. But what the *De Re Publica* says about the true statesman and his education is lost to us with the missing portions of Books II and V of this dialogue.  

Traditionally among students of the history of political theory Cicero’s *De Re Publica* has been looked to along with his *De Legibus*, both dialogues which he explicitly paralleled with the *Republic* and *Laws* of Plato and which indicate that Plato was, with Socrates, Aristotle, and Carneades, one of his important and beloved philosophical resources. Book I of the *De Legibus* supplements and amplifies the brief sketch of a universal and natural law in Book III of the *De Re Publica*. Besides the famed statement on the natural law, several other topics are usually addressed when Cicero is examined in the often sweeping views taken of the history of political thought. The most familiar of these are his defense of the active life of the statesman over that of the philosopher, his restatement of the Polybian analysis of the mixed regime as the best regime, and his location of the fullest actualization of that regime in the Roman Republic at its peak. It seems appropriate here to observe that a fuller and more coherent understanding of Cicero’s political philosophy requires more development than has been evident of his defense of philosophy before practical men and would-be statesmen, of his conception of the model or true statesman, and especially of the foundation of his philosophical position. The latter implies there is such a basis from which Cicero sorts his way through the philosophical schools and movements of his time and on which he grounds his political philosophy.  

Greater recovery of Cicero’s political philosophy requires the kind of careful reading of the established political works which has become the standard of good work on primary sources. That warrants mention here only because the reputation of Cicero and specifically of his philosophical works seems at times to be an obstacle to giving him such careful attention. Beyond this, the recovery of a

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8 *De Re Publica* ii. 51, 66-67. The text here indicates that missing passages considered the true statesman; Book v indicates in its remaining fragments that the true statesman was also considered here.
coherent Ciceronian understanding of politics is facilitated by, and in some instances, requires attention to his other major philosophical works. Cicero’s approach to philosophy and his qualified embrace of the Academic school is explored in the *Academica*; that approach is further discussed in the *Tusculan Disputations*, and there it is exemplified on a question (“What constitutes happiness?”) which separates the schools of his time.9 Cicero applied his philosophical method and tested the schools’ positions on the highest concerns in *De Natura Deorum, De Divinatione* and *De Fato*.10 Throughout his philosophical examination of the teachings of the schools, the moral or ethical implications of those teachings seem clearly to constitute the chief standard by which Cicero assessed them. In the two remaining major philosophical works of Cicero, *De Finibus* and *De Officiis*, he directly engaged the moral teachings of the schools and presented his own position. The *De Finibus*, which Cicero said at one time was his philosophical writing most worth reading, concerns that central question of moral philosophy which Cicero had also considered in the *Tusculan Disputations*.11 The *De Officiis*, in the form of an extended letter to his son, treats what might ordinarily be called ethics—namely, precepts or specifications on how to live in accord with the true end of a human being. Cicero’s claim that the foundation of philosophy rests on the distinction between good and evil is one important reason for believing that his works in moral philosophy contain—the basis for whatever coherent understanding can be found of his philosophical and political teaching.12

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10 At *De Divinatione* ii. 1-4 is found Cicero’s own summary and characterization of all his major philosophical works except his *De Officiis* apparently not written at that time. The text of *De Fato* which we have is badly fragmented.

11 *De Finibus*. i. 11.

12 See *De Divinatione* ii. 2 for Cicero’s statement on the foundation of his philosophy. The extant philosophical writings of Cicero not specifically mentioned in this and preceding paragraphs are the still frequently read dialogue-essays on old age and on friendship (*De Senectute* and *De Amicitia*) and the *Paradoxon Socrateum*, consisting in spirited defenses of unusual aspects of Stoic ethics. This should be read in the context of Cicero’s other writings on moral philosophy. There is evidence that at least three major works of Cicero are lost to us: *De Gloria, De Consolatione* and *Hortensius*. The last is the dialogue that Augustine claimed in *The Confessions* had turned him to philosophy from a self-satisfied life as a teacher of rhetoric. Michel Ruch, a French scholar,
One of the charges against Cicero, and one that would indeed be damming if true, gives a special meaning to the search for the foundation or ground of Cicero’s thought. This is the charge that Cicero is but a compiler and not a thinker, with which a generation or more of political scientists were introduced to Cicero in Sabine’s text.\(^{13}\) It makes Cicero’s thought out to be entirely derivative and extensively eclectic. Sabine asserted as he made the charge that Cicero himself confessed to it, and here he no doubt has in mind a letter (May of 45) of Cicero to his friend Atticus wherein Cicero referred to his writings or something he has done as essentially a copy for which Cicero supplied the words.\(^{14}\) May it now suffice to say that that single ambiguous reference runs against a multitude of others in which Cicero took most seriously his own engagement in philosophy, his appropriation of the method of Socrates and the writings through which he hoped to introduce philosophy to Rome. It must further be said that as a life-long student of philosophy in a period (like most periods thereafter) in which philosophy was presented in an atmosphere of contention among schools, Cicero’s approach to philosophy was through the teachings of the schools. In being dependent on them and yet independent as he sorted through their teachings from his Academic perspective, Cicero appears eclectic. In fact, he was a self-confessed eclectic for he was not captured by a single school and was explicit about his sources and dependencies.\(^{15}\) What there is no warrant to accept, however, is the frequent implication of the charge of eclecticism, namely, that it is mindless or without principle and form. That would leave Cicero as wholly derivative and not worthy of attention except as a reporter on philosophical positions the original materials on which are largely lost. It is precisely in that capacity as reporter, especially on earlier Stoicism, that Cicero as ”philosopher” has often been valued and read.


\(^{14}\) The original of this disputed passage and a discussion of it can be found in D. R. Shackleton Bailey (ed.), *Cicero’s Letters to Atticus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) vol. 5, pp. 161, 341-42. Also see Douglas, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

\(^{15}\) McKeon, *op. cit.*, p. 56 if.
Sabine considered Cicero as a reporter and transmitter. Despite evidence of much more extensive personal study of Cicero, Sabine's treatment of Cicero in *A History of Political Theory* is proportionate in space to the little regard he has for Cicero as a political thinker. It is not unreasonable to see Cicero as presented by Sabine and so many others in this century as under the cloud of the severe attack on him in late nineteenth-century German scholarship and specifically in the histories of Rome by Drumm and Mommsen. That was a wholesale attack on the person and achievement of Cicero which shortly requires attention here. What must, however, be noted is a recurring objection in recent scholarship to undervaluing Cicero as a thinker by stressing solely or primarily his function as reporter and transmitter. Richard McKeon already in 1950 was ill at ease with the tradition of reducing Cicero's contribution to that of an eclectic compiler; he concluded a substantial essay with the modest observation that "in those portions of his [Cicero's] writings in which we are able to compare his formulation of doctrines with existing sources . . . the modifications which he introduces are considerable, both in the orientation and use of the argument and in the manner of expressing it." James Holton began his essay on Cicero in Strauss and Cropsey's *History of Political Philosophy* by, in effect, wanting to open the issue that seemed closed for Sabine as he began. Addressing that tradition which regards Cicero as primarily reporter and transmitter, Holton wrote:

Such an assessment contains a measure of truth. It fails, however, to give serious consideration to Cicero's method or to his purpose in treating philosophical materials in the manner in which he did, to say nothing of the substance of his thought. It falls short, therefore, of that understanding essential to an adequate analysis.

16 Cicero is considered within six pages of Sabine's more than nine hundred page text. Sabine collaborated with Stanley Barney Smith on what is still the standard American edition of Cicero's *De Re Publica. On the Commonwealth* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1929).


18 McKeon, op. cit., p. 64.

19 Holton, op. cit., p. 130.
Then in 1968 the English scholar, A. E. Douglas, in a worldwide survey of scholarship on Cicero not only reported a general movement away from the "exaggerated" nineteenth-century criticisms of Cicero but also summed up the emerging view of Cicero's philosophical writings, "... not as a pale shadow of the great Greek fore-runners, but as presenting a synthesis of the Greek and Roman experiences—which is something in its own right."20 And finally, the close study of Cicero in Cumming's *Human Nature and History* led him to similar reservations about the charge of eclecticism in Cicero. At one point he wrote,

But Cicero's procedure (in political philosophy, at any rate) is not random eclecticism or even *bricolage*. His arrivals at solutions to political problems regularly take the philosophical form of reconciling other oppositions between philosophical positions by anchoring them all to their common opposition to Epicureanism.21

What has been reported here from McKeon, Holton, Douglas, and Cumming indicates a common resistance to the charge of mindless eclecticism in Cicero, but it hardly makes visible the real problems to be worked out in finding Cicero's distinctive political philosophy (namely, the ground and argument of his political thought). This must, of course, be the central task for students of political philosophy once they become convinced that Cicero is saying something that can be sought out. If Cicero sorted through and chose among the teachings of the philosophical schools, what standards or principles of choice has he employed? If Cicero developed the thought of his acknowledged greatest teachers, Plato and Aristotle, what were the additions and subtractions and the principles governing them? Similarly, if Cicero bends Stoicism back in the direction of Plato, what governed the degree of the curvature? If Cicero fused Greek and Roman things, what has determined the nature of the synthesis? Total consistency and internal coherence which can suggest more of ideology than philosophy is, no doubt, not to be expected, but the ground and case for Cicero's reconciliation must be found and articulated if the expectation that he transcended mindless eclecticism is to be established as fact.

Although mindless eclecticism is, perhaps, the most damaging charge to Cicero's possible stature as a political philosopher, it is not the only such charge. There is need to take a more complete view of

21 Cumming, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 236.
the tradition of hostile criticism of Cicero, for it is, as already said, appropriate to do so on this occasion. Furthermore it will be discovered that much of the tradition of hostility to Cicero constitutes a kind of fabric of criticism in which is woven together an assessment of Cicero the man, the political leader, and the philosopher. What makes this fabric especially noteworthy is that it appears to address the ground toward which most efforts to comprehend the political philosophy of Cicero move, that being the centrality of political practice or statesmanship to Cicero’s thought about politics. From the recognition of this informing center to his political philosophy and even, perhaps, his philosophy, it is a short (though, not necessary) step to interpret Cicero’s thought as a simple projection of his life and commitments.

Never, it seems, has the criticism of Cicero been as total and rarely has it been as severe as that found in Mommsen. There Cicero was opposed because he stood as an apparent reactionary for the old Republic against the progressive, popular, and centralized rule that Caesar brought. In the light of this fundamental error, Cicero’s character, political skills, rhetoric, and philosophical writings take on a yellowed hue that minimally betokens incompetence and maximally decadence. One scholar-friend of Cicero, even at the peak of Mommsen’s influence on the Western perception of Rome, protested, “have we not the right to demand of the German historians that they set a less biased man to the task of re-writing the story of the Roman Republic, one who knows neither ira nor studio, and may we not expect at his hands a fairer treatment of the man whose unpardonable sin was a belief in free institutions?”

However extreme and exaggerated was the nineteenth-century German school’s treatment of Cicero, it is a mistake to trace to it or even to Petrarch’s rediscovery of the letters to Atticus the troubled reputation of Cicero.

Rather the problem of Cicero must be traced to his own time. Plutarch’s account of Cicero’s life and his comparison of Cicero and Demosthenes provides support for this claim. Even then it is support supplementary to what can be detected of Cicero’s troubles in his own writings. Throughout his account Plutarch called attention to Cicero’s vanity and excessive love of glory; from this flaw, above all, came whatever misjudgments Cicero made in politics and rheto-

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22 Slaughter, op. cit., p. 130.
One effect of this flaw that Plutarch especially singled out was Cicero's turning his natural wit into harsh sarcasm directed at opponents and even, at times, at friends. By this habit, Plutarch reported, Cicero, that "Greek scholar" as he was disrespectfully known in some quarters, "made himself odious with many people.

Then at one point Plutarch drew out the implications of Cicero's flaw for his efforts in philosophy, and there is found, perhaps, the first instance of what is here called the fabric of criticism of Cicero. Immediately after having noted Cicero's aspirations as a philosopher, Plutarch wrote:

But the desire of glory has great power in washing the tinctures of philosophy out of the souls of men, and in imprinting the passions of the common people, by custom and conversation, in the minds of those that take a part in governing them, unless the politician be very careful so to engage in public affairs as to interest himself only in the affairs themselves, but not participate in the passions that are consequent to them.

What then was known of the personal and political life of Cicero became in a number of different forms the basis for evaluation and explanation of his philosophical writings. What was one to expect from a vainglorious politician who attempted a side or second career in philosophy but philosophical writings that were dashed off and, if not simply derivative and mindlessly so, then surely superficial and likely to be honey-coated (Cicero was, after all, a skilled orator) flatteries for his way of life and the regime under which he had risen to power? Even when Cicero's character and political actions were not adversely judged, there was the suspicion that his philosophical work must have suffered from its secondary place in his life or that his philosophy was too informed by his way of life and commitments and even that it is, simply a rationalization for them. Montaigne thought Cicero was deficient in not recognizing that ambition is the humor most contrary to solitude; without solitude there is little hope for substance. Cicero's eloquence was great but empty to Montaigne's ears. He concurred in the common opinion that Cicero had no great natural excellence.

So too Pascal wrote as if all dis-

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25 Ibid., p. 167.
26 Michel de Montaigne, see his essays "On Solitariness," "A Consideration upon Cicero," and "Of Books."
cerning minds had seen the true nature of Cicero: "All the false beauties which we blame in Cicero have their admirers, and in great number." 27

A significant critique of Cicero that is still vigorously articulated concedes that his impact on subsequent philosophy has been powerful but regards that impact on the whole as harmful. It is charged that, in contrast to the Greeks, the Romans neglected speculative philosophy, theoretical science and mathematics, and that this neglect was encouraged by Cicero's defense of philosophy and all the arts in terms of the needs of the statesman-orator. Practically centered and vast in its aspirations (Cicero did present the true orator as an expert in all fields of knowledge), Roman learning was bound to be superficial and reliant on handbook collections of earlier work. Neither original nor rigorous thinking were continued or developed in the Roman or Ciceronian tradition. Cicero, it is charged, played a key part in the birth of the "Dark Ages."

When respectable scientific subjects, together with the occult arts, were consigned by neglect to *voti doceissimi*, the doom of science in the West was sealed for a thousand years.

The turning of the way occurred in Republican Rome, and Cicero called the turn in Book I of his *De Oratore*. He points out that the Greeks placed the philosopher and the specialist on the pedestals of their intellectual world, while the Romans more sensibly reserved the place of honor for the orator.

Even when Cicero's philosophical works were greatly appreciated and hence there was no temptation to explain perceived anomalies and deficiencies of those works by aspects of his life and political commitment, there has sometimes been a concern with lack of consistency in Cicero's life. So Petrarch could not understand Cicero's turning from the noble work of philosophy to the entanglements of politics, and John of Salisbury in his perplexity over certain actions of Cicero gave perhaps initial expression to what has later been

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27 Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (New York: E. M. Dutton, 1958) no trans. listed, i. 31. The force of what is quoted here is even greater in the light of i. 30.

called the problem of "the two Ciceros"—Cicero the politician and Cicero the teacher of a beautiful way of life.

In this examination of the fabric of criticism directed at Cicero; coherent lines of argument explicit or implicit in criticism have been stressed and brought to the fore; and because the concern here is with the tradition of hostile criticism or underestimation of Cicero, much in the larger Western tradition that is appreciative and laudatory of Cicero's life and thought has been here set aside. Two observations seem to follow from the preceding exhibition of the fabric of criticism. The first is to acknowledge the simple good sense in the fabric of criticism which is an understandable response to the fabric or oneness of life. In other words, it is reasonable to stand perplexed and distressed before apparent inconsistencies between a man's life and his writings and to seek to find consistency by interpreting the latter in terms of the former. But Cicero would have to be much more manifestly a rogue or political opportunist than he can possibly be construed to be even from reports like that of Plutarch in order for there to arise a serious problem of consistency with his moral and political teaching. Allowing some space for the weakness of the human condition and for the realm of prudence or the contingencies of various situations, this reader does not find in the most direct sources available, Cicero's letters and speeches, evidence of such inconsistency.

What is more interesting is the other major aspect of the fabric of criticism—that is, the tie that is drawn between Cicero's major political involvement and his philosophical writings. The basic line of argument in this part of the fabric is that Cicero's political life has skewed his philosophic life and writings. This has happened either by necessary distraction from philosophy resulting in shallow or less than commendable thought or by a philosophic achievement that is distorted at critical points by the perspective of the active and committed statesman. Among those who have respected Cicero, it has been said that he wrote much that he did in order to justify his active life before the court of Plato. And in the most detailed interpretation of Cicero's key philosophic texts in the last generation in the English-speaking world, Cumming came around at a critical point to find Cicero's "philosophical highmindedness ... encum-

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29 Haskell's view, especially as captured in his last chapter, is one of the latest statements of "the two Ciceros" thesis. *op. cit.*
tiered” with issues of Cicero’s own “career?” It appears that the very problem Cicero struggled with, both personally and in his hopes for Rome, is imbedded in the tradition of criticism, and in this case not outrightly hostile criticism. Public life and philosophic life, the tradition of criticism seems to be saying, cannot be reconciled without damage to one or the other. Cicero’s commitments and even excellences as a public man (rhetoric, for example) must inevitably, it seems, take their toll on Cicero the philosopher. Unwittingly perhaps, the tradition of criticism is saying that the unattenuated union of philosophy and power is impossible; Cicero is a case in point. At his best, Cicero offers attenuated philosophy, the political thought of a statesman; at his worst, he is a warning to those who would seek to bridge unbridgeable chasms.

That may well be at least partly correct. But a relevant question that captures another view must be raised. Can Cicero’s public life have been on balance, an asset rather than a liability to Cicero the philosopher? Cicero himself thought so, and he has at times been appreciated as a philosopher precisely because of the practical, common sense perspective that informs his teaching and that was seen as rooted in his active life. Such was the view among some early Christians, during the Renaissance, in the republican tradition in England and among American Founders as different as Jefferson and Adams. The perspective of practice is not, of course, the preserve of the actual political participant or, to be sure, leader. Yet is such participation not likely to make this perspective more accessible and more steady? In the case of the reflective political leader, is there not forced upon him a regular encounter with the larger practical questions and the constraints of human existence? It would seem as hard for the archetypal philosopher to keep in consideration the perspective of practice as it is for the archetypal statesman to attain the distance and isolation that are customarily associated with sound reflection and contemplation. Though Cicero apparently hoped for more isolation than life allowed him, he asserted, in effect, that the perspective of practice and of the greatest practice, statesmanship, is an advantaged perspective. It was advantaged in the sense of being the true perspective, the basis for a true philosophy of life insofar as man can attain that. The central role of the statesman in Cicero’s political philosophy, the common sense foundation of his entire philosophy as well as other facets of his thought, may be read auto-

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biographically as a projection of Cicero's "career" upon his philosophy; but that does not remove the applicability of the question of the truth of what he teaches. The principle involved here was made clear by Leo Strauss in one of his essays on historicism. Strauss cautioned that in observing that doctrines are related to their times, one must not overlook "that the situation to which one particular doctrine is related, is particularly favorable to the discovery of the truth, whereas all other situations may be more or less unfavorable." 31

III

Cicero sought to encourage the birth and development of moral and political philosophy in Rome. He had only partial success within his lifetime and the immediately following years. More substantial success came through his writings among early Christians. Later he played an important part in the renewed vigor of moral and political philosophy during the Renaissance. In general there is no basis for suggesting that American universities and intellectual life are experiencing a renaissance of interest in classic authors or in the fundamental questions to which such authors direct their readers. Yet in the more limited quarters of political science, it is reasonable to speak of a renaissance of political philosophy in the last generation; at the very least there is a rebirth of interest in the study of political philosophy, and it manifests itself in the intensity, depth, and number of studies on political thinkers of classic stature. The scope of these studies and the concerns they reflect call for special notice, for they suggest Renaissance-like characteristics even if relatively small numbers of political scientists and others are involved. What is witnessed are scholarly interests in philosophical, theological, literary, and historical studies that are rooted in a concern with moral and political disorders of the present and recent past; also in evidence is an atmosphere of encouragement of language studies, especially the classical languages, so that primary texts can be studied. Thus in conception at least, the rebirth of political philosophy encourages such interests and scholarship without losing the focus implied in its association with American political science, namely, a concern with the American regime and the present and future of political order in the world.

Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin have been the leaders and primary agents of this renaissance within American political science, and it is here proposed to examine how Cicero fares in their hands. What can be hoped for from such an endeavor is some help, from those to whom many are accustomed to go, in understanding this controversial figure Cicero. But it happens that some mutual illumination can result and that Cicero, himself a mediator of the tradition of political philosophy to Rome, brings to light some key issues in and some interesting differences between the primary mediators of the tradition of political philosophy to contemporary America.

Such a bold endeavor should imply the right of certain preliminary qualifications. The first and most extensive is to acknowledge that other currents besides those emanating from the work of Strauss and Voegelin are, of course, present in the contemporary study of political thought and political philosophy. Two in which Cicero plays a very important or even pivotal role seem deserving of special note here: the revived interest and scholarship in classical republicanism the seeds for which appear to have been sown in Zera Fink's 1945 book, *The Classical Republicans,* and the study of the history and crisis of liberalism as presented in Robert Cummings's *Human Nature and History.*

Fink's study focuses on the ideas of the English republican-reformers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They include Harrington, Milton, and Sydney whose ideas of republicanism were based on the Roman model and the concept of mixed government which they learned through Polybius and Cicero had been gradually infused in the Roman state. They sought to do the same in England though not in every respect as "gradualists" for there were other models of "how to do it" in the classical tradition (Lycurgus above all). The working definition of a "republican" in Fink's study is a supporter of "a state which was not headed by a king and in which the hereditary principle did not prevail in whole or in part in determining headship."\(^3\) Reminiscent of Hobbes' finding Cicero and Aristotle responsible for unsettling democratic ideas in his time, Fink found the royalists in general holding the chief "declamer" Cicero responsible for the republican thinking of the time. The seventeenth-century reformers had "the Ciceronian dia-


logues . . . lurking in the background in their minds." Not only was the teaching of Polybius on mixed government and the slightly moderated version of Cicero dear to the classical republicans, but Cicero's very view of the greatness of the Republic and the treachery of Caesar seems to have informed the republicans' view of Roman history. Sydney affirmed that "all that was ever desirable, or worthy of praise and imitation in Rome, proceeded from its liberty, grew up, and perished with it." That liberty was tied to virtue which Sydney thought honored in the days of the Roman Republic "to such an extent that it had never elsewhere been excelled." The classical republicans' goal to build Rome anew in the West (England) passed yet further west to American shores where it became, among so many dissenters to the English Establishment, one important polestar in the politics and political thought of Colonial and Revolutionary America.

Near the end of The Classical Republicans Fink began to trace the concerns and leading ideas of the classical republicans into the Whig political theory of the eighteenth century, a process continued and developed in Caroline Robbins' The English Commonwealthman. "The impact on America of this tradition has been elaborated in the work of W. Trevor Colburn, Bernard Bailyn and others, and J. G. A. Pocock has taken up the challenge of moving backwards (as well as forward) from the republicans to a study, as clearly suggested by Fink, of the political thinking of Machiavelli and the Italian Renaissance as the primary source for the classical dimension of the English Republicans and what follows from them into America." History of ideas should be no end in itself, and it is therefore important to recognize that significant discussions in American political theory can be illuminated not simply through a better understanding of the classical republican tradition but also by understanding better that alleged seminal thinker in that tradition, Cicero.

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34 Ibid., p.5...
35 Ibid., p. 157. The quotation in the previous sentence is Sydney as quoted by Fink.
Recent inquiries and disputes concerning the meaning of republican government, the bearing of the model of mixed government on the creation of the American Founders, the nature and relevance of republican virtue, the relationship of religion and the republic, and even the role of "common sense" and other non-Lockean elements in Founding political thought at least point the student of the American regime to the classical republican tradition. The classical republican ferment in the study of American political thought in turn points to Cicero as a key figure and thinker, but as yet there is no evidence in these circles of reexamination and renewed interest in Cicero's own writings.

In contrast to this classical republican ferment, Cumming's two-volume work seems to have been little noticed by students of political philosophy and is not symptomatic of an intellectual movement. In fact, Cumming's effort might well be understood as within the scope of the classical republican tradition although there is no noticeable evidence of any mutual reliance between Cumming and the other body of scholarship. Cumming is concerned with the tradition of liberty and how its sources might help us better understand its modern problems. John Stuart Mill is taken as the prototypical liberal, and it is with analysis of his thought and the manifestation of the crisis of the liberal tradition in him that Cumming's *Human Nature and History* begins and ends.

The crisis of the liberal tradition is rooted in the tension in that tradition's dual attachment to specific historical achievements and a philosophy of human nature. Without the latter, political philosophy is dead; yet it is in the former that political philosophy finds realizations. Insofar as specific historical achievements become the liberal tradition, historicism swamps political philosophy. The historicist strain in the liberal tradition is traced by Cumming through Machiavelli to Polybius's rejection of Plato's model regime in favor of one realized in the Spartan or Roman state. Though he observed that Cicero like Polybius had his intellectual roots in Plato, Cumming set him off against Polybius as the philosopher of human nature, the "second founder" of political theory, the founder being Plato. Cicero's effort to reconcile history and human nature, or politics and philosophy is the classical paradigm for the problem of the liberal tradition. So it is that Cumming wrote that "the outcome of this complex process of reconciliation will be the classical tradition in the guise in which it will exercise the most influence on the
development of modern liberal thought. At another point he added that Cicero contributed more decisively than any other classical thinker to the development of modern political thought, and in particular to the development of what Mill identifies as the principle of individuality. 

In further contrast with the classical republican strain in recent and current scholarship, Cumming himself engaged in an extended and close study of the thought of Cicero; he compared aspects of Cicero’s political thought with that of Polybius and that of Plato, and in explicating Cicero he fixed his attention specifically on the De Re Publica and the De Officiis. Those two works provide focal points for the dialectic that Cumming believed Cicero struggled with more explicitly than any classical thinker; in the De Re Publica Cicero is said to come forth as the champion of authority, and in the De Officiis as the champion of liberty. In Cicero’s attachment to philosophy, Cumming found the champion of individualism and liberty; in his practical political life, the champion of authority.

Cumming’s volumes are clearly thoughtful, ranging, and scholarly, and they are deserving of much more consideration than they have received. However at this stage of the study of his thesis and argument one has the sense that he has made more of individualism in Cicero than can be made. Supporting Cicero’s role as the predominant classical figure for modern liberal thought is Cumming’s distinction of Cicero from Plato and Aristotle on the ground that the individual plays a more important role for Cicero. This distinction merits further consideration as does Cumming’s turning the tension in Cicero’s life between the vocations of politics and philosophy into a form of the tension between authority and liberty and his presenting the De Re Publica and the De Officiis as a manifestation of the latter tension. These are, of course, key reservations given the thesis of Cumming, but it should be noted that he not only has taken Cicero seriously and sought to understand him as a philosopher but also has directed his attention to those three topics noted earlier as most requiring attention in Cicero: his defense of philosophy, the pivotal role of the orator-statesman in his thought, and the ground or fundamental principles of Cicero’s philosophy.

Both Fink and Cumming, then, have stressed Cicero’s seminal and positive contribution to modern liberal and republican thought.

39 Ibid., p. 227.
Neither Strauss nor Voegelin have denied the many continuities that run through Western political thought, but each found it more significant, in exploring who we are and where we are, to bring fundamental discontinuities to the forefront. Cicero is without qualification on the ancient side of the divide between the ancients and moderns which is central to Strauss’s analysis. In a review of Fink’s book, Strauss hesitated at the suggestion that the classical republicans were really classical, finding them more democratic than "their classical teachers" and more disposed to the modern belief in political perfection independent of the moral qualities of the citizens.\(^{40}\)

Cumming, apparently independently and despite his overall emphasis on the modern aspects of Cicero’s thought, has joined Strauss in his denial of the frequent assertion that modern egalitarianism can be traced to Cicero.\(^{41}\) Voegelin sees Cicero as both personally and culturally (for he lived in the Ecumenic Age) distracted from the fundamental experiences and thus the high-calling of the philosophical life; Cicero is then more implicated in the development of Gnosticism and disorder than he is successful at the passing on of the Platonic experience.

But two briefer preliminary qualifications are in order before turning to a more complete examination of Strauss and Voegelin on Cicero. It is necessary to be clear that the contemporary renaissance in political philosophy associated with Strauss and Voegelin has not been a particular boon for the study of Cicero. It is not, however, the strong forms of the tradition of hostile criticism of Cicero discussed in Part II that appear to be operating in these circles. Strauss has been clearly more respectful of and more dependent on Cicero than Voegelin. For each, nonetheless, and for the scholarship which their work has encouraged, Cicero has been of secondary interest; the reason for this is different for each and is entailed in the overall thesis on which each built his case for the renewal of political philosophy.

Finally there is need for some confession of concern in taking such an apparently oblique and surely unusual entree to the political thought and interpretation of two such formidable thinkers of this generation. There is no removing the concern that the consid-

\(^{40}\) Strauss, “Criticism: Sixteen Appraisals,” op. cit., p. 291. It does not seem characteristic of the classical republicans to underestimate the importance to the political good of the moral qualities of the citizens.

eration here of a part of their work may suffer from the fact that the effort to understand the whole of it is continuing. An examination of their consideration of Cicero proves, however, to be only apparently oblique, for Cicero's primary interest in bridging across the life of politics to the life of philosophy seems to have given him the power to bring to the forefront the understandings of Strauss and Voegelin on the relation between politics and philosophy and thus on the very nature of political philosophy. This is not to deny that other points of entry to their thought could lead as directly or even more directly to this central question.

IV

It is proper to begin by noting the obvious. Neither Strauss nor Voegelin has chosen to write a monograph or to make a major statement on Cicero. In the case of Strauss, Holton's positive and probing essay on Cicero's political philosophy has appeared under his co-sponsorship in the volume on the History of Political Philosophy. In Natural Right and History, normally taken as the basic statement of Strauss' overall position in political philosophy, there are nearly as many references to Cicero as there are to Plato (the most) and to Aristotle (the second most). No other thinker is there cited nearly as frequently as these three: Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. More restricted in scope than Natural Right and History is Strauss' The City and Man which, being constituted by studies on Plato, Aristotle, and Thucydides, is limited to the Greeks; here too Cicero is cited with frequency but surrenders the third place to another Greek, Xenophon. In these books and in other writings, Strauss has cited almost exclusively the philosophical works of Cicero, and among those he has rarely referred to the rhetorical works. He has then ignored the speeches and letters, and it appears to be his intent to abstract from the controversies concerning the personal character and the more obvious political actions of Cicero. He gave one clear indication of this when he wrote that Cicero's "...political action on behalf of philosophy has nothing in common with his actions against Catiline and for Pompey."

Not only has Strauss held back from most of the swirl of controversy around Cicero's personal and public life and focused on the

political philosopher Cicero," he has also avoided any observation that could be seen as diminishing Cicero's political philosophy. He did not write about or mention considerations like the eclectic, superficial or even derivative quality of Cicero's political philosophy. Why then did Strauss turn to Cicero with the frequency that he did? How, in other words, does Cicero enter the fabric of Strauss' thought as reflected in his writings? There appear to be two evident ways: Cicero's writings serve as a source for materials on the division and debate over natural right in ancient times, and Cicero's own position is an exemplification of the nature of classical political philosophy.

Like many others, Strauss valued Cicero as a source through which one could understand the course of philosophy and political philosophy as it passed from Plato and Aristotle to Christian times. Thus Cicero's dedicated and often dispassionate presentation of the teachings of the schools of his time has benefited Strauss as it has aided students of philosophy through the ages. Footnote references to texts of Cicero often indicate that Cicero has been the source or is to serve as the illustration of what understanding Strauss has of the Stoic and Epicurean teachings. More must shortly be said of Strauss' view of Cicero's relationship to the Stoics. It is through Cicero and Lucretius that Strauss most directly encountered ancient Epicureanism. Already in *Natural Right and History* he referred to the poem of Lucretius as "the greatest document of philosophic conventionalism and, in fact, its only document available to us that is both authentic and comprehensive...." At the same time he argued that Rousseau's *Second Discourse* was modeled on Lucretius and suggested the same of Hobbes' *Leviathan.*

As one might expect, a much closer public study of Lucretius followed, and therein Strauss can be found using Cicero's Epicureans from the dialogues to support his interpretation of Lucretius and to illustrate the general character of Epicureanism. In this study, "Notes on Lucretius," Strauss drew attention to Lucretius' explicit claim that he was the first to be rendering into his "native speech" that truth of nature which was discovered not very long

44 Strauss used this phrase in stating that Machiavelli was almost completely silent about Plato, Aristotle, "the political philosopher Cicero" and scholasticism. *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 290-91.
45 Strauss, *Natural Right...* op. cit., p. 111.
46 Ibid., pp. 168, 264, 271.
ago.\footnote{Leo Strauss, "Notes on Lucretius," *Liberalism, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 104. The phrase "native speech" is used in the translation of the relevant passage found in Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1951) trans. R. E. Latham, p. 181.} The intent of Lucretius, according to Strauss, was "to propagate Epicurean philosophy in Rome."\footnote{Strauss, op. cit., p. 107.} This analysis of Lucretius invites a limited comparison with Cicero which is not explicitly in evidence in Strauss' writings. Whatever his own stature as a philosopher Cicero clearly claimed to be putting Greek philosophy in his native speech.\footnote{See, for example, the opening of the *De Officiis.*} Cicero's approach is apparently more pluralistic than that of Lucretius, although as Cumming has already suggested there is clear and unquestionable opposition to one school, the Epicureans, in Cicero's philosophical writings. Strange it is that although Cicero and Lucretius were contemporaries, in fact nearly coterminous, there is no evidence of interaction between them and apparently only a single brief reference in all of Cicero, and that in a letter, to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* which appeared in 55 B.C.\footnote{In a letter to Quintus about a year after Lucretius’s poem appeared, Cicero seems to have praised the poem as sparkling with genius and at the same time skilfully executed. The original (*multis luminibus ingenii, multae tamen artes*) has been differently interpreted as in E. S. Shuckburgh's translation: 'The poems of Lucretius are as you say with many flashes of genius, yet very technical.' *The Letters of Cicero* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), vol. 1, p. 266.} Cicero's silence concerning Lucretius may have a number of explanations; two of these, not exclusive of one another, are a strong sense of rivalry with Lucretius for the direction of philosophy in Rome and a preference, despite the seeming character of *De Natura Deorum,* to meet the threat of Epicureanism from a practical perspective rather than on the terms of Lucretius.

There is, perhaps, a more important matter to be noted concerning Strauss' encounter with the Epicureans through Cicero and Lucretius. As already implied in his linking Rousseau and Hobbes to Lucretius, the Epicureans indicated for Strauss the presence in premodern times of the modern alternative. In Lucretius and the Epicureans, wrote Strauss, "... premodern thought seems to come closer to modern thought than anywhere else."\footnote{Strauss, "Preface," op. cit., p. viii.} The pivotal ancient-moderns distinction for Strauss was not, of course, a rigid periodization but a characterization of the predominant understand-
ing of the end and nature of political life before and after Machiavelli. On each side of the divide between the ancients and moderns there are present representatives, at least, of the other side. And then too, the divide is one between the predominant understandings of political thinkers. and if only in the light of Athens' treatment of Socrates, it can be said that societies only more or less incorporate such understandings. As the "modern" Epicureans were present in ancient times, so, Strauss has suggested, there is in modern times an "ancient" way of thinking as well as reservoirs of common sense which can provide support for a healthy liberal democracy.

Even more noteworthy than Strauss' use of Cicero as reporter on Epicureanism and other ancient teachings was his regular reliance on Cicero to exemplify classical political philosophy. Strauss has chosen again and again to cite Cicero as he illustrated and documented the classical alternative with which Strauss sought above all to reacquaint the world. For Strauss, Cicero was one of three major spokesmen for the classical or ancient understanding of politics. Strauss has looked away from possible ultimate differences in the thought of Cicero, Aristotle, and Plato in order to point up the common defining core of classical political philosophy. For Strauss one of these defining characteristics was that classical political philosophy takes its bearing from an inquiry into the "human things"; it is Cicero who above all or most explicitly seemed to draw Strauss' attention to this characteristic or, what might be called, the Socratic focus for inquiry. The "human things" are the "things good or bad," not "the nature of man."

Cicero draws our attention to the special effort which was required to turn philosophy toward the human things; philosophy turns primarily away from the human things toward the divine or natural things; no compulsion is needed or possible to establish philosophy in the cities or to introduce it into the households; but philosophy must be compelled to turn back toward the human things from which it originally departed.


53 Gildin has noted this in Strauss. See p. xx of "Introduction" to Political Philosophy: Six Essays ..., op. cit.

54 Strauss, The City and Man, op. cit., pp. 13-14; Natural Right ..., op. cit., p. 120.

55 Strauss, The City and Man, op. cit.
In taking its bearings from "the human things" political philosophy is the branch of philosophy closest to non-philosophic life, to human life. It is related directly to political life which is charged with the questions of the good and the bad as they "are raised in assemblies, councils, clubs and cabinets" and raised in terms intelligible and familiar, at least to all sane adults, terms drawn "from everyday experience and everyday usage." Another characteristic of classical political philosophy, related to its focus on "human things," concerns the addressees of the ancient teaching. Strauss wrote that "the political teaching of the classical philosophers, as distinguished from their theoretical teaching, was primarily addressed not to all intelligent men, but to all decent men."

These defining characteristics of classical political philosophy seem to point to a disproportion and a tension between political philosophy and philosophy, the search for the truth of the whole, the divine and the natural including the nature of man. Classical political philosophy was and understood itself as at least somewhat independent of philosophy or science.

And Socrates was so far from being committed to a specific cosmology that his knowledge was knowledge of ignorance. Knowledge of ignorance is not ignorance. It is knowledge of the elusive character of the truth, of the whole. He, held therefore that we are more familiar with the situation of man as man than with the ultimate causes of that situation. We may also say he viewed man in the light of the unchangeable ideas, i.e., of the fundamental and permanent problems. For to articulate the situation of man means to articulate man's openness to the whole. This understanding of the situation of man which includes, then, the quest for cosmology rather than a solution to the cosmological problem, was the foundation of classical political philosophy.

Later in a discussion of Aristotle, Strauss spoke of ancient prudence or practical wisdom as "in principle self-sufficient or closed" to the impact of theoretical science (physics and metaphysics); then he added that it is but a qualified self-sufficiency for "prudence is always endangered by false doctrines about the whole of which man is a part———". Against such doctrines prudence is in need of defense and that "defense is necessarily theoretical." Prudence is "only

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57 Ibid., p. 89.
de jure but not de facto wholly independent of theoretical science. . . . Theoretical opinions defending prudence are not, however, "the basis of prudence." 68

These considerations and others make "political philosophy . . . more questionable than philosophy as such," at least to philosophers.80 It appears that the disproportion or tension between political philosophy and philosophy is a special case of the disproportion or tension between political life and philosophy. Classical political philosophy is seen in Strauss' writings as a mediation between politics or the city and philosophy; it defends philosophy before the city, and it defends political concerns before those inclined to philosophy, if not actual philosophers.69 Like all mediators the political philosopher (consider Cicero as well as Socrates) will find himself in tension with each pole between which he stands, between, in other words the city and philosophy as such. In the light of this understanding of classical political philosophy, Cicero must have been seen by Strauss not merely as an exemplification of the classical way but also as a superbly explicit one for just as Cicero drew attention to the Socratic focus on the "human things" so too he recurrently and unambiguously commends philosophy to the city and the city to philosophy. In fact, it would be speculation but not unreasonable speculation to assert that Cicero played an important part in Strauss' recovery of the distinctive characteristics of classical political philosophy and in his seemingly related decision to concentrate his later studies on the founding father Socrates.

Strauss drew upon Cicero in two significant ways which have not thus far been considered here. Each when examined opens to important and difficult issues in Strauss' and Cicero's understandings of the relationship between politics and philosophy. Strauss found in Cicero, as have so many, a version of the Stoic natural law teaching. Although at times he simply stated the conventional view that Cicero transmitted the Stoic teaching, on other occasions he elaborated so as to make clear that the version of that teaching which Cicero presented, but did not himself embrace, is an already rigidified or corrupted version of an original Stoic teaching that was much

69 Strauss, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 18.
Ciceron's own position on "natural law" was that of Socrates and Plato on natural right including the "hesitations and ambiguities" of that earlier view. Those hesitations and ambiguities seem, above all, to be doubts about or qualifications of the view that natural law or natural right is in "natural harmony with civil society." This is the view without mitigation or qualification that Strauss found represented in Ciceron's *De Re Publica* and *De Legibus* but not approved of by Cicero.

Strauss' disengagement of Cicero from the version of Stoic natural law teaching presented in his most political dialogues is based on an interpretation of those dialogues, especially of their dramatic detail; the interpretation is followed and developed in Holton's essay. It is only possible here to cite some of the grounds for questioning this interpretation. In the *De Re Publica* it is Laelius who is spokesman for the natural law teaching (Cicero himself being spokesman in *De Legibus*). Strauss endeavored to sever Cicero's association with the natural law statement by Laelius by portraying the latter as "distrustful of philosophy in the full and strict sense of the term," as "absolutely at home on earth, in Rome," and as one who finds "no difficulty in reconciling natural law with the claims of the Roman Empire." The chief character of the dialogue, Scipio, is suggested as the representative of Cicero, and he "longs for the contemplative life" and understands that the Roman regime is not simply just, that it can be seen as the best regime only by a standard of "diluted" natural law. At the same time Strauss noted Cicero's identification with the Academic school and pointed out that another character in the *De Re Publica*, Philus, is an Academic skeptic and is called upon to attack the natural basis of right which Laelius above all defended. This interpretation failed to address directly the friendship and respect between those equals or near equals Scipio and Laelius, that Cicero in his own name in an attack on Epicurean thought in *De Finibus* explicitly called upon the statement Laelius makes here, and the fact that Philus expresses his disgust and disagreement with the position he is here called upon.

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Nor has a persuasive case been made that Laelius is any less aware than Scipio of the imperfections of the Roman past and the model Roman regime. But perhaps most important is the fact that although Scipio is the Roman spokesman in this dialogue for the merits and uses of speculative philosophy, the emphasis on the priority of moral and political philosophy which is put in the mouth of Laelius is consistent with Cicero's position throughout his writings.

Much is made by Strauss and Holton of the "severe criticism" to which Cicero exposed Stoic metaphysics and theology in other writings, especially the *De Natura Deorum*. Even that work, however, provides especially in its closing lines ground for arguing that Cicero regarded the Stoic teaching as the best even if wanting in many ways. Cicero clearly wanted to distinguish the Stoic moral and political teaching from the metaphysics and theology. And what do Cicero's objections and doubts concerning the latter have to do with establishing his embrace of an earlier rather than later version of Stoic teaching? Would not either version be dependent on a first or fundamental philosophy, a satisfactory version of which Cicero has failed to find? And in fact those parts of the Stoic teaching, which Cicero has found more acceptable than others were determined so not from a first philosophy but from the practical perspective, the fundamental concern with "human things" that Cicero shared with Socrates. It must be asked why for Strauss a Stoic teaching that asserts the harmony or congruence of natural law with the essence of civil society was regarded as inaccessible from the perspective of prudence.

Related to this problem is Strauss' remaining major reliance on Cicero. At least four times in Strauss' writings he credited Cicero with helping to expose a single important dimension of Plato's *Republic*. Strauss wrote that "as Cicero has observed, the *Republic* does not bring to light the best possible regime but rather the nature of political things-the nature of the city."

Whether

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"See *De Re Publica* i. 18, iii. 8-9 and *De Finibus* ii. 59 all of which are noted by Strauss after he made the interpretation under question here. So, clearly he considered these passages.

"See especially *De Re Publica* i. 30, 33.

"Strauss, *Plato,* in *History of . . .,* op. cit., p. 41; *The City and Man,* op. cit., p. 138; *Natural Right . . .,* op. cit., p. 122; and in *The Argument and the Action of Plato’s ‘Laws’,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 1. In the last reference Strauss wrote that the *Republic* does not present "the best political order," suggesting that in fact no regime is presented in the
Cicero intended in the passage in question to point up the inherent impossibility of the regime portrayed in the Republic is a matter deserving further consideration. Here it is possible, however, only to comment on some apparent inconsistency in Strauss in holding to this interpretation of the Republic and on the general significance of such an interpretation. Strauss seemed to hesitate at times about the view that the best regime was impossible; that is reflected in his having written, for instance, that "the actualization of the best regime proves indeed to be impossible or at least extremely improbable..." This reader believes that the text of the Republic gives ample reason for such hesitation; then too, what is one to say of the logic in a presentation of a best regime that is in the nature of things impossible. The hesitation of Strauss was probably related to his recognition of this logical problem, for already in Natural Right and History in commenting upon the contentions of Cicero and Burke that the best regime has been realized within their respective national experiences, Strauss wrote, "These contentions of Burke and of Cicero are, if taken by themselves, in perfect agreement with the classical principles: the best policy being essentially 'possible,' it could have become actual at some place and at some time." The attachment in Strauss to the notion that the best regime, that in thought or word, is impossible is akin to his reluctance to associate a Socratic-like Cicero with a natural law teaching that professes to be in harmony with the requisites of civil society. In each of these cases what is coming to the forefront is Strauss' finding in classical philosophy and his own conviction of a radical gap between the philosophic life and the civil or moral life, between philosophy and the city. "Justice and moral virtue," the very realm of prudence in classical political philosophy is rooted, are "legitimate" only insofar as they are necessary conditions of the philosophic life. The sphere of prudence or morality is transcended by the philosopher who can look back upon it as a datum among others in the vast array of things to be understood. Man is not set in a
potentially harmonious ambience; the practical perspective does not blend with or flow into the speculative; it is only useful to, though incongruous with, the speculative. Here it is not appropriate to do more than say that this does not seem to fit Cicero, that Cicero was convinced of the overall harmony of man’s setting, that he took his hearings from the practical perspective and made his judgments in the speculative realm in accord with that perspective. Cicero was capable of accepting the constraints of a given political situation, of working for a second-best when circumstances made it the best that could be had, of encouraging amelioration in Rome by portraying ancestors and ancestral ways as better than they actually were. He was as capable of this as he incontestably was of flattering an audience to win his case. These capacities need not entail, and do not seem to, an inherent incongruity between the peak of human thought about the right or the just and the potential of human nature.

Compared to Strauss' dependence on Cicero, Voegelin in his major works rarely turns to Cicero. There are relatively few citations of Cicero, but on several occasions Cicero or passages from his writings receive extended consideration. Voegelin looks to Cicero, the philosophical writer, giving no consideration to his speeches and letters. Although he finds Cicero seriously deficient as a philosopher, there is no evidence that the tradition of hostile criticism of Cicero is directly responsible for Voegelin's judgment; it appears, rather, that the grounding-points of his own thought, his understanding of the nature of philosophy and his historical elaboration of its life, set the standard for his judgment of Cicero. For Voegelin, Cicero is implicated with his judgment of Rome, and Rome is, in turn, implicated with the Ecumenic Age, but this is, of course, a statement from the perspective of one looking at the substance of Voegelin's work as we now have it. Whatever encounter Voegelin had directly with the thought of Cicero no doubt helped him work out his view of Rome and the Ecumenic Age.

As Strauss and many others, Voegelin employs Cicero as a source for information on philosophy at that time. This is in evidence in a significant discussion in his recently republished essay, "Reason: The Classic Experience"; there Voegelin draws on Cicero's Tusculum Disputations to reveal a Stoic understanding of "mental disease as a of the 'status of morality' in "A Giving of Accounts" (with Jacob Klein).
disturbance of noetically ordered existence." What is noteworthy about Voegelin’s use of Cicero as a source is that he draws information only on the Stoics from Cicero and that generally, though not explicitly in the instance just cited, he associates Cicero without qualification with the Stoic teaching. Voegelin takes, for example, the statement on natural law by Laelius in the De Re Publica as Cicero’s “confession,” and on another occasion he treats the critique of Stoicism in the De Natura Deorum simply as the statement of an Epicurean and in a manner that suggests that Cicero was not at all sympathetic with this attack. Since "Ciceronian Stoicism" plays an important role in Voegelin’s overall explanation of the life and "deformation of philosophy," it may seem understandable that Voegelin is only or primarily interested in the Stoicism in Cicero. It is remarkable, nonetheless, that he gives no evident attention to Cicero’s claims to be an Academic and a follower of Socrates. Accordingly there is, in Voegelin’s writings, no attention to Cicero’s effort to sort out the claims of the schools of his time and a tendency to underestimate the complexity of Cicero’s dialogues as vehicles of his teaching. Without attention to these matters Cicero has little chance to make any claim as a philosopher.

Voegelin’s most direct attack on Cicero as philosopher occurs in The New Science of Politics wherein Augustine’s dissatisfaction with Varro giving priority to the “human things” over the “divine things” in Rome provides the occasion to take up Cicero. “The more supple Cicero,” wrote Voegelin, was in basic agreement with “his friend” Varro and that is best expressed in the De Natura Deorum. Cicero is then presented as a kind of Roman who represented “the compactness of Roman experience, the inseparable community of gods and men in the historically concrete civitas, the simultaneousness of human and divine institution of a social order.” Roman compactness is for Voegelin an “archaic survival”; it is an anachronism in the process of historical “differentiation” and a somewhat innocent anticipation of “Gnostic immanentization.”

Voegelin’s De Re Publica is interpreted by Voegelin as a document of this archaic

Ibid., passim but especially p. 168.
compactness. It stands against the Greek way in its rejection of the "fictitious" city of the Platonic Socrates in favor of the superiority of the Roman political order. It will not range as Greek learning did but turns instead to problems useful to the Roman order, and it prefers "the vita civilis of the statesman . . . to the vita quieta of the sage." Later in The Ecumenic Age, Voegelin shows an additional perspective on Cicero's constricted view. There in the context of a detailed discussion of Polybius as "pragmatic historian," Voegelin sees in the work of that Romanized Greek the "appalling decline of philosophy" to the "common understanding," and a pragmatic outlook which holds that "what did not count in the game of power did not count at all." Then Voegelin turns aside to Cicero and adds:

There was already in the making the attitude of Cicero who with a sneer dismissed the best polities of the Hellenic philosophers as fancies of no importance by the side of the best polity that was created on the battlefields by the imperatores of Rome. The intellectual and spiritual atmosphere forcefully reminds one of Stalin's dictum: How many divisions has the Pope?

The "atmosphere" was that of the Ecumenic Age at its peak; that age was "an epoch . . . when the societies which had differentiated the truth of existence through revelation and philosophy succumbed, in pragmatic history, to new societies of the imperial type." The old societies are dissolved by "the blows of pragmatic history" into an ecumene which "had not yet sufficient life of its own to react against the orgy of obscene destruction ..." Cicero as a Roman is seen as infected with the virus of pragmatic success. Thus Voegelin appears to reach a fuller understanding of what first appeared to be almost a mystery of archaic Roman compactness.

His judgment of Cicero the philosopher remains, however, constant. There seems at times to be almost an anger on Voegelin's part with what he clearly considers to be Cicero's betrayal of philosophy.

The thinker who can speak of philosophy as a "foreign" learning," to be respected but nevertheless to be considered as a spice that will add perfection to superiority, has, one may safely say, understood

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75 Ibid., p. 90.
76 Voegelin, The Ecumenic Age, op. cit., p. 128.
77 Ibid., p. 114.
78 Ibid., p. 128.
79 Voegelin never seems to get from Voegelin the measured respect he has for tradition-oriented later regimes as that in England and for regimes like the United States with a common sense foundation.
neither the nature of the spiritual revolution that found its expression in philosophy nor the nature of its universal claim upon man. The peculiar way in which Cicero mixes his respect for Greek philosophy with amused contempt indicates that the truth of theory, while sensed as an enlargement of the intellectual and moral horizon, could have no existential meaning for a Roman.80

Thus Voegelin reveals surely the most important basis for his judgment of Cicero. Cicero's teaching is ultimately without intelligibility for his psyche has not "become luminous for the order of reality through the revelation of the one, divine ground of all being as the Nous."1 Cicero's outlook or "philosophy" is a form of what Voegelin calls a "secondary ideology"; it is "richly supplied with ordo, but lacking . . . the noetic clarification that renders conscious the origin of the ordo in the existential tension toward the ground."81

Here it is appropriate to mention that the monograph, Cicero and The Politics of the Public Orthodoxy, by Wilhelmsen and Kendall appears to be a friendly attempt to refine Voegelin's assessment of Cicero as a philosopher. This essay draws on a Voegelinian framework of analysis and takes some direction from Voegelin's brief consideration of the De Natura Deorum in The New Science of Politics. Wilhelmsen and Kendall perform a more extensive analysis of the De Natura Deorum and draw out into the open a utilitarian strain in Cicero's thought which merits the closest attention. Overall the essay appreciates Cicero the philosopher; he is described as "deeply grounded in Plato, and by no means the popularized and rhetorician of Stoic doctrine that some commentators have made him out to be." But Cicero as Roman statesman is not seen in harmony with Cicero the philosopher. Wilhelmsen and Kendall do not find the philosopher, defeated by the patriot and statesman as Voegelin does, but they leave the reader with another version of "two Ciceros." Cicero is seen as unable to bring together two truths, "two orders of meaning," that of theoretical truth and that of society.83

There is, it should be noted, a bit of ambiguity, only that, in Voegelin's assessment of Cicero the philosopher. He acknowledges that Cicero through his Hortensius was a mediator to Augustine of the tradition of philosophy as a way of life.84 But more importantly

82 Voegelin, Anamnesis, op. cit., p. 189.
and as already noted, he treats Cicero as a Stoic as well as a Roman. Although on at least one occasion Voegelin was puzzled over the co-existence of civil and philosophic theologies in Rome, in the case of Cicero he has always seen the Stoic as subservient to the Roman. And although in both capacities as Stoic and Roman Cicero is implicated with the loss of the ground of philosophic experience, in his very discussion of the "Stoic deformation of symbols" Voegelin observes that the Stoic symbolization has the civilizational purpose and effect of protecting an historically achieved state of insight against the disintegrative pressures to which the differentiated truth of existence is exposed in the spiritual and intellectual turmoil of the ecumenic situation. Voegelin then singles out Cicero as having discerned the forces of disintegration as well as the necessity of protecting the truth through language symbols. On balance then, perhaps the thrust of Voegelin's critique of Cicero is to measure him against Plato.

The Roman Cicero might be said to have a "civilizational purpose" comparable to that of the Stoic Cicero. It is to protect truth through institutions. Voegelin wrote of this effort when he reflected upon Plato's recognition that "... institutions will be required for continuing and transmitting spiritual insights, as well as the intellectual culture that is necessary for their exposition and communication through the generations. ..." 88 In the light of this and other parts of Voegelin's consideration of Plato and Aristotle as well as his appreciation for the noetically informed common sense tradition of AngloAmerican institutions, one might expect some appreciation for Cicero, especially for Cicero the moral and political philosopher. But Rome-centered Cicero apparently exemplifies too much the stable tradition-centered societies that for Voegelin are so fertile a ground for the development of a true science of politics. As he brought out clearly in his important article on "The Oxford Political Philosophers," Voegelin is wary of "philosophers" who are in too

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88 Ibid., p. 39.
great a harmony with their environment. But is Cicero so content with the Rome of his time? To embrace a tradition is not, of course, necessarily to abandon a critical posture and that is especially so when the tradition does not authoritatively inform the immediate environment. Yet even if Cicero’s prudent discontent is acknowledged, there is still a great gap between the “theopolitical” peak that defines the philosopher for Voegelin and the practical perspective, the concern with “human things,” from which Cicero takes his bearings. Whether that gap is unbridgeable and it must be concluded that there is a fundamental incompatibility between these outlooks should at least await a better attempt to understand Cicero the philosopher as he understood himself.

This essay has sought to recall the life and works of Cicero, to review the tradition of opposition to him and to point out and assess recent considerations of Cicero as a political philosopher, with particular attention to those by Strauss and Voegelin. It seems clear that whatever new attempts are made to understand Cicero, the political philosopher must reach for an understanding of Cicero the philosopher and that such attempts will find themselves confronting the tension between philosophy and practice. That tension, which manifested itself in Cicero’s life and in much of the tradition of hostile criticism of him, is deeply involved in the consideration of Cicero by Strauss and Voegelin. To take up Cicero anew is not at all to remove oneself from some of the most interesting and central questions in current political philosophy.

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