CHAPTER 4

Return to Plato and Transition to Middle Platonism in Cicero[1]

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I Cicero's Reception in Outline

It is difficult to determine with precision what Platonic dialogues Cicero (106–43 BCE) actually read. His references to them are often indirect and allusive. Yet Plato's stature as a philosopher is never in doubt. Cicero is unstinting in his praise, referring to Plato as "the prince of philosophers" (*princeps philosophorum*)[2] and the most eloquent of them all. He considers him first and foremost to be a sceptical thinker, faithful to the Socratic heritage. He nevertheless distinguishes Socrates from Plato, as he sees Platonism as being composed of the Socratic and the Pythagorean. It can be argued that Cicero's predilection for Plato over Aristotle,[3] in conjunction with a certain return to transcendence, foreshadows Middle Platonism. Indeed Cicero's scepticism is not incompatible with convictions about the existence of the divine in us and beyond us.

Cicero's complex and varied use of the Platonic dialogues spans from literal translation to mere allusion.[4] He sometimes draws on a dialogue without naming it, following a common practice in antiquity. He also presupposes a basic unity in the Platonic corpus, which is why he does not hesitate directly to link one dialogue with another. He does not, however, give a privileged status to any dialogue as a guide to the rest of the corpus, although he does have a certain predilection for the *Phaedrus.* His reading, especially in the 50's, is above all moral and political in orientation. He also associates closely the teachings of a dialogue or of a group of dialogues with certain Stoic or Peripatetic views. The study of Cicero's "Platonism" cannot be limited to his explicitly philosophical works and must include his treatises on rhetoric, as well as his vast correspondence.

1 My warmest thanks go to my friend and colleague Jeremy Hayhoe for proofreading the English text as well as my co-editors for their insightful suggestions.

2 *De fin.* 5.7.

3 *Tusc. Disp.* 1.22.

4 Cf. Gildenhard (2013), 225–27.

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The question about Cicero's sources is complex and controversial. When does he refer to Plato's text directly and when does he rely on intermediary, Hellenistic or contemporary sources? Cicero's most important contemporary source with regard to the Academy is unquestionably Philo of Larissa (c. 145–79 BCE). In connection with Stoicism, as well as with Platonism, he makes use of Antiochus of Ascalon (c. 124–69 BCE); and he uses Cratippus of Pergamon (1st BCE) for Aristotelianism. This chapter will not directly discuss the fraught question of his sources but aims instead to highlight his direct and relatively free reception of the dialogues.

Cicero's reception of Plato can be characterized in at least three ways: 1) as a key testimony to a pivotal chapter in the history of Platonism; 2) as an examplar of the rebirth of Platonism in the first century BCE; and 3) as significantly impacting his own philosophical dialogues.[5] Let us consider these three aspects, before presenting two case studies in the latter half of this chapter.

1) *Testimony to a Pivotal Period*

Cicero is an important witnesses of, and actor in, the history of the Academy in the first century BCE, a time of new directions and reorientations in philosophy, including the slow transition from the sceptical interpretation of the New Academy to the doctrinal reading of Middle Platonism. This change poses enormous difficulties of reconstruction given the fragmentary nature of our sources, notably with regard to Philo of Larissa and Antiochus of Ascalon, respectively advocates of the sceptical and dogmatic interpretations, whose divergent interpretations are part of the "great dispute" in antiquity.[6] The social and political context in Cicero's time further enhanced the importance of this dispute. The First Mithridatic War (89–85 BCE) and Sulla's prolonged siege in Athens (88–86 BCE) lead to a break in the Academy's institutional authority in Athens, a "brain-drain" towards Rome and elsewhere that lead, in turn, to a decentralisation of philosophy and the renewal of philosophical schools, notably Platonism.[7] Cicero was taught by both main figures in the dispute, Philo and Antiochus, which makes it somewhat problematical to establish his philosophical affiliation.[8] In general terms he sides with Philo's probabilism but

5 Cf. Hösle (2008), 146–49.

6 D.L. 3.51: πολλὴ στάσις. On the quarrel more specifically between Philo and Antiochus, see Glucker (1978), Tarrant (1985), Schofield (2013b), 76–78.

7 Cf. Sedley (2003); Ioppolo and Sedley (2007), 10–11.

8 Glucker (1988) defends the view that Cicero's philosophical stance goes through three successive periods: adherence to Philo, then to Antiochus and finally a return to Philo's New Academy. On Cicero's relation to Antiochus, see also Schofield (2012), 243–9.

adopts some of Antiochus' tenets.[9] He defines his allegiance to Plato primarily in methodological terms, holding the dialectical debate (*disputatio in utramque partem*) to be the best means to attain truth or an approximation thereof. He expounds this conception especially in the *Academica* (cf. 2.7–9), in which he tries to determine the authentic heritage of the Academy.

Scholars have long underappreciated the importance of Cicero's testimony, on the grounds of his rootedness in Roman culture, which would allegedly exclude him linguistically and institutionally from the (Greek) history of Platonism. He is frequently denied the title of Platonist and sometimes even that of philosopher. The exclusion of Cicero from the Platonic school rests on a purely doctrinal conception of Platonism.[10] Platonism in this reading is constituted by the doctrines on the soul and the ideas. This conception, however, should be challenged. There are good reasons to consider Platonism as more than a doctrine in the strict sense of the term, namely as fidelity to a heritage related to the spirit of dialectical search. The history of the Academy in antiquity should be characterized as a tradition of relatively free appropriation. A tradition of appropriation with the Academy's history proves to have been a key factor allowing Platonism to adapt to varying contexts of reception and thus insuring its survival. This also helps to explain how Platonism could survive the violent dissensions within the Academy in the first century BCE. These severe dissensions gave rise to the desire to rediscover the authentic Platonic heritage beyond the Hellenistic debates that had led to this impasse. Cicero and Plutarch are our two principal testimonies to this return to the Platonic dialogues.

2) *Rebirth of Platonism*

While Cicero's direct knowledge of Aristotle's treatises appears to be relatively limited,[11] much of his knowledge of the Platonic dialogues seems to be independent of the Hellenistic reception, including that of Carneades, Antiochus and even, to some degree, of Philo. He is part of the rebirth of Platonism in the

9 On Antiochus and later, imperial Platonism, cf. Bonazzi (2012c).

10 Cf. Dörrie (1987), 543; Brittain (2008), 527.

11 See Fortenbaugh (1989) and Hatzimichali (2013), 24–25. He is likely to have read his exoteric writings, especially his now lost dialogues, which he very much admired. While the influence of the Aristotelian conception of dialectic is evident (for the method *in utramque partem dicere*; cf. Long (1995), 52–58), he may have hand only indirect access to the *Rhetoric* and to the *Topics*. Andronicus' edition, which begins to circulate towards the second half of the first century BCE only, may have been unknown to him. Cf. Sharples (2010), 2.

first century BCE which is characterized by a return to the classic founders.[12] The renewed interest in the *Timaeus* then is an important event.

The archaistic classicism of the age may strike us as a form of sterile traditionalism. Today we often oppose Plato and the Platonism of tradition presented as the free quest and autonomous acquisition of knowledge to a straightforward, often rigid transmission of that knowledge[13] It is true that imperial Platonism sometime displays scholastic and very conservative attitudes, notably in the explicit refusal of all innovation (νεωτερίζειν). As a member of the New Academy Cicero does not accept, in principle at least, any authority other than reason[14] and defends the Philonian idea of a single, continuous Academy.[15] His appropriation of Platonic thinking implies its transformation through Hellenistic and Roman categories, but this transformation is also a matter of Cicero's personal, engaged relation to the Greek author. He himself compares his relation to Plato to that of Ennius to Homer. Such is the original meaning of imitation (μίμησίς, *imitatio*), which is at the same time emulation (ζήλωσις, *aemulatio*).[16] And this is the meaning of Quintilian's designation of Cicero as "Plato's rival" (*Platoni aemulus*).[17] His return to Plato takes the form of a dialogue and contest, the stakes of which are nothing less than the meaning of philosophy (φιλοσοφία). A fair amount of the intensity animating the Platonic dialogues also characterize Cicero's philosophical work. This vitality contributes to the distance separating him from the Greek master.[18] He wishes to serve his country by offering it the best of Greek philosophy, starting with Plato, and creating a philosophical corpus in Latin. Such is the basic principle of this first philosophical classicism in Rome.[19] Similarly to Lucretius, Cicero has the ambitious project of overcoming the intellectual poverty of Latin and the prejudices

12 Cf. Puelma (1980), 164.

13 Cf. e. g. Dörrie (1971), 25.

14 *Ac.* 2. 8–9; *De nat. de.* 1.10–11. However it does happen that Plato's authority has the upper hand over the principle of the autonomous *ratio*, which the Greek philosopher also embodies in his eyes: *Errare mehercule malo cum Platone* [...] *quam cum istis vera sentire* (*Tusc. Disp.* 1.39); cf. *Phd.* 91b–c.

15 On the one Academy thesis and the skeptical dimension of Platonism in Philo and Plutarch, see Tarrant (1985), 22–32 and Opsomer (1998) respectively. Cf. Brittain (2001), 169–254.

16 Cf. Ps.-Longinus, *On the Sublime* 13.2–14; Flashar (1979), 92.

17 *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1, 123.

AQ1 18 Cf. Burkert (1960), 184 and 189.

19 Horace, *Ars poetica* 268–9. Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* 1.5–6) regards the hitherto Latin translations as unsatisfactory. For the larger context of that philosophical classicism, which would relativize this general claim, see Vesperini (2012), 44–75.

of his contemporaries against his translation and transplantation project.[20] This return to Plato is not characteristic of the 50's only (the decade of his great "trilogy": *De oratore, De republica, de Legibus*), but also in part of the 40's (*Orator, Brutus, Tusculan Disputations, Timaeus*). His vast project ultimately is to reconcile wisdom and eloquence.[21]

What of Plato did Cicero actually read? His translations provide an initial approach to the question. He translated the *Protagoras* in its entirety (now lost) as well the *Timaeus*, at least section 27d–47b, which we possess, preceded by a prologue. He also translated several passages from various dialogues, freely integrating them into his own writings. Generally Cicero's method of translation is both relatively faithful and quite pliable to the context it serves.[22] Cicero also makes numerous allusions to works that he did not translate.[23] Combining both types of evidence, it is highly probable that Cicero read in entirety the following dialogues: *Protagoras, Timaeus*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Meno*, *Phaedo, Menexenus*, *Republic*, *Laws*, as well as the *Letters*, all of which he seems to regard as authentic.[24] He nowhere refers by name to the *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* or *Parmenides*, and he may not have had access to them.[25] This is almost certainly the case with the *Theaetetus*, the epistemological examination of which would necessarily have induced in him the most vivid interest. Nor does he ever speak in his work of the "unwritten doctrines" alluded to in some of the *Letters* and by some disciples, notably Aristotle. Generally his free use of the dialogues bespeak his relative independence from the Athenian philosopher. The *De republica*, for instance, explicitly takes Plato's *Republic* as model while openly rejecting some of its basic components.[26] As we shall see, he does the same in *De Oratore* especially with respect of the *Gorgias*.

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20 Cf. Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1.832: *patrii sermonis egestas; De re pub*. 1.65: *difficile factu est, conabor tamen*. Cf. Lévy (1992), 93, 97, 106; Baraz (2012), 113–27. For a complete and systematically organized survey of Cicero's remarks on the subject see Glucker (2012).

21 *Tusc. Disp.* 1.7.

22 Poncelet (1957) for instance insists on the limits and various determinations imposed by the Latin language, thus underestimating Cicero's creative freedom; cf. Lambardi (1982), 10–17.

23 He has also translated a passage from the Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in his dialogue *De Senectute* (79–81). Cf. Dörrie (1987), 484 as well as DeGraff (1940), especially 146. AQ2

24 For the controversial case of the *Alcibiades I* see Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 110–37.

25 Cf. Orellius–Baiterus (1836–38), vol. 2, 460–64.

26 For instance about the community of women and children: *De re pub*. 4.5; cf. 2.9; 2.29.

3) *Writing of Dialogues*

Cicero is not only a reader of Plato, he is also the author of dialogues. In fact he is the only ancient philosopher after Plato whose philosophical dialogues were mostly preserved, if we exclude Plutarch's philosophically lighter dialogues and those of the young Augustine, who was an avid Cicero reader. While he wrote no commentaries that offer detailed exegesis justifying his interpretation of Plato, his practice of dialogue rests on his interpretation of the dialogues, the outlines of which he sometimes offers in his theoretical expositions. Moreover as an author of dialogues he might be considered to be more faithful to the Platonic conception of philosophical writing than the commentators are. He discusses the epistemological basis of his Platonism in the *Academica*, its political aspects in the *De republica*, *De legibus*, its ethical teaching in the *De finibus* and the *Tusculan Disputations*, and the relation between philosophy and rhetoric especially in the *De oratore*. His Plato interpretation is also apparent in his use of literary techniques.

His dialogues possess, as he himself claims, their own structure (*scribendi ordo*) and express his personal judgment (*iudicum*).[27] His ability and subtlety in writing dialogues have long been underappreciated.[28] Recent studies tend to correct this judgment to underscore their originality.[29] Like his Platonic counterpart, the Ciceronian dialogue is characterized by freedom of thought, in deliberate opposition to dogmatic obstinacy (*pertinacia*).[30] This freedom is reflected in the seemingly improvised nature of the dramatic action, including humour and wit, as part of his understanding of irony.[31] His dialogue can be distinguished from the Platonic model in many ways. His dialogue includes one or more prefaces where he expounds his intentions.[32] The unique preface of *de Divinatione* II contains a valuable chronological catalogue of Cicero's works. He sometime plays the role of one of the interlocutors, following Aristotle's example in his lost dialogues.[33] As a result Cicero is emphatically present

27 *De fin.* 1.6.

28 Here are a few important exceptions among classic studies: Hirzel (1895), 457–552; Becker (1938); Ruch (1958).

29 Hösle (2006), 91–100, (2008); Schofield (2008), (2013b).

30 Cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 2.5.

31 *De or.* 2.269–270.

32 For a detailed analysis of all of these prefaces, see Ruch (1958) and more recently Baraz (2012).

33 See Zanatta's bilingual and commented collection (2008). For the influence of Heraclides Ponticus, see Cicero *Epistulae ad Familiares* 1.9, 23 (from September 54).

in his dialogues, in contrast with Plato, who is deliberately absent from his.[34] The prefaces, the catalogue of his works and his frequent role as interlocutor, in addition to his correspondence (c. 900 letters) give greater access to Cicero's thought, than we have to that of Plato. Ciceronian dialogues always take place in private, often in a distant past (e. g. *De re pub.*, *De or.*, *Cato major de Senectute*). His characters are usually great Roman political figures, who meet and discuss as equals. The atmosphere is peaceful and friendly. The discussion is conducted in a conciliatory spirit, as opposed for instance to the *Gorgias* or *Euthydemus*.[35] The erotic dimension characteristic of Socratic dialectic is entirely absent. Refutations (*elenchoi*) are relatively rare due no doubt to Cicero's concern for a peaceful atmosphere, the age and class distinctions in accordance to Roman traditional values and good manners. Cicero's aim is to enrich, not overturn, the *mos maiorum* by the incorporation Greek culture into it.[36] Perhaps the most striking difference between Ciceronian and Platonic dialogues is the mode of argumentation. Contrary to the short questions and replies typical of the Platonic dialogue (διαλέγεσθαι), Cicero usually prefers debates involving long speeches (*disputatio in utramque partem*). Such is the case of the *Academica*, *De finibus* and *De natura deorum*.[37] This preference is linked to judicial practices that Cicero knew very well, but it also proceeds from his conviction that this type of discussion allows for a more complete presentation of a doctrine.[38] Dialectic thus conceived would be the best means for the

34 Schofield (2008), 73 and 75 defends for that reason the view that the Ciceronian dialogue is more open, less dogmatic than its Platonic counterpart, in opposing for instance the *Phd.* and that of the *De natura deorum*, namely an eschatological myth seeking to persuade the reader by contrast with the rational, calm, non-emotional examination characteristic of the Ciceronian dialogue.

35 Cicero discusses the ethical implications of (Socratic) conversation (*sermo*) in the *De off.* (1.134–7). On that important passage and the tension between friendship and the requirement of truth, see Renaud (forthcoming).

36 Cf. Fantham (2004), 53. As in the case of Plato it is necessary to make a distinction between Cicero's explicit remarks (such as in the prefaces) and the indirect indications derived from the dramaturgy, such as the setting (time, place, etc.) and the characters.

37 Cicero calls the conversations in his dialogues *sermones* and often designates his written dialogues *disputationes*, which are mimetic in nature and comprising a rhetoric dimension: *De fin.* 2.17; *Tusc. Disp.* 1.112. For a defense of Cicero's rhetorical strategy in *De fin.* 2 for instance, see Inwood (1990).

38 Cf. *De fin.* 2.3: *Nos commodius agimus. Non enim solum Torquatus dixit quid sentiret sed etiam cur*. See how in the same passage, after stating his preference for the Socratic method and its advantages (*cum in rebus singulis insistas et intelligas quid quisque concedat*), he quickly gives it up in favor of long speeches.

attainment of truth or at least the probable (*verisimile*, *probabile,* πιθανόν) as well as an excellent rhetorical exercise.[39] This striking feature is no doubt the main reason why modern commentators routinely call his dialogues "treatises". Calling them instead "dialogue-treatise", as Schofield suggests,[40] would be a good compromise, and has the advantage of underlining the relative novelty of Cicero's practice. He may even be a key figure in the development of this type of philosophical dialogue structured in pairs of opposed speeches (*in contrarias partes*). He emphatically seeks to combine a logical and systematic presentation of doctrines with persuasive elegance. This would embody the union of wisdom (*prudentia*) and eloquence. The reader targeted by the dialogue-treatise is the educated public, a fact that distinguishes it from oratory, which speaks to the crowd and appeals to its emotions.

II Two Case Studies: *Gorgias* and *Timaeus*

1) *Gorgias:* Philosophy, Rhetoric and Public life

Reconciling philosophy and rhetoric is Cicero's lifetime project, from the *De inventione* to his writings in the forties. Plato was both an inspiration for and a challenge to the project. The *De oratore* (from 55), the dialogue formulating his vast synthesis, is inspired in form and content by the *Phaedrus*, which contains the sketch of a philosophical rhetoric. Commentators have pointed out the dramaturgic allusions, starting with the peaceful atmosphere in the shade of plane trees. Here I will focus primarily on the challenge that the *Gorgias*'s critical stance towards rhetoric poses for Cicero.[41] Although the *De oratore* contains only two explicit references to the *Gorgias* that are relevant to the question raised (1.47 and 3.60–61), these two references are enlightening and far reaching. Reading the Ciceronian project as a response to the *Gorgias* enriches our understanding of Cicero's thought.[42]

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39 *Ac.* 2.99–101. In this Cicero seems to follow the "Aristotelian fashion" (*De or.* 3.80). He brings together the Socratic and the Aristotelian methods (*Tusc. Disp.* 2.9). In other words he appeals to the antilogical method (*utramque partem*) and defends the *probabilia* (or *similia veri*).

40 Schofield (2008), 67; MacKendrick (1989), 25.

41 In the *Gorgias* Socrates nevertheless occasionally recognizes good rhetoric: 503a–b, 504d5–6, 517a5.

42 See Schütrumpf's (1988) tentative but in many ways insightful analysis of structural parallels between *De oratore* I and the *Gorgias*.

In Book I of the *De oratore*, Crassus, in many ways Cicero's spokesman, says that he studied *Gorgias* in company of the Academician Charmadas (c. 165–v. 91 BCE), a pupil of Carneades. The dialogue struck them as paradoxical:

> I read [Plato's *Gorgias*] with close attention (*diligentius*) under Charmadas during those days at Athens, and what impressed us most deeply about Plato in that book was that it was when making fun of orators that he himself seemed to us to be the consummate orator (*quod mihi in oratoribus inridendis ipse esse orator summus videbatur*). (trans.) Sutton and Rackham slightly modified.[43]

First, this passage tells us that the *Gorgias* was read and studied in the Academy at the time. Through Crassus, Cicero gently criticizes Plato for having a contradictory take on oratory or, to put it more forcefully and in modern terms, for being guilty of performative self-contradiction, given his rhetorical condemnation of rhetoric. Second, Crassus' remark gives us a glimpse into discussions taking place in the New Academy on rhetoric at the end of the second century BCE.[44] The interest taken in the *Gorgias* as well as the critical attitude towards rhetoric at the New Academy then is confirmed shortly after (1.84–86). Given the lack of concrete evidence, Charmadas remains a shadowy figure. It is difficult to know whether his criticism of rhetoric is complete or whether it entertains the possibility of a philosophical rhetoric.[45] In any case, his successor, Philo of Larissa, does grant rhetoric its rightful place within the Academy's curriculum when he begins teaching it on a regular basis.[46] This turning point has no doubt contributed to building closer ties between philosophy and

43 *De or.* 1.47. For Cicero's texts I shall refer to the Loeb Classical Library for the translation. The name of the translator is in all cases given. The references to Plato's texts are to the Burnet edition (1901–07). The English translations of Plato, which I have sometimes modified, are those of the *Complete Works* edited by Cooper (1997).

44 *De or.* 1.84–93.

45 On Charmadas see Tarrant (1985), 34–40; Brittain (2001), 319–28; Dorandi (1994); Lévy (2005), 60–70; (2014), 73–76. Lévy (2014), 80 sees in this a thoroughgoing criticism of rhetoric, which denies the possibility of a philosophical rhetoric envisaged in the *Phaedrus* (and in fact already in the *Gorgias*; see *Grg.* 480c, 502e, 504d, 508c, 517a and 527c) and which would also be in contradiction with the anti-dogmatism of the New Academy; according to Tarrant (1985), 38–40, however, Charmadas' criticism of conventional rhetoric does not exclude the possibility of a noble rhetoric; likewise Dorandi (1994), 298.

46 *Tusc. Disp.* 2.9. This turning point would have occurred around 95. Cf. Long (1995), 54; Brittain (2001), 296–342.

rhetoric. These ties are reflected in Cicero's inclusion of the general questions in the rhetorical domain.[47] The general questions (θέσεις, *questiones infinitae*), in comparison with the particular questions (ὑποθέσεις, *quaestiones definitae*), pertain to basic notions considered to lie at the heart of public life (*in re publica*), such as "the immortal gods, the training of youth, justice, endurance, self-control, or moderation in all things," etc. (1.85, trans. Sutton and Rackham).[48] Cicero incorporates the general questions into his own synthesis,[49] thus recovering the initiative of Hermagoras (c. 150 BC) and ultimately of the *Phaedrus*.[50] From the *Phaedrus* Cicero also retrieves the principle that the ideal orator must know the various kinds of soul and the various kinds of discourse capable of persuading each of them.[51]

In the second reference to the *Gorgias*, in Book III (60–61), Cicero formulates an even more forceful and far-reaching criticism. This time the target is none other than Socrates, "the father of philosophers." Cicero, again through Crassus, accuses him of having shattered the original unity between language and thought:

> This is the source from which has sprung the undoubtedly absurd and unprofitable and reprehensible severance (*discidium*) between the tongue and the brain (*linguae atque cordis*), leading to our having one set of professors to teach us to think and another to teach us to speak (*alii nos sapere, alii dicere docerent*). (trans.) Rackham.[52]

This is an astonishing accusation as Cicero praises Socrates highly as a philosopher and conversationalist both in the *De oratore* and elsewhere. He generally regards him as the unsurpassed master in dialectical argumentation[53] and extols his turn towards ethics as the axis and pivot of the history of philosophy.[54] If all subsequent philosophers are indebted to him for this, they are equally heirs to the momentous divorce between eloquence and knowledge.[55] In the same

47 *De or*. 2.65; cf. 3.107–08; Reinhardt (2003), 3–17.

48 Cf. *Orat*. 45, *De or*. 1.138; Aristotle *Top.* I.11, 104b29.

49 *Brutus* 322.

50 Cf. e. g. *Phdr.* 266b.

51 271d1–5. Cf. *De or*. 1.87: *nisi cognosset is qui diceret quot modis hominum mentes et quibus et quo genere orationis in quamque partem moverentur*.

52 On this whole section (3.59–61) see Leeman, Pinkster and Wisse (1996), 220–38. Cf. 3.20–24.

53 *De or*. 1.42; 3. 129.

54 Cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 5.10.

55 *Tusc. Disp*. 3.72.

passage of the *De Oratore* Crassus sides against Socrates and with the great political figures, such as Themistocles and Pericles. These politicians have practiced philosophy in the way that the Seven Sages did, combining wisdom (*sapientia, prudentia*) and eloquence (*eloquentia*).[56] Cicero's praise of these political figures of Athens can be read as a reply to the virulent criticisms of them in the *Gorgias* (515b–517a). As other representatives of this practical wisdom Crassus includes Socrates' adversaries, Gorgias and Thrasymachus, as well as Isocrates, Plato's rival.[57] Like Isocrates, Cicero in the *De oratore* presupposes the value of rhetoric, taken to be the most beneficial of all the arts.[58] Cicero's proximity to Gorgias, the teacher of Isocrates, is also quite apparent. The ambitious ideal of an orator capable of speaking on all branches of human knowledge (*in omni parte humanitatis*, 1.71) recalls Gorgias' praise of the orator in *Grg*. 457a5–6.[59] According to Crassus and Cicero, however, the scope of rhetoric is not universal as the orator's training includes one of the three parts of philosophy only, namely ethics, and leaves aside logic and physics, of which he will have no more than a working knowledge (1.68–69). Cicero here moves closer to Socrates and his turn towards ethics. Still, for Cicero the utility of philosophy for the orator is rather limited. Philosophy is useful and necessary for training in argumentation, but it is not the moral or political guide Rome needs. Cicero offers a reply to the *Gorgias*' challenge by insisting that the orator's responsibilities include a concern for justice.[60] The question of the kind of moral knowledge that the ideal orator ought to possess remains. Cicero's mistrust towards philosophy rests on the assumed primacy of practical experience over theoretical pursuits and on the adaptation of Greek knowledge to the Roman tradition.[61]

The heart of the disagreement between Cicero and Plato pertains to the relationship between philosophy and the political or public sphere. Cicero rejects

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56 *De or*. 3.59; 137–8. Cf. Zetzel (2003), 133.

57 *De or*. 3.59.

58 Isocrates' influence in Cicero's work has often been studied. Concerning Solon, Clisthenes, Themistocles and Pericles, see *Antidosis* 230–36 and 306–8. The view that cities have been founded by orators (*De inv*. 1.3) also goes back to Isocrates (*Antidosis* 253–56).

59 *Grg.* 457a5–6: "The orator has the ability to speak against everyone on every subject (δυνατὸς μὲν γὰρ πρὸς ἅπαντάς ἐστιν ὁ ῥήτωρ καὶ περὶ παντὸς λέγειν)". Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet*. 1355b25; 1356a33.

60 *De or.* 3.122; cf. Tuscan (2014), 64. AQ3

61 Crassus declares (*De or.* 1.195) high and loud "I truly believe, if you look at these ultimate sources of our laws, that the little booklet of the Twelve Tables alone is weather in authority and richer in usefulness (*et auctoriate pondere et utilitate ubertate*) than the libraries of all the philosophers." trans. May and Wisse (2001). Cf. Zetzel (2003), 131.

both the separation, typically defended by Greek philosophers, between the political life (*vita activa*) and the theoretical life (*vita contemplativa*) and the Roman opposition between public and private.[62] Oratory for Cicero is the meeting place of philosophy and political life.[63] Plato's mistake, and that of philosophers in general, consists in evading the harshness of political and judiciary practice.[64] The theoretical gap between the two thinkers can also be observed in their biographies. Plato gives up his political ambitions and his hopes for the future of Athens quite early as the *Gorgias* and the *Seventh Letter* (324a–326a) indicate. Cicero never renounces his. Moreover, contrary to Plato, he presupposes the value of political success. For Plato Socrates' fate demonstrates that it is practically impossible to participate in political life without losing one's moral integrity.[65] A passage in the *Gorgias* describing rhetorical practice very unfavourably could be read as a depiction of Cicero's political world: "oratory is used to defend injustice [...], one's own or that of one's relatives, companions, or children, or that of one's country when it acts unjustly" (480b9c3).[66] Plato's rejection of the social context is tantamount to ignoring collective common sense.[67]

Yet Cicero's reconciliation project between philosophy and rhetoric, between the private and the public spheres, appears to have its limits, in his own eyes. He admits that the language of the forum is unable to provide the vocabulary of moral philosophy.[68] In the *De officiis* (1.3–4) he makes a remark that is both personal and theoretical:

> [...] for the same man to succeed in both departments, both in the forensic style (*forense dicendi*) and in that of calm philosophic discussion (*disputandi genus*) has not, I observe, been the good fortune of any one of the Greeks so far (*nemini video Graecorum*) [...]. But let others judge how much I have accomplished in each pursuit: I have at least attempted both. I believe, of course, that if Plato had been willing to devote himself to forensic oratory, he could have spoken with the greatest eloquence and power. (trans.) Miller.

62 Cf. Schofield (2013b), 74.

63 *De nat. de.* 1; cf. Baraz (2012), 136.

64 Cf. *Orat*. 63–64.

65 *Ap*. 32a1–3. Cf. Dodds (1959), 31.

66 Cf. Fantham (2004), 56, 59.

67 See Zetzel's (2003), 135–7 enlightening comparison between Cicero's conservatism and that of Edmond Burke.

68 *De fin*. 3.4: *Ars est enim philosophia vitae, de qua disserens arripere verba de foro non potest.*

This praise of Plato (and of himself) recognizes an irreducible difference between the two kinds of discourse, namely philosophical discussion and oratory, the art of the forum. The efficacy of persuasion, in front of the crowd, does not coincide with the accuracy of thought. There seems to exist a paradox in Cicero's position. In the *De oratore*, he criticizes Socrates and the Stoic Rutilius Rufus for refusing to distinguish between two kinds of discourse, eloquence (*contentio*) and conversation (*sermo*). This results in their respective condemnations.[69] Socrates and Rutilius Rufus are criticized for discarding the *decorum* principle, that is adaptation to the context.[70] Cicero defends the necessity of practising both kinds of discourse, but admits indirectly the conflict the duality of discourses and places of discourse inevitably imply. In this, he again moves closer to Plato.

2) The *Timaeus:* Pythagoreanism and Middle Platonism

The discovery of new interest in the *Timaeus* is a significant event in the slow and obscure transition from the New Academy to Middle Platonism.[71] The Ciceronian translation of the *Timaeus* is an important part of this renewed interest. Contrary to that of the *Protagoras*, the translation of the *Timaeus* is unlikely to be a mere exercise in style. Judging from the prologue preceding it, it was meant to be part of a dialogue. But why translate a dialogue apparently foreign to the Socratic heritage and to the scepticism of the New Academy?[72] The Pythagorean influence does not seem to sit well with the neo-Academic genealogy tracing a straight line from Socrates to Plato and from Plato to Arcesilaus. As the main representative of the natural philosophers (*physici*) Pythagoras is in a certain sense the antipode of Socrates, whose questioning attitude is opposed the mere obedience to a master's *auctoritas*.[73] What is then the place of Pythagoreanism in Cicero's interpretation of Plato?

The references to Pythagoreanism, less frequent than to those to Pythagoras himself, pertain especially to number as principle of the universe, the immortality of the soul and the music of the spheres.[74] Pythagoras is regarded as the

69 *De or.* 1.227–32.

70 Cf. *Orat*. 70–71.

71 Cf. Dörrie (1971), 20–22; Tarrant (2007), 25–30. Crantor is known to commented on several passages of *Tim.* and is regarded by Proclus (*in Tim*. I 75.30–76.10) as the first Plato commentator.

72 Cf. Giomini (1975), xvi–xvii.

73 Cf. the well-known *ipse dixit;* e. g. *De Nat. De.* 1.10.

74 *Ac*. 2.118, *Tusc. Disp.* 1.38, *De re pub*. 6.18–19 respectively.

one who coined the term φιλοσοφία.[75] In the *De finibus* (5.87) he says Plato visited Archytas at Tarentum and other Pythagoreans including Timaeus at Locri, "intending [...] to extend his studies into those branches which Socrates repudiated (*ut cum Socratem expressisset, adiungeret Pythagoreorum disciplinam eaque, quae Socrates repudiabat, addisceret*)." (trans. Rackham). In the *De republica* (1.16) he also claims, through the mouth of the venerable Scipio, that

> [...] as he [*sc*. Plato] loved Socrates with singular affection and wished to give him credit for everything, he interwove Socrates' charm and subtlety in argument with the obscurity and ponderous learning of Pythagoras in so many branches of knowledge (*leporem subtilitateque sermonis cum obscuritate Pythagorae et cum illa plurimarum artium gravitate contexuit*). (trans.) Keyes.

Cicero thus distinguishes the historical Socrates from the Platonic Socrates. Plato's work would be divided in two parts: the Socratic presented in the majority of the dialogues and the Pythagorean expounded mainly in the *Timaeus*.[76] The alliance of the Socratic and Pythagorean elements seems to constitutes what he regards as the universality of Platonic thought.[77] The renaissance of Platonism in Cicero is also a return to transcendence, envisaged as the recollection of ideas[78] and especially the "assimilation to god" as the ultimate aim of the human soul, deemed inseparable from the divine soul.[79]

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75 *Tusc*. *Disp.* 5.8–9 (= Heraclides Pontus fr. 88 Wehrli). Cf. D.L. 1.12. See Burkert's (1965) criticism of the authenticity of Cicero's testimony as well as its defense by Riedweg (2005), 91–94 and more fully in Riedweg (2004).

76 Hösle (2008), 153–4, 169–70. Sedley (2013), 204. According to Tarrant (2007), 29 however, the Ciceronian translation presents a cosmology that is largely freed from its specifically Platonic components and that aims at reviving the ancient Pythagoreanism of Timaeus of Locri. At any rate, Cicero's youthful translation of the astronomical poem of Aratos, which he cites at length in the *De Nat. De.* (2.104–15) demonstrates his interest in this field of knowledge, as well as the importance that Cicero attributed to the act of translation.

77 *De or*. 3.21.

78 Cf. *Tusc*. *Disp.* 1.57; *Orat*. 7–10. On the last passage see Gildenhard (2013), 249–53.

79 On the renewed interest for Pythagoreanism within the Platonic tradition especially at Alexandria, and more specifically for Eudoxus (c. 100–50?), see Dillon (2014), 261–63 and Flinterman (2014), 343–50. On Eudoxus' Platonism and Pythagorism with the notion of "assimilation to god" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ; cf. *Tht.* 176a) see Stobaeus' *Anthologium* 2, 49.8–12 Wachsmuth; Tarrant (2000), 67–71; Bonazzi (2013b), 168 n.25.

It is impossible to separate the questions about the date of the translation from those concerning its goals. The catalogue of *De divinatione* II (from 45) makes no mention of it either because it was not yet completed it or because Cicero knew his project would remain incomplete. Various indications suggest a late date of composition as well as the likelihood that we are dealing with part of an incomplete work. In the preface to the *De finibus* (1.7), also dating from 45, Cicero notes that his writings on the Greek philosophers are not direct translations, but adds that even if he did translate them directly, his service would not be any less significant. He has not yet done (*neque adhuc*) this type of translating, but he may in the future:

> Indeed I expressly reserve the right of borrowing certain passages, if I think fit, and particularly from the philosophers just mentioned [Plato and Aristotle], when an appropriate occasion offers for so doing; just as Ennius regularly borrows from Homer, and [Scipio] Africanus from Menander. (trans.) Rackham

In addition to the practice of classicism already mentioned, this remark testifies to the possibility and legitimacy of borrowing a whole passage and inserting it in to one of his own writings.[80] Moreover in the *De natura deorum* (second half of 45) there are two references to the *Timaeus* (1.18; 30). The question of the relation between the divinity and the world unites the translation of the *Timaeus* and the *De natura deorum*.[81]

Regarding the translation itself, some of Cicero's choices are particularly telling. He omits the prologue of the Platonic dialogue (17a–27d) and with it the dramatic action. This omission is typical of a general tendency in his use of the Platonic dialogues.[82] In his preface Cicero refers to the arguments formulated in the *Academica* against the natural philosophers (*physici*). He also alludes to the conversations he had with the Pythagorean P. Nigidius Figulus (c. 100–45 BC), which were conducted in Carneades' fashion (*Carneadeo more et modo*), namely in an antilogical manner.[83] He then praises Nigidius as an expert on physical science who has given new impetus (*renovaret*) to Pythagoreanism.

80 Cf. *De fin.* 1.7; cf. 2.15.

81 On the whole context see Sedley (2013), especially 187–9.

82 In the case of the *Alcibiades I* see Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 112–19.

83 It is difficult to know whether Nigidius Figulus contributed to the rebirth of Pythagoreanism in his time, since we are dealing here with the setting of a written dialogue rather than with a straightforward remark about a contribution to the history of philosophy.

The setting is then depicted, at Mytilene in 51 BC, where Cicero meets Nigidius and Cratippus the Peripatetic en route towards Cilicia.[84]

It can plausibly be assumed that Cicero attempts in the spirit of classicism to remedy the absence of a Latin vocabulary for mathematics as employed in Platonic cosmology. In most cases Cicero first cites the Greek character before translating them: ἀναλογία (*comparatio pro portione*, 5.13), σφαιροειδές (*globosus*, 6.17),[85] μεσότης (*medietas*, 7, 23) and ἁρμονία (*concentio*, 8.27).[86] The dialogue that Cicero planned to write was likely to have a dialectical structure,[87] opposing two cosmologies, the Platonic (and Pythagorean) and the Aristotelian, defended respectively by Nigidius and Cratippus. Plato's *Timaeus*' prologue being omitted, the translation, "recited" by Nigidius, opens on the question about the origin of the universe: has the world been created or not (*oriri* = γίγνεσθαι), did it have a beginning (ἀρχή) in time? On Cicero's reading Plato defends creationism as opposed to the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternality of the world.[88]

Cicero's translation reveals neo-Academic and Stoic influences as recent studies have shown.[89] The famous phrase εἰκὸς μῦθος is rendered through a single term, *probabilia* (without *narratio*).[90] Stoic naturalism colours and limits its Platonic transcendence notably with regard to the ontological dualism between model and copy. It is instructive that the Platonic phrase "so far as possible" (κατὰ δύναμιν, 30a3) is completed by the term "nature" (*quoad natura pateretur*, "so far as nature permits").[91] Transcendence is nevertheless highlighted by the notion of divine soul (*ratio et mens divina ad originem temporis*, 9.5). The divine soul in Cicero's thought is the source of both natural

84 Cicero had a deep admiration for Cratippus and entrusted him with the education of his son at Athens (*De off.* 1.1–1).

85 Cf. *De nat. de.* 2.47: *globus* for σφαίρα.

86 Lambardi (1982), 70–90; Sedley (2013), 190–92.

87 Cf. Hoenig (2013), 5, 7.

88 Sedley (2013), 197–8. Lévy (2003), 98 suggests that Cicero's *Timaeus* was meant to be the third and last part of a trilogy to which the *De natura deorum* and the *De divination* would have belonged, thus corresponding to the physical counterpart of the ethical trilogy of the *De finibus* (with its criticism of Epicureanism and Stoicism, and the defense of the Academy); this dialogue would therefore have been the crowning work of Cicero's reflections on physics. Let us recall the work in the Medieval manuscripts is entitled *De universo* or *De essentia mundi*.

89 Cf. Lévy (2003); Aronadio (2008); Hoenig (2013).

90 The choice of the antilogical debate also incorporates the Aristotelian conception of rhetoric. Cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 1.4; Hoenig (2013), 7.

91 Cf. Lévy (2003), 102.

and positive laws. The doctrine of natural law in *De legibus* (1.18–34) bears an indirect relation to the *Timaeus*, which attributes the legislative function to the demiurge (41e–42d).[92] This attribution in turn foreshadows Middle Platonic conceptions about the demiurge as law-giver.[93] Likewise in the *De republica* human beings are deemed to be divine by virtue of the fact that reason governs (*moderatur*) the body, in the same way that god governs the universe.[94] The doctrine that human being's resemblance to god (*cum deo similitudo, De leg.* 1.25) also goes back to the *Timaeus* (90c7–8), and recalls the famous formula "the assimilation to god" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, *Tht.*, 176b1–2) that would be so important in imperial Platonism.[95]

The end of the translation (47a–b) constitutes in a sense its climax.[96] God has given vision to human beings in order to guide them through the knowledge of astronomy, towards philosophy. Cicero's translation (52) is particularly accurate:

> From these things we have acquired philosophy, a good more than which none is more desirable, none more lofty has been given nor will ever be given to the race of mortals by the gods.
>
> *quibus rebus philosophiam adepti sumus, quo bono nullum optabilius, nullum praestantius neque datum est mortalium generi deorum concessu atque munere neque dabitur.*
>
> ἐξ ὧν ἐπορισάμεθα φιλοσοφίας γένος, οὗ μεῖζον ἀγαθὸν οὔτ' ἦλθεν οὔτε ἥξει ποτὲ τῷ θνητῷ γένει δωρηθὲν ἐκ θεῶν. (*Tim.* 47a7–b2)[97]

This praise of philosophy reappears in very similar words in the *De legibus* (1.58) and the *Tusculan Disputations* (1.64).[98] These reoccurrences testify to the importance Cicero attributes to this praise. The divine soul and the demiurge

92 This is a term Cicero has difficulty to translate; he renders it in no less than seven different terms or circumlocutions (*is qui aliquod munus efficere molitur, artifex, effectrix, effector, genitor et effector, efficiens*); cf. Lamdardi 1982, 105–7; Tarrant (2007), 297, n.831.

93 Cf. Numenius fr. 13. Cf. Tarrant (1979) and Alcinous 16.2. See also Dillon (1993), 136–8.

94 *De re pub.* 6.26; cf. Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 115, 119–22.

95 Cicero renders the Greek terms νοῦς and νόησις by *intelligentia* (*Timaeus* 3, 10, 51).

96 See the exact parallels in *ND* 2.47.

97 Cf. Aronadio (2008), 114–16.

98 *Leg.* 1.58: *Ita fit ut mater omnium bonarum rerum sit sapientia, cuius amore Graeco verbo philosophia nomen invenit, qua nihil a dis immortalibus uberius, nihil florentius, nihil praestabilius hominum vitae datum est. Tusc. Disp.* 1.64: *Philosophia vero, omnium mater artium, quid est aliud nisi, ut Plato, donum, ut ego, inventum deorum?*

take such a place in Cicero's incomplete dialogue that Carlos Lévy argues that if completed this dialogue would have been "the first Latin Middle-Platonist text."[99] The exact nature of content of that dialogue is not easy to determine but it is part of probable truths (*probabilia*) which Cicero is inclined to accept and defend. Thus, on the whole, Cicero in his *Timaeus*, as in the case of the *De oratore*, appears to combine the neo-Academic method with a doctrinal content.

99 Lévy (2003), 107.

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