defense of interracial marriage contrasts the Portuguese colonization with the racial exclusivism of the Puritan settlement in North America. Moreover, it demonstrates a policy continuation with another document, Diretório dos Índios (1755–58), that supports a similar policy under secular authority (263). Nóbrega's example illustrates the complexity of the intellectual history of Portugal and its overseas empire and reinforces the significance of this excellent volume that will open new paths for academic exploration.

To navigate those uncharted waters, the editors provide a brilliant introduction that maps the historical development of Portuguese political thought and contextualizes all authors. Moreover, before every document they provide a brief bibliography, the political and intellectual context, and a summary. Hundreds of footnotes, an extensive bibliography, and an index provide a helpful compass for researchers. Overall, *Political Thought in Portugal and Its Empire* is exceptional. It will prove invaluable for scholars of modern intellectual history and political thought and help to better integrate Portugal into the broader European intellectual history as well as into Latin American political thought.

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Moryam VanOpstal: *An Ancient Guide to Good Politics: A Literary and Ethical Reading of Cicero's "De Re Publica."* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2023. Pp xi, 187.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670523000852

Cicero's *Republic* poses unique challenges of interpretation. What teaching can we confidently ascribe to a text that must have been one of the great and comprehensive works of political philosophy as originally written, but that can now be read only in fragments? By careful attention to both the arguments and the dramatic elements in the extant text, along with judicious reference to the Ciceronian corpus, Moryam VanOpstal has produced a rich and provocative commentary that will surely contribute to the ongoing revival of Cicero's political philosophy.

VanOpstal clarifies Cicero's teaching through two extended arguments—the first on the place of politics in the best life, and the second on the sound operation of the republic itself. In part 1, he traces the difficult question of the "two lives," starkly posed by Cicero himself in the author's preface and given a final, poetic treatment in the most famous passage of the work as we have it, and their eventual reconciliation as "alternating centers" in the life of the exemplary citizen, for whom the conflicting claims of action and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670523000852 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contemplation, of the things of earth and the things above, create a "productive tension" (28, 35, 59, 70, 85). Having established the dignity of politics and its decisive, though not exclusive, place in the complete life, VanOpstal turns in part 2 to Cicero's teaching on the best republic, which again seems to contain two centers. On the one hand, there are the fixed points in human nature and society that render the political world a kind of cosmos, with its own predictable—though not always rational—movements and courses (96, 115–20; 169–70). On the other hand, there are the rarer forces standing, as it were, outside this fixed cycle—the character of the Guide of the republic (always capitalized) and the structure of the mixed regime—that fully realize human virtue (144, 156–57, 162; 170–72).

Readers less familiar with Cicero will find in VanOsptal's work plenty to spur and help their own study of this important work, particularly his elaboration of the many binaries (action and contemplation, native and foreign, heaven and earth, etc.) that drive the argument and how Cicero teaches prudence by doing justice to both sides of those binaries. Experienced readers will be most interested in his use of dramatic details and literary structure to shed light on longstanding scholarly disputes and by (at least) three unique aspects of his interpretation: his elevation of Laelius as an equal to Scipio, whom he says Cicero uses to represent the positions of Socrates and Plato in the dialogue (47, 52–53, 59, 102–3, 120), his expansive understanding of the type of the *rector rei publicae*, which includes not only Brutus and Cicero the senator, but also Pythagoras and Cicero the author (144, 149–52), and his strong claim that Cicero "departs to an astonishing degree from Plato's skepticism about the possibility of infusing and ordering the body politic according to the *ratio* of things" (77; 24, 70, 91, 99, 105, 121n7, 162).

The question of Cicero's relation to Plato, which naturally follows from Cicero's choice to present his political philosophy as direct responses to Plato's great political dialogues, takes on greater importance with the fragmentary state of those texts. Is there some guiding thread or programmatic statement that can help us organize and interpret what remains to us? We know that Cicero's overall intention was to expound the *rationes rerum civilium*, which includes pointing out the cause of each public good and evil (*Rep.* 1.13; 2.52). Moreover, we have the insistence of Scipio, the main speaker, that the *rationes* he relies on in his teaching about the best republic are "the very ones" that Plato saw and that form the basis of his *Republic* (2.52). However, this insistence on the identity of Scipio's teaching with Plato's does not sit easily with either the author's preface, taken up with an attack on perhaps the most famous *ratio* of Plato's *Republic*, that the philosophic life disdains political action, or the action of the dialogue itself, with its many well-known differences from the Platonic original. VanOpstal offers seemingly contradictory arguments on the matter, on the one hand positing a fundamental agreement between Cicero and Plato on the meaning of politics (99), leaving only a difference regarding how many people can come to see that meaning (77), while on the other hand minimizing

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670523000852 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the "Platonic" Scipio's status in favor of the "Socratic" Laelius and presenting Cicero's teaching as a synthesis of their perspectives (59–60, 78).

For all the interesting and original insights generated by VanOpstal's greater respect for Laelius (see especially 53–60 and 101–6), some confusion results from his identifying Socrates's turn to the human things with the practical or political life. There seem rather to be two different questions, which VanOpstal does not distinguish, at stake at the beginning of the text. In the dialogue's opening scene, there is the question whether the truth of political things (including the truth about virtue) depends on the disposition of the "things above," and thus whether it is useful to study those things. On this, there does seem to be a difference between Scipio/Plato and Laelius/Socrates. However, the question that frames the whole dialogue is whether the best life is devoted to political action or to inquiry. Here, we find Socrates and Plato on one side, both subject to Cicero's main critique in the preface, Laelius on the other, and Scipio seemingly in the middle. Socrates's turn to dialectic and to everyday questions of human action is not yet Laelius's consuming desire to do whatever it takes to preserve Rome's ancestral constitution as he understands it (60–62). Indeed, Laelius's enthusiastic (and unique) reaction to the prophecy that Scipio will either become dictator and restore the republic or be killed by his Gracchi cousins in his fifty-sixth year—that is, the year of their conversation—seems far more characteristic of the young aristocrats around Socrates than of Socrates himself (*Rep.* 6.16). And Scipio's show of equanimity amid the possibility of assassination and the republic's decline, made possible by his attachment to something more than the republic, seems much closer to Cicero's own example.

Cicero's closing reminder that Rome's greatest statesman and true guide—with perhaps the most distinguished lineage and career in her history—was able to observe but not arrest the causes of her decline would seem at odds with the rationalizing, synthetic, and optimistic spirit that suffuses earlier parts of the text and that animates this valuable commentary. However, it was Cicero's genius to endure the uncertainties and disappointments of politics for his own purposes. This book will prove useful to anyone hoping to understand those purposes and to take up Scipio's advice to live as though his country's fate may depend on him.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670523000852 Published online by Cambridge University Press