

## RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY IN CICERO

GILBERT (N.), GRAVER (M.), MCCONNELL (S.) (edd.) *Power and Persuasion in Cicero's Philosophy*. Pp. x+268. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Cased, £85, US\$110. ISBN: 978-1-009-17033-8.

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The relation between philosophy and rhetoric in Cicero's literary output and the impact of philosophy on Cicero's art of persuasion and political thought are questions any Ciceronian scholar is familiar with. As has recently been stated, the harmonic fusion of political virtues, rhetorical strategies and philosophical wisdom marks out Cicero's ideal *vir bonus dicendi peritus*: free from any form of dogmatism, Cicero sees the combination of good eloquence and practical philosophy as crucial to the formation of the educated politician (cf. G. Remer, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Politics*, in: J.W. Atkins and T. Bénatouil [edd.], *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero's Philosophy* [2021], pp. 200–14). The volume under review sheds fresh light on the sophisticated and intricate use of rhetorical and persuasive techniques in Cicero's philosophical and political writings. Adopting a 'highly flexible approach' to Cicero's art of persuasion (p. 7), the contributors felicitously demonstrate how Cicero connected his philosophical *otium*, as an alternative form of political action, with his personal engagement in Roman society (cf. *Off.* 2.2.6): besides being effective modes of introducing and debating diverging arguments in the dialogues as well as in the political treatises and speeches, philosophy and dialectic become parts integral to Cicero's self-portrait as a public figure. The common thread running through the volume is Cicero's extreme versatility in the employment of persuasive strategies in his philosophical and political writings and his practice of selecting arguments and assessing their value according to what is plausible or *veri simile*. Moving from the general to the particular and dwelling on specific issues with an eye to the different circumstances and background of each single work, the essays enormously contribute to our understanding of Cicero's undogmatic vision of the complex, multifaceted relation between philosophy, *ars dicendi* and political life, a relation complicated by the impending decline of the *res publica*.

Prefaced by a dense introduction, the volume is divided into two main sections, each comprising five chapters. The first section, 'Techniques and Tactics of Ciceronian Philosophy', includes essays dealing with Cicero's methodological approach to philosophy and his use of philosophical arguments in different literary and textual contexts. The papers of the second section, 'Political Philosophy and Ethics', explore the interconnection between philosophy, rhetoric and politics in Cicero's work, with a focus on moral and political questions pertaining to Roman society and *res publica*. The essays are followed by an up-to-date bibliography, an *index locorum* and a general index.

In the opening chapter of Section 1 R. Woolf, in 'Cicero on Rhetoric and Dialectic', addresses the puzzling interplay between dialectic, as a formal method of inquiry, and rhetoric, as a way of stirring emotional responses from the audience. In his pragmatic attempt at smoothing over the differences between these branches of knowledge, Cicero reasserts the importance of exemplarity to the effectiveness of argumentation (cf. *Fin.* 2.63–5) and solves the contradiction between the diverging goals of dialectic and rhetoric by means of a 'personal' approach, that is, by giving priority to society and public interest over individual life. For Cicero, harmony between dialectic and rhetoric remains a problematic issue. Yet, philosophy and rhetoric may cooperate to create a figure of a

philosopher-orator deeply engaged in social and political life, free from any mental disturbance and able to arouse emotions in the supreme interest of the *res publica*. The following chapter by J.E.G. Zetzel, 'Cicero's Platonic Dialogues', insists on the 'meta-Platonic' nature of the dialogues *De oratore*, *De re publica* and *De legibus*, belonging to the years 55–51 BCE. Zetzel's discussion allows for a reappraisal of the presence of Plato in Cicero's philosophical and political thought (on Cicero and Plato, see now C. Bishop, *Cicero, Greek Learning, and the Making of a Roman Classic* [2019], pp. 85–128). The different treatment of Plato in the dialogues stems from Cicero's enigmatic attitude towards the Greek philosopher: the incompleteness of *De legibus* may exemplify the failure of Cicero's project of 'Platonizing' the Roman republic and its laws. The fascinating paper by G. White, Chapter 3: '*Mos dialogorum*: Scepticism and Fiction in Cicero's *Academica*', focuses on the choice of the dialogue form in the *Academica* as associated with the notion of plausibility or *veri simile*, closeness to the truth. Cicero's epistemological scepticism is motivated by the impossibility of knowing truth and distinguishing reality from fictionality: by rejecting evidentness, *enargeia*, as an indicator of truth, Cicero plays down the reliability of the Stoic-Academic rhetorical theory. The celebrated motto *nos in diem vivimus* at *Tusc.* 5.33 is an open manifesto of Cicero's search for truth and his preference for *probabilitas* as a way of conducting a socially respectable life (Chapter 4: G. Roskam, '*Nos in diem vivimus*: Cicero's Approach in the *Tusculan Disputations*'). Common sense determines Cicero's choice of life 'from day to day': as Roskam puts it, *in diem vivere* must be regarded as Cicero's 'virtuoso act of accurately responding to the demands of a particular situation and creatively using his rich experience as a philosopher, orator, and politician to deal with the matter at hand' (p. 80). In the last chapter of this section, Chapter 5: 'Cicero the Philosopher at Work: the Genesis and Execution of *De officiis* 3', Gilbert revisits the question of the incompleteness of Book 3 of *De officiis*. Gilbert provides us with an interesting portrait of Cicero committed to revitalising Stoic ethics and combining Greek philosophical tradition with the contemporary Roman context.

The second section is much more centred on Cicero's adaptation of philosophical notions to political life. Starting from the expression *iuris consensu* in *Cic. Rep.* 1.39, M. Schofield, in Chapter 6: '*Iuris consensu* Revisited', reconsiders Cicero's stance on the concept of *ius* and its double meaning, as 'justice' or 'law', pointing to unanimity (*consensus*) as central to the exercise of rights in the aristocratic *res publica*. The honour motif, treated by Cicero in line with Stoic ethics, is strictly connected to the public display of political virtues, as emerges from Graver's analysis of *De re publica*, in comparison with Book 3 of the *Tusculan Disputations* (Chapter 7: 'The Psychology of Honor in Cicero's *De re publica*'). Graver opportunely points to Cicero's condemnation of 'material' glory (cf. *Leg.* 1.32; *Tusc.* 3.3) and draws attention to his incessant search for the approval of others as dictated by his political experience. Cicero's appeal to justice in war clearly reflects his position on Roman imperial power. In Chapter 8, 'Cicero on the Justice of War', J.W. Atkins investigates the relation between ethics and politics in Cicero's *De officiis*, emphasising the 'utilitarian' aspects of a just war, regulated by the principle of prudence. The last two chapters best illustrate Cicero's innate tendency to interpret politics in philosophical terms. K. Volk, in 'Towards a Definition of *Sapientia*: Philosophy in Cicero's *Pro Marcello*' (Chapter 9), concentrates on Cicero's manipulative exploitation of *sapientia* in *Pro Marcello*, delivered before Caesar in 46 BCE. McConnell, in 'Old Men in Cicero's Political Philosophy' (Chapter 10), comments on Cicero's promotion of the political role played by the old men in *De senectute* as an exhortation to restore the proper republican model of senatorial politics.

Cicero never ceased to present himself as an example of a good politician and good thinker. The volume not only fulfils the expectations of anyone interested in finding out more about the mutual interdependence of rhetoric, philosophy and politics in Cicero's writings, it also makes a significant contribution to Cicero's self-fashioning project and paves the way for further explorations of the complexities of Cicero's intellectual world.

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