

IV. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2: Pain, Plato, Pacuvius

The *Tusculan Disputations*, written in the summer of 45BC, was the fourth of the seven philosophical works that occupied Cicero in the last years of his life.¹ As with *De Fato*, each book of the *Tusculans* opens with a proposition offered by the interlocutor (known in the manuscripts as ‘A’), which is then dismantled over the course of the book by the figure known in the manuscripts as ‘M’.² After the interlocutor of Book 2 puts forward the proposition ‘pain is the greatest of all evils’, he is almost immediately embarrassed by M. into amending it to the more defensible ‘pain is an evil’, which is then adopted as the topic of the book. Much of the subsequent discussion is concerned less with the question of whether pain is an evil than with the issue of how physical pain can be endured.

Tusculans 2 is full of poetry, both Latin (Ennius, Lucilius, Pacuvius, Accius) and Greek translated into Latin by Cicero (Sophocles, Aeschylus). My intention in this paper is to demonstrate, using a single case-study – the long quotations of Pacuvius’ *Niptra* at *Tusc.* 2.48-50 – that Cicero’s engagement with early Latin poetry in his *philosophica* must be understood in relation to his Greek philosophical models, in this case Plato.³ Just as Greek philosophers drew on Greek poetry as a rich source of wisdom, so too does Cicero – engaged as he is in providing a Latin equivalent to Greek philosophy – draw on Latin poetry as an equivalent cultural authority. What is more, in the example to be discussed here, Cicero insists on the superiority of the Latin poetic tradition over the Greek, a literary-critical claim we might compare to such assertions of linguistic superiority (made in the face of contemporary scepticism about the philosophical value of Latin) as *Fin.* 3.5 *nos non modo non uinci a Graecis uerborum copia, sed esse in ea etiam superiores*. Before getting to Pacuvius, a certain amount of groundwork is required to trace the close engagement with Plato in this book of *Tusculans*, something which is yet to have been fully appreciated. Reasons of space mean that I will not look beyond Platonism to other philosophical traditions, including especially Stoicism. A longer treatment would result in a more complex philosophical picture, to be sure, but the central claim of the paper – that Cicero’s relation to early Latin poetry is conditioned by the quotational practices of his Greek philosophical models – would not be affected.

Cicero’s connection to *deus ille noster Plato* is profound, with a personal element that goes far beyond his status as an Academic.⁴ The connection is not merely factional, but literary and indeed stylistic: Pliny the Elder reports that Cicero considered himself a fellow-traveller of Plato in the *Republic* (*qui de re publica Platonis se comitem profitetur*), and

¹ *Hortensius; Academici libri; De Finibus; Tusculans; De Natura Deorum; De Divinatione; De Fato*. I am grateful to audiences at Oxford, Newcastle, and Cambridge for discussion of this paper, and to the editors for the invitation to contribute, and for their helpful comments.

² Book 1: *malum mihi uidetur esse mors*; Book 2: *dolorem existimo maximum malorum omnium*; Book 3: *uidetur mihi cadere in sapientem aegritudo*; Book 4: *non mihi uidetur omni animi perturbatione posse sapiens uacare*; Book 5: *non mihi uidetur ad beate uiuendum satis posse uirtutem*. At *De Finibus* 2.2 Cicero says this *propositum* structure of argument and teaching was favoured by his contemporaries in the Academy. See further WARREN 2025a.

³ On Cicero and the early Latin poets generally, see esp. the recent study of ČULÍK-BAIRD 2023, and on the *philosophica* esp. 80-93.

⁴ Among the vast bibliography on Cicero and Plato see esp. BISHOP 2018; SCHOFIELD 2021.

Quintilian famously described him as *Platonis aemulus*.⁵ The closeness of Cicero's literary debt to Plato is made clear in a well-known letter to Atticus (4.16.3):

quod in iis libris quos laudas personam desideras Scaevolae, non eam temere demoui, sed feci idem quod in 'Πολιτεία' deus ille noster Plato. cum in Piraeum Socrates uenisset ad Cephalum, locupletem et festiuum senem, quoad primus ille sermo habe[re]tur, adest in disputando senex; deinde, cum ipse quoque commodissime locutus esset, ad rem diuinam dicit se uelle discedere neque postea reuertitur.

You say you regret Scaevola's disappearance from the work [*sc. De Oratore*] which you are good enough to praise. I did not drop him casually, but followed the example of our divine Plato in his *Republic*. Socrates calls on Cephalus, a reliable, genial old gentleman, in the Piraeus. During the opening talk the old fellow is present at the discussion, but then, after speaking himself and very nicely too, he says he has to go and attend to a sacrifice, and does not reappear. (text and trans. Shackleton-Bailey, adapted).

The resemblance between Cicero's Scaevola and Plato's Cephalus⁶ leads Cicero to create a deliberate (*non temere*) isomorphism between Scaevola's role in the structure of *De Oratore* and Cephalus' in *Republic*, a resemblance made the more salient by the fact that the departure of Scaevola comes at the very end of the first book of *De Oratore*.⁷ Whether Cicero expected this Platonic *aemulatio* to be recognised by others seems unlikely; he does not appear surprised or disappointed that a reader as deeply steeped in Plato as Atticus did not pick up on it, and makes no suggestion that he should have done so.⁸ What is clear is the closeness and intricacy here of Cicero's engagement with the text of Plato's *Republic*, of which we will see further evidence in *Tusculans 2*.

Tusc. 2.7-8 is programmatic for the book:

quam ob rem, quoniam quem ad modum dicant ipsi non laborant, cur legendi sint nisi ipsi inter se qui idem sentiunt, non intellego. nam, ut Platonem reliquosque Socraticos et deinceps eos, qui ab his profecti sunt, legunt omnes, etiam qui illa aut non adprobant aut non studiosissime consecretantur, Epicurum autem et Metrodorum non fere praeter suos quisquam in manus sumit, sic hos Latinos ii soli legunt, qui illa recte dici putant. nobis autem uidetur, quicquid litteris mandetur, id commendari omnium eruditorum lectioni decere; nec, si id ipsi minus consequi possumus, idcirco minus id ita faciendum esse sentimus.

Since they themselves are unconcerned about how they express their views, I do not see why they need to be read except to each other by those who hold the same views. For, just as Plato and the other Socratic writers and then those who descended

⁵ Pliny, *Natural History*, praefatio 22; Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.123. For Cicero's literary engagement with Plato see esp. DE GRAFF 1940; DOUGLAS 1962; ZOLL 1962; PUELMA 1980; HÖSLE 2008.

⁶ Both are old men speaking to younger men; both discussions take place at the property belonging to the older speaker's son (Polemarchus, son of Cephalus) or son-in-law (Crassus, onetime son-in-law of Scaevola); both are respected elder figures in the early parts of the dialogue. Indeed, Scaevola's Platonic resonance extends beyond his resemblance to Cephalus, for it is he at *De Oratore* 1.28 who suggests that they imitate the *Phaedrus* of Plato. On Scaevola and Cephalus SPAHLINGER 2005: 64 cites KAMMER 1964, 127, which I have not been able to consult.

⁷ On Plato in the *De Oratore* see esp. ZOLL 1962. This is not the only text of Cicero influenced by the opening scene of *Republic*; see also *Cato maior* 6-9, with LEFÈVRE 1997.

⁸ On Atticus as producer of high-quality editions of Plato (the so-called *Attikiana*), see Galen, *Plat. Tim.* Fr. II.107-109 Schröder; *On Freedom from Grief* 13 Boudon-Millot, with HATZIMICHALI 2013: 9-10.

from them are read by everybody, even those who disagree with their views or follow them with no great enthusiasm, but hardly anybody picks up Epicurus and Metrodorus except their own disciples, so the only readers of those Latin books are those who hold their contents to be correct. My own view is that whatever is committed to literary writing must be fit to be recommended for reading by all educated people: nor, if I myself cannot achieve that, do I think that there is any the less obligation on that account to do it like that. (trans. Douglas).

This is an assertion not of Cicero's philosophical allegiance (although that is relevant), but of his belief in the importance of an attractive philosophical style. The subjects of the first sentence are Epicurean writers like Amafinius, whose careless style limits their readership to members of their own sect, just as was true, says Cicero, for its Greek founder Epicurus and his pupil Metrodorus. Plato and the Socratic school (including certainly Xenophon, whom Cicero knew and admired)⁹ offer a different model: philosophy whose written style appeals to all regardless of philosophical allegiance. This is the style Cicero pursues (with a certain amount of false modesty – *si id ipsi minus consequi possumus*) in *Tusculans* 2.¹⁰ Cicero, then, is to Amafinius what Plato was to Epicurus: a writer not just writing as a member of a given philosophical sect, appealing only to one's friends and fellow-travellers, but a writer of philosophical literature with a style worth reading. As will become clear, this 'Platonic' style extends to the close imitation and adaptation of Plato's texts. Further evidence for Cicero's stylistic programme comes later, at *Tusc.* 2.26:

M. fuisti saepe, credo, cum Athenis esses, in scholis philosophorum. A. uero, ac libenter quidem. M. Animaduertebas igitur, etsi tum nemo erat admodum copiosus, uerum tamen uersus ab is admisceri orationi. A. ac multos quidem a Dionysio Stoico. M. probe dicis. sed is quasi dictata, nullo dilectu, nulla elegantia. Philo ut propria¹¹ et lecta poëmata et loco adiungebat. itaque postquam adamaui hanc quasi senilem declamationem, studiose equidem uxor nostris poëtis, sed, sicubi illi defecerunt, uerti etiam multa de Graecis, ne quo ornamento in hoc genere disputationis careret Latina oratio.

M. When you were at Athens, you often attended the schools of the philosophers. A. Certainly, and I enjoyed it. M. Then you noticed that even if at that time there was no one very fluent, all the same they included verses in their discourses. A. Yes, and Dionysius the Stoic included a great many. M. That's true. But he did it mechanically, at random and without taste. But Philo introduced well-chosen verse-pieces as if they were his own, and fitted them to their context. So now that I have fallen in love with this sort of 'declamation of the elderly', I make a point of using Roman poets. But whenever they are lacking, I have produced my own extensive translations from the Greeks, so that Latin discourse should not lack any adornment in this type of discussion. (trans. Dougan, adapted).

⁹ See in this book 2.62; on Xenophon in the *philosophica* see esp. MÜNSCHER 1920: 75-82; SPAHLINGER 2005: 47-53.

¹⁰ That Cicero seeks to emulate Plato in *Tusculans* 2 comes as no surprise to the reader: *Tusculans* 1 is steeped in Plato, including extended translations from *Phaedo* at 1.103-104 and *Apology* at 1.97-99 (see esp. GOULD 1968). GILDENHARD (2007: 245) sees Cicero's engagement with *Phaedo* in *Tusculans* 1 as competitive: 'Cicero will succeed where Plato failed.'

¹¹ ut propria is Lündstrom's emendation of the nonsensical paradosis; *alii alia*.

These lectures of Philo were delivered not (like those of Dionysius) at Athens but rather at Rome, and were heard by Cicero himself as well as by other learned men of the time.¹² Philo offers a model for the incorporation of poetry into philosophical education, which, like the style of Plato praised earlier at 2.7-8, Cicero will adopt himself, with the amendment that he will use, where possible, Latin poetry rather than translations out of the Greek.¹³ This preference for quoting Latin poets connects to Cicero's broader nationalising project in the *philosophica* of the mid-40s, where he routinely stresses, in the face of doubts and anxieties from others, the appropriateness of Latin as a language in which to do philosophy. At the same time, and despite this nationalising agenda, Cicero's use of early Latin poets is modelled on Greek philosophers' use of Greek poetry. Cicero's relation to early Latin poetry here should not be understood as dyadic, but rather must be triangulated with respect to its Greek models of citation and quotation (explicitly Philo's, and, as we shall see, Plato's).

Tusculans 2 is indeed one of the books of Cicero in which poetry is quoted the most, on some occasions at substantial length. This deep engagement with poetry, combined with the explicit Platonic modelling earlier at 2.7-8, creates a tension that Cicero addresses in the very next paragraph (2.27):

Sed uidesne, poëtae quid mali adferant? lamentantes inducunt fortissimos uiros, molliunt animos nostros, ita sunt deinde dulces, ut non legantur modo, sed etiam ediscantur. sic ad malam domesticam disciplinam uitamque umbratilem et delicatam cum accesserunt etiam poëtae, neruos omnes uirtutis elidunt. recte igitur a Platone eiciuntur ex ea ciuitate, quam finxit ille, cum optimos mores et optimum rei publicae statum exquireret. at uero nos, docti scilicet a Graecia, haec [et] a pueritia legimus¹⁴ ediscimus, hanc eruditionem liberalem et doctrinam putamus.

But do you see what harm the poets inflict? They introduce great heroes wailing, they enfeeble our souls, and on top of that are so agreeable that they are not only read but actually learned by heart. So when to bad home upbringing and a sheltered and dainty way of life the poets are added as well, they crush all the sinews of virtue. So Plato was right to expel them from the society which he framed in his search for the best character and the best political constitution. But we, who undoubtedly learned it from Greece, read and learn by heart these things from childhood, and consider this to be liberal education and training. (trans. Douglas, adapted)

As a follower and emulator of Plato, Cicero accepts his negative characterisation of mimetic poetry and the harms it can do. Accordingly, the underlined sentences here are drawn straight from *Republic* 10 (605cd):

οἱ γὰρ που βέλτιστοι ἡμῶν ἀκροώμενοι Ὁμήρου ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν τραγῳδοποιῶν μιμουμένον τινὰ τῶν ἡρώων ἐν πένθει ὄντα καὶ μακρὰν ῥῆσιν ἀποτείνοντα ἐν τοῖς ὄδυρμοῖς ἢ καὶ ἄδοντάς τε καὶ κοπτομένους, οἴσθ' ὅτι χαίρομέν τε καὶ ἐνδόντες ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς...

The best of us, I imagine, when we hear Homer or one of the tragic poets imitating some hero in a state of grief, as he drags out a long speech of lamentation, or even breaks into song, or starts beating his breast... well, you know how it is. We enjoy it, and surrender ourselves to it... (trans. Griffith).

¹² Already referenced at *Tusc.* 2.9; see also *Lucullus* 11, with BRITAIN 2001: 65-66.

¹³ On Philo in this passage see SPAHLINGER 2005: 188-189;

¹⁴ ediscimus *Seyffert*; et discimus *codd.*

While Cicero acknowledges the existence of these harms and accepts that an ideal state (i.e. the Kallipolis of *Republic*) would be free of poets, he enjoys and appreciates poetry nonetheless, with *at vero nos* indicating a strong contrast between the ideal policy of Kallipolis and the reality of Cicero's (and the interlocutor's)¹⁵ cultural practice.¹⁶ As Cicero well knows, he is echoing here a tension present in Plato already, where mimetic poetry, despite its harms, is regularly quoted for confirmatory philosophical purposes, and where Socrates himself, in the opening lines of *Republic* 10 (595b), expresses the very same ambivalence that Cicero states above: ῥητέον, ἦν δ' ἐγώ· καίτοι φιλία γέ τις με καὶ αἰδῶς ἐκ παιδός ἔχουσα περὶ Ὁμήρου ἀποκωλύει λέγειν 'I'd better explain,' I said, 'though the affection and respect I have had for Homer since I was a child makes me very reluctant to say it.'¹⁷ Socrates's boyhood appreciation for poetry is deliberately echoed by Cicero (ἐκ παιδός, *a pueritia*).

The central argumentative passage of *Tusculans* 2 is a diptych, beginning at 2.34 with habituation to pain through *consuetudo* or training (*exercitatio*), before ascending to the exertion of self-control over pain through rationality.¹⁸ The hinge between panels is at 2.42 – *de exercitatione et consuetudine et commentatione dixi, age sis, nunc de ratione uideamus* – although we don't arrive at the main argument regarding *ratio* until 2.47. Each of the two central arguments (2.34-41, 2.47-51) culminates in an extended quotation from early Roman drama (Ennius' unidentified Eurypylus play at 2.38-9,¹⁹ and Pacuvius' *Niptra* at 2.48-50), while each begins, as we shall see, with close engagement with the text of Plato: *Laws* 1 at 2.34, and *Republic* 4 at 2.47. In each panel, then, we move from engagement with Plato to quotation of early Latin poetry as a source for further philosophical illustration and confirmation.

Book 1 of Plato's *Laws* opens (624a) with references to the law codes of Sparta, Crete, and Homer's tale (*Odyssey* 19.178-9) of Minos' visit to his father Zeus:

AΘ. Θεὸς ἢ τις ἀνθρώπων ὑμῖν, ὃ ξένοι, εἴληφε τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς τῶν νόμων διαθέσεως;

ΚΛ. Θεός, ὃ ξένε, θεός, ὡς γε τὸ δικαιοτάτον εἶπεῖν· παρὰ μὲν ἡμῖν Ζεὺς, παρὰ δὲ Λακεδαιμονίοις, ὅθεν ὁδε ἐστίν, οἶμαι φάναι τούτους Ἀπόλλωνα. ἦ γάρ;

ΜΕ. Ναί.

AΘ. Μῶν οὖν καθ' Ὁμηρον λέγεις ὡς τοῦ Μίνω φοιτῶντος πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκάστοτε συνουσίαν δι' ἐνάτου ἔτους καὶ κατὰ τὰς παρ' ἐκείνου φήμας ταῖς πόλεσιν ὑμῖν θέντος τοὺς νόμους;

Athenian: Is it a god, my friends, who in your view should take the credit for your legal arrangements? Or some human?

Cleinius: A god, my friend. Rightfully speaking, it has to be a god. With us it's Zeus. In Sparta, where our companion here is from, I believe they say it's Apollo, don't they?

Megillus: Yes.

¹⁵ Reading *nos* as inclusive of the interlocutor; *pluralis auctoris* seems less likely given the first-person singulars at 2.26.

¹⁶ See esp. the sensitive analysis of WOOLF 2015: 219-220.

¹⁷ Hence the ironical *docti scilicet a Graecia*: Cicero knows full well that the love of poetry is a Greek inheritance.

¹⁸ This 'ascent to *ratio*' structure is found also in *Tusculans* 1 (GILDENHARD 2007: 263).

¹⁹ Perhaps the *Hectoris Lytra*.

Athenian: Ah, you agree with Homer, then, that Minos used to go and stay with his father every eight years, and that Zeus's utterances were the basis for the laws he gave your cities?

The first panel of Cicero's diptych – his argument on habituation to pain through training – opens at *Tusc.* 2.34 with the same three elements: Crete, Sparta, and the visit of Minos to Zeus:

Cretum quidem leges, quas siue Iuppiter siue Minos sanxit de Iouis quidem sententia, ut poëtae ferunt, itemque Lycurgi, laboribus erudiunt iuuentutem, uenando currendo, esuriendo sitiendo, algendo aestuando.

The laws of the Cretans, established by Jupiter, or by Minos in accordance with Jupiter's wishes, as the poets tell, and those of Lycurgus too, train the young men by making them toil, hunting and running, going hungry and thirsty, feeling cold and heat. (trans. Douglas)

The allusion, enhanced by the fact that the base text constitutes the very opening words of Plato's dialogue, is unmistakable. The anonymisation and pluralisation of Plato's Homeric citation (*ut poetae ferunt*) playfully invites the reader to access deeper textual knowledge, and may also reflect Cicero's desire, discussed above, to promote and emphasise the value of Latin poetry at the expense of Greek – the citation is not only anonymised but also thereby deHellenised.

The use of training and custom to habituate children to suffer hardships is a recurring concern of *Laws* 1-2. See, for example, 653b on how children, who have not yet reached the age of reason, are ὀρθῶς εἰθίσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν προσηκόντων ἐθῶν 'correctly habituated by appropriate customs'. This habituation is discussed in the opening pages of *Laws* 1 with reference to the upbringing of Spartan youth, which focus is closely emulated by Cicero in the opening pages of his argument on habituation in *Tusc.* 2. Particularly important is *Laws* 633bc, where Megillus expatiates on the importance to Spartan society of training in αἱ καρτερήσεις τῶν ἀλγηδόνων 'endurance of physical pain', listing such customs as severe beatings of children, the 'secret service' (κρυπτεία), and naked athletics, each of which is reflected in the list of Spartan customs Cicero produces at 2.34-36. Furthermore, at 2.37, Cicero's reference to the use of anapaests in military training reflects Plato's discussion and quotation of Tyrtaeus at *Laws* 629be. We have in the opening pages of *Laws* 1, then, a text of Plato containing directly relevant material about the power of habituation to enable one to endure pain, with examples drawn from Spartan custom. Cicero, in turn, opens his own section on habituation to pain with a close allusion to Plato's opening sentences, followed by Spartan examples matching those given by Megillus at 633bc, into which are incorporated two early Latin tragic adespota about Spartan custom and brutality (*Trag. Inc.* 209 Ribbeck; 205-7 Ribbeck). This Platonising opening to Cicero's section on habituation to pain culminates at 2.38-39 with extended quotations from an Ennian tragedy which adapts Patroclus' medical treatment of Eurypylos in *Iliad* 11, which Cicero uses to exemplify and confirm his arguments about the power of military training and courage to enable one to endure pain.

At 2.42 we ascend from *consuetudo* to *ratio*, as Cicero moves on to the power of rational self-control to endure physical pain. The ground is prepared via repeated recourse to a *fortiori* argumentation: if *consuetudo* and training can enable pre-rational children (2.34), soldiers (2.39), even gladiators (2.41, quoting Lucilius), to endure terrible physical pain, what will the much greater power of *ratio* enable the *sapiens* to do? The proper argument about the

power of *ratio* begins at 2.47. Here, once again, we find intricate engagement with the text of Plato, in this instance *Republic*:

reliquum est, ut tute tibi imperes. quamquam hoc nescio quo modo dicatur. quasi duo simus, ut alter imperet, alter pareat. non inscite tamen dicitur. est enim animus in partis tributus duas, quarum altera rationis est particeps, altera expers. cum igitur praecipitur, ut nobismet ipsis imperemus, hoc praecipitur, ut ratio coërceat temeritatem.

It remains that you should rule over yourself. Although I find this statement puzzling, as if we were two, so that one rules, the other obeys. Still, it is not a foolish statement. The soul is divided into two parts, one of which partakes of reason, the other does not. So, when the instruction that we should rule over ourselves is given, the instruction is that reason should restrain impulsiveness. (trans. Douglas, adapted).

Cicero introduces the question of rational self-control by focusing on a phrase – presented as a piece of ordinary language – meaning ‘control oneself’. He then expresses puzzlement about the phrase, before suggesting it can be explained by the bipartition of the soul – one part rules over another.²⁰ This recapitulates precisely a sequence from *Republic* 4 (430e-431b):²¹

Κόσμος πού τις, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ἡ σωφροσύνη ἐστὶν καὶ ἡδονῶν τινῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν ἐγκράτεια, ὡς φασὶ, κρείττω δὴ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες οὐκ οἶδ’ ὄντινα τρόπον. καὶ ἄλλα ἄττα τοιαῦτα ὡσπερ ἴχνη αὐτῆς λέγεται. ἦ γάρ;

Πάντων μάλιστα, ἔφη.

Οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν κρείττω αὐτοῦ γελοῖον; ὁ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ κρείττων καὶ ἥττων δήπου ἂν αὐτοῦ εἶη καὶ ὁ ἥττων κρείττων. ὁ αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐν ἅπασιν τοῦτοις προσαγορεύεται.

Τί δ’ οὐ;

Ἀλλ’, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, φαίνεται μοι βούλεσθαι λέγειν οὗτος ὁ λόγος ὡς τι ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τὸ μὲν βέλτιον ἐνι, τὸ δὲ χεῖρον, καὶ ὅταν μὲν τὸ βέλτιον φύσει τοῦ χείρονος ἐγκρατὲς ᾖ, τοῦτο λέγειν τὸ κρείττω αὐτοῦ, ἐπαινεῖ γοῦν. ὅταν δὲ ὑπὸ τροφῆς κακῆς ἢ τινος ὁμιλίας κρατηθῇ ὑπὸ πλήθους τοῦ χείρονος σμικρότερον τὸ βέλτιον ὢν, τοῦτο δὲ ὡς ἐν ὀνειδίει ψέγειν τε καὶ καλεῖν ἥττω ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ ἀκόλαστον τὸν οὕτω διακείμενον.

‘Self-discipline, I take it, is a kind of order. They say it is a mastery of pleasures and desires, describing a person as (I don’t quite know how) ‘master of himself’. And there are other clues of the same sort in the way it is talked about, aren’t there?’

‘Indeed there are,’ he said.

‘But isn’t the phrase “master of himself” an absurdity? The master of himself must surely also be slave to himself, and the slave to himself must be master of himself. It’s the same person being talked about all the time.’

‘Of course.’

‘What this way of speaking seems to me to indicate is that in the soul of a single person there is a better part and a worse part. When the naturally better part is in control of the worse, this is what is meant by “master of himself”.’ (trans. Griffith, adapted).

This is the very first discussion of the partition of the soul in *Republic*, a discussion motivated via the analysis of an ordinary language expression following an assertion of

²⁰ For Cicero’s account of the relation between parts of the soul in this sequence see now Warren 2025b.

²¹ See KORWIN 1972: 28; GRILLI 1987: 75-76.

confusion (Plato's οὐκ οἶδ' ὄντινα τρόπον being translated directly by Cicero's *hoc nescio quo modo dicatur*). The engagement with Plato is precise and intricate. The bipartition of the soul, with the rational component having power over the irrational component, then becomes the focus of Cicero's argumentation in *Tusculans* 2.²² The relation of control and subordination between soul-parts is expressed in servile and military metaphors which find direct analogues in the text of *Republic* 4 (*ut dominus seruo; ut imperator militi; ut bonos militiae; ut seuro imperatori miles; δουλεύω; καταδουλόω; προπολεμέω; ἄρχω*).²³

While elsewhere in *Tusculans* Cicero acknowledges Plato's tripartite division of the soul (1.20), the bipartite model explored here is neither a simplification of nor a departure from Plato. As can be seen, the particular part of *Republic* Cicero is drawing on here also relies on a bipartite model (the tripartite model will be worked out later in Book 4), and indeed it is typical of Plato's practice to move between different models of soul-partition depending on the needs of a given argument. The combination, in *Tusc.*, then, of an acknowledgement of the tripartite model at 1.20 and the exploration of a bipartite model here matches Plato's own variable practise.²⁴

Later in *Republic* 4 (441bc), in his elaboration of the tripartite soul, Socrates draws on a line of Homer concerning the psychology of Odysseus to demonstrate how the rational part of the soul can exert control over a non-rational part (in this case the *thumoeides* soul):²⁵

πρὸς δὲ τούτοις καὶ ὁ ἄνω που ἐκεῖ εἵπομεν, τὸ τοῦ Ὀμήρου μαρτυρήσει, τὸ 'στῆθος δὲ πλήξας κραδίην ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ' [*Odyssey* 20.17] ἐνταῦθα γὰρ δὴ σαφῶς ὡς ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ ἐπιπλήττον πεποίηκεν Ὀμηρος τὸ ἀναλογισάμενον περὶ τοῦ βελτίονός τε καὶ χείρονος τῷ ἀλογίστῳ θυμουμένῳ.

And apart from these examples, there is the evidence of Homer, in the line I think we quoted earlier.²⁶ 'He smote his chest, and thus rebuked his heart.' In that passage Homer clearly portrays two different elements. The part which has reflected rationally on what is better and what is worse has some sharp words to say to the element which is irrationally angry.' (trans. Griffith)

It can be no coincidence that at 2.48-50, where Cicero seeks poetic confirmation for the idea that the rational part of the soul is able to exert control over the irrational part, he also draws on the example of Odysseus, 'the wisest man of Greece'.²⁷ But instead of quoting Homer, he looks to an early Latin text in a different genre, which brings us finally to

²² Once the connection of *Tusc.* 2.47 to Plato, *Resp.* 430e-431b is recognised, a further structural resemblance between Cicero's argument and the argument of *Republic* 4 may be identified. As mentioned above, Cicero's treatment of habituation ends with a focus on military courage, demonstrated by recourse to Ennius' Eurypylus (2.38-39). There follows the ascent to the consideration of *ratio*, at the heart of which is the above discussion of self-control, drawing on *Republic* 430e-431b. Immediately prior to this sequence of *Republic*, at 429a-430c, we also find focus on military courage. There is a structural match, then, between the movement from military courage to rational self-control in *Tusculans* 2, and the equivalent movement at *Republic* 429a-431b, a text on which Cicero is evidently directly drawing. For a reader with a very close knowledge of *Republic*, once the Platonic connection at 2.47 is noticed, this deeper structural resemblance between the two texts may become apparent by a kind of insight by hindsight.

²³ For these metaphors in Plato see KAMTEKAR 2006.

²⁴ For the history of the tripartite division in the Academy and the Stoa after Plato see VANDER WAERDT 1985A and 1985b. Elsewhere in Cicero (e.g. *Off.* 1.101) the bipartite soul is presented in terms that show clear Stoic influence; here, however, there is no need to look beyond Plato to find Cicero's inspiration.

²⁵ For this Homeric quotation in *Republic* see HALLIWELL 2000: 102, 107.

²⁶ 390d; the same line is also quoted at *Phaedo* 94d: it was therefore a well-known Homeric quotation in Plato.

²⁷ The proverbial wisdom attributed to Odysseus here makes him an appropriate (and appropriately greater) follow-up to Eurypylus, the textbook soldier, whose courage, as depicted in the unidentified Ennian tragedy, was used at 2.38-39 to demonstrate the power of endurance learned through *consuetudo*.

Pacuvius, whose *Niptra* dealt with the end of Odysseus' life, after he had suffered a terrible wound.²⁸

48. non nimis in Niptris ille sapientissimus Graeciae saucius lamentatur uel modice potius:

*pedetemptim, inquit, ite et sedato nisu,
ne succussu arripiat maior
dolor.*

49. (Pacuius hoc melius quam Sophocles; apud illum enim perquam flebiliter Ulixes lamentatur in uulnere); tamen huic leuiter gementi illi ipsi, qui ferunt saucium, personae grauitatem intuentes non dubitant dicere:

*tu quoque, Ulixes, quamquam grauiter
cernimus ictum, nimis paene animo es
molli, qui consuetus in armis
aeuom agere...*

Intellegit poeta prudens ferendi doloris consuetudinem esse non contemnendam magistram.

50. atque ille non inmoderate magno in dolore:

*retinete, tenete! opprimit ulcus;
nudate! heu miserum me! excrucior.*

incipit labi, deinde ilico desinit:

*operite, abscedite, iam iam!
Mittite! nam attrectatu et quassu
saeuum amplificatis dolorem.*

uidesne ut obmutuerit non sedatus corporis, sed castigatus animi dolor? itaque in extremis Niptris alios quoque obiurgat, idque moriens:

*conqueri fortunam aduersam, non lamentari decet.
id uiri est officium, fletus muliebri ingenio additus.*

huius animi pars illa mollior rationi sic paruit, ut se uero imperatori miles pudens.

48. In *Niptra* that wisest man in Greece does not lament to excess when wounded, rather he is quite restrained:

'Go slowly,' he says, 'and with placid stride, for fear greater pain might seize me with the jolting.'

49. (Pacuvius handles this better than Sophocles. With him Ulysses laments over his wounds most tearfully.) Even so at his slight groans the very people who are carrying the wounded man, considering the heroic stature of the character, do not hesitate to say:

'You too, Ulysses, although we see you gravely stricken, are of too weak a spirit, you who, accustomed to spend your days under arms...'

²⁸ For the play see SCHIERL 2006: 386–400.

The poet sensibly realises that habit is no contemptible instructor in bearing pain.

50. And the hero, not over-reacting, considering his great pain:

'Keep hold of me! Hold me! My wound overwhelms me. Uncover it. Oh how I suffer! I am in agony.'

He begins to lose grip, then stops immediately:

'Cover it up: go away at once now. Leave me alone: with your touch and your shaking you increase the fierce pain.'

Do you see how what has fallen silent is not a physical pain which has been soothed, but a mental one which has been checked by a rebuke? So at the end of *Niptra* he criticises others too, and that when dying:

'It is seemly to deplore ill fortune but not to bewail it: that is a man's duty; weeping is bestowed on women's natures.'

That feeble part of his soul obeyed reason just as a conscientious soldier obeys a stern commander. (trans. Douglas, adapted)

This long quotation does not introduce a new theory of the endurance of pain, but instead serves to confirm elements of the theory already articulated by Cicero; this confirmatory function of poetic quotation is familiar from the practice of Plato.²⁹ As a demonstration simply that one part of the soul can 'command' another the significance of the quotation may not be immediately apparent, certainly relative to *Odyssey* 20.17, but there is a deeper structural alignment with the overall argument at *Tusc.* 2.34-47.³⁰ Cicero's argument there moves from the use of *consuetudo* at 2.34-41 to the (more powerful) use of *ratio* at 2.47ff; here, despite his training as a soldier, Ulixes' *consuetudo* has failed to enable him to withstand his pain (*nimis paene animo es | molli, qui consuetus in armis | aeuom agere*, 2.49), meaning that the eventual mastery of pain that Cicero reads into the lines *operite, abscedite, iam iam mittite...* (2.50) is to be attributed instead to the more powerful *ratio*. This dynamic demonstration of the power of *ratio* over *consuetudo* is made possible by the extended nature of the quotation, showing (Cicero would have us believe) a change in Odysseus within the dramatic scene, as he moves from failed endurance-by-*consuetudo* to successful endurance-by-*ratio*, thus recapitulating the structure of the Book's argument between 2.34 and 2.47. This extended quotation (typical for *Tusculans* 2, and indeed for Cicero) is a departure from the practice of Plato, who prefers short decontextualised quotations, often a single line, or a short run of lines.³¹

Cicero's theories on the endurance of pain do not require that he depict for us a hero who eliminates his own pain completely. The claim of *Tusculans* 2 is decidedly not that the wise man feels no physical pain: see the realist rejection of Epicurean arguments at 2.17-18, *si fortis est in perferendo, officio satis est*, where it is made quite clear that negative reactions to extreme pain are unavoidable even in heroes (this is the point of *non sedatus corporis, sed castigatus animi dolor* at 2.50; endurance does not eliminate pain itself, but rather psychic distress and loss of control in the face of pain). Accordingly, that Ulixes is evidently reacting to severe pain here does not detract from his moral achievement, in Cicero's eyes, of enduring that pain *non immoderate*. I do not subscribe to the view of Schierl (2015: 66) that this sequence in the original Pacuvius necessarily showed a Ulixes who was not in control of himself, but who is tendentiously characterised otherwise here by Cicero. To the contrary, while the precise tone of the Pacuvian original is underdetermined by the evidence we have, the passage as transmitted is quite compatible with Cicero's reading. Albeit he groans softly

²⁹ HALLIWELL 2000: 107.

³⁰ On the quotation from *Niptra* see especially the excellent treatment of Schierl 2015: 45-62; ČULÍK-BAIRD 2023: 185-188; on the structure of this sequence and its place in *Tusc.* 2 see also WOOLF 2015: 222-223.

³¹ HALLIWELL 2000: 99.

leuiter gemens, with the exception of the four words *heu miserum me! excrucior!* Ulixes' language throughout the anapaestic sections here is directive and controlling: *retinete, tenete, nudate, operite, abscedite, mittite*. These Pacuvian imperatives are significant for Cicero's psychological analysis: recall that, for Cicero, a governing metaphor for the power of the rational part of the soul is that of military command. Ulixes' loss of control, at the moment the wound is uncovered (and, presumably, he sees it), is temporary, before his rational faculties resume control, he returns to his imperatives, and commands his attendants to cover the wound up and leave him be. It is this moment at 2.50 – where the power of Ulixes' *consuetudo* as a soldier habituated to pain appears to desert him, yet he resumes control nevertheless – that Cicero interprets as confirmation of the power of *ratio* to enable one to endure pain. Contrast the excruciating exclamatory sequence of *Trachiniae* translated at 2.20-22, and recall Cicero's claim here that Pacuvius handles the depiction of heroic pain *melius quam Sophocles*.³²

The quoted text ends gnominically with a condemnation (seemingly in the mouth of Ulixes) of lamentation in men, as the metre shifts from anapaests to trochaic septenarii. Schierl draws attention to how *extremis in Niptris* (2.50) indicates that these lines are drawn from the end of the play. Cicero, then, has combined a Pacuvian scene depicting Ulixes in extreme pain with a later scene from the same play in which Ulixes reflects on appropriate responses to pain. This dislocation and recontextualization of lines is telling, but need not be considered inappropriate, except perhaps by our own contextualist standards to which there is little reason to think that Cicero would have given his assent. Reading quotations contextually was not seen as necessary or even desirable by Greek and Roman philosophers, most famously in the case of Plato, who routinely removes quotations from their internal context.³³ Indeed, Cicero's own treatment of Plato's poetic quotations takes this decontextualist tendency further still: as convincingly demonstrated by Čulík-Baird (2023: 84-86), when Cicero quotes a passage of poetry previously quoted by Plato, he often does so to demonstrate a quite different (sometime opposite) point. Poetic quotations, in the hands of Plato and Cicero, take on a power of their own, while at the same time maintaining a link to the wisdom of their poets even once liberated from their contexts and recycled to new purposes. I would suggest that the dislocation and recombination of Pacuvian lines by Cicero at 2.48-50 should be read in just such a light: as a demonstration of the power of decontextualised quotations in philosophical prose. Indeed, in the re-fitting of carefully-selected segments of Pacuvius to the particular argumentative context of *Tusculans* 2.48-50, we may detect the very practice which Cicero earlier identified and praised in the lectures of Philo of Larissa: *lecta poëmata et loco adiungebat*.

Just as Plato both expelled mimetic poets from Kallipolis and yet also drew on Homer to support and confirm his doctrines of the soul, so Cicero, in *Tusculans* 2, at once acknowledges the harm mimetic poetry can do to its audiences while at the same time giving rein to the dynamic power of poetry (and especially dramatic poetry) to illustrate certain features of his moral psychology. This ambivalence in the Ciceronian attitude to poetry is quintessentially Platonic, and itself an aspect of Cicero's Platonic *aemulatio*. We have seen that within *Tusculans* 2 Cicero is closely and intimately engaged with the texts of *Laws* and *Republic*, matching his similarly close engagement with *Phaedo* and *Apology* in *Tusculans* 1.³⁴ We also know that Cicero pays close attention to Plato's quotations of poetry elsewhere.³⁵

³² See WOOLF 2015: 219-221.

³³ See esp. HALLIWELL 2000, 99, and 110: 'the tenets and practices of what one might call critical contextualism, which Plato has often been felt to be blind to, do not represent a timelessly obvious way of reading poetry, but need to be seen as the product of special and extremely sophisticated cultural expectations.'

³⁴ See above, n. 10.

³⁵ ČULÍK-BAIRD 2023: 80-86.

It can come as no surprise, then, that in developing his account of the role played by the partition of the soul in enduring physical pain, he draws on the very same character – Odysseus/Ulixes – that Plato did in a comparable sequence of *Republic* 4. As in Plato, Cicero’s quotation is decontextualised and shaped to fit its context; as in Plato, the purpose of the quotation is not to bring in a new theory but to illustrate and confirm a previously articulated one. Unlike Plato, however, Cicero quotes at length, using dramatic form and dynamism not just to confirm a single point but to illustrate aspects of the whole of the theory of endurance developed at 2.34-47. And unlike Plato, Cicero’s analysis has a bilingual element, as, in keeping with his nationalising motives in the *philosophica*, he asserts the exemplary moral value of a canonical early Roman poet over and above that of a canonical Greek one. The reception of early Latin poetry in *Tusculans* 2 is not dyadic, not simply a case of Cicero drawing on and reflecting on the poetry of the Roman past. Rather, Cicero’s engagement with early Latin poetry must be triangulated with respect to the quotational practice of Plato, *ille deus noster*.

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