

CICERO'S DEFINITION OF ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟΣ¹

JONATHAN ZARECKI

Cicero's use of the Greek word πολιτικός has been almost entirely ignored by scholars and commentators.² Most, like D. S. Shackleton Bailey, simply translate it with the English cognate "political," while others assume that Cicero was merely continuing Attic prose usage.³ There are several compelling reasons that suggest we should take a closer look at Cicero's use of πολιτικός. First, there is no firm evidence that the educated Roman elite used Greek in everyday conversation among themselves, and thus the

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2 All citations from the *ad Atticum* and *ad Familiares* are taken from Shackleton Bailey's Cambridge editions. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

3 Rose 1921.108 declared πολιτικός in Cicero to be no different in meaning than as it is found in Attic prose and comedy. Earlier works had been similarly unconcerned with πολιτικός. Steele 1900.390 did not call specific attention to πολιτικός and categorizes Cicero's use of Greek as both a display of his fluency in the language and a way to fill gaps in his Latin vocabulary. The Tyrell-Purser edition makes no mention of it at all beyond noting that even when transliterated, it is not a Latin word. Shackleton Bailey, as might be expected, makes more detailed comments on the passages containing πολιτικός, but mostly for rendering assistance with translation (he often translates πολιτικός with "political"). Baldwin 1992 focuses on the *ad Familiares* (deferring to Shackleton Bailey's authority on the *ad Atticum*), in which πολιτικός appears but once and does not draw comment. Adams 2003.308–47 treats in detail the linguistic phenomenon of code-switching in Cicero's letters, but dismisses Cicero's use of derivatives of πόλις as a "lexical convenience" only made possible by his deeply personal relationship with Atticus.

appearance of any Greek should be by itself of some interest.⁴ Second, J. G. F. Powell (1994) argues persuasively for reading *rector rei publicae* and its variants as Cicero's Latin translation of the Platonic πολιτικός.⁵ Third, A. A. Long (1995.44) notes that it is doubtful that Cicero was familiar with Plato's *Politicus*, though he was influenced by both Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's now-lost treatise on the best citizen.⁶ Furthermore, while it is true that Cicero was well educated in Greek literature, it would be simplistic and rather limiting to assume that all of Cicero's Greek reflected classical usage.⁷ His education in Greece would presumably have made him comfortable with the *koine* of the period, and several scholars have called attention to this fact.⁸ All in all, it seems that a reexamination of Cicero's use of πολιτικός is in order.

- 4 See Kaimio 1979.189–93. Birch 1981.161, writing on Augustus's letters to Tiberius, states unequivocally that the use of Greek in letters between educated Romans was "normal." We should not, however, dismiss the influence of Atticus's Hellenism on the Greek vocabulary in Cicero's correspondence. Swain 2002.164 notes that Cicero's use of Greek should be seen as a "discourse strategy" in his Latin writings rather than as a demonstration of Cicero's bilingualism. Dubuisson 1980.890, in another example, finds support for the authenticity of Caesar's last words being spoken in Greek as a reflection of his relationship with Brutus.
- 5 So too does Lepore 1954.12, 57. Krarup 1956.42 believes it to be a fruitless exercise to try and find a single Greek source for Cicero's conception of the *rector*; cf. Heinze 1924.93. Ferrary 1995.52 notes that Cicero was capable of translating πολιτικός with *principes*, as at *Fin.* 5.11. On several occasions he makes disparaging comments about those who use Greek indiscriminately (*Off.* 1.111, *Tusc.* 1.15), and he also professed that Latin was superior to Greek for philosophical discussions (*Fin.* 1.10, 3.5, 5.51; *Tusc.* 2.35, 3.10, 4.10).
- 6 Cicero makes explicit reference to Aristotle's work in *Q. fr.* 3.5.1. For a comprehensive list of Cicero's references to Plato, see DeGraff 1940.
- 7 Though Cicero refers to Plato as *noster Plato*, "our Plato" (*Rep.* 4.5, *Leg.* 3.5); *deus ille noster*, "that famous god of ours" (*Att.* 4.16.3); *princeps philosophorum*, "foremost of the philosophers" (*Fin.* 5.7); and "quasi quidam deus philosophorum," "just like a god of philosophers" (*ND* 2.32), and mentions Aristotle by name as an inspiration for his work on the best constitution and citizen (*Q. fr.* 3.5.1; cf. *Fin.* 5.11, which seems to be a direct reference to Aristotle's *Politicus*), we cannot be sure that the Greek used in the letters was classical; for the objection, see Powell 1994.28–29.
- 8 The comment by Powell 1995.294 sums this point up nicely: "The language of Greek philosophy did not spring fully armed from the head of Thales, but developed over a number of generations; and the technical terms differed from one school to another." Cicero was certainly fond of coining words, and Rose 1921 provides a fairly comprehensive list of Ciceronian neologisms. Dubuisson 1980.887, however, attributes to Cicero a reliance on the *koine* of his era. The Greek of Cicero's time was centuries removed from the Greek of Plato and Aristotle, and it is indeed possible that a Roman could have been fluent in the current version of spoken Greek but unskilled in the more classical and literary form; cf. Adams 2003.13, 319.

If Powell is correct, as I believe he is, that Cicero translates the Platonic πολιτικός as *rector rei publicae*, we are left with the following question: what is the meaning of πολιτικός when Cicero renders it in the original Greek? This article will investigate Cicero's use of πολιτικός and, through an examination of its occurrences, elucidate its particular Ciceronian meaning. I will first give a brief overview of both the Platonic πολιτικός and the Ciceronian *rector rei publicae*. Then by examining the context of its use and Cicero's overall consistency in its application, I will show that πολιτικός has a Ciceronian meaning that is much narrower in scope than either the πολιτικός of Greek philosophy or the Ciceronian *rector*.⁹ Cicero uses this word as a noun, an adverb, and an adjective. As a noun, the Ciceronian πολιτικός is depicted as the rectifier of immediate and pressing political crises, a transitory figure used to eliminate aberrations in the functioning of the Roman state and thus ensure its continuation. As an adjective and adverb, it is used to describe those situations that require a πολιτικός of the Ciceronian style for their resolution.

Though I will be discussing Cicero's concept and definition of πολιτικός, I will not be promoting a single Latin or English word as a concrete definition, for I am not sure that it is possible to do this. We should be wary of using "political" as a blanket translation for the word (as Shackelton Bailey prefers to do). Nor will I employ a periphrasis, though Cicero, and the Latin language in general, tends to employ circumlocutions to describe "political" ideas.¹⁰ There are instances in which, for convenience's sake, I will translate πολιτικός with English cognates such as "political"; the word is, after all, derived from πόλις and often denotes the participation of citizens in government or civic affairs (e.g., Arist. *Pol.* 1253a3, Pl. *Ap.*

9 The Greek form πολιτικός appears only thirty-two times in the entire Ciceronian corpus, and of these thirty-two, twenty-seven are found in the letters to Atticus—and over half of those in the letters from 51–49 B.C.E. It also appears once each in the letters to his brother (*Q. fr.* 2.13.1) and his friends (*Fam.* 2.8.1), and thrice in the philosophical works (*Brut.* 265, *Fin.* 4.5, 5.66). It appears twice transliterated into Latin (*de Orat.* 3.109, *Fam.* 8.1.4); Oksala 1953 does not make note of it. Cicero also mentions the *Tripolitikos* of Dicaearchus in *Att.* 13.32.2.

10 In the letters, Cicero favors a form of *res publica*; e.g., *Att.* 1.13.2: "nihil agens in re publica," "(he is) doing nothing in the political arena"; 2.17.2: "in re tam utor quam in hac civili et publica," "in no matter more than this civil and political one"; 14.9.1: "de re publica multa cognovi ex tuis litteris," "I've learned much about political matters from your letter"; 5.2.3: "de re publica scribas ad me," "You write to me about politics"; 16.15.3: "redeo ad rem publicam," "I come now to political matters"; cf. Tyrell-Purser on *Fam.* 8.1.5.

31d, Xen. *Mem.* 2.6.24). In general, however, I will leave πολιτικός in its Greek form and use its context to explain its meaning.

The Platonic πολιτικός finds its most explicit expression in the dialogue of the same name. Although Cicero was likely not familiar with this work, as Long suggests, he would have been familiar with the qualities of the πολιτικός. There is a strong correlation between the πολιτικός of the *Politicus* and the philosopher-guardians of the *Republic*, and its use in other dialogues is consistent.¹¹ In Plato's works, a πολιτικός is first and foremost the ruler of a city or state. He (or they, as it is possible for there to be a number of πολιτικοί) has expert knowledge of the art of governing (τέχνη πολιτική, *Prot.* 319a, *Grg.* 521d, *Leg.* 677c).¹² He rules his city with the interests of the subjects ahead of his own (*R.* 341c–42e, *Plt.* 268b–c, 296–301d; cf. Rowe 2003.129–34). But for all of the characteristics that Plato assigns to his πολιτικός, he is nevertheless a hypothetical figure, one that does not exist outside of the ideal philosophical state.

The Ciceronian *rector rei publicae* is similar. Like Plato's πολιτικός, Cicero's *rector* is a statesman of the highest rank, and he leads through his exceptional *auctoritas*.¹³ He is skilled in governing (*Rep.* 2.51; cf. *de Or.* 1.211), though he does not receive a formal education in the art of ruling, the τέχνη πολιτική (called the *maxima ars* at *Rep.* 1.35).¹⁴ He

11 See, especially, Samaras 2007.137–50 and McCabe 1997.94–112, who views the *Politicus* as a clarification and extension of some of the ideals in the *Republic*; also Sprague 1976.100. For the opposing view, see Lane 1995. Powell 1994.24 thinks that Cicero may have had some acquaintance with Plato's dialogue—at least its influence on later Greek political theory.

12 This τέχνη has much in common with the τέχνη βασιλική (*Euthd.* 291b–c), though Aristotle states unequivocally that the τέχνη πολιτική and τέχνη βασιλική are distinct (*Pol.* 1252a8–11).

13 See Hellegouarc'h 1972.351–52, who also believes that the *rector* is “le plus éminent des sénateurs”; cf. *Orat.* 3.63. Krarup 1956.198–99 defines the *auctoritas* of the *rector* as akin to that of a *paterfamilias*. Though it was unlikely that one could achieve this *summa auctoritas* without having been elected to political office (as Cicero seems to imply in *Rep.* 1.7–8), an extraordinary military command of the sort that Pompey held in Africa against the Marians and in Spain against Sertorius could also bestow on someone similar *auctoritas*. There does seem to be circular logic present here. For the *rector* to attain *auctoritas*, he must originate and instigate public policy; according to Earl 1967.33, it was the only way to attain *auctoritas*. Yet the *rector* could be an *auctor publici consilii* only by having *auctoritas*. Election to public office, however, would give a potential *rector* enough *auctoritas* to embark on the beginnings of his regency.

14 Cicero says that it is important that a *rector* not spend too much time on his studies, since most of his time should be spent in learning through practice (*Rep.* 5.5: “sed se respondentando et lectitando et scriptando ne impediatur, ut quasi dispensare rem publicam et in ea quodam modo vilicare possit”); cf. *Rep.* 1.11.

relies on his *prudencia* (a word derived, according to Cicero, from *provideo*) to prevent sedition and civil disturbance (*Rep.* 6.1), and like the Platonic version, he serves to make men better through his own example (*Rep.* 2.69; cf. *Pl. Prot.* 319a).¹⁵ He is analagous to a *gubernator*, steering the state clear of political upheaval as a navigator avoids storms (*Rep.* 1.11; cf. *Pl. R.* 6.488c–89c). He, like his Platonic predecessor, must always keep the safety of the state as his highest priority (*Leg.* 3.8). The *rector*, like the πολιτικός, is an ideal. Though in *de Oratore* 1.211 Cicero lists some famous names from Rome's past as examples of “rectores rei publicae et auctores consilii publici,” “governors of the state and authors of public policy,” including P. Lentulus, Ti. Gracchus, Q. Metellus, P. Africanus, and C. Laelius, he never applies the term *rector* to a living Roman. Nor do any of the ten occurrences of the word *rector* fall outside of the philosophical works (*de Or.* 1.211; *Rep.* 2.51, 5.5, 5.6, 5.8, 6.1, 6.13; *Fin.* 4.11; *Nat. D.* 2.90; *Div.* 1.24); Cicero's *rector* exists only in theory, not practice.

The Ciceronian πολιτικός differs from the Platonic πολιτικός / Ciceronian *rector* in respect to their role as rulers of the state, their expert knowledge of the τέχνη πολιτική, the insistence that they make men better through their own goodness (*Pl. Prt.* 319a; *Cic. Leg.* 3.7, 28), and their hypothetical nature. Whereas the titles πολιτικός and *rector* are applied by Plato and Cicero to those who rule or, rather, would rule, πολιτικός in Cicero contains no hint of governance.¹⁶ Indeed, no one whom Cicero calls a πολιτικός is, strictly speaking, a magistrate of the sort described in the *de*

15 In *Leg.* 3.28, Cicero says that the senate, in his ideal state, ought to be free from moral defect and should be an example for the rest of the people (“is ordo vitio careto, ceteris specimen esto”), and his concept of the *rector* does allow for a multitude of them in any given state (*Rep.* 6.13). But the comment in *Leg.* 3.28, and the following discussion, coming as it does after the lengthy discussion of piety (2.19–24) and the role of the censors in regulating the morality of the senate (3.6), implies that the example of the senate is to be merely moral, not political. Cicero does make mention of the training and education of the future members of the senate (*Leg.* 3.29), but here, too, the context implies that their training will primarily be concerned with learning how to avoid dishonor, not with how to become an effective politician.

16 *Leg.* 3.5 declares that “it is necessary that he who rules well must at another time have been obedient to another, and he who obeys modestly is deemed worthy of ruling in the future” (“nam et qui bene imperat, paruerit aliquando necesse est, et qui modeste paret, videtur qui aliquando imperet, dignus esse”). However, Cicero is discussing in this passage the role of the *magistratus*, whose primary function is to govern and who is in every instance bound to act according to the law (*Leg.* 3.2; see also Dyck 2004.431–33). Cicero does not expressly assign to his πολιτικός either a need for moral behavior or a requirement that he be bound by existing laws.

Legibus.¹⁷ They are, to be sure, expected to exercise leadership and exert their influence, but it is strictly their actions at specific times, particularly during political crises, that earn them the designation πολιτικός.¹⁸ These actions are both remedial and transitory, designed to eliminate aberrations in the functioning of the republic. Moreover, they are not designed to fortify the state against future irregularities, as is the case in Plato and with the *rector* (e.g., Pl. *Grg.* 519b–c, Cic. *Rep.* 1.11, 2.45, 6.1; cf. *Off.* 1.72, *ad Brut.* 1.15); the actions of a Ciceronian πολιτικός are strictly curative.

Furthermore, unlike the purely hypothetical Platonic πολιτικός and Ciceronian *rector*, the ideal embodied in the Ciceronian πολιτικός is achievable. As Neal Wood (1988.179) comments, Cicero was no “starry-eyed philosopher,” but rather a “clever and hard-headed politician with his feet planted firmly on the ground.” Cicero’s pragmatism certainly affected his conception of the πολιτικός, which becomes, in effect, a tangible alternative to the theoretical *rector* or the Platonic concept. While the πολιτικός/*rector* exists only in an idealized state, Cicero, save for one reference to the orator Demosthenes, applies πολιτικός exclusively to living people and the political problems for which the actions of a πολιτικός are needed for resolution. Through both positive and negative applications of the term, Cicero creates a clear picture of his expectations for, and the duties of, a πολιτικός.

It is true that the Ciceronian πολιτικός denotes, at some elemental level, a political expert or politically engaged citizen, which is the fundamental meaning in the original Greek; this meaning is also encapsulated in the term *rector rei publicae*.¹⁹ But the sense of the word as it is used by Cicero is that of a person who takes extraordinary action in a time of politi-

17 None of the men described by Cicero with some form of πολιτικός were at the time of the description holding civil magistracies that had been conferred through a free election (though all had served in some capacity in earlier years and had accrued significant *autoritas*). Brutus and Cassius were both praetors in 44, but Caesar’s extraordinary powers and his penchant for recommending candidates to the voting assemblies—or appointing them outright, as in the case of the one-day consulship of Caninius in 45 (Cic. *Fam.* 7.30.2, Dio 43.46.2–4, Plut. *Caes.* 58.2–3, Suet. *Jul.* 76.2)—casts some doubt on the legality of their appointments.

18 In the *pro Sestio* (97–102, 104, 136–40, 143) the *rector*’s duties are not exclusively moral or advisory; cf. van der Blom 2003.310–15.

19 Cicero uses *boni*, for example, for those whom he believes are responsible for the long-term maintenance of the status quo and the governing of the state, and the man most responsible for this is given the title of *rector rei publicae*; see Wirszubski 1961.13–14.

cal crisis.²⁰ Context dictates meaning, and in the case of Cicero's concept of πολιτικός, the contexts in which the word appears narrow the meaning to reveal something more idiosyncratic. For example, when Labienus defected to the Pompeians in January 49, Cicero termed this noble act a *facinus civile*, "political achievement" (*Att.* 7.13.1). Labienus here was indeed taking decisive action to help restore the republic, but Cicero chooses to describe his action—which was certainly a political and military boon for Pompey—with a more general term, perhaps because Labienus by himself would not be able to restore the state.

I shall not be delving in detail into the enormous amount of scholarship on bilingualism in ancient times and the linguistic phenomenon called "code-switching"; the works of Dubuisson (1992), Swain (2002.132–67), and Adams (2003.297–347), in particular, treat this topic in detail, especially as it applies to Cicero.²¹ But to say that Cicero used πολιτικός because he knew of no Latin word that succinctly expressed the intended sense does not fit with what Cicero himself said about translating between the two languages, as I mentioned earlier (see note 5 above). As I will demonstrate, Cicero signals his use of the strictly Greek form of πολιτικός with phrases such as *Graeci vocant/dicunt*, or by using the term to refer to heavily Greek-influenced works like the *de Republica*. Cicero professed that Latin was superior to Greek for philosophical discussions (*Fin.* 1.10, 3.5, 5.51; *Tusc.* 2.35, 3.10, 4.10). He thought it better to use a Latin word (or several, if the need arose) to translate a Greek word (*Fin.* 3.15), and in the instances where no Latin term applied, he did not take the use of Greek lightly.²²

20 See Lyons 1995.75–96 for a more thorough discussion of denotation and sense. See also Cruse 1986.16: "The meaning of a word is fully reflected in its contextual relations; in fact, we can go further, and say that . . . the meaning of a word is constituted by its contextual relations." My argument regarding the Ciceronian πολιτικός relies on this line of reasoning.

21 Whether or not Cicero can be considered truly bilingual is irrelevant to my argument; it is enough to say that he had tremendous proficiency in Greek, as Plutarch took care to point out (*Cic.* 4.6–7).

22 On the limitations of the Latin language, see Lucr. 1.136, 8.32, 3.260; Cic. *Acad. Post.* 1.15, *Fin.* 3.40, 5.96, *ND* 1.8 (cf. Plin. *Ep.* 4.18.1 and Sen. *Ep.* 58.1). Furthermore, he asks in *de Orat.* 3.44–45: "peregrinam insolentiam fugere discamus," "Let us learn to shun foreign mannerisms"; later in that work, he would Latinize πολιτικός into *politicus* for the first time (the only other occurrence of the Latinized *politikos* is *Fam.* 8.1.4). Though Cicero had a high opinion of the classical Greeks, particularly the philosophers, he maintained at best an ambivalent attitude towards the Greeks of his day (*Q. fr.* 1.1). For example, he uses the term *Graecus* of Romans only as an insult (*Fin.* 1.9). On the disparity between Cicero's opinions of ancient Greeks and the Greeks of his own time, see Guite 1962.145–52.

Cicero is careful to signpost the instances when πολιτικός has the sense of the original Greek word by attributing it to Greek speech or otherwise indicating a specifically Greek context. These Greek meanings tend to reflect the derivation of πολιτικός from πόλις and maintain a connection to the duty of citizens and their participation in routine civic affairs.²³ The two occurrences in the *de Finibus*, for example, concern respectively what Cicero calls the *locus civilis* and the “civic and nationalistic feeling inborn in mankind” (“quiddam ingenitum quasi civile atque popolare”). In both cases, however, Cicero has clearly indicated that this is a Greek meaning of πολιτικός, not his own (4.5: *Graeci πολιτικόν*, “as the Greeks say, *politikos*”; 5.66: “quod Graeci πολιτικόν vocant,” “which the Greeks call *politikos*”).²⁴

In addition, when Cicero refers to his *de Republica*, he describes it with the adjective πολιτικός (*Q. fr.* 2.13.1: “scribebam illa quae dixeram πολιτικά,” “I’m working on those political works that I mentioned”).²⁵ Since that work was heavily influenced by both Plato and Aristotle, the connection to those authors is made explicit by the use of the Greek term. The same situation applies to the use of πολιτικός in *ad Atticum* 13.10.2. Here Cicero makes a reference to a composition for Dolabella that he has been contemplating (“ad Dolabellam, ut scribis, ita puto faciendum, κοινότερα quaedam et πολιτικότερα,” “As you suggest, I think I must create something for Dolabella, something more conventional and more political”). Cicero was unsure of the type of work to give Dolabella (*Att.* 13.13–14.2: “volo Dolabellae valde desideranti; non reperio quid,” “I want to give something to Dolabella, who greatly desires it; I’m not sure what”), and it is likely that the adjective here refers to a political tract like the *de Republica*, or

23 Swain 2002.156–57 notes that Cicero’s use of πολιτικός in its Greek form highlights a particularly Greek definition for the word, though he does not venture to define it nor comment on why Cicero would need this particular Greek word in each context.

24 So, too, with the description of L. Manlius Torquatus in *Brut.* 265: “L. Torquatus, quem tu non tam cito rhetorem dixisses, etsi non derat oratio, quam, ut Graeci dicunt, πολιτικόν,” “Lucius Torquatus, whom you would say is not so much an orator in the strict sense (even if he did not lack the ability to speak in public) as what the Greeks call a *politikos*.” The “πολιτικόν σύλλογον more Dicaearchi,” “a political conference in Dicaearchus’s style” of *Att.* 13.30.2 is also clearly marked as a specifically Greek usage, as also is *Att.* 12.23.2, where Cicero qualifies πολιτικοί with the locative *Athenis*.

25 Tyrell-Purser prints *politici* in Greek letters; cf. the comments on *Att.* 4.8a.1: “It is only necessary to look through the Adn. Crit. to see that the copyists of Cicero’s letters were *absolutely ignorant* of Greek, and never but by chance wrote down words which even *could* be in Greek (II.62–63)” [italics in the original].

perhaps something more akin to the sort of works he had been composing since 46. These later works, too, were influenced heavily by Greek philosophy, which only strengthens the Greek connotation.

The question of whether or not Dolabella should accept Livia's bequest is said to be a πολιτικὸν σκέμμα (*Att.* 7.8.3). Here Cicero also qualifies the meaning of πολιτικός as a Greek one. The following sentence ("sed id φιλοσοφώτερον διευκρινήσομεν cum sciemus quantum quasi sit in trientis triente") suggests that Cicero is here referring to Greek philosophy and ethics, not the Roman meaning used elsewhere. Shackleton Bailey rightly gives the sense of this passage: "It is a question in political ethics whether it is right for a young man of noble family to change his name under a lady's will. But we shall solve the problem more scientifically when we know approximately how much a third share of a third share amounts to."²⁶

The remaining occurrences of πολιτικός highlight Cicero's unique, non-Greek definition of πολιτικός. Political crises often result in the lack of strong leadership or consensus, and Cicero only employs πολιτικός for those dire predicaments that cannot be solved through traditional means. The situation in January 60 (*Att.* 1.18.6) caused Cicero to complain bitterly that "sed interea πολιτικὸς ἀνὴρ οὐδ' ὄναρ quisquam inveniri potest," "But in the meantime, no statesman is able to be found even in a dream."²⁷ A difference should be noted here between the political crises that Cicero defines as πολιτικός and the idea of the καιρός, presented by Socrates in the *Republic* as the "right moment" for the execution of the τέχνη (Pl. *R.* 370b). The Platonic καιρός is determined by the practitioner of the τέχνη, and it is his experience in the τέχνη that allows him to determine the right

26 He further comments, ad loc., that "social" would be a better translation of πολιτικός here "but for the allusion in the next letter [*Att.* 7.9.2: "πρόβλημα sane πολιτικόν"] which clearly has a more urgent tone."

27 Cicero mentions in this passage the proposed transition of Clodius from patrician to pleb and the consul Metellus's impotence in the matter, the agrarian legislation put forth by L. Flavius, the consulship of L. Afranius, and the debacle concerning the proposed laws *de ambitu* and *de iudiciis* (a situation in which Cicero claims: "exagitatus senatus, alienati equites Romani," "The senate is disturbed, and the knights put off," *Att.* 1.18.3–6). Pompey is again faulted here for not exercising his great authority to maintain order and constitutional procedure: "qui poterat, familiaris noster (sic est enim, volo te hoc scire) Pompeius, togulam illam pictam silentio tuetur suam," "The one who could [have been a πολιτικός], our friend Pompey (for so he is, I want you to know), earns his pretty little painted toga with his silence."

time to act (*Phdr.* 271d–72a). The *καιρός* for the Ciceronian πολιτικός is not a moment to be determined through the application of knowledge of the art of governing, but rather a critical moment, the importance of which is obvious to all.

That the proper moment for action is determined not by the πολιτικός but by political circumstances is nowhere more evident than in Cicero's depictions of Pompey. Pompey is three times described using forms of πολιτικός, both positively and negatively, and each time it is clear not only that being πολιτικός is an achievable ideal, but also that the actions of a πολιτικός are temporary and corrective. Pompey's failure to support Cicero in the aftermath of the Bona Dea affair earns him a scathing rebuke in *ad Atticum* 1.13.4: "tuus autem ille amicus . . . nihil come, nihil simplex, nihil ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς illustre, nihil honestum, nihil forte, nihil liberum," "However, regarding that friend of yours . . . there's nothing cultured, nothing straightforward, nothing that makes him stand out among the other *politikoi*, nothing honorable, nothing resolute, and nothing independent in him" (cf. *Att.* 1.20.2).²⁸ Cicero highlights what would be one of his recurring complaints about Pompey: his lack of conviction and consequently of action.²⁹

Less than ten years later, however, Pompey's declarations of opposition to Caesar would cause Cicero to state that Pompey was finally speaking in the manner of a πολιτικός (*Att.* 7.8.4: "audiens πολιτικῶς de pacis simulatae periculis disserentem," "hearing that man holding forth like a *politikos* about the dangers of an artificial peace"). When the time came, however, for Pompey to act on his promises, he did not stand and fight; rather, he chose to abandon Rome and take the war with Caesar to Greece. Pompey's decision to withdraw in the face of Caesar's advance becomes for Cicero

28 Shackleton Bailey translates "nihil ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς illustre" as "politically paltry," but I think that this use of πολιτικός is meant to be sarcastic, as it would be in 49 with reference to Antony (*Att.* 10.13.1).

29 Representative remarks can be found at *Att.* 1.20.2: "nihil habet amplum, nihil excelsum, nihil non submissum atque popolare," "He considers nothing ambitious or distinguished, but only that which is humble and popular"; *Att.* 2.16.2: "Gnaeus quidem noster iam plane quid cogitet nescio," "I certainly have no idea what our friend Pompey is considering doing"; *Att.* 2.21.3, where Pompey is "insolens infamiae . . . fractus animo quo se conferat nescit," "unaccustomed to dishonor . . . feeble-minded and with not a clue as to what he should do." In a letter to Quintus (*Q. fr.* 1.3.9), Cicero would go so far as to call Pompey a hypocrite (*simulator*).

an inexcusable display of weakness (“quem ego hominem ἀπολιτικώτατον omnium iam ante cognoram, nunc vero etiam ἀστρατηγητότατον,” “I’ve known all along that he was the complete antithesis of a *politikos*, and now I know for a fact that he’s just as terrible as a general,” *Att.* 8.16.1).³⁰ To stand and fight was, for Cicero, the republic’s only hope, and Pompey’s actions bordered on madness. Though Pompey had shown the will to act, in Cicero’s opinion, he had doomed the state rather than saved it.

Pompey, as the most powerful military leader in Rome and, according to Plutarch, the most beloved Roman of his time (*Pomp.* 1.2), was in the best position to deal decisively with both Clodius and Caesar. From Cicero’s comments, we can see that Cicero had a clearly defined expectation for a πολιτικός: he must show not only initiative but also the fortitude to carry out that initiative. Cicero felt that the Bona Dea business would get out of hand (*Att.* 1.13.3: “haec . . . magnorum rei publicae malorum causa sit,” “This will be cause of great troubles for the state”), and that it should be dealt with by somebody, since he himself was not ready or willing to act (*cottidie demitigamur*, “I’m being softened up every day”). Furthermore, Pompey’s failure to resolve the dispute between Caesar and the senate, which Cicero described as a “πρόβλημα sane πολιτικόν,” “a problem that is clearly *politikos* in nature” (*Att.* 7.9.2), defined him as the opposite of a πολιτικός. The Caesar question called for a πολιτικός for its resolution; it will be recalled that Pompey’s failure in such a situation resulted in his denigration as ἀπολιτικώτατος.

Caesar’s invasion, commenced in part to free the republic from a tyrannical faction (*Caes. Civ.* 1.7, *Plut. Caes.* 28.3–4), could have been construed as the act of a πολιτικός. After all, there could not be a more decisive and corrective action than the removal of a tyrant. However, in Cicero’s view, the illegality of Caesar’s actions, and the fact that the majority of the magistrates, including both consuls, had fled the city ahead of his advance negated any possible positive results. Without the backing of the senate and magistrates, Cicero claims that Caesar “will not even be able to pretend to do anything in the manner of a πολιτικός” (“ne simulare quidem poterit

30 Cicero was thoroughly troubled by Pompey’s move (*Att.* 7.10) and would rave to Atticus that there was nothing more absurd than leaving the capital (*Att.* 7.11.3) and that Pompey had lost his mind (*Att.* 7.13.1). He would have preferred any sort of settlement with Caesar to the abandonment of Rome (*Att.* 7.13.2); in February 49, Cicero was prepared to blame Pompey for all the failings of the Roman state (*Att.* 8.3.3–5).

quicquam πολιτικῶς,” *Att.* 7.13.1). The flight of the legitimate government ahead of his advance had cast Caesar in a traitorous light.³¹ Any settlement made by Caesar at this point would reek of self-preservation and personal advancement, and would be a divisive force in the republic.

Cicero, knowing that the republic was failing, longed to take some sort of decisive positive action (“utinam aliquod in hac miseria rei publicae πολιτικὸν opus efficere et navare mihi liceat,” “In this time of trouble for the state, would that it was possible for me to devote my energies to and accomplish the work of a πολιτικός!” *Att.* 9.11.2). He was, however, unsure of how to proceed. His letter to Atticus on 12 March 49 explains his uncertainties. Cicero describes the themes of this letter as θέσεις πολιτικάί (9.4.1), and it is clear that all of these theses are concerned with the actions of a πολιτικός under a despot. Cicero is unsure, for example, whether or not one should even remain in his country if a despot is in place, whether anything can be accomplished by words rather than deeds, and whether a πολιτικός could sit back in retirement or if he should do everything possible to eliminate the tyranny.³² He further asks whether or not it would be desirable for a man to join forces with friends and benefactors ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς regardless of the danger.³³ Given Cicero’s reluctance to throw his lot in with Pompey, ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς may refer in this letter to the republican forces. A number of Cicero’s intimates and friends had joined Pompey, and considering Cicero’s opinion of Caesar’s actions, it would not

31 See Gelzer 1968.196–99 for a discussion of the political ramifications of Caesar’s invasion of Italy.

32 *Att.* 9.4.2: εἰ μενέτεον ἐν τῇ πατρίδι τυραννουμένης αὐτῆς . . . εἰ πειρατέον ἀρῆγειν τῇ πατρίδι τυραννουμένην καιρῷ καὶ λόγῳ μᾶλλον ἢ πολέμῳ. εἰ πολιτικὸν τὸ ἡσυχάζειν ἀναχωρήσαντά ποι τῆς πατρίδος τυραννουμένης ἢ διὰ παντὸς ἰτέον κινδύνου τῆς ἐλευθερίας, “Should one stay in his fatherland when it is subjected to a despot? . . . Should he attempt to give aid to his fatherland through every possible opportunity and through words rather than through war? Should a πολιτικός live on quietly in retirement when his fatherland is subjected to a despot or should he run every risk for the sake of freedom?” Though action is at the very heart of Cicero’s definition of πολιτικός, there is no inconsistency here. Cicero had, through his efforts in suppressing the Catilinarian conspiracy, acted in a manner consistent with a πολιτικός, as his comparison of Demosthenes’ *Philippics* with his own consular speeches indicates (see below). But Cicero’s inaction in the following months certainly disqualified him from further consideration as a πολιτικός, and it is clear that he answers his own question in the negative, since after May 49 he never considers the questions again and does not refer to himself, even obliquely, as a πολιτικός.

33 Cf. *Att.* 1.13.4, in which Pompey is depicted as undistinguished ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς.

be surprising for Cicero to view the actions of those in active resistance to Caesar as the actions of a group of πολιτικοί.

Since the bulk of *ad Atticum* 9.4 is in Greek, it is perhaps not surprising that πολιτικός appears here. But this occurrence of πολιτικός cannot simply be dismissed as due to Cicero's composition in Greek, since its use is consistent with its use elsewhere. Cicero repeats his thoughts from *ad Atticum* 9.4 in early April 49, when he ruminates on the value of entering a tyrant's *consilium* if something in the public's interest is up for debate (*Att.* 10.1.3: "est magnum et τῶν πολιτικωτάτων σκεμμάτων, veniendumne sit in consilium tyranni si is aliqua de re bona deliberaturus sit").³⁴ The second half of this thought parallels what Cicero had said in *ad Atticum* 9.4.2: "Should he attempt to give aid to his fatherland through every possible opportunity and through words rather than through war?" In both cases, Cicero is debating the value of words rather than deeds in a Rome now ruled by a tyrant.

In the spring of 49, Cicero may have thought that it was best to use his oratorical skills as his method of influencing events, since he had already made reference to the importance of speech when action was impossible. When Demosthenes stood and delivered his *Philippics*, Cicero says that he broke out of the traditional role of a judicial orator and become something more elevated and πολιτικώτερος (*Att.* 2.1.3: "quod in eis orationibus quae Philippicae nominantur enituerat tuus ille civis Demosthenes et quod se ab hoc refractariolo iudiciali dicendi genere abiunxerat ut σεμνότερός τις et πολιτικώτερος videretur," "how your famous compatriot Demosthenes stood out in those orations called the *Philippics* and how he separated himself from the rebutting, judicial manner of speaking so that he might seem to be more revered and more like a *politikos*"). Calling Demosthenes a πολιτικός merely for delivering a speech would not be by itself noteworthy. But Cicero goes on to make a comparison between Demosthenes' *Philippics* and ten of his own speeches, conspicuously including in this group the Catilinarian

34 The proper form of the Greek phrase here is uncertain. Tyrell-Purser ad loc. prints τῶν πολιτικωτάτων σκέμμα, commenting that "by a common error σκέμμα was assimilated by the copyists to the number and case of πολιτικωτάτων." Shackleton Bailey, on the other hand, prints τῶν πολιτικωτάτων σκεμμάτων, calling σκεμμάτων a partitive genitive, and gives an equivalent in Latin of "magna est quaestio et ex maxime civilibus." Following Tyrell-Purser's reading of σκέμμα, I interpret τῶν πολιτικωτάτων as a substantive noun: "It is a great question, and one for the most *politikos* citizens, whether to enter the council of a tyrant if he is going to be considering something in the public interest."

orations. The circumstances under which both the *Philippics* and the *Catilinarians* were delivered were similar, in that both sets of speeches were given in response to an immediate and potentially devastating crisis. Cicero certainly took initiative in his execution of the Catilinarian conspirators. The use of πολιτικώτερος to describe Demosthenes highlights the idea that the πολιτικός is an attainable ideal. One can also see a correlation to the depiction of Pompey in *ad Atticum* 1.13.4. Neither Demosthenes nor Pompey needed to take military control or some form of titled leadership position in order to act in the manner of a πολιτικός.

The questions raised in *ad Atticum* 9.4 and 10.1 could not be answered by Cicero alone, and because he could not decide on a course of action, he often sought advice from Atticus. Atticus had great influence on Cicero, as L. K. Geweke (1937) demonstrates, and he was an astute political observer. As an outsider, Atticus would, of course, not himself be in a position to fulfill the requirement for significant curative actions.³⁵ But in his letters, he generally advised Cicero to remain involved in affairs of state, or at least to remain in Italy, in order to put Cicero in the best position to act when the time came.³⁶ Such was the gist of Atticus's advice in early March 49 (*Att.* 9.10.4). Cicero's response was to exclaim that this advice was spot on, and that “quem φιλόπατριν ac πολιτικὸν hominis prudentis

35 In *Att.* 4.6.1, Cicero describes Atticus as “πολιτικός natura,” “a πολιτικός by nature,” in an apparent contrast between the public lives chosen by Atticus and himself; Shackleton Bailey also sees a parallel to *Fam.* 2.8.1, discussed above. Atticus's designation as πολιτικός in *Att.* 2.12.4 (καὶ Κικέρων ὁ φιλόσοφος τὸν πολιτικὸν Τίτον ἀσπάζεται, “Cicero the philosopher sends greetings to Titus the politician”) is merely a rephrasing of a playful valediction from the younger Cicero; cf. *Att.* 2.9.4: καὶ Κικέρων ὁ μικρὸς ἀσπάζεται Τίτον τὸν Ἀθηναῖον, “Cicero Jr. sends greetings to Titus the Athenian.” Shackleton Bailey makes it a point to differentiate this use of πολιτικός from the one in *Att.* 4.6.1.

36 In mid November 56, Atticus had apparently advised Cicero to behave πολιτικῶς, and Shackleton Bailey ad loc. comments that we should read this adverb as indicating Cicero should act “diplomatically” or “like a politician,” with no hint of civic action implied. He sees τὴν ἔσω γραμμὴν as a reference to the game of πεττεῖα, and thus Atticus's advice implies the hedging of Cicero's bets. Tyrell-Purser 1885–1901.77, on the other hand, reads ἔξω for ἔσω, and sees the passage as meaning *ut medium teneam*, “that I should hold the middle course”—a metaphor taken from chariot racing. Tyrell-Purser also notes a parallel to a proverb from Theocritus 6.18: τὸν ἀπὸ γραμμῆς κινεῖν λίθον, “to move one's piece from the middle line,” which implied that the player would try “their last best chance.” If Atticus was making a reference to the Greek game or Theocritus's proverb, we might do well to lump this occurrence of πολιτικός in with the purely Greek meanings discussed earlier.

et amici tali admonitu non moveret auctoritas," "which loyal *politikos* could not be persuaded by such an authoritative admonition from a far-sighted friend?" (*Att.* 9.10.5). Cicero at this point seems to feel that he is still in a position to do something for the state, and Atticus appears to have known exactly what to say to encourage his friend not to give up hope for a restoration of the republic.

Though Atticus remained disengaged from politics throughout his life, he seems to have understood well what Cicero meant by πολιτικός. Atticus, despite his proficiency in Greek, was not a native speaker. Given the similarities in age and education between Cicero and Atticus, it can be assumed that they would have had comparable Greek vocabularies. Thus when in the fall of 44 Cicero would praise Atticus's wise words concerning Octavian's active opposition to Antony, it is not surprising that Cicero intimates that they share a similar definition of πολιτικός: "multa mehercule a te saepe ἐν πολιτικῷ genere prudenter, sed his litteris nihil prudentius," "By god, you've sent me many far-sighted things on the character of a *politikos*, but nothing more sensible than this letter" (*Att.* 16.15.3).

The case of Caelius presents a bit of an enigma, and the reasons for his designation as πολιτικώτερος in July 51 (*Fam.* 2.8.1) are not as obvious as they are in the cases of Pompey and Demosthenes. In this letter, Cicero, on his way to Cilicia, rebukes Caelius for sending him relatively boring daily reports of the courts and games. He asks that Caelius instead send letters of speculation on the brewing crisis between Pompey and Caesar, for "πολιτικώτερον enim te adhuc neminem cognovi," "I know of no one who is more of a *politikos* than you." Cicero's flattery of the young man in this letter is perhaps related to Caelius's support of Milo following Clodius's assassination in January 52 (*Cic. Mil.* 91, *App. BC* 2.22). But more germane is the fact that Caelius was tempestuous and highly motivated to succeed, as his high profile prosecutions of C. Antonius Hybrida and L. Calpurnius Bestia suggest.³⁷ He had also shown a willingness to oppose both Pompey (*Ascon.* 36.13–17) and Caesar (*Att.*

37 The scholarly consensus on Caelius's personal politics is that there is no consensus beyond a general agreement that he was hot-tempered and desperate to advance his career at every opportunity; e.g., Rosivach 1980–81 believes that Caelius adhered consistently to the Caesarian cause, while Clauss 1990 believes that Caelius had no consistent ideology.

7.1.4) when it suited him.³⁸ His readiness to do whatever was necessary for his own career may have prompted Cicero to think that his protégé was a πολιτικός-in-waiting, and, as such, he would be able to provide valuable predictions about the extreme measures that were sure to be taken to resolve the impending calamity.³⁹

The requirement that a πολιτικός must take temporary and corrective action to restore the status quo is made explicit in the two instances when Cicero uses πολιτικός in a sarcastic manner. In May 45, Cicero responds to Atticus's suggestion that Cicero's proposed correspondence to Caesar be sent by commenting that the times have changed, and so, too, has the definition of *optimus civis*. The "best citizen" now is one who is obedient to Caesar, and obedience to the new political system is the precept of all the πολιτικοί in Rome.⁴⁰ The mockery is blatant; the term disparages both the original Greek meaning of "political expert" and the Ciceronian sense of "extraordinary actor in time of danger to the state." The only action that these men are capable of is slavish devotion to Caesar, which is neither politically savvy nor helpful in eliminating the monarchical threat to the republic that Caesar represents.

It was not only the nobility whom Cicero would fault for their actions under Caesar. In a letter from May 49, Cicero describes the disrespect shown by Antony towards the *decemprimi* and *quattuorviri* with the phrase "attende πᾶξιν πολιτικοῦ," "Check out this act of a *politikos*" (*Att.*

38 The implication of *Att.* 7.1.4 is that Caelius was ready to oppose the bill to allow Caesar to stand in absentia, but that Cicero had, at Caesar's request, used his influence to convince Caelius to vote for the bill; cf. Shackleton Bailey ad loc. and Rosivach 1980–81.204–05. *Brut.* 273 indicates that Cicero felt he had been very influential in all of Caelius's activities as tribune in 52.

39 Cicero would again use a form of πολιτικός in reference to future political events in a letter to Atticus at roughly the same time (5.12.2: "sed tuas de eius iudici sermonibus et mehercule omni de re publicae statu litteras exspecto, πολιτικώτερον quidem scriptas," "But I am awaiting your letter about what's being said about the trial and about all political affairs, one written in a style more like a *politikos*") and in March 49, after Cicero and Caesar had failed to come to agreement (*Att.* 9.18.4: "nihil est enim ut antea 'videamus hoc quorsum evadat' . . . amabo te, epistulam, et πολιτικὴν," "No longer can we say, 'let us see how this affair plays out' . . . I beg you, send me a letter, and one that is worthy of a *politikos*").

40 *Att.* 12.51.2: "epistulam ad Caesarem mitti video tibi placere . . . nihil est in ea nisi optimi civis, sed ita optimi ut tempora; quibus parere omnes πολιτικοὶ praecipiunt," "I see that you want me to send my letter to Caesar . . . there is nothing in it unbecoming one of the loyal citizens, at least as loyal as the times dictate; submission to which all the πολιτικοί are advising." Cf. Cicero's complaint about Pompey at *Att.* 1.13.4.

10.13.1).⁴¹ Cicero comments that this was only yesterday's achievement; Antony was now on his way to making yet another outstanding show of statesmanship ("hoc here effecit, hodie autem in Aenariam transire constituit <ut> exsulibus reditum polliceretur," "He did this yesterday, but today he has decided to go to Aenaria in order to promise a return to their exiles"). The provisional nature of the actions of a πολιτικός is thus reversed, and the restorative nature of his actions maligned. By using πολιτικός to describe Antony and his disrespect of the embassies, Cicero highlights the continuing abuse of power that Caesar's domination had and would entail.

The final appearance of πολιτικός occurs in the immediate aftermath of Caesar's assassination and encapsulates all the nuances of the Ciceronian meaning of πολιτικός. In a letter to Atticus from late April 44, Cicero says that he will now turn to the part of the letter that is πολιτικώτερα, that is, the part concerning the actions of Cassius and the Bruti following Caesar's assassination.⁴² Atticus seems to think that Cicero is blaming these three men for the new troubles that have arisen in Caesar's absence. Cicero makes it clear to his friend that it is the circumstances of the action, not the men themselves, that trouble him. Caesar's assassination was a noble act on behalf of the state, and one that had eliminated the cause of the tyranny in Rome.⁴³ But since the framework of Caesar's tyranny remained, the assassins had failed to improve Rome's situation, as the famous phrase from *ad Atticum* 14.9.2 makes clear: "vivit tyrannis, tyrannus occidit!" "The tyrant is dead but the tyranny still lives!" (cf. *Att.* 14.14.2). The assassination of Caesar was the act of πολιτικοί. Brutus, Cassius, and the rest of

41 Shackleton Bailey ad loc. translates πράξιν πολιτικοῦ as "act of statesmanship," but I feel that the sarcasm is better expressed by "act of a statesman," making it the person rather than the discipline, which would be consistent with the use of πολιτικός elsewhere in the letters to Atticus (see note 34 above on *Att.* 10.1.3).

42 *Att.* 14.14.1: "πολιτικώτερα illa videamus. ita Brutus Cassiumque defendis quasi eos ego reprehendam; quos satis laudare non possum," "Let's look at more *politikos*-worthy matters. You are defending the Bruti and Cassius as if I am reproaching them; I can't praise them enough"; cf. *Att.* 14.6.2: "haec ad te scripsi apposita secunda mensa; plura et πολιτικώτερα postea, et tu quid agas quidque agatur," "I wrote this letter to you during dessert; I'll write more and on topics more *politikos*-worthy in a bit, and do let me know what you are doing and what is happening."

43 Cicero had no ideological problems with violence when the survival of the state was in the balance, as Wood 1988.185–93 explains in detail, but he hesitated to endorse its use in a state with a written constitution (*Leg.* 3.42). Caesar's perpetual dictatorship had rendered the traditional constitution moot, and thus violence became a viable option.

the *Liberatores* had acted decisively and had accomplished what they considered necessary for the restoration of the state.

Cicero's definition of *πολιτικός*, then, is more nuanced than the definition favored by Greek philosophers, especially Plato. The Ciceronian *πολιτικός* represents more than just someone skilled in politics. For Cicero, *πολιτικός* signifies the ability and fortitude needed to temporarily rectify a crisis; the means and the will to act, not mere political acumen, are its fundamental requirements. To be a Ciceronian *πολιτικός* is an attainable ideal, though Cicero most often bemoans the lack of any true *πολιτικοί* in Rome. Though the *rector rei publicae*, who is Cicero's version of the Platonic *πολιτικός*, does have a duty to be on the lookout for destructive influences, he is considered a more long-term part of the republic's functioning; a Ciceronian *πολιτικός*, however, need not demonstrate leadership or guide the state beyond the rectification of the temporary crisis that requires his attention. *Πολιτικός*, then, is Cicero's term for the man who demonstrates both the ability and fortitude to take extraordinary and transitory corrective action in a crisis in order to assure the continuation of the republic.

University of North Carolina, Greensboro

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