

THE ETHICS OF BRUTUS AND CASSIUS*

By DAVID SEDLEY

BRUTUS O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.
CASSIUS Of your philosophy you make no use
 If you give place to accidental evils.

(Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 4 Scene 3)

Among that select band of philosophers who have managed to change the world, and not just to interpret it, it would be hard to find a pair with a higher public profile than Brutus and Cassius — brothers-in-law, fellow-assassins, and Shakespearian heroes. Yet curiously little is understood of the connection, if any, between the fact that they were philosophers and their joint decision to form the conspiracy against Caesar. It may not even be widely known that they *were* philosophers.

What work has been done on this question has been focused on Cassius' Epicureanism, thanks above all to a famous review published by Momigliano in 1941 which included a seminal survey of the evidence for politicized Epicureans.¹ I shall myself have less to say on that topic than on the richer, and less explored, evidence for Brutus. For the present, we may note that at the time of the assassination, March 44 B.C., Cassius had been an Epicurean for just three or four years; that he had already prior to that been actively engaged in philosophy,² but that his previous allegiance is unknown. His conversion to Epicureanism seems to have been timed to reflect his decision in 48 B.C. to withdraw from the republican struggle and to acquiesce in Caesar's rule, expressing his hopes for peace and his revulsion from civil bloodshed.³ This sounds in tune with a familiar Epicurean policy: minimal political involvement, along with approval of any form of government that provides peaceful conditions.⁴ We may, therefore, plausibly link Cassius' withdrawal to his new-found Epicureanism. In which case it becomes less likely that his subsequent resumption of the political initiative in fomenting conspiracy against Caesar was itself dictated purely by his Epicureanism.⁵ Yet he did remain an Epicurean to the end.⁶ At its weakest then, the question which we must address might simply be how, when he became convinced that Caesar must be eliminated, he managed to *reconcile* that decision with his Epicureanism. I shall have a suggestion to make about Cassius' Epicurean justification, but it will emerge incidentally during the examination of the evidence for Brutus, who is the real hero of this paper.

Marcus Junius Brutus was highly respected both as a rhetorician and as a philosopher, especially by his friend Cicero, who dedicated to him his philosophical works the *De finibus*, the *De natura deorum*, the *Tusculan Disputations*, and the *Paradoxa*

* My thanks for numerous comments from audiences at the Triennial Classics Conference at Oxford in July 1995, at Princeton in April 1996, at Cambridge in November 1996, at Bologna in March 1997, and at UC Irvine in April 1997. For invaluable further criticisms and suggestions I would like to thank Miriam Griffin, Paul Cartledge, Peter Garnsey, Martha Nussbaum, Melissa Lane, Tim Duff, Myles Burnyeat, Michael Frede, Eric Brown, Malcolm Schofield, and Chiara Palù, and above all John Moles, who sent me meticulous comments covering almost every aspect of an earlier draft. None of those named should be held responsible for the views expressed in the paper, or for any of its other shortcomings.

¹ A. Momigliano, review of B. Farrington, *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*, in *JRS* 31 (1941), 149–57; other related studies include two valuable papers in M. Griffin and J. Barnes (eds), *Philosophia Togata* (1989): M. Griffin, 'Philosophy, politics and politicians', 1–37, esp. 28–31, and D. Fowler, 'Lucretius and politics', 120–50. The sources for Cassius' Epicureanism are collected by C. J. Castner, *A Prosopography of Roman Epicureans* (1988), 24–31.

² Cic., *Ad fam.* 15.16.3; Griffin, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 28–32.

³ Cic., *Ad fam.* 15.15.1, cf. 15.19.4.

⁴ Epicurus fr. 8, 551 Usener; Lucretius 5.1143–51; Plut., *Col.* 1124D.

⁵ Thus Griffin, *op. cit.* (n. 1), contra Momigliano, *op. cit.* (n. 1).

⁶ Plut., *Brut.* 36–7. There is nothing un-Epicurean about Cassius' behaviour described at *Brut.* 66.2 (cf. B. Frischer, *The Sculpted Word* (1982) for Epicureans drawing inspiration from statues). His explanation of Brutus' portentous vision as illusory at *Brut.* 37 is not easy to square with Epicureanism (see F. E. Brenk, 'Cassius' "Epicurean" explanation of Brutus' vision in Plutarch's *Broutos*', in I. Gallo (ed.), *Aspetti dello Stoicismo e dell' Epicureismo in Plutarco* (1988), 109–18); fortunately the episode must in any case be fictional (since, as John Moles has observed to me, Brutus' vision was itself an invention of Caesarian propaganda), but Plutarch's insistence that Cassius was, as customarily, arguing an Epicurean position against Brutus, should still carry some weight.

Stoicorum, as well as commemorating his rhetorical eminence with his own dialogue the *Brutus*.

Philosophically, Brutus was well known to be an adherent of the so-called Old Academy,⁷ the school founded by Antiochus of Ascalon in the 80s B.C. The Old Academy's manifesto was to promote a properly updated version of Platonism, invoking as more or less legitimate spokesmen for Plato not only Plato's immediate successors in the Academy but also his less obviously loyal disciple Aristotle. Stoicism, on the other hand, Antiochus represented largely as a degenerate descendant of true Platonism, despite the fact that its epistemology and much of its philosophical terminology and conceptual framework were at the same time being appropriated by him to the Platonic cause. Antiochus' attitude to Stoicism was a combination of dependence and resentment. In his eyes, the Stoics were dwarves on the shoulders of the Platonist giants. Occasionally their privileged vantage point had enabled them to see a little further. But more frequently they had been guilty of falsely claiming as their own a disguised and even distorted version of the giants' achievements.

We should not let ourselves be misled by the rhetoric of inter-school disputes. The Antiocheans sometimes called the Stoics Platonists in disguise, and Antiochus' critics sometimes called him a virtual Stoic.⁸ But in ethics at least, despite much common ground, Antiochus and the Stoics differed fundamentally and irreconcilably on central issues. Some of these differences will be crucial to the argument which I shall be developing in this paper.

Brutus studied philosophy under Antiochus' brother Aristus, who became his philosopher-in-residence and a close friend.⁹ Brutus himself came in time to be a philosophical author of some note, whose gifts as a Latin philosophical writer were in fact rated higher than his rhetorical skills by Quintilian and Tacitus.¹⁰ His *De virtute* was especially admired and quoted, and a *De patientia* is also cited.¹¹ In addition, a fluent Greek speaker, he wrote at least one of his philosophical treatises in Greek — *On Proper Conduct* (Περὶ καθήκοντος).¹²

Most historians who have tried to explain the role of philosophers in fomenting resistance at Rome have treated the philosophical allegiances of Romans as carrying little weight. Romans, it is often insinuated, had no real aptitude for philosophy or for abstract thought in general, and their rampant eclecticism meant that their formal school allegiances were of relatively little practical importance. As MacMullen wrote in 1966, in his classic study *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 'they often mixed elements of several brands — Stoic the favourite, but also Epicurean, Peripatetic, Pythagorean, Academic, or Cynic — in a manner that showed their ignorance of the strict connections that ought to exist among all parts of a chosen system'.¹³

Those who have immersed themselves in the philosophical writings of Cicero or Seneca should recognize such judgements as massively exaggerated. It is Cicero, in fact, who has contributed most to this picture of the Romans as philosophical dilettanti, but even his permissive style of eclecticism is in reality anything but indiscriminate. As an adherent of the sceptically inclined New Academy, Cicero has a policy of rejecting all claims to certainty and refusing to acknowledge the authority of any philosopher in any matter. This leaves him free to evaluate each school's position on each issue and make up his own mind; but it would be entirely incorrect to suggest that he does not attach importance to the mutual consistency of his adopted philosophical preferences at the time of writing. The complex interweaving of different school positions in his trilogy,

⁷ Cic., *Brutus* 120, 149, 332; *Fin.* 5.8; *Tusc.* 5.21; *Ad Att.* 13.25.3; Plut., *Brut.* 2.2–3. For Antiochus' philosophical position, see esp. J. Barnes, 'Antiochus of Ascalon', in Griffin and Barnes, op. cit. (n. 1), 51–96. However, my stress on the separation of Antiochean from Stoic ethics represents to some extent a disagreement with Barnes.

⁸ e.g. Cic., *Fin.* 5.89–90, *Ac.* 2.132.

⁹ Plut., *Brut.* 2.3; Cic., *Brut.* 332.

¹⁰ Quint. 10.1.123; Tac., *Dial.* 21.5.

¹¹ For *De virtute*, see below. A phrase from the *De patientia* is quoted by Diomedes in H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini* 1 (1857), 383.8.

¹² Seneca, *Ep.* 95.45.

¹³ R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (1966), 49. Such exaggerated notions of eclecticism are powerfully criticized in J. M. Dillon and A. A. Long (eds), *The Question of Eclecticism* (1988), see esp. 15–33, Pierluigi Donini, 'The history of the concept of eclecticism'.

On the Nature of the Gods, On Divination, and On Fate, totally contradicts any such picture.¹⁴

A New Academic like Cicero is, in any case, untypical. Most of those contemporaries of Brutus whom Cicero portrays as participants in his philosophical dialogues are fully committed to the doctrines of a single school, and claim, with every appearance of seriousness, to base their entire lives on their chosen philosophies.¹⁵ Into the mouth of the Antiochean Varro Cicero puts the following words (*Academica* 1.7): 'So for myself, at least, I adopt that entire pursuit of philosophy both in order to make my life as self-consistent as I can, and for the sake of intellectual satisfaction; and, as can be read in Plato, I believe that no greater or better gift has been bestowed by the gods on the human race'. Should we not expect similar intentions on the part of Varro's fellow-Antiochean Brutus? His own Platonist allegiance was fully acknowledged by his contemporaries. Given also that his philosophical work was concentrated on ethics, it would be surprising, not to say disappointing, if we could find nothing at all to connect his Platonism with his celebrated role as tyrannicide.

The greatest obstacle to doing so has long been the belief, endemic among historians of the period, that whatever his formal affiliations may have been Brutus was in spirit, like so many Romans, a virtual Stoic; or at any rate that his motivations in the conspiracy were fundamentally Stoic in inspiration. The belief usually includes one or more of the following elements, often hard to disentangle:¹⁶ (1) Brutus 'had much of the Stoic in him' (Momigliano); (2) Brutus' thought was an eclectic synthesis of Platonism and Stoicism; (3) Brutus was an authentic follower of Antiochus, but Antiochus' philosophy was itself an eclectic synthesis of Platonism and Stoicism; (4) Brutus was perceived and portrayed as a Stoic by contemporary and later writers;¹⁷ (5) Brutus grew more sympathetic towards Stoicism at the end of his life; (6) Brutus' three attested philosophical works 'sound Stoic' (even the *De patientia*, of which just three words, 'inridunt horum lacrimas', survive!). None of these claims appears to me to have any

¹⁴ The upshot is a preference for a Stoic theological world-view (*ND*), but subtracting the closed future which Stoic belief in divination would imply (*Div.*), in order to be able to preserve free will (*Fat.*).

¹⁵ This applies to Cicero himself too: *ND* 1.7.

¹⁶ See e.g. G. L. Hendrickson, 'Cicero's correspondence with Brutus and Calvus on oratorical style', *AJP* 47 (1926), 234–58, at 240; Momigliano, op. cit. (n. 1), 157; MacMullen, op. cit. (n. 13), 12; R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes II* (1978), 114 (corrected on the point by J. Griffin, *JRS* 70 (1980), 183); J. Moles, 'Some "last words" of M. Iunius Brutus', *Latomus* 42 (1983), 763–79, at 779 n. 52; E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (1985), 285–6; J. Moles, 'Politics, philosophy, and friendship in Horace Odes 2,7', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 54 (1987), 59–72, at 64–5; C. Pelling, 'Plutarch: Roman lives and Greek culture', in Griffin and Barnes, op. cit. (n. 1), 199–232, at 222–6; S. Swain, 'Hellenic culture and the Roman heroes in Plutarch', *JHS* 110 (1990), 126–45, at 134. Honourable exceptions include M. Gelzer, 'Iunius 53', *RE* x (1919), 973–1020, esp. 987–8; Griffin, op. cit. (n. 1); and M. L. Clarke, *The Noblest Roman: Marcus Brutus and his Reputation*. The credit for having actively opposed the assumption goes not to any student of ancient history or philosophy, but to the Shakespearean scholar J. C. Maxwell, 'Brutus' philosophy', *Notes and Queries* 215 (1970), 128.

¹⁷ This is the view defended by Moles, op. cit. (n. 16). I can here deal only very briefly with his evidence. (1) Cic., *Ad Brut.* 1.15.5, addressing Brutus, makes fun of their mutual Stoic friends, but it no more makes Brutus a Stoic than it does Cicero himself. (2) Plut., *Brut.* 50.1–9: the 'immunity of virtue to physical assault' is no more characteristic of

Stoicism than of other schools; and even if 'the idea of the sage as Virtue incarnate' were distinctively Stoic (which I doubt), it is surely not present in the Plutarch passage. (3) Dio Cassius 47.49.1–2 gives the dying Brutus a tragic couplet taken from the mouth of Heracles, 'a Stoic hero'. This last description, though a commonplace, seems to me exaggerated. As a superhero and benefactor of mankind, Heracles is common property (to be found, among philosophers, in Plato, Clitomachus, Lucretius etc., as well as the Stoics); allegorized as an exemplary moral figure, as first in Prodicus, he had been absorbed into Stoicism by the first century A.D. (I know of no clear evidence before that, apart from the entirely different and depersonalized allegorization by Cleanthes, *SVF* 1.514), but was above all a Cynic hero (see R. Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King* (1948)) — which may account for his frequent appearance (Sen., *Const.* 2.2.1, Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.24.13ff., etc.) alongside Ulysses, the archetype of the wandering Cynic. (4) Velleius Paterculus 2.72.1: I see no way in which the assertion that a single day, that of Brutus' death, 'illi omnes virtutes . . . abstulit' might be seen as 'recalling the Stoic doctrine that there are no gradations of vice'. (5) Plut., *Brut.* 40.8 surely does not attribute to Brutus 'an essentially Stoic justification of suicide', cf. n. 65 below. (6) Horace, *C.* 2.7.11: the Stoicizing interpretation is optional, and fails if the above parallels are discounted. Pelling, op. cit. (n. 16), does better to see Plutarch's portrayal as tending to make Brutus a philosopher, rather than specifically a Stoic. Even where Pelling does for once smell Stoicism (p. 223), the mixture of vocabulary which he cites could have been argued to be at least as Epicurean as Stoic (two schools equally detested by Plutarch!).

significant foundation. Shakespearian scholars, incidentally, have usually gone even further, and stated as simple fact that Brutus was a Stoic.¹⁸

Of course, Stoic-derived ideas and terminology are ubiquitous in the writings of Roman intellectuals. But that is just a sign of Stoicism's pervasive influence on all intellectual modes of thought in the Hellenistic age and after. The tempting slide from that correct observation to the casual attribution to this or that Roman of a Stoic philosophical outlook has frequently been made too swiftly and casually. The resultant impression of *de facto* Stoicism or of indiscriminating philosophical eclecticism is usually unjustified. Stoic philosophical idioms were, after all, sometimes used to make explicitly anti-Stoic points.

I shall argue that it is far from being the case that Brutus was even a Stoic-sympathizer. Only when we see why this is far from being the case will we have any chance of uncovering his philosophical rationale for the assassination. It will turn out to be no accident at all that the conspirators did not even include any known Stoics.¹⁹

We can usefully start with an episode from Plutarch's life of Brutus (12.3–4), the philosophical implications of which have scarcely been glimpsed in the modern literature. Plutarch is describing the cautious means by which potential co-conspirators were sounded out:

ἐπει καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἑταίρων ὁ Βροῦτος Στατίλιον τε παρέλιπε τὸν Ἐπικούρειον καὶ Φαώνιον ἔραστην Κάτωνος, ὅτι πόρρωθεν αὐτοῖς τοιαύτην τινὰ κύκλω περιβαλόντος ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ συμφιλοσοφεῖν πείραν, ὁ μὲν Φαώνιος ἀπεκρίνατο χεῖρον εἶναι μοναρχίας παρανόμου πόλεμον ἐμφύλιον, ὁ δὲ Στατίλιος ἔφη τῷ σοφῷ καὶ οὖν ἔχοντι διὰ φαυλοῦς καὶ ἀνοήτους κινδυνεύειν καὶ ταραττεσθαι μὴ καθήκειν.

παρῶν δὲ Λαβεῶν ἀντεῖπεν ἀμφοτέροις. καὶ ὁ Βροῦτος τότε μὲν, ὡς ἔχοντος τι τοῦ λόγου χαλεπὸν καὶ δύσκριτον, ἀπεσιώπησεν, ὕστερον δὲ Λαβεῶνι κοινοῦται τὸ βούλευμα.

For of his other friends too, Brutus excluded Statilius the Epicurean and Favonius the lover of Cato. This was because, when in the course of joint philosophical dialectic he indirectly, in a roundabout way, put them to such a test, Favonius replied that civil war was worse than a law-flouting monarchy (*monarchia paranomos*), while Statilius said that it was not proper conduct (*kathêkein*) for one who was wise and intelligent to take on risks and worries (*tarattesthai*) on account of people who were bad and foolish.

Labeo, who was there, spoke against both. Brutus was reticent on that occasion, saying that the argument had a problematic aspect which was hard to decide. But later he divulged the plot to Labeo.

To summarize, Brutus cautiously sounded out potential conspirators by asking them leading questions during philosophical discussion. One of them, Favonius, was rejected because he gave the answer that civil war (the straight alternative to Caesar's dictatorship)²⁰ was worse than living under a tyranny. An Epicurean named Statilius was also rejected, because he gave the reply that it was not proper conduct for the wise to suffer anxieties on account of the foolish. A third participant, Labeo, expressed his disagreement with both. Brutus read this as a signal that Labeo would co-operate in the assassination, and afterwards he took him aside and signed him up. During the discussion itself Brutus kept his own views quiet.

I see every reason to believe that the report is fundamentally reliable. Its plausibility lies above all in the fact, too easily overlooked, of the incredible dangers involved in organizing a conspiracy on this scale. There were in the end no fewer than sixty conspirators (including, as if to make things even more complicated, two Brutuses and two Cassiuses).²¹ To mount so large an operation without a single one of those

¹⁸ Maxwell, *op. cit.* (n. 16), lists ten examples.

¹⁹ Admittedly only sixteen of the sixty conspirators can now be named: see P. Gröbe, *RE* x (1919), 254–5. However, note that at Tac., *Ann.* 16.22.7 the best that Thræsea's accuser Capito can do to associate Stoicism with the plot against Caesar is to name Favonius, who (see below) was rejected as an accomplice by the conspirators, although he subsequently fought on their side.

²⁰ That is, Caesar's dictatorship was the price currently being paid for the cessation of civil war. I do not necessarily mean to imply a recognition at this date that Caesar's elimination would lead to renewed civil war.

²¹ See Gröbe, *op. cit.* (n. 19).

approached turning informer was an extraordinary feat. The measured use of philosophical debate for taking preliminary soundings makes obvious sense.

The report's reliability is also strongly confirmed by its authentic Greek philosophical jargon, not all of it drawn from Plutarch's own usual repertoire.²² I shall return to this later. Plutarch's source may well be a Greek writer, Empylus of Rhodes,²³ a teacher and close friend of Brutus, who published a history of the conspiracy.²⁴ Certainly there is every reason to assume that Greek technical terminology was used throughout the conversation, that being the standard Roman philosophical practice at this date.²⁵ Brutus himself was bilingual.

Next, we can make some inferences about Brutus' own role. The discussion was between philosophers of different persuasions — what Plutarch calls 'joint-philosophizing' (συμφιλοσοφεῖν).²⁶ Brutus extracted the two discouraging answers in the course of 'dialectic'. Dialectic is formal question-and-answer, and, given the steering role attributed to Brutus, we may reasonably expect the two answers recorded to reflect his own carefully chosen formulation of the questions. It will be worth keeping an eye open to see how far this was achieved by tailoring the questions to the respondent's own beliefs, how far by the creation or exploitation of common philosophical ground.

The former, *ad hominem* approach may be discerned in the discussion with the Epicurean Statilius. The question put to him, either at the outset or after discussion, was whether the wise should accept risk and 'worry' (ταράττεσθαι) on account of the bad and foolish. Evidently the question is carefully framed in the Epicurean respondent's own terms, asking whether political involvement can ever be rated more highly by Epicurean philosophers than their own prized state of *ataraxia*, 'freedom from worry'. Taken at face value, Statilius' negative answer to this question is no more than sound Epicureanism, reasserting Epicurus' recommendation of abstention from political life in the interests of personal tranquillity. But no doubt in the highly charged atmosphere of early 44 B.C. the encoded implications of Brutus' question were not altogether lost on those present — why else did Brutus choose to keep his own opinion quiet throughout the discussion?

What was the political issue implicitly under discussion? It was whether the wise should take on risk and worry 'on account of people who were bad and foolish' (διὰ φάυλους καὶ ἀνοήτους). The 'bad and foolish' here might correspond either (a) to the Caesarians, who would be the instruments or sources of danger and worry to the wise person engaging in resistance, or (b) to the Roman public, who would cause the wise worry in virtue of being the intended beneficiaries of a move to oust or eliminate Caesar. Either seems possible in principle (especially if the preposition used was *propter*, which spans both 'because of' and 'for the sake of'). But it is hard to find an Epicurean philosophical issue in (a). Why should it make any moral difference what the instruments or sources of the danger are? On the other hand, (b) raises an excellent moral issue for Epicureans, who do take risks 'for the sake of friendship',²⁷ and might well ask whether that could ever be extended to the support of their fellow-citizens.

That the public at large should be classed as 'bad and foolish' may sound surprisingly harsh, but this simple bipartition of people into the wise (= 'philosophical') and the bad or foolish (= unphilosophical), although Cynic in origin and a prominent tenet of Stoicism, had become conventional even among contemporary Epicureans.²⁸

²² On the technical terms μοναρχία παράνομος and καθήκειν, see below. Plutarch never presents his own ethics in terms of καθήκοντα, and the only (partial) parallel to the phrase μοναρχία παράνομος that I have found in his works is *Caes.* 28.5, νομιμωτέρᾳ μοναρχίᾳ, which I shall argue below to reflect Brutus once again.

²³ See *Plut.*, *Brut.* 2.4.

²⁴ For Plutarch's sources in *Brutus* see C. B. R. Pelling, 'Plutarch's method of work in the Roman lives', *JHS* 99 (1979), 74–96, esp. 86–7. That Empylus was the source of ch. 12 is argued by J. Moles, *A Commentary on Plutarch's 'Brutus'* (unpub. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1979), liv.

²⁵ This larding of Latin speech with Greek termino-

logy is typified by Cassius in *Cic.*, *Ad fam.* 15.19.2–3, part of which is quoted below p. 46.

²⁶ For this probable implication of the term, cf. *Plut.*, *Brut.* 24.1, where Brutus is described at Athens Θεομνήστου ... ἀκροάμενος τοῦ Ἀκαδημαϊκοῦ καὶ Κρατίππου τοῦ Περιπατητικοῦ καὶ συμφιλοσοφῶν.

²⁷ Epicurus, *Sent. Vat.* 28.

²⁸ See e.g. Philodemus, *Lib. dic.* cols 1–2, and cf. Cassius in *Cic.*, *Ad fam.* 15.19.2–3, 'ea quae maxime mali petant et concupiscant, ad bonos pervenire'. Cf. also Theodorus the Cyrenaic, who (*DL* 2.98) had advised the good not to die for their country, so as not to sacrifice their own wisdom (φρόνησις) for the benefit of the foolish (ἄφρονες).

Significantly, it does not appear to be Antiochean.²⁹ Brutus' question was in this respect too a dialectical one, drawing on Statilius' view of the issue rather than Brutus' own.

If the aim of Brutus' question was to test Statilius' suitability as a conspirator against Caesar, it must have been one which Brutus knew an Epicurean could in principle answer either way. That is, if Statilius had been sympathetic to the conspiracy — like its instigator his fellow Epicurean Cassius — he might in principle have given the positive answer that the wise *should* be prepared to sacrifice tranquillity on account of non-philosophers: otherwise there would have been little point in Brutus' putting the question to him. Indeed, since Brutus had already discussed the conspiracy with Cassius, it is a reasonable guess that his test question about jeopardizing one's *ataraxia* for the public good somehow borrowed from Cassius' own moral reasoning with regard to the assassination.³⁰

This constitutes indirect but not negligible evidence that Cassius saw in the current political situation factors which might justify even Epicurean sages in sacrificing their own tranquil detachment. It was, as a matter of fact, an Epicurean tenet already familiar to Cicero (*Rep.* 1.10) that in exceptional crises the 'no politics' rule might have to be suspended.³¹ We have no direct evidence as to how such crises were specified or how the suspension was defended on Epicurean principles. One plausible guess might have been that it was simply a prudential matter of the wise accepting short-term worry for the sake of their own greater long-term tranquillity — for example, working for improved social or political conditions which will, once established, safeguard an Epicurean lifestyle. But Brutus' question implies a very different rationale: it implies that the wise were supposed by some contemporary Epicureans, perhaps including Cassius, to be on occasion driven by an overriding sense of obligation to their non-philosophical fellow-citizens.

I do not mean to deny that Cassius' version of Epicureanism was fully committed to the school's traditional hedonist position, whereby agents neither should be nor ever are motivated by any goal beyond their own pleasure. Writing to Cicero just a year before the conspiracy, Cassius dismisses Cicero's assertion that morality is choiceworthy for its own sake as far less credible than his own Epicurean tenet that morality is the means to pleasure and *ataraxia*: 'ἡδονὴν . . . et ἀτ<αρ>αξίαν virtute, iustitia, τῶ καλῶ parari', 'Pleasure and Freedom from Worry are won by virtue, justice, and Propriety'.³² But this does not create any conflict: for Cassius to accept the existence of a sense of social obligation to which the sage must on occasion yield need not entail any rejection of hedonism. There is in fact evidence that some such sense of commitment to one's fellow human beings — what the Stoics called *oikeiōsis* — was already acknowledged by the Epicurean school's authoritative co-founder Hermarchus.³³ And once it was acknowledged, that the wise should yield to it, even at the cost of their tranquillity, might in principle be explained in hedonic terms as the promotion or protection of some

²⁹ Cic., *Fin.* 5.69; cf. Plato, *Phd.* 89e-90b.

³⁰ Of course there is no sign of such reasoning in Plutarch, *Brut.* 10, where Cassius persuades Brutus to join the conspiracy. An Epicurean argument would be unsuitable to use on a Platonist.

³¹ cf. Sen., *De otio* 3.2, where it is attributed to Epicurus himself. For further discussion of this and other Epicurean principles regarding political involvement, see Fowler, op. cit. (n. 1).

³² Cic., *Ad fam.* 15.19.2-3, where Cassius is replying to Cicero's friendly jibe at 15.17.3. I do not agree with Fowler (op. cit. (n. 1), 149) that this letter suggests 'the conversion of the world' as the motive underlying Cassius' Epicureanism: a comparison with the remark from Cicero which prompted it (*Ad fam.* 15.17.3) shows that there is no such issue at stake, simply whether the Epicurean explanation of values is a credible one.

³³ Porphyry, *Abst.* 1.7.1. I agree with P. A. Vander Waerdt, 'Hermarchus and the Epicurean genealogy of morals', *TAPA* 118 (1988), 87-106, at 104-6, against A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (1987), 2.137, that the structure of *Abst.* 1.7.1-2 shows that the reference to *oikeiōsis* derives from Hermarchus (whether or not that was his own word), not Porphyry. However, if (as Vander Waerdt accepts) the passage comes from Hermarchus' *Against Empedocles*, it cannot be echoing a specifically Stoic theory, since this work was written in the late fourth century, before the emergence of Stoicism (see F. Longo Auricchio, *Ermarco, frammenti* (1987) fr. 29 and p. 33). Cf. also the Epicurean Diogenes of Oenoanda's admission of 'philanthropy' as a motive (3 V Smith).

other kind of pleasure, perhaps moral satisfaction.³⁴ Admittedly, no Epicurean could have held that the pleasure of moral satisfaction was greater than that of *ataraxia*, since Epicurus was emphatic that pleasure could not be increased beyond the removal of all disturbance, only 'varied'. But nothing, as far as I can see, would have prevented Cassius from holding moral satisfaction to be a sufficiently great pleasure to counterbalance the pain brought on by political anxieties.

However, rather than speculate further about this hypothetical Epicurean position, for which the evidence is scanty at best, let me return now to Brutus. A second striking feature of his question to Statilius is that it is cast in terms of *kathêkonta*, moral 'duties' or 'proper conduct' of the kind eloquently explored in Cicero's *De officiis*, written just months later. The term itself was still recognized as a Stoic one,³⁵ but along with much other Stoic terminology it featured prominently in Antiochus' revived Platonist ethics, as amply attested in Book 5 of Cicero's *De finibus*.³⁶ Hence Brutus' use of the mere term is not at odds with his Antiocheanism, and by no means evidence that Stoic doctrine had contaminated his thought. This is especially important because Brutus, as already mentioned, dedicated an entire Greek treatise to *kathêkonta*. There, according to Seneca's report of it,³⁷ you could find out all you ever wanted to know about how to behave as a parent, a child, a brother.³⁸ The study of *kathêkonta* was the favoured current mode of investigating practical ethics, one by which Antiocheans as much as Stoics set out to derive a more or less systematic code of conduct from the facts of human nature.³⁹ Plutarch's story that Brutus questioned Statilius as to whether it *kathêkei* the sage to sacrifice tranquillity for the public good reveals how effective a framework these debates *peri kathêkontos* could afford the conspirators for probing individuals' political commitments. It is also unique testimony, as far as I am aware, for Epicurean involvement in debates about *kathêkonta* — surprising perhaps,⁴⁰ but still very much of a piece with a climate in which even Epicureans were apparently allowing the sage a sense of obligation to society at large. Here, at least, we can witness the availability of common conceptual ground for the inter-school debate — crucial if Brutus' strategy for recruiting conspirators was to work.

We can now turn to Brutus' other dialectical probe, the one aimed at Favonius, whose reply was that civil war is worse than *monarchia paranomos*, a 'law-flouting monarchy'. It is not certain what Favonius' philosophical allegiance was: perhaps formally a Stoic, he was nevertheless perceived as Cynicizing in tendency.⁴¹ Given Cynicism's low regard for human *nomos* and high regard for the brotherhood of man, his supposed Cynicism seems at the very least consistent with his expressed preference of a lawless regime to civil war. However, even viewed as a mainstream Stoic, he was

³⁴ The fact that Cassius in his letter (Cic., *Ad fam.* 15.19.2–3) had described morality as the means to 'pleasure and tranquillity' might even be thought to confirm that he did not consider tranquillity itself the sole kind of pleasure obtainable by moral action. However, his main point, in context, is that 'the things which the bad most seek and covet' (viz. pleasure and *ataraxia*) are what the good actually obtain. Hence the pairing 'pleasure and *ataraxia*' is primarily dictated by the Epicurean thoughts (a) that *everyone* is seeking pleasure (Cic., *Fin.* 1.29 ff.), and (b) that those who seek fame and power do so in a (usually vain) quest for security (Epicurus, *KD* 7, *Lucr.* 5.1117–35). For a more subtle reading of this letter than mine, see M. Griffin, 'Philosophical badinage in Cicero's letters to his friends', in J. G. F. Powell (ed.), *Cicero the Philosopher* (1995), 325–46.

³⁵ Anon., *In Plat. Th.* 4.17–23, probably written a few decades later: see text and commentary by G. Bastianini and D. Sedley in *Corpus dei Papiri Greci e Latini III* (1995).

³⁶ Cic., *Fin.* 5.15, 18, 22, 23, 30, 69, 82.

³⁷ *Ep.* 95.45.

³⁸ cf. Brutus, in Cic., *Ad Brut.* 1.13.1, on his *officium* as an uncle.

³⁹ cf. Cicero, *Academica* 1.23, where the Old Academy is said to locate in 'the things recommended by nature' the principle of duty (*officium*).

⁴⁰ However, cf. Cic., *Fin.* 4.46, where it is assumed that Epicureans, on the basis of their hedonism, can give a coherent account of their *officia* (= *kathêkonta*). Likewise at *Off.* 1.5–6, despite disputing the *right* of some philosophers to discourse on *officia*, Cicero nevertheless writes 'atque haec quidem quaestio communis est omnium philosophorum: quis est enim qui nullis officii praeceptis tradendis philosophum se audeat dicere?'

⁴¹ Tac., *Ann.* 16.22, *Plut., Brut.* 34.5, 7. See further, D. Babut, *Plutarque et le Stoïcisme* (1969), 168–9; J. Geiger, 'M. Favonius: three notes', *Rivista Storica dell'Antichità* 4 (1974), 161–70, at 167–70; J. Moles, '“Honestius quam ambitiosius”: an exploration of the Cynic's attitude to moral corruption in his fellow men', *JHS* 103 (1983), 103–23, at 121 n. 129; M. Griffin, 'Le mouvement cynique et les Romains: attraction et répulsion', in M.-O. Goulet-Cazé and R. Goulet (eds), *Le Cynisme ancien et ses prolongements* (1993), 241–58, at 244–6.

giving an answer which, if not mandatory for a Stoic, will at any rate prove unsurprising once we learn how little priority the Stoic tradition attached to constitutional reform.⁴²

Why did Brutus' exchange with Favonius, instead of the expected reference to 'tyranny', use the cumbersome and highly unusual expression *monarchia paranomos*? I find it hard to doubt that this time the phraseology reflects the interests of the questioner more than those of the respondent, and that he was directly echoing Plato's division of actual (imperfect) constitutions in the *Politicus* (especially 300e-303b), the only other place known to me in which the same expression (or what amounts to it) occurs.⁴³

In this Platonic scheme, there are three basic types of constitution: rule by the one (i.e. monarchy), the few, and the many. Each of these three is further subdivided into two species, one relatively good, the other bad. The resultant sixfold scheme was highly influential, recurring in Aristotle's *Politics* (3.5, 4.2) and Cicero's *De republica* (1.35-71).⁴⁴ Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero's speaker Scipio all agree that worst of the six is the bad form of monarchy, identified with tyranny. But Brutus' expression *monarchia paranomos* differs from both Aristotle and Cicero in explicitly retaining Plato's own favoured differentia for the bad constitutions, namely their disregard for *nomos*. Thus the closest Plato comes to a formal definition of tyranny is 'lawless monarchy', *monarchia . . . anomos*, at the end of the following passage (*Pol.* 302e):

ΞΕ. τότε μὲν τοῖνυν τὴν ὀρθὴν ζητοῦσι τοῦτο τὸ τμήμα οὐκ ἦν χρῆσιμον, ὡς ἐν τοῖς πρόσθετον ἀπεδείξαμεν· ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐξείλομεν ἐκείνην, τὰς δ' ἄλλας ἔθεμεν ἀναγκαίαις, ἐν ταύταις δὲ τὸ παράνομον καὶ ἐννομον ἐκάστην διχοτομεῖ τούτων.

ΝΕ. ΣΩ. εἰσὶν οὕτως νῦν ῥηθέντος τοῦ λόγου.

ΞΕ. μοναρχία τοῖνυν ζευχθεῖσα μὲν ἐν γράμμασιν ἀγαθοῖς, οὐς νόμους λέγομεν, ἀρίστη πασῶν τῶν ἔξ· ἀνομος δὲ χαλεπὴ καὶ βαρυστάτη συνοικησαί.

STRANGER. So previously, when we were looking for the ideal constitution, this division was of no use, as we showed at the time. But now that we have excluded the ideal constitution and established that the others are a necessity, 'law-flouting' and 'law-abiding' are what divides each of these constitutions into two.

YOUNG SOCRATES. It looks like it, now that the argument has been so put.

STRANGER. So a *monarchy* harnessed within good written provisions, which we call laws, is the best of the six. But a *lawless* one is burdensome and hardest to live with.

Brutus' own formulation *monarchia paranomos* selects from the passage the more precise term *paranomos*, 'law-flouting', in preference to *anomos*, 'lawless'. This variant term, *paranomos*, is used elsewhere too⁴⁵ in the same Platonic discussion as the proper differentia of bad constitutions, and Brutus rightly prefers it for its greater precision, since *anomos* is ambiguous between 'lawless' in the sense 'having no laws' and 'lawless' in the sense 'flouting the laws'. Plato is explicit that he means the latter (301b-c): a 'lawless monarchy' is one in which customs and legal codes are defied. Thus Brutus' chosen formulation reflects a very close reading of Plato's divisions in the *Politicus*. This is as strong a piece of evidence as any I know that the Platonism of Antiochus' Old Academy really did include in its curriculum the study of Plato's own text, and was not just the diluted form of Stoicism some imagine it to have been. Plutarch describes Brutus as 'nourished by Plato's *logoi*' (*Dion* 1.2), and we have now seen good reason to take that description seriously.

Outside the *Politicus* and Brutus' debate with Favonius, I am aware of just one other context in which a variant on the phrase *monarchia paranomos* can be found. In 52 B.C., according to Plutarch's life of Caesar (28.5), Pompey's suspected ambition to become dictator was deflected by 'Cato's circle' (οἱ περὶ τὸν Κάτωνα), who persuaded

⁴² In calling civil war 'worse' than law-flouting monarchy, Favonius was not using the word in its strict Stoic sense, according to which only vice is 'bad' and troubles like civil war and tyranny are merely 'dispreferred' (ἀποπροηγμένα).

⁴³ For contemporary acknowledgement that classifying constitutions is a distinctively Platonist enterprise,

see Cic., *Fin.* 4.61. For Stoic non-appreciation of the Platonic classification, cf. Seneca, *Ben.* 2.20.1-2, n. 53 below.

⁴⁴ See *Div.* 2.3 for Cicero's acknowledgement (of what is anyhow obvious) that the *De republica* itself draws on a Platonist/Aristotelian tradition.

⁴⁵ 302e2, 303a8, as well as 302e7 quoted above.

the Senate to appoint him sole consul instead, thus buying him off with 'a more lawful monarchy' (νομιμωτέρη μοναρχία). Now the description 'Cato's circle' may be vague, but if it refers to anyone beyond Cato himself it can hardly fail to include his nephew and ally Brutus, the author of an oration 'On Pompey's dictatorship' which may be presumed to have played a leading role in the successful campaign referred to by Plutarch. Shortly we shall meet a probable echo, in a fragment from the same speech, of the language of our *Politicus* passage. It is extremely likely that Plutarch's phrase 'a more lawful monarchy' is another such echo, mediated once more by Brutus.

There is an additional reason why Brutus, as an Antiochean Platonist, should have been interested in this passage from the *Politicus*. It is a classic model of the Platonic method of division in one of its two applications. Elsewhere the method of division is often used to arrive *vertically* at the definition of a single chosen item, by starting with a genus and progressively differentiating within it, until you reach the precise sub-species you were aiming for. That is the way that the arts of weaving and statesmanship are defined elsewhere in the *Politicus* itself. But a second use of division is the one found in the classification of constitutions: to produce an exhaustive *horizontal* conspectus of all the species of a given genus, in this case all possible constitutions. Now in the first-century B.C. this horizontal use of division became a hallmark of Antiochean Platonism. Antiochus⁴⁶ welcomed, and exploited for his own ethics, Carneades' famous ninefold division of all possible accounts of the ethical end, and Varro, who joined Brutus among the Roman adherents of Antiochus' school, developed the same division down to a grand total of 288 views on the end.⁴⁷ The point of this laborious division was to provide the fullest possible basis from which to proceed to a reasoned ethical choice. And Plato's division of constitutions in the *Politicus* had a similar aim: it led to his placing the six non-utopian constitutions in a ranking order, with lawless monarchy at the bottom.

Now Brutus, in speaking of a law-flouting monarchy, *monarchia paranomos*, was pointedly retaining the original genus-plus-differentia terminology of this Platonic division. That may suggest that he too was engaged in comparing a range of constitutions. In which case the full issue proposed for debate was perhaps not blatantly about the relative badness of tyranny and civil war — too transparent a reference to Caesar's dictatorship — but, more subtly, how civil war ranked relatively to the entire Platonic spectrum of political constitutions. It was, if anything, by his reference to 'civil war' in preference to the more usual Greek term *stasis* that Brutus made the debate recognizably relevant to the Roman crisis.

Lawless monarchy, Plato had said, is the hardest of all regimes to live with (*Pol.* 302e, quoted above). Labeo, present at Brutus' debate, thought even civil war preferable to it, and Brutus himself secretly agreed. Plato (*Republic* 8.564a) had equated life under a tyranny with the worst form of 'slavery', and Brutus was fond of the same metaphor, contrasting the 'slavery' of Caesar's tyranny with the 'freedom' which became the watchword of the conspirators.⁴⁸ Eight years before the assassination, in his oration 'On Pompey's dictatorship' (*De dictatura Cn. Pompeii*),⁴⁹ Brutus had declared his uncompromising hostility to such enslavement: 'It is better to rule nobody than to be enslaved to somebody. It is possible to live a moral life without ruling; but there are no terms at all on which you can live with enslavement'. Here too we may have an echo of the *Politicus*, with its description of tyranny as 'hardest to live with'.

These are not the statements of a Stoic, not even of a fellow-traveller of Stoicism. There is little evidence to suggest that the Stoics spent much time classifying and

⁴⁶ Cic., *Fin.* 5.16 ff.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *CD* 19.1–3.

⁴⁸ See esp. Brutus' letter to Atticus (Plut., *Brut.* 29.9), whose authenticity is defended by Moles, *op. cit.* (n. 16, 1983), 763–7: ἡ γὰρ νικήσας ἐλευθερώσειν τὸν Ῥωμαίων δῆμον, ἢ δουλείας ἀποθανὼν ἀπαλλαγῆσθαι. For Brutus on 'freedom' and 'slavery' see also Dio Cassius 44.1.2, 19.2, 21.1 etc.; Plut., *Brut.* 10.4,

29.6; Nicolaus Dam., *Vit. Caes.* 25 (ὕπερ κοινῆς ἐλευθερίας); Cic., *Ad Brut.* 1.16.9 and 1.17.6 (the latter with a possible reference to *monarchia paranomos* as well; regarding the authenticity of these two letters, see n. 59 below); and the *libertas* coinage issued by Brutus and Cassius in 43–42 B.C., in M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (1974), no. 500.

⁴⁹ Quoted by Quintilian 9.3.95.

comparing constitutions,⁵⁰ or that they considered that life under a tyrant was, as such, the worst kind of enslavement. Slavery, in the sense which interested the Stoics,⁵¹ is the moral condition of the non-wise. The wise are free, and remain so under any regime, however repressive. This is partly because the wise are under no obligation to stay alive, and are free to make a 'well-reasoned exit' (εὐλόγος ἐξαγωγή) from life — if necessary by suicide — at any time rather than compromise their integrity under political pressure. Ordinary people are slaves, and are totally wretched, and that remains so whatever kind of regime they may live under. There was, therefore, no Stoic tradition of advocating either tyrannicide or any comparable means of overthrowing repressive regimes. The ultimate Stoic model was Socrates, who had willingly accepted death rather than compromise his philosophical mission or moral standards. And, nearer to home, Brutus' uncle the younger Cato had become the great Roman Stoic hero, embracing death by his own hand rather than accept Caesar's pardon. In the prelude to his suicide, Cato had explicitly defended the Stoic paradox 'Only the good are free'.⁵² Later, under the Empire, Seneca's carefully staged Stoic suicide self-consciously followed that same tradition, while in his *De beneficiis* he had criticized Brutus' act of tyrannicide as pointless and contrary to Stoic principles.⁵³ Likewise, the so-called 'Stoic opposition' of figures like Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus, despite their reverence for the memory of Brutus and Cassius, showed little if any interest in the assassination of emperors, and much more in courting a heroic death by the exercise of unbridled free speech.⁵⁴ The very notion of political freedom rarely surfaces in Stoic texts:⁵⁵ for a Stoic, freedom is first and foremost a personal matter, exclusive to the wise, who can count on preserving it under any political conditions, however adverse.

To understand Brutus' impassioned defence of political freedom and his denunciation of enslavement to tyranny as altogether intolerable, we must forget Stoicism, and view them instead within the context of Brutus' Antiochean ethics.⁵⁶

Antiochus' main ethical disagreement with Stoicism was as follows. The Stoics taught that virtue alone is good, and that naturally preferable items like health, honour, and wealth are morally indifferent: when possessed, they add nothing to happiness. The proper motive for seeking them in normal circumstances is merely the exercise of well-reasoned moral choice. Whether or not you attain them is irrelevant to happiness. Antiochus saw this as a perversion of the correct Platonist tradition, to which he demanded a return. On his preferred 'Old Academic' view, the possession and exercise of virtue is both a necessary and a sufficient condition of happiness, but naturally

⁵⁰ cf. P. A. Brunt, 'Stoicism and the Principate', *PBSR* 43 (1975), 7–35. DL 7.131, an isolated statement on the Stoics' 'best constitution', has been thought to reflect Panaetius (cf. Cic., *Rep.* 1.34). Cic., *Leg.* 3.13–14 confirms that, despite contributions by Diogenes of Babylon and Panaetius, Stoicism was not well known for non-utopian political theory (and even a text like *SVF* 3.611 does not suggest otherwise). A significant attempt to undo this picture has been made by A. Erskine, *The Hellenistic Stoa* (1990); for doubts about his thesis, see esp. P. A. Vander Waerdt's review article, 'Politics and philosophy in Stoicism', *OSAP* 9 (1991), 185–211.

⁵¹ Erskine, *op. cit.* (n. 50), ch. 2, does succeed in demonstrating that the Stoics recognized a second metaphorical sense of 'slavery', namely 'subordination' (see DL 7.121–2), which could in principle include political subordination. But I see no good evidence that any such usage played a serious role in their political thought.

⁵² Plut., *Cato minor* 67.1–2.

⁵³ Sen., *Ben.* 2.20.1–2. Seneca's philosophical objection as a Stoic is that Caesar's regime, being a monarchy, was at any rate half way to the best regime, namely a just monarchy. This shows no appreciation of the Platonic ranking of constitutions in the *Politics*, where a good monarchy is the best regime but a bad one the worst.

⁵⁴ On the entire tradition of Stoic suicide, see M. Griffin, 'Philosophy, Cato, and Roman suicide', *G&R* 33 (1986), 64–77, 192–202. Thrasea's suicide, like Seneca's (*Tac., Ann.* 15.64), recalled that of Cato (as well as Socrates' death) with his libation in blood to 'Iovi liberatori' (*Tac., Ann.* 16.35) or Ζεὺ Ἐλευθέριε (*Dio* 62.26.4). The reference may, therefore, be as much to personal as to political freedom.

⁵⁵ cf. M. Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* (1991), 46–56. The strongest exception to this claim may seem to be in Lucan, whose Cato in the *Pharsalia* is undoubtedly a champion of political *libertas*. However, although there may be much Stoicism in Lucan, I see no necessity to view his portrayal as exclusively representing Cato the Stoic, as distinct from Cato the great Roman. For well-founded doubts about the purity of Lucan's 'Stoicism' in other respects, see M. L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: I, Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (1985), 252–75.

⁵⁶ There may be some connection — but I cannot pursue the question here — between Brutus' Antiochean political outlook and his equally Antiochean cultivation of rhetorical eloquence, which Cicero explicitly contrasts, as being politically more effective, with Cato's uncompromising Stoic handling of rhetorical argument (*Par. St.* 1–2, cf. *Brut.* 332).

preferable items like health, honour, and wealth are themselves further, incremental *goods*, without which you cannot attain the greatest happiness. In Cicero's Latin version, virtue is enough for living *beate*, but not for living *beatissime*.⁵⁷

Now, the celebrated claim eloquently defended in Brutus' *De virtute* was precisely that, although there are indeed non-moral goods, virtue is sufficient for living *beate* (Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.1, 12, 21).⁵⁸ If you are forced to live in exile, it is enough that you bring your virtues with you (Seneca, *Helv.* 8.1, 9.4; cf. Cicero, *Brutus* 250): the deprivations that you are compelled to suffer can be alleviated by intellectual pursuits. All this can be accurately paralleled in Antiochus, who likewise explained how intellectual pursuits can compensate for the deprivation of external goods brought about by adverse situations like exile (Cicero, *Fin.* 5.53).

What remains uncertain in the sources on Antiochus is whether in these situations intellectual activity can so effectively compensate as to enable you to live not merely *beate* but *beatissime*. Brutus, according to Seneca (*Helv.* 9.4, cf. Cicero, *Brut.* 250), did claim to have seen Marcellus, while exiled in Mytilene, living *beatissime* thanks to the consolation of study. Mere geographical displacement is not exile in the truest sense: according to Seneca, Brutus remarked in the same work that, in having to return to Rome without Marcellus, he felt that he, more than Marcellus, was the exile. And Seneca may still be quoting Brutus when he goes on to observe in Cynic fashion (*Helv.* 9.7) that 'to the wise every place is their fatherland'. At any rate, that same theme remains prominent in one of Brutus' last letters (Cicero, *Ad Brut.* 1.16.6), written when he had fled Rome, some sixteen months after the assassination. His theme is that notions like 'safety' and 'exile' are determined by situation (*res*), not location. Is he in danger and exile? No. His own 'safety', properly understood, *began*, rather than ended, when he formed the conspiracy against Caesar. Likewise, wherever he may be, he cannot be in exile so long as he does not rate enslavement and vilification the worst evils he can suffer, i.e. worse even than moral badness.⁵⁹

This theme that real exile is a moral state, so that even a supremely happy life is possible in merely geographical exile, is clearly Brutus' own trademark. Nevertheless, it is surely Antiochean in spirit. That Antiochus had already allowed the possibility of a supremely happy life in exile is not explicitly recorded, but since he himself lived his entire adult life away from his native Ascalon — in virtual exile, as Cicero describes it⁶⁰ — it would be surprising if he did not. Voluntary absence from one's native city is not quite the same thing as exile, but the disadvantages involved are largely the same, especially the deprivation of full civic status. In short, there is no reason to doubt the Antiochean orthodoxy even of Brutus' assertion that a supremely happy life is possible in exile.⁶¹

Living under a tyrant, however, may be a different matter. Here too, intellectual activity can alleviate the ills you suffer, according to Antiochus (Cicero, *Fin.* 5.53), and certainly no Antiochean could have held that someone possessing and exercising virtue might, even under a tyranny, forfeit their happiness altogether. But the question is, how do you exercise your virtue under tyranny?

Here the Stoic answer, at least, was well known, and had been put into practice by Brutus' uncle Cato. You continue to act in accordance with virtue, and rather than compromise it in any way you are ready to forfeit your life, by your own hand if

⁵⁷ *Fin.* 5.71, 81, *Tusc.* 5.22.

⁵⁸ For a valuable reconstruction of this work, see G. L. Hendrickson, 'Brutus *De virtute*', *AJP* 60 (1939), 401–13.

⁵⁹ This surely must be what he means by 'neque usquam exsul esse possum, dum servire et pati contumelias peius odero malis omnibus aliis': he cannot be an exile, wherever he may be, *until* ('dum': not 'so long as', as standardly translated here — otherwise he would indeed be open to Cassius' criticism in my opening quotation) the day when he hates enslavement and vilification more than all other evils. Against D. R. Shackleton Bailey (*Cicero's Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem et Brutum* (1980), 10–14),

who argues for rejecting the letter as inauthentic along with 1.17 (on which cf. esp. 1.17.4–5), see Moles, *op. cit.* (n. 16, 1983), 765 n. 6, and now especially idem, 'Plutarch, Brutus and Brutus' Greek and Latin letters', in J. Mossman (ed.), *Plutarch and his Intellectual World* (1997), 141–68.

⁶⁰ *Cic.*, *Tusc.* 5.107.

⁶¹ At all events, Brutus' position here must not be mistaken for a Stoic one. Seneca (*Helv.* 9.4) reports Brutus as saying that he had seen Marcellus 'quantum modo natura hominis pateretur, beatissime viventem'. This makes it unambiguous that his superlative *beatissime* assumes variable degrees of happiness, an Antiochean but totally un-Stoic position.

necessary.⁶² Life and death, like honour and dishonour, are indifferent: terminating a happy life now rather than later does not diminish its happiness.

It seems equally clear that Antiochus did not fully endorse this Stoic solution. Morally honourable suicide had no place in the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions on which Antiochus was drawing,⁶³ and Cicero's Antiochean spokesman in *De finibus* 5.28–9, in accounting for the phenomenon of suicide, attributes its cause simply to overpowering states of passion. Plutarch was well aware of all this, since when portraying Brutus' own declaration before the Battle of Philippi of a new readiness to contemplate suicide he has him⁶⁴ explaining this as a reasoned abandonment, if not of Platonism itself, of a recognizably Platonic⁶⁵ philosophical position he has always previously held.

How then do Antiocheans preserve their freedom under a tyrant? They cannot fall back on the Stoic notion of freedom as the purely personal autonomy of the wise, guaranteed in part by the constant availability of suicide. And there is good evidence that Brutus himself, as an Antiochean, did not even concede the legitimacy of this Stoic style of freedom. That only the wise are free is one of the notorious Stoic paradoxes, rejected *en bloc* by Cicero when speaking on behalf of the Antiocheans in *De finibus* Book 4 (74). Indeed, Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, which includes a defence of the Stoic paradox that only the wise are free (*Par. St.* 33–41), is addressed to Brutus, and in his poem (*ibid.* 2) Cicero is careful to remark that neither he himself nor Brutus is philosophically committed to these paradoxes. To Brutus, it seems clear, freedom is not a personal but a political matter.⁶⁶

Equally, there has never been any doubt that the twin notions of slavery and freedom with which the 'liberators' were operating were political ones. But we can now see that Brutus' own philosophical commitment to political freedom should not simply be taken for granted; rather, it must be understood as reflecting his own Antiochean philosophical stance.

As a Platonist, Brutus had a much stronger motive than the Stoics to act against tyranny and thereby to promote freedom in the political sense of the word. A Stoic like Panaetius could, of course, include in his study of moral 'duties' plenty of political advice to rulers as to how to treat their subjects equitably.⁶⁷ And there can be no doubt that there were some politically engaged Stoics, especially at Rome, who fought stubbornly for their values. But ultimately Stoicism had to allow that no form of government would make the happy less happy or the wretched more wretched. This may be why, as I have said, there was no established Stoic tradition of placing constitutions in an order of preferability. Platonism, by contrast, had always classified and ranked constitutions, and had done so explicitly on the ground that the subjects in a state can be more or less happy according to its political provisions. It was on a sliding scale of this kind that Plato in *Republic* 8 (564a) had declared tyranny the worst kind of enslavement.

Given that suicide is not on the agenda, Antiochean Platonists seem to be left with two choices when confronted with life under a tyranny. To protect their own virtue,

⁶² Athenodorus, a Greek Stoic who lived through the late Republic and served Augustus in the early Principate, recommended abstention from political life (*Sen., Tranq.* 3), but this is a development which I cannot parallel among Roman Stoics of the late Republic.

⁶³ Esp. Plato, *Laws* 9.873c–d; Aristotle, *EN* 5.11. Cf. Griffin, *op. cit.* (n. 54), 70–1. As far as I know, Platonist (tentative) acknowledgement of morally honourable suicide starts much later: Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.4.7–8, 1.9; Porphyry, *Abst.* 4.18; Olympiodorus, *In Plat. Phd.* 8–9.

⁶⁴ *Brut.* 40.5–9.

⁶⁵ It has often been noted that at *Brut.* 40.7 οὐχ ὄσιον and ἀποδιδράσκειν echo the objections to suicide canvassed by Socrates at Plato, *Phd.* 61c–62c. (It is hard to decide whether this reflects Brutus', or Plutarch's, familiarity with Plato's text.) Whether Brutus considered his final change of heart justifiable

from within his Platonist creed, or a move away from it, Plutarch leaves unclear, but the very special *ad hoc* pleading he puts into Brutus' mouth (that he effectively gave up his life on the Ides of March, and has been living on borrowed time since then) may suggest that he intends the former. Since Plutarch's dialogue here is no doubt fictional, we cannot know whether Brutus in fact offered any philosophical justification for his suicide. At all events, there is no hint in Plutarch or any other source that he underwent any sort of conversion to Stoicism; and among Romans honourable suicide was far from being an exclusively Stoic activity.

⁶⁶ Why should Brutus reject this Stoic redefinition of 'freedom' and 'slavery' while himself similarly redefining 'exile'? The implication is that he does not object methodologically to the Stoic paradoxes, but to their actual content.

⁶⁷ See e.g. Cic., *Off.* 1.85–6.

they can either withdraw into study, or somehow continue to operate politically. But while their withdrawing into study makes obvious sense in political exile, where the opportunity to improve the happiness of their fellow-citizens is in any case denied them, it is far less obviously satisfactory under a tyranny, where the opportunity may well still exist. And if Brutus did indeed feel that the political virtue of justice should be actively exercised even under the Caesarian tyranny, there was no doubt which of his famous relatives he was going to imitate: not Cato, the Stoic uncle whose suicide Brutus had, according to Plutarch,⁶⁸ explicitly deplored on philosophical grounds, but his equally celebrated ancestors Lucius Junius Brutus, who had expelled the last of the kings from Rome in 509 B.C., and Servilius Ahala, who not long afterwards had assassinated a would-be tyrant. Already some ten years before the assassination of Caesar, when Brutus controlled the Roman mint, he had issued a coin depicting these two ancestors, one on each face.⁶⁹

As I remarked earlier — and for reasons which should by now be a little clearer — there seems to have been no Stoic tradition of advocating or glorifying tyrannicide. But there undoubtedly was such a tradition within Platonism. In 353/352 B.C. a disciple of Plato named Chion had assassinated Clearchus, the tyrant of his native city Heraclea. The event was recorded as part of Academic history by Brutus' contemporary Philodemus,⁷⁰ and eventually immortalized in a collection of Chion's correspondence probably forged a generation or two later.⁷¹ This approval of tyrannicide was one aspect of a strong and proud Platonist commitment to promoting constitutional reform by whatever means were necessary. Plutarch (*Col.* 1126C-D), a Platonist himself, can recite a list of nine further pupils or associates of Plato who were credited with redrafting constitutions or bringing about other kinds of political progress, including Python and Heraclides who were honoured for assassinating the Thracian ruler Cotys. Above all, Plutarch in his *Parallel Lives* pairs Brutus with Dion, the main point of comparison being precisely that each was a follower of Plato and enacted his philosophical principles in the removal of a tyrant.⁷²

In locating Brutus within this highly politicized Platonist tradition, I do not pretend to have found the complete explanation of his conduct in 44 B.C. First, not all Platonists killed tyrants. Second, I dare say that most courses of action can be justified, given a little ingenuity, whatever philosophical principles you start from. Cassius' role in the assassination is eloquent testimony to that. Third, as the conspirators were acknowledging when they decided against inviting Cicero to join them, someone might give the assassination full intellectual approval yet for reasons of character fail to act accordingly.⁷³ Fourth and finally, my reconstruction takes no account of numerous personal and political motivations that may have underlain the conspiracy, some of them familiar to us from Plutarch and Shakespeare. In short my aim has been, not to find an exhaustive explanation of the assassination, but to investigate how it embodied and reflected the philosophical commitments of its protagonists.

It does seem clear to me that Brutus' philosophical position was a full-bloodedly Antiochean one, systematically developed in his own writings, based on a close knowledge of Plato, and carefully applied in the crisis of 44 B.C. If he had, as usually supposed, been *de facto* a Stoic, it is most unlikely that tyrannicide would have been his preferred option — in which case, if Plutarch is to be believed (*Brutus* 10.1–2), the assassination would probably never have gone ahead. When we watch Brutus' role in the events of the Ides of March, it is Platonist political thought that we are seeing enacted.

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⁶⁸ Plut., *Brut.* 40.7; followed by Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* Act 5 Scene 1.

⁶⁹ See Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 48), no. 433 1 and 2. Cf. also Cic., *Phil.* 2.26.

⁷⁰ *Index Academicorum* 6.13 Dorandi.

⁷¹ See I. Düring, *Chion of Heraclea: A Novel in Letters* (1951).

⁷² Plut., *Dion* 1–2 and *Synkrisis* 2–4.

⁷³ Plut., *Brut.* 12.1–2.