

## MISZELLEN

### *MENS ADDITA* Cicero, Ad Atticum 4.8.2

From his youth M. Tullius Cicero was an avid reader of philosophical texts and enjoyed discussing philosophical problems informally with his friends. His correspondence and, later, formal essays on philosophical themes attest this fact. M. Griffin has recently shown that a reading of the letters attuned to the philosophical issues of the time can shed new light on this remarkable corpus.<sup>1</sup> One passage has long been regarded as philosophical in nature, namely Cicero's report ca. mid-April, 56 (Att. 4.8.2):

*postea vero quam Tyrannio mihi libros disposuit, mens addita videtur meis aedibus.*

But *mens* has played a rôle in various philosophical arguments, and commentators have disagreed over the contextualization of this reference. Tyrrell and Purser supposed that Cicero had in mind the Anaxagorean  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , the principle by which the universe was organized. But the organizer in this case was Tyrannio; it is the organization itself that is compared to *mens*, not the organizer. Shackleton Bailey merely quotes the words *mens agitat molem* (Verg. Aen. 6.727). In context this refers to the Stoic fire (*spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus / mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet*: 726–27 with Norden's note). In our passage Cicero's house is personified, the possession of *mens* or *ratio* being characteristic of human beings or gods.<sup>2</sup> But the emphasis in our passage is on the transition: the operative word is *addita*. The underlying idea is that of Platonic/Pythagorean dualism, with Tyrannio implicitly assuming the rôle of the gods; cf. De sen. 77: *sed credo deos immortales sparsisse animos in corpora humana*.<sup>3</sup> Here, writing from a cosmological perspective, Cicero uses the verb *spargo* ("to scatter [seed]": OLD s.v., 1b), which suggests that life will arise in the sequel, whereas our passage has the more general *addo*, since he is speaking merely of a single instance. But in both passages the implication is that the addition of *mens* or *animus* creates a living organism out of inert matter.<sup>4</sup>

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1) Cf. Miriam T. Griffin, Philosophical Badinage in Cicero's Letters to his Friends, in: J. G. F. Powell (ed.), Cicero the Philosopher: Twelve Papers (Oxford 1995) 325–46, who, however, does not discuss this passage.

2) Cf. Leg. 1.23 with note in my commentary (in press).

3) For Greek parallels cf. Powell ad loc.

4) I should like to thank the Editor for helpful comments on an earlier draft.