Classical Quarterly **51.2** 509–519 (2001) *Printed in Great Britain*

METAPHOR IN CICERO'S *DE RE PUBLICA*

In the 180 years since Mai came upon our only extant manuscript of Cicero's *De Re Publica*, few writers have suggested any relation between the astronomical imagery of the dialogue and its discussions of political theory. I argue, however, that *De Re Publica*'s discourses on astronomy play a central role in the dialogue on the best constitution. First, they provide metaphors for the political processes discussed and the political theory advanced by Scipio Aemilianus throughout the dialogue. Second, they advance a cosmology within which Scipio can claim that it is possible to prevent the otherwise inevitable degeneration of governments.

It has long been recognized that the *Dream of Scipio* (*De Re Publica* 6.9–29)[1] is foreshadowed in the introductory dialogue on astronomy in *De Re Publica* 1.[2] Ruch observed that the introductory dialogue and the *Dream* frame the dialogue on political theory with their notions of the unity of science and politics.[3] Comment attempting to relate this frame to the dialogue on politics has been rare and brief.[4] No one has related the dialogue's astronomical discourses to its political theory in any systematic fashion. In particular, no one has offered an explanation why Cicero included in the work the passage on the orrery of Archimedes (1.21–2) that plays such a prominent role in the introductory dialogue on suns and eclipses.[5] I propose that this passage can help us interpret Cicero's art in *De Re Publica*. I claim that it is not possible to understand the dialogue without mastering the relation of this passage to the work as a whole.

The dialogue opens with a discussion of astronomy that leads directly to the description of the orrery. Q. Aelius Tubero asks Scipio about reports in Rome of

[1] References to the text are to K. Ziegler (ed.), *M. Tulli Ciceronis: De Re Publica* (Leipzig, 1969[7]). This edition contains the entire extant manuscript, fragments, and testimonia. I also use the following abbreviations: *D.R.P.* = *De Re Publica*; Astin = A. E. Astin, *Scipio Aemilianus* (Oxford, 1967); Bréguet = E. Bréguet (ed.), *Ciceron: La Republique* (Paris, 1980); Büchner = K. Büchner, *M. Tullius Cicero De Re Publica* (Heidelberg, 1984); Powell-1 = J. G. F. Powell, 'Second thoughts on the *Dream of Scipio*', *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 9 (1996) 13–27; Powell-2 = J. G. F. Powell (ed.), *Cicero Cato Maior De Senectute* (Cambridge, 1988); Powell-3 = J. G. F. Powell (ed.), *Cicero: Laelius on Friendship and The Dream of Scipio* (Warminster, 1990); Zetzel = J. E G. Zetzel (ed.), *Cicero De Re Publica* (Cambridge, 1995).

[2] M. Pohlenz, 'Cicero *De Re Publica* als Kunstwerk', *Festschrift R. Reitzenstein* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1931), 70–105, esp. 99, 102 (rpt. in *Kleine Schriften* 2 [Hildesheim, 1965], 374–409); M. Ruch, 'La composition du de republica', *REL* 26 (1948), 157–71; Powell-1, esp. 18, 23. See also P. L. Schmidt, 'Cicero "*De Re Publica*": Die Forschung der letzten fünf Dezennien', *ANRW* 1.4.262–333, esp. 296–7. Pohlenz argued against viewing the *Somnium Scipionis* as isolated from or unconnected with the work as a whole (99, n. 2). He pointed out that Scipio's speech at *D.R.P.* 1.26 foreshadows 6.16, 20, 22, 25 (102 and 102, n. 2). Powell wrote that 'the *Somnium* should appear as little more than an amplification of the attitude of Scipio as expressed at the beginning of the dialogue' (23).

[3] Ruch (n. 2), 162.

[4] A. Ronconi (ed.), *Cicerone: Somnium Scipionis* (Florence, 1966[2]), 103; Büchner, 474; Zetzel, 238, 237; J.-L. Ferrary, 'L'Archéologie du *De Re Publica* (2, 2, 4–37, 63): Ciceron entre Polybe et Platon', *JRS* 78 (1984), 97. Ronconi, Büchner, and Zetzel all briefly comment on *D.R.P.* 6.17, line 4.

[5] Zetzel even omitted the passage on the orrery from the text of *D.R.P.* 1 in his Cambridge edition (see Zetzel, ix). The most discussion that we have on the passage is the recognition by Powell and Zetzel that the description of the solar system in the *Somnium* follows the account of the orrery; see Powell-3, 157; and Zetzel, 235. Büchner, 104 alleges differences, not similarities, between the orrery and the description of the heavens in *D.R.P.* 6.

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the simultaneous observation of two suns. C. Laelius and L. Furius Philus join the discussion, and the four politicians debate whether the study of astronomy is worthwhile. Laelius questions whether they should study the heavens when they have not yet mastered everything that pertains to their homes and republic. Philus then begins the discussion of eclipses and of the orrery that has puzzled scholars (1.21–4).[6] He relates that during a previous observation of a second sun[7] he was present when the consul, C. Sulpicius Galus, demonstrated the operation of Archimedes' orrery, a mechanical model of the solar system, and used it to explain how eclipses occur.[8] While we read of Galus' demonstration of this device, the Vatican manuscript breaks off for a few pages. Where the manuscript resumes, Scipio is explaining how Galus used his knowledge of astronomy to calm Roman soldiers terrified by a lunar eclipse before the battle of Pydna (1.23).[9]

The immediate point of this story is that the study of the heavens is politically useful: a politician with knowledge of astronomy can calm soldiers frightened by predictable celestial phenomena, and restore their spirits before an important engagement. Therefore, Laelius' objection that the study of the heavens does not pertain to the Republic is refuted.[10] I propose, however, that this story plays a more important role in *De Re Publica*. In order to consider this, let us review Philus' description of the orrery and of how Galus manipulated it. Philus explains:

> That type of globe (*sphaera*) is one that represented the motions (*motus*) of the sun and the moon and of those five stars, which are called, as it were, errant (*vagae*), because they wander, and could not be described on the solid globe. In that respect, the invention of Archimedes must be admired, because he understood, how a single revolution (*conversio*) could reproduce the diverse and unequal courses (*cursus*) of the celestial bodies with their very dissimilar motions (*motus*). When Galus set this globe into motion, it happened that the moon went under the sun in just as many revolutions (*conversiones*) on that bronze device as in days in the heavens themselves, so that the same eclipse of the sun occurred on the globe as in the heavens. (1.22)[11]

1. DEVELOPED METAPHOR

The passage introduces certain astronomical language and imagery into the discourse of *De Re Publica*. Zetzel observes that '*conversio* is normally used in an astronomical context', and that its root '*convertere* is the regular term for the revolution of planets around the earth'.[12] Accordingly, Philus and Africanus the Elder use *conversio* and *convertere* to describe the revolutions of planets and stars (1.22; 6.18, 19, 24). But

[6] For example, Zetzel and Büchner; see previous note.

[7] Moser tells us that Iulius Obsequens reports that two suns were observed for a time in the thirty-fourth year before the death of Scipio, in the consulship of Gracchus and Iuventius (G. Moser [ed.], *M. Tullii Ciceronis De Re Publica* [Frankfurt, 1826], 60).

[8] For an explanation of the second sun, or parhelion, see N. Rudd and J. Powell, *Cicero: The Republic and The Laws* (Oxford, 1998), 177–8.

[9] The incident is also described by Livy (44.37.5–9). In T. Habinek's 'Science and tradition in *Aeneid* 6', *HSCP* 20 (1992), 250, Galus' political use of astronomy is mistakenly attributed to Aemilius Paulus.

[10] Ruch errs in regarding Laelius as a spokesman for the group as a whole; see Ruch (n. 2), 159. On the issue of whether and when a character represents the thought of the author of a dialogue, see R. Gallagher, 'The structure of Socratic dialogue: an Aristotelian analysis', Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1998 (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1998).

[11] For the translation of *succedere* as 'went under' see Büchner, 104, and Bréguet, 1.260. I use Dobree's reading *et in caelo et in sphaera* for the MS reading *et in caelo sphaera*.

[12] Zetzel, 156, 228, 247. See *OLD conversio* 1, *converto* 1.

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Scipio and Africanus also apply *conversio* and *convertere* to revolvings in politics. For example, Scipio says of kingship, aristocracy and democracy that

> Those three earliest forms of government easily revolve (*convertere*) into their opposed vices, so that from a king arises a tyrant, from aristocrats an oligarchy, and from democracy a mob and confusion. (1.69)

Scipio uses this metaphor of planetary revolution several times in *De Re Publica*, to describe, as above, the behaviour of the three simple constitutions and their three degenerate forms (cf. 1.44, 68, 69 [twice], 2.47).[13] In so far as Cicero has written that a metaphor makes meaning clearer by the resemblance between what we are describing and that to which it is compared (*De Or.* 3.155),[14] readers may wonder what is clarified by saying that states 'revolve' (*convertere*), and how this revolving bears any resemblance to that of the planets. An answer emerges from examining Scipio's development of the metaphor in presenting his cyclical model of constitutional change in *De Re Publica* 1 and 2. First, he says:

> There are remarkable circles (*orbes*), and, as it were, circuits (*quasi circuitus*) in the change and alteration of commonwealths. It takes a wise man to recognize them, but a great citizen and almost godlike individual to foresee them when they threaten, while regulating the course (*moderans cursum*) of the commonwealth and keeping it under control in governing it. (1.45)

To understand Scipio's meaning we turn to *De Re Publica* 2, where he analyses several *conversiones* in the history of Rome. In discussing how Rome revolved (*convertere*) from kingship to tyranny under Tarquinius Superbus (2.44–7), he uses that case to illustrate his notion that states turn in circles that compose their natural motion.

> Here turns (*vertere*) that circle (*orbis*) whose natural motion and circuit (*naturalis motus atque circuitus*) you must learn to recognize from its beginning. For the summit of political wisdom about which our whole discourse revolves (*versare*) is to perceive the paths (*itinera*) and turns (*flexus*) of commonwealths so that after you know in which direction each commonwealth inclines, you may be able to hold it back or counteract the movement beforehand. (2.45)

Scipio is saying that when Tarquin seized absolute power the Roman state began to revolve in a circle. A circular path, however, is one that eventually turns back upon itself. We must consider how Tarquin's action in establishing a tyranny resulted in movement back around in a circuit. Such a reversal is suggested by a general law of constitutional change, which Scipio advances in *De Re Publica* 2.

[13] Cicero uses the same metaphor at *Div.* 2.6: *naturales esse quasdam conversiones rerum publicarum* (W. Ax [ed.], *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Divinatione, De Fato, Timaeus* [Teubner, 1965]). The metaphorical use of *convertere* at 1.69 is also noted in Zelzel, 156, but in the discussion of 'the use of extended metaphors as a mode of argument' in *D.R.P.*, Zetzel, 31 fails to mention the astronomical metaphor that pervades the dialogue. The cited instances of Scipio's use of the metaphor are summarized as follows: he argues that a state which entrusts all power to the people revolves (*convertere*) into ochlocracy (1.44). He says that as a rule all extremes revolve (*convertere*) into their opposites; so, from ochlocracy comes tyranny (1.68). He says that the mixed constitution has a stability that kingship, aristocracy, and democracy lack, which left to themselves each easily revolve (*convertere*) into their degenerate forms. But in the mixed constitution there is no cause for revolution (*conversio*) when each of the three elemental modes of government is so established that it will not easily degenerate (1.69). After describing the rise of Tarquinius Superbus, and early Rome's turn from kingship to tyranny, Scipio states that by the wickedness of one man Rome revolved (*convertere*) from a good government to the worst possible (2.47).

[14] References are to K. Piderit and O. Harnecker (edd.), Cicero: *De Oratore* (Leipzig, 1965).

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Unless a state maintains a fair balance of rights, duties and functions, so that the magistrates have enough power, the aristocratic council enough authority, and the people enough freedom, its constitutional order cannot be preserved from change. (2.57)

Scipio is saying that whenever rulers impose a regime premised upon an imbalance of such 'rights, duties and functions', by the nature of things such a regime will not endure. In the case that we are examining, Tarquin, in establishing a tyranny, upset the balance that existed under the early Roman kings. So, it was natural that he would be overthrown, as indeed he was by the movement led by Lucius Brutus (2.46). Tarquin's action started the circle turning, and Brutus' action completed the circle to re-establish the balance that Scipio holds must exist in a commonwealth. It is the complete cycle that composes the natural motion (*naturalis motus*) of the commonwealth (2.45). This is what it means for a state to 'revolve'. Rome's constitution developed by means of such cycles of revolution and counter-revolution. Tarquin established a tyranny, and, in response, the Romans, led by Brutus, established the Republic, rather than reinstate kingship.[15] Such is 'the kind of natural path and course' (*naturale quoddam iter et cursus*) by which 'the commonwealth advances (*progredior*) and comes to the best constitution' (2.30).[16] The movement, emphasizes Scipio, is circular (1.45, 2.45), and, like all circular movement, it reverses direction in its course. Accordingly, the movement that Scipio describes has the same general outline as the motion of a planet across our sky.

To an observer on Earth, the planets appear to wander in their course in cycles of motion in which they appear to stop or reverse direction and then advance again. Our text calls attention to this phenomenon in the passage on the orrery. Philus says that the planets wander (*errantes*) and are, as it were, errant (*quasi vagae*). Cicero wrote that this 'wandering' is composed of 'advancings and stoppings' (*errantium stellarum cursus praegressiones institiones*) (*Tusc.* 1.62), or 'advancings and retrogressions' (*progressus et regressus*) (*N.D.* 2.51).[17] According to Scipio, the advance of the Roman

[15] So, J.-L. Ferrary errs when he says of 1.45 and 2.45 that 'these [political] *orbes*, *motus*, *conversiones* have a constantly destabilizing effect, which can only in the long run lead to a perverted form of *res publica*' ('The statesman and the law in the political philosophy of Cicero', in A. Laks and M. Schofield (edd.), *Justice and Generosity: Studies in Hellenistic Social and Political Philosophy* [Cambridge, 1995], 57). Rather, some *conversiones* overturn tyrants (e.g. Tarquin) or oligarchs (the *decemviri*), and re-establish the *res publica* on a new and firmer basis. As Cicero advised his contemporaries in a speech shortly after he had written *De Re Publica*: 'Since we all are stationed, as it were, on some circle (*orbis*) of the commonwealth, we should choose that direction for its turning towards which the advantage and welfare of the commonwealth revolves (*convertere*)' (*Planc.* 93).

Ferrary also misinterprets *D.R.P.* 2.57, which describes how Rome advanced towards the best constitution when the people seized the Sacred Mount and Aventine and as a result the tribunate was established. Scipio states clearly that the action of the people was in accordance with the nature of politics because there was not a fair balance of rights, duties, and functions within the commonwealth.

[16] Scholars have interpreted the political theory advanced by Scipio as a variation of Polybius' theory of the *anacyclosis*. Polybius taught Scipio and is mentioned as an authority on politics and history three times in our text (1.34, 2.27, 6.3) (see also Zetzel, 135; Büchner, 131; and Astin). Polybius held that constitutions change in a closed cycle, which he called the *anacyclosis* (*Hist.* 6.9). Rejecting Polybius' closed system for the case of Rome, Scipio regards the cyclical movements of states as only alterations in an advancing 'natural path and course' that ultimately brought Rome to the best constitution (2.30). Textual references to Polybius are to W. R. Paton (ed. and trans.), *Polybius, The Histories* (Cambridge MA, 1979). For further discussion of the *anacyclosis*, see F. W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley, 1992).

[17] In his treatment of *stellae errantes* Cicero is probably drawing on Pl. *Tim.* 38cd, where Plato accounts for the retrogression of the planets in the 'contrary power' of Venus and Mercury,

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commonwealth is also composed of such cycles of movement, first, motion towards an unbalanced, depraved form of the state, followed by a motion that re-establishes the sort of balance required by the nature of commonwealths. So, there is a resemblance between the apparent cycles of movement of the planets and the cycles of movement which Scipio attributes to states.

Since commonwealths are subject to such cycles, Scipio urges his interlocutors to master the political wisdom required to recognize and foresee such motion when it begins, so that they can intervene in the commonwealth, and regulate its motion, or even counteract it (*ante occurrere*) (2.45), as Brutus did in his time. The movements of the planets, however, seem to require no intervention to remain in their right paths. Here the parallel between astronomy and politics seems to break down. But Philus says that the planets wander and are errant, and that opinion suggests that something is needed to govern or regulate their motions. Africanus assigns such a role to the sun. In the review of the cosmos in *De Re Publica* 6, Cicero has Africanus say that the sun is the leader (*dux*), the chief (*princeps*), and the governor (*moderator*) of the planets and moon; it is the intellect of the universe (*mens mundi*) and its moderation (*temperatio*) (6.17).[18] In applying such political metaphor to the sun and representing it as a political leader, Cicero prompts us to analogize the role of the sun in the solar system with the role of the *rector* in the commonwealth, as Zetzel has proposed.[19] The only other being described as *moderator* in the dialogue is the *rector rei publicae* (5.8). As the sun governs the planets (6.17), so the *rector* governs the course (*moderans cursum*) of the commonwealth (1.45). As *moderator* of the planets, the sun leads the celestial harmony (6.17–18). As governor of the state, the *rector* harmonizes the orders that

'whereby the Sun and the star of Hermes and the Morning Star alike overtake and are overtaken by one another' (trans. Cornford). Cornford comments that 'Proclus held that Plato did recognize actual retrogradation, and there is good reason to believe that this striking phenomenon had been observed. It was provided for in the system of Eudoxus, which must have been familiar to Plato' (see *Plato's Cosmology* [London, 1952], 110–11).

[18] In subsequent works, Cicero writes of the sun in the same way. In the *Academica*, the sun is the lord and master of the world (*solem dominari et rerum potiri*, 2.126). In *De Natura Deorum*, the sun holds the first place (*principatus*) among the stars (2.49); it is the chief (*princeps*) of the stars (2.92). In these later works, Cicero, following Plato, disapproved of calling the planets 'wanderers'. Following *Laws* 282a, he wrote in *N.D.* that if bodies preserve regular motions they are not properly said to 'wander' (2.51).

[19] Zetzel, 238 states that 'Cicero's language links his astronomy to *De Re Publica* as a whole; the sun's role in the universe is analogous to that of the *rector rei publicae* in the state; in particular, *temperatio* reflects the balance of the ideal government.' Zetzel, 237 notes that the main reason for Cicero's use of the Chaldean ordering of the planets in *De Re Publica* 6 'is that it places the sun in the middle as the guide and leader of the celestial order and an analogy for the statesman on earth'. His comments raise a few questions. First, how does he envisage the *rector rei publicae*? Second, does the 'analogy' between the role of the sun and the role of the *rector* harmonize with or contradict his and/or Cicero's conception of the *rector*? In response to a query, Zetzel has stated that his view of the rector is close to that of R. Heinze (see also Zetzel, 27, n. 56). Heinze, in arguing against R. Reitzenstein's view that the *rector* was some sort of charismatic, quasi-monarchical leader, proposed that the *rector* was just 'the statesman' in general; see 'Cicero's "Staat" als Politische Tendenzschrift', *Hermes* 59 (1924), 73–94. (For a summary of the debate up to 1970, see Schmidt [n. 2], 326–32.) For a recent treatment in favour of Heinze's view, see J. G. F. Powell, 'The *rector rei publicae* of Cicero's De Republica', *Scripta Classica Israelica* 13 (1994), 19–29. Powell writes of the *rector* that 'The safety of the Roman state can from time to time depend on one man, who may officially be a consul or dictator, but could even be a man without public office but in a position of supreme informal influence enabling him to direct public policy' (25).

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comprise the commonwealth (2.69). The job of each is to turn its charges back from their errant ways.[20]

Ronconi saw in *temperatio* an allusion to the mixed constitution.[21] *temperatio* occurs only this once in *De Re Publica*, but five times in *De Legibus*, which speaks of *temperatio mensum* (2.16), *rei publicae* (3.12), *iuris* (3.17 and 28), and *vitii* (3.27). In none of these cases is *temperatio* anything but the 'moderation' or 'balanced organization' of some entity, usually abstract (cf. *OLD temperatio* 2, 3). Accordingly, the sun is *temperatio mundi* in so far as it regulates the orbits of the planets and moderates their errant motion. It is an agent of moderation or organization. The mixed constitution, however, is not an *agent*. But the *rector* is, insofar as he regulates the course of the commonwealth and keeps it under control while governing it (1.45). *temperatio* is perhaps better understood as an allusion to the *rector* who regulates the mixed state, rather than the state itself. [22]

De Re Publica represents the contrast between the messy reality of the observation of wandering planets and the ideal of orderly celestial motion by means of the differences between the orrery and another globe of Archimedes which Philus also describes. The other globe was solid and the stars were painted on its surface, but it could not represent the complicated motions of the planets. M. Marcellus had placed it in the temple of Valour, but out of all the booty which he had captured in the conquest of Syracuse, he shipped only the orrery to his home (1.21). The solid globe was more attractive visually, but the intricate orrery exhibited a different sort of beauty that was coveted by the statesman.

Scipio's political theory is an abstraction, whose simple form may not be obvious to the non-theorist. In writing *De Re Publica*, Cicero had to somehow illustrate it with concrete images. Scipio's use of the images of the orrery and of the planetary motion it represents is a case of that mode of metaphor which Crassus says, in *De Oratore*, does not consist in the metaphorical use of a single word, but is joined from many connected together (*ex pluribus continuatis conectitur*) (3.166); this mode does not consist of a single word, but of a discourse (*oratio*) (3.167). Cicero explains in the *Orator* that when there is a stream of many connected metaphors (*continuae plures translationes*), a different sort of discourse is produced, which the Greeks call allegory (94), and which Fantham has called 'the developed metaphor'.[23] By expropriating the

[20] Obviously, Scipio's metaphors do not suggest that we humans can intervene in the motions of the planets, as we can intervene in the motions of commonwealths. Rather, the parallel is between the human *rector* intervening in politics and the sun regulating celestial dynamics. The motions of the planets we can only predict. The movements of *rei publicae* are less easy to predict, because they are less regular; but once you have predicted them, as political science seems to enable us, we can then intervene, provided we are in a suitable position to do so, as writes Cicero in the preface to Book 1.

[21] See n. 4.

[22] Criticizing Ronconi, Büchner, 474 holds that *D.R.P.* 6.17 represents a political order of a god set above and under him a king managing temporal affairs. Büchner seems right that the sun represents an agent of organization of some kind, but overlooks the philological evidence that the parallel is with the *rector*, not a monarch.

[23] Fantham calls 'developed metaphor' that which *non est in uno verbo translato, sed ex pluribus continuatis conectitur* in her discussion of *De Or*. 3.41.166 in *Comparative Studies in Republican Latin Imagery* (Toronto, 1972), 179. Textual references to Cicero's *Orator* are to: W. Kroll (ed.), *M. Tullii Ciceronis Orator* (Zurich, 1971).

The orrery would satisfy Crassus' account of metaphor in another respect. He emphasizes that every metaphor adopted with good reason is directed to the senses, especially sight, which is the keenest sense. Metaphors drawn from the sense of sight, he says, are much more vivid; they place within the sight of the soul what we are not able to discern or see (3.160). The orrery is a visible

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images of planetary motion and of the orrery in his discourse on states, Scipio makes concrete the abstraction of his political theory. At the same time, the account of the sun in *De Re Publica* 6 serves as a 'developed metaphor', or allegory, for the *rector*.

Scipio's detailed language in the two passages on the circles and circuits of commonwealths (1.45, 2.45) is also metaphorical. With his use of *quasi* in the first passage (1.45), Scipio indicates that he is applying *circuitus* to states metaphorically. Furthermore, the only other entities described in *De Re Publica* as having *orbes*, or undergoing *motus*, besides states, are celestial bodies (1.22, 25, 6.15–18). *Circuitus*, *iter*, *motus*, and *orbis* are not exclusively astronomical terms, but their use to describe changes and alterations in states is surely metaphorical here, for it is metaphor to say, as do these passages, that commonwealths engage in movements (*motus*) or travel in circles (*orbes*) or circuits (*circuitus*), or follow paths (*itinera*). In a different context, these metaphors might not be astronomical. But in a dialogue introduced by a lengthly discourse on astronomy that comprises fully 31 percent of the dialogue portions of *De Re Publica* 1, and that treats of the revolutions of the sun, the moon, and the planets, and of a device that models them, the important astronomical meanings of these words would seem to be invoked.[24]

In conclusion, in *De Re Publica*, the ancient science of astronomy serves as a model for the science of politics which Cicero advances in his preface to Book 1 and calls *rationes rerum publicarum* (1.11). Just as the science of astronomy reveals order in the motions of the planets, so the science of politics reveals order in the movements of states. Scipio uses the orrery of Archimedes as a pedagogical device by which to educate his younger interlocutors in the science of politics. The ultimate power of metaphor in *De Re Publica* is thus pedagogical: to assist in educating the mind and soul of the citizen.

2. CICERO'S COSMOLOGY

The very nature of Scipio's metaphors, however, represents an enigma in his discourse. Since metaphor compares objects that are actually unlike, the comparison is never consistent in all respects. Qualitative differences persist which undermine any imagined strict correspondence, for the metaphor is foreign (*aliena*) to the thing it is used to describe. While Scipio describes the alterations of constitutions with language normally used of the revolutions of the planets, the discourse of *De Re Publica* interrogates their similarities and differences. Africanus says that the planets are eternal (6.17), but Scipio emphasizes that states on Earth degenerate and do not always advance to a mixed constitution of the Roman sort. The ontological basis for this contrast between astronomy and politics is revealed in the *Dream*. As if to explain the difference between the planets and commonwealths, Africanus says:

> Below the moon everything is mortal and subject to decay, except the souls (*animi*) which the gods in their generosity have given to the race of human beings; above the moon, all is eternal. (6.17)

object, seen and understood by Philus, who describes it to his interlocutors in *De Re Publica* by its observable movements.

[24] Or at the very least, metaphors of circles, circuits, motions, and journeys do the work of astronomical imagery. For the important astronomical meanings of these words, see the following. On *circuitus* (not separately listed in *OLD*), see *circuitus* 1 in Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*. On *motus*, see *OLD motus* 1b. On *iter*, see *OLD iter* 1d.

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If everything that is sublunar is doomed to decay (except for human souls), how can Scipio talk of holding the state back from its path of degeneration (2.45)? The degeneration of commonwealths would seem inevitable. The answer to this problem, in the discourse of *De Re Publica*, may be the exception to mortality in the sublunar realm which Africanus says the gods have granted to human beings, namely the soul. Scipio's father, Aemilius Paulus, explains that

> Human beings were given life on the condition that they look after that globe called Earth, which you see in the middle of this region; a soul (*animus*) was given to them from those eternal fires which you call stars and planets. (6.15)

So, the human soul is not sublunar in origin, but superlunar; it comes 'from those eternal fires which you call stars and planets'.[25] Moreover, human beings have 'a duty assigned by god' which they must not abandon (6.15), namely to care for the Earth.[26] Africanus specifies what form that care should take when he urges Scipio to employ the peculiar nature and power of his soul (*propria natura animi atque vis*) for the welfare of his country (*salus patriae*) (6.28–9).[27] The remarks of Paulus and Africanus suggest that within the discourse of *De Re Publica* the soul is regarded to have a nature and power by which human beings may establish new commonwealths and prevent the degeneration of existing ones. In explaining how possessing a soul empowers each human being, Africanus uses the very same language which he had earlier employed to describe the sun:

> Each person (*quisque*) is his or her intellect (*mens*), not that form which can be indicated by the finger. Therefore, know that you are a god, if indeed a god is one who is vigorous, who perceives, who remembers, who foresees, and who rules, governs (*moderatur*) and moves that body for which he is the commander just as that god who is the chief (*princeps*) rules, governs and moves this universe (*mundus*); and as the very eternal god moves the mortal world in a definite way, so the everlasting soul (*animus*) moves the fragile body. (6.26)

With this simile, Africanus proposes that the soul governs (*moderatur*) the body in essentially the same way as the sun, which he also calls *princeps*, acts as the governor (*moderator*) of the planets. The human soul is the locus of those peculiar capacities that make a *rector* like the sun. The intellectual powers previously attributed to the *rector* as governor of the commonwealth are now ascribed to all human souls. Africanus says that each soul is a god. He supports this claim of special powers for the soul with a paraphrase of Socrates' discourse on the soul in Plato's *Phaedrus* (245c–246a). Africanus argues that whatever always moves itself is eternal, but that that which is set in motion by another is necessarily mortal (6.27). 'Since then it is clear that what moves itself is eternal', he argues, 'who could deny that this property is possessed by souls?' (6.28).

Since the soul is self-moving, it is free and immortal, and imparts movement to other, mortal things, such as an earthly body, and, through that body, an earthly

[25] The notion is also expressed at *Cato Maior* 77. Cicero's representation of the soul bears some of the features of the account in Plato's *Timaeus* (41d–42d), which dialogue Cicero translated. But Cicero omits Plato's world soul from his account and the notion that individual souls are pieces of the world soul. For further discussion and citations, see Powell-3, 153, 155, and Powell-2, 252.

[26] The notion of caring for the earth is also expressed in *Cato Maior* 77. On this, see Powell-2, 252.

[27] Perhaps explaining the 'duty assigned by god', Africanus says that 'Nothing that is done on earth is more pleasing to that chief god who rules the whole universe than the councils and assemblies of human beings united by justice, called commonwealths' (6.13).

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commonwealth. Since the human soul has these powers, for Africanus, human beings have in their immortal soul the ability to change the course of earthly events, and preserve commonwealths from decay.[28] The text of *De Re Publica* presents examples of such human action, initiated out of the intellect (*mens*) and informed by wisdom (*sapientia*). The preface to *De Re Publica* 3 states that with the intellect humans have invented vehicles, and have created language, an alphabet, and writing. They invented number, something useful yet changeless and eternal that brought them to study the motions (*motus*) of the stars and the planets (3.3). Humans brought into existence two forms of wisdom (*sapientia*), the principles of ethics (*ratio vivendi*) and the art of government and the education of peoples (*ratio civilis et disciplina populorum*) (3.4–7). The people of Rome looked for such wisdom (*sapientia*) in their early kings (2.24). Wisdom guided those kings in establishing the defences of the city (2.11), and it guided the ancient Romans along that natural path and course to the best constitution, when they incorporated features of the constitutions of other states into their own constitution, in such a way that they improved upon those features at the same time (2.30).

Through such human action governed by the divine soul, the superlunar realm intervenes into the sublunar, political realm, and regulates the movements of commonwealths, as the sun regulates the movements of the planets. The *rector* who governs a state is like the sun which rules the planets, because they are both of the imperishable superlunar realm where the sun holds sway and from which the human soul originates. Accordingly, human beings establish and govern commonwealths by following the pattern of the commonwealth of stars and planets in the heavens. As Cato says in *De Senectute*, the gods gave souls to human beings so that they would care for the earth and imitate the heavenly order in their way of life.[29] Africanus represents this interrelationship between cosmos, state, and individual in his prophecy to Scipio.

> When your life has revolved (*convertere*) through eight times seven revolutions of the sun, and these two numbers, each of which is held for different reasons to be perfect, have by their natural circuit (*circuitus naturalis*) fulfilled your greatest destiny, the whole nation will turn (*convertere*) towards you alone and towards your name. Towards you the Senate, towards you all good men, towards you the allies, towards you the Latins will gaze. You will be the one on whom the welfare of the nation (*civitatis salus*) depends. (6.12)

In this complicated image, the different components of Roman power all revolve (*convertere*) towards Scipio,[30] when the number of revolutions of the sun since Scipio's birth reaches the product of two 'perfect' numbers. Here, the movement of the cosmos, the alignments of classes and peoples, and the choices before an individual all coincide in an historic moment of fundamental import for the future of Rome.[31] In this passage,

[28] Africanus does not restrict the powers which he attributes to the human soul to any particular class, or rank of citizens. He does not even restrict these powers exclusively to men. Each person (*quisque*: 6.26), human beings without distinction (*homines*: 6.15, 17), has access to them. In this connection, see also Powell-3, 153. In addition, it is interesting that Philus supports economic and political rights for women in *D.R.P.* 3 (3.17).

[29] *Cato Maior* 77. See also *N.D.* 2.37. Powell-2, 253 cites an origin for the conception of imitating the heavens in Anaxagoras (cf. Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1216a). See also R. W. Sharples, 'Cicero's Republic and Greek political theory', *Polis* 5.2 (1986), 30–50, esp. 35; and Powell-1, 16. My discussion is consistent with Ferrary's conjecture that the model presented by nature (*naturae imago*), which Scipio says must be utilized to explain the nature of the best state (2.66), is an astronomical one (see n. 4). Ferrary's proposal is hard to confirm, however, due to the lacuna that interrupts the period and follows 2.66.

[30] This metaphorical use of *convertere* is also noted in Powell-3, 151, and Zetzel, 228.

[31] The interrelationship of individual choice, political movement, and celestial action is

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Africanus' discourse represents political processes as part of the structure of the universe, and proposes that states can be governed by the same eternal causality that governs the cosmos. *Circuitus naturalis*, used here of perfect numbers, recalls *De Re Publica* 2.45, where Scipio uses this same phrase, which he says he heard from Africanus in the *Dream*, to describe the movement of commonwealths.

Human beings are free, however, to decline to devote the powers of their soul to the sort of activities praised by Africanus and Paulus. Some choose to devote themselves to the pleasures of the earthly body (*corporis voluptates*), says Africanus, and become its slaves, cultivating those passions (*libidines*) at whose impulse, he claims, they violate the laws of gods and men (6.29). The example, again, is Tarquin, who, Scipio relates, committed the crime (*scelus*) of regicide, and turned Rome from rule by kingship to tyranny. Scipio explains that Tarquin was unwilling to check either his own conduct or the lusts (*libidines*) of his sons.[32] He was not of sound mind (*mens*) (2.45–6). His case illustrates the principle that constitutions are likely to revolve into corrupt forms, because they are vulnerable to the choices of human beings, such as Tarquin, who chose to seize absolute power, rather than use his soul for what Africanus calls 'the best pursuits' (*optimae res*), that is, for the welfare of the nation (6.29).

This secondary theme of humans choosing a narrow self-interest over the interest of their community is embedded in the setting of *De Re Publica*. It casts a shadow over the optimism of Africanus, and warns the reader that nothing is guaranteed in politics, even for those who adhere to virtue and function under the best of constitutions, as Cicero believed Scipio and his interlocutors did.[33] Africanus' prophecy of success for Scipio carries within it the disquiet of failure. He tells Scipio that he will save the Republic, but only 'if you escape the wicked hands of your relatives' (6.12). Indeed, in the days after those in which the dialogue is set, during the constitutional crisis of 129 B.C., Scipio suddenly died, believed assassinated by his Gracchan relatives and political enemies.[34] The condition laid down by Africanus is not met; the cosmic moment is lost. Accordingly, Ruch cast *De Re Publica* as a tragedy, and interpreted the second sun as a prodigy of harm for the elder statesman who submits to the needs of his country, and perishes.[35] From an earthly perspective, such an outcome is surely tragic, and with it Cicero expresses scepticism towards Scipio's programme to preserve commonwealths.[36] The *rector* who could have preserved the commonwealth dies, and the *res publica* devolves into a condition of greater disorder. Indeed, for Cicero, the death of Scipio began that so-called 'short century' that led to Caesar, whom Cicero regarded as another Tarquin. The *Dream*, however, rejects that earthly perspective, and tells us, as Pohlenz has observed, that Scipio is really about to pass over to a more beautiful form of being,[37] and that sometime, somewhere, away from the factions that tore the Republic apart, humans will establish a commonwealth based on justice.

expressed in our text also in the use of *cursus* to describe the paths of the stars and planets (1.22), the directions of commonwealths (1.44, 45, 64), and the course of actions chosen by human beings (1.3, 10). Cicero exhorts his listeners to hold fast to that course of action (*cursus*) followed by their ancestors (1.3), and near the conclusion of the preface, he states that he could never have defeated the conspiracy of Catiline, had he not become consul, and he could never have become consul, had he not held fast to that course of action in his life (*cursus*) through which, though an *eques,* he achieved the consulship (1.10).

[32] Polybius also explains that kingship degenerates into tyranny when princes yield to their appetites (*Hist.* 6.7).

[33] For a useful discussion of this problem, see Powell-1, 21–2.

[34] See Astin. [35] Ruch (n. 2), 164–5, 169–70.

[36] See, again, Powell-1, 21–2. [37] Pohlenz (n. 2), 100.

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Cicero probably had his doubts about the success of efforts to preserve the Republic, but his final decision to resist Antony, which produced the circumstances that led to his own death one decade after writing *De Re Publica*, indicates that he did not question the value of trying.

3. CONCLUSION

De Re Publica is concerned with our ability to represent both the world of the stars and planets and the world of politics. Throughout their discussions, Cicero's characters contrast the nature of things with the human effort to model them. An important result of such exercises, for Cicero, seems to be to identify the circumstances under which human choice, within a context set by the nature of things, can determine success or failure for peoples and cultures.

For many centuries, all we had of *De Re Publica* was the *Dream of Scipio*, which was read in isolation from the work as a whole, which was lost. Its charming cosmological discourse puzzled readers, who wondered what it had to do with the dialogue on the best constitution which Cicero had mentioned in a letter to his brother Quintus (*Ad Q. Fr.* 3.5). We now can see that the *Dream* is an integral part, indeed the culmination of the dialogue on the best state.[38] For Cicero the *Dream* presents his final argument that a science of politics is possible. Together with the orrery, the *Dream* depicts a cycle of astronomical causation that engages the cycles of constitutions through the human being, whose soul migrates to earth from the starry firmament that rules Cicero's universe, to become *rector et moderator rei publicae*. In representing the physical universe, the orrery unites the beginning of *De Re Publica* with its end. In representing the political universe, it unites the beginning and end of *De Re Publica* with its middle. The image of the orrery draws the *Dream* back into the dialogue after its years as a wandering star. The *Dream* cannot be understood apart from the orrery and the political theory it illustrates.[39]

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[38] Also noted by Powell (n. 18), 21.

[39] I am grateful to C. Collard, K. Freudenburg, D. Hahm, J. Zetzel, and the referee chosen by *Classical Quarterly*, for their invaluable comments on previous versions of this paper. I also wish to thank the Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington DC for the support it provided during the summer of 2000 when I completed work on this paper.

https://doi.org/10.1093/cq/51.2.509 Published online by Cambridge University Press