Toward a New Reading of Cicero's De Finibus

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TOWARD A NEW READING OF CICERO’S *DE FINIBUS*

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ABSTRACT

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In this dissertation, I argue that Cicero has two primary, interdependent aims in De finibus: the critical assessment of the dominant ethical positions, and the education of his readers. These aims are accomplished through four key devices. First, Cicero develops flat, useful readings of the dominant ethical positions without rejecting eudaimonism itself. This allows Cicero to demonstrate Academic practices while also insisting upon the importance of virtue, which suggests the best ethical view for Cicero is a skeptically grounded eudaimonism. Second, the arrangement of the text in reverse chronological order dramatically enacts Cicero’s own alternative to the cradle argument on which the dominant positions rely. Third, he uses truth-disclosive terminology to suggest the relative strength of different positions. Fourth, he obscures his own position, if he has one, in several ways over the course of the text. Cicero uses each of these devices to direct De finibus at the interlocutors and at the readers. The relative successes
and failures of philosophical positions in the dialogue instruct the readers about the general
terrain of ethical discourse. In learning about ethics, the readers are ideally thinking more
critically about the principles on which they guide their lives and become better people. As better
people, they might also become the virtuous citizens who could steady Roman politics again.
Cicero is in some sense concerned with the impact of De finibus on the political future of Rome
even when he deals with the minutiae, down to the knuckle bone, of Hellenistic ethics.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: The Aims of De finibus</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: The Appeal to Nature</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Truth-Disclosive Terminology in De finibus</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Author, Character, Translator, Teacher</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The study of Cicero and his works has a long and varied history. Cicero’s influence is significant through the Renaissance, but the re-discovery and distribution of ancient Greek texts precipitated the swift decline of his philosophical reputation. His decline is marked by rebellion against scholasticism and Ciceronianism as a confining style and practice by Erasmus and others (Wilamowitz 1982, 28, 44). In addition, the rise of Hellenism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had a significant deleterious effect on the study of Latin texts (Davies 1971, 105; Douglas 1968, 27). Perhaps the final straw is Drumann’s influential treatment of Cicero and its distillation by Mommsen, now understood to be striking misrepresentations of Cicero and his abilities (Douglas 1968, 5). In the aftermath, Cicero has been read for the sake of some other end, from learning Latin to reconstructing the views of the Hellenistic schools represented in his philosophical works.

In recent years, Cicero’s philosophical reputation has undergone a rapid recovery. It is no longer controversial to say that Cicero fell out of favor as the result of historical accident and the incorrect assessment of his work as unoriginal and derivative by modern scholars. Especially telling is the shift that has occurred in the last few years from defending Cicero’s philosophical abilities to assuming them. Cicero’s competence is now generally accepted, but it is interpreted differently by different scholars. As a result, there are two main interpretive camps concerning his philosophical works.

The first camp isolates arguments in the text, extracts them from their context, and evaluates them for strength, detail, and accuracy.¹ This camp, which I call ‘excavationist’,

¹ Irwin 1986 is the quintessence of this tendency when he describes the Stoic position concerning care for and about the body and cites De finibus iii 41; iv 36, 72; v 74, 89 as his sources (205). Others in the excavationist camp include Reydams-Schils 2005, Schofield and Striker 1986, and Long 2006 on questions of ethics. On questions concerning knowledge, see Striker 1996, Bett
produces valuable work, but it is necessarily limited by the assumption that Cicero is an eclectic commentator whose works can generally be used as sourcebooks for the contents of Stoic, Epicurean, and Academic arguments. Reading his work in this way makes it possible to overlook Cicero’s craftsmanship in engineering the texts as he does. This may be especially true in the case of the philosophical works. Cicero is far better known as an orator than as a philosopher. Cicero defended the idea of the Roman republic, was a sought-after litigator in the courts, and was an influential writer and orator in his public life. The historical circumstances of his life make his political involvement a seeming preoccupation that he and his commentators cannot avoid. Unfortunately, such a focus usually overshadows for interpreters his training and philosophical background. In several dialogues Cicero recounts his acquaintance with philosophers throughout his youth, including the Epicureans Phaedrus and Zeno of Sidon, the Academic Philo of Larissa and his student Antiochus of Ascalon. Several of his friends and colleagues were patrons of philosophers. Some of these also serve as characters in Cicero’s dialogues, including Piso and Lucullus, who hosted Staseas of Naples and Antiochus, respectively. Cicero even sends his son to be educated by Cratippus, the most prominent Peripatetic philosopher at the time.

The second camp would accept Cicero’s interest in philosophy is genuine and that his philosophical training arguably has as much influence on his writing as his political inclinations and background in rhetoric. I call this camp ‘contextualist’ because it incorporates the structural and dramatic components of Cicero’s work into its analyses. In several works ‘he remains consistent about his interest as a writer in integrating philosophy with politics and rhetoric’ (Long 1995, 39). Cicero himself insists philosophy and rhetoric are finest when they are together

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(Ac. i 8-10, De fin. iv 6, iv 24, v 1). Contextualist interpretations use Cicero’s unique strengths in rhetoric to complement his philosophical argumentation.\(^2\) Whereas excavationists might assume that Cicero’s position is directly reported by the character bearing his name, for example, contextualists take seriously the possibility that Cicero’s own view may differ from the claims of the character named Cicero.\(^3\) Yet much of the literature in this camp looks across several dialogues, or even across several genres of Cicero’s writings, which generally limits understanding of the subtle themes Cicero can develop over the course of a single text.

This means that both camps, for one reason or another, continue to undervalue Cicero’s philosophical work. There is a need to direct these efforts to one dialogue as a concentrated case study to discover the themes and ideas that emerge over the text as a whole.\(^4\) This dissertation uses the strengths of each camp to demonstrate the consistency and nuance of Cicero’s position in De finibus, his text on ethics. I argue that Cicero has two equally important aims. First, Cicero assesses Hellenistic ethics to criticize the problematic components of the Epicurean, Stoic, and Antiochian positions in order to suggest the more plausible alternative of a skeptical

\(^2\) As we have learned to take seriously the dramatic features of Plato’s dialogues as having an impact on their philosophical content, we should become increasingly cognizant that Cicero as a gifted philosophical author and rhetorician is similarly situated as Plato to write works that require careful consideration of their form along with their content.

\(^3\) Görler 1997 exposes the elements of the Lucullus that indicate Cicero’s personal views where they differ from the Cicero character. Another fruitful application of the contextualist approach is in facilitating the discovery that Cicero develops passages of his own dialogues parallel to passages of Plato’s. For one strong example, Barnes 1997 observes that Academica ii 91 parallels Plato’s Gorgias 453-454.

\(^4\) Some recent interpreters in the second camp have focused on De finibus, but the resulting analysis focuses on the structural anomaly of De finibus v. The structure and dramatic construction of De finibus are examined in Stokes 1995, Wright 1995, Schofield 2012, and Long 2015.
eudaimonism. Second, Cicero is using *De finibus* to aid in the philosophical training of his Roman readers.

As an Academic, Cicero adopts three features of skepticism in *De finibus* associated with Socrates and Carneades: ‘(i) relieving others of falsely believing they know what they don’t, and (ii) revealing the most probable solutions to the problems discussed while (iii) concealing his own opinion so as not to interfere with the rational autonomy of the participants’ (Thorsrud 2018, 51). The first three chapters deal with features (i) and (ii), in effect establishing Cicero’s inclinations toward Carneadean probabilism. In brief, Carneadean probabilism is one product of the Academic-Stoic exchange that begins with the criterion of knowledge. Stoics maintain that knowledge is possible on account of kataleptic impressions, or impressions that are marked just so that they could not possibly be false. When someone assents to those impressions, they have knowledge. The Academics challenge the possibility of kataleptic impressions, and suggest that it is irresponsible to assent entirely to impressions that are not indubitably true. The Stoics reply with the apraxia argument, which claims that without assent, action is impossible. In response to the apraxia argument, Carneades provides a practical criterion: the plausible or probable (to pithanon). Under the guidance of the probable, an Academic may act according to the best option. Some interpretations of Carneades maintain that the Academic can act on the probable without assenting to the probable and holding a corresponding opinion. Others maintain that the

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5 In so doing, Cicero is in the Socratic tradition.
6 There is a substantive body of literature dedicated to the specific determination Cicero’s allegiance to the Old Academy, the New Academy, or radical or mitigated skepticism. Most of these distinctions rely on distinctions in the critique, acceptance, or rejection of the epistemological tenets of the Stoics in particular. A clear determination of Cicero’s position can be made from *De finibus* outside of his general methodology and general inclination toward Carneadean probabilism. As a result, I focus on the skeptical features of Cicero’s method, which can fall under Frede’s description of ‘classical’ as opposed to ‘dogmatic’ skepticism (Burnyeat and Frede 1997).
7 In chapter 1, I offer my own interpretation of Thorsrud’s three features.
Academic may hold opinions, assenting to the probable as true, under the proviso that they may be mistaken.¹⁸

Eudaimonism is a promising ethical position because it requires that people take virtue seriously as an important contributor to personal happiness. Since virtue is central to attaining eudaimonia, citizens engaged in eudaimonistic pursuits will likely benefit their community. For Cicero, then, eudaimonism is the only, or at least the best, ethical position because it confers well-being at the level of the individual and the state. Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians are all eudaimonists insofar as they all strive for happiness or well-being as the best end. Though concepts of happiness proper to each school differ, they all make an attempt to include virtue in a serious way. For the Stoics, virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness. The Antiochians maintain that virtue is sufficient for the happy life, but not the happiest life. The Epicureans have the most strained relationship with virtue since they use it instrumentally as something useful in producing the best pleasure and minimizing pain.

Incorporating virtue in different ways makes the schools differ in degree of political viability and responsibility. The Antiochians and Stoics promote virtue for its own sake, which should guide their practitioners to become better people and, as a result, better citizens. Cicero finds the role of virtue in Epicureanism problematic. He portrays Epicurean virtue as the instrumental good that helps promote the highest good, which is pleasure and freedom from pain. Instrumental virtue seems to teach the Epicureans that they should only be good people so that they experience more pleasure. Compared to the others, Epicurean happiness is self-serving and often results in a withdrawal from politics. It refuses to confront Roman realities and cannot

¹⁸ For a thorough treatment of the meaning and application of to pithanon, see Thorsrud 2018; Allen 1994; Striker 1996 and 1997.
encourage flourishing in a truly Roman context. The Epicurean offers an unacceptable and irresponsible response to philosophy and must therefore be rejected.

Though Cicero values eudaimonism, he cannot accept it without scrutiny. His critiques of the positions provided by the different schools are designed to scrutinize the extent to which they distort the original positions. There is a precedent for this practice in Plato and Aristotle. This strategy of providing flat readings is not taken up with the purpose of being unfair. Instead, it serves to help educate the readers. Flat readings provide readers with the distinctions and awareness of the general problems they need in order to think more effectively about the topic in question. In the *Meno*, for example, Plato aims to develop a distinction between what is truly good and apparent goods. In order to draw this distinction, Socrates provides Meno with options that he cannot easily refuse. Consider the question Socrates asks: ‘does anyone wish to be miserable and unhappy?’ (78a3) The answer is obviously ‘no’. Thus when people choose objects that make them miserable and unhappy, they do so while thinking that the object they choose is good. This means there must be a difference between what is actually good and what merely seems to be good. Having been led through this process, readers possess a new distinction that they can use for further philosophical inquiry and for practical application in their own lives.

Cicero in *De finibus* gives all obvious options, even if they do not accurately reflect the nuance of their original forms. He then eliminates some or, arguably, all options with criticism of varied intensity and subtlety. In the end, the reader is left somewhat uncertain about the correct answer, but for good reason. If there is a correct ethical position, and all of the obvious answers fail, then

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9 Even the classification of the three ethical systems concerning their use of virtue may be distorting. Virtue can be (1) instrumental in attaining happiness, (2) solely constitutive of happiness, or (3) partly constitutive of happiness. Cicero might borrow this threefold division concerning the role of virtue from Plato. See Vlastos 1991, 203-209 for an assessment of this threefold division and its origin in Plato’s dialogues.
a more difficult answer must be sought by further inquiry and reflection. The best Cicero can do for his readers is provide them with the tools they need to think about the problem.

*De finibus* is equally concerned with the critical assessment of ethical systems as it is about teaching Roman readers the best philosophical practices and methods. In this dissertation, I argue that Cicero aims to train his readers in Academic philosophy so that they can make their own judgment about the ethical systems on display in *De finibus*. The result of this training should bring the readers to appreciate that there are no easy answers in selecting the best ethical system. Instead, readers proficient in Academic methods will recognize that the best option is to adopt that skeptically grounded eudaimonism.

Instruction that relies on flat readings assumes that the readership is sophisticated. Cicero’s writing assumes that his audience will include well-educated Romans who might possess or lack the ability to discern his more subtle points. In other words, Cicero presents some material that could be understood without much effort, and some ideas that require a sharp eye and careful analysis to be understood. The expectation that his readership engagement will vary in perspicacity was accepted by many ancient philosophers. Piso attributes apparent conflicts between texts within the Old Academy, for example, to this difference between esoteric and exoteric works (v 12). The case of *De finibus* is further complicated by the structure of the text, and amplified by Cicero’s many roles in the text. Cicero includes himself in *De finibus* as a character in all three dialogues, each occurring at different times in Cicero’s life and possibly offering very different perspectives on what positions he may or may not take up. In addition to using himself as a named character, Cicero also takes care to call attention to his work as author and translator in the text. As author, Cicero constructs the text and conducts the narration that frames all three dialogues for Brutus, who is not used as an interlocutor.
Plato writes a number of narrated dialogues, including *Republic, Protagoras, Charmides, Lysis, and Euthydemus*. In such narrated dialogues, Plato has Socrates narrate an account of a dialogue he supposedly had with his interlocutors. The narration is conducted for those reading the dialogue, but it occurs with or among interlocutors. The aim of narration demonstrates authorial care for the education both of the interlocutors with whom Socrates is directly engaged and of the readers who are approaching the text separately. Cicero does something quite similar in *De finibus*. He narrates the three dialogues of *De finibus* and arranges them in such a way that the careful, talented readers can discern insights that are unavailable to the interlocutors.

Consider, for example, Cicero’s approach to the Hellenistic appeal to nature that we call the ‘cradle argument’. The interlocutors engage with the Cicero character to present their respective schools’ understanding of this appeal to nature. Yet each of the three dialogues occurs at different times, and they are arranged in reverse chronological order. This means that Cicero’s character in book 1 is supposed to have already participated in the discussion that takes place in book 5, but the other characters of book 1 were not present for book 5’s debate. Meanwhile, the reader gains philosophical experience by reading the books in order, so that when she arrives at book 5, she has the benefit of having read the basic positions and basic refutations of the Epicureans and Stoics. This is a kind of privileged access that Cicero allows for his readership but denies for his interlocutors. In effect, only the reader can draw conclusions about the text that concern Cicero the author. The interlocutors are unable to see the progress of the text Cicero devises as author and therefore have very limited access to Cicero’s position.

Only the reader has access to the fact that *De finibus* is arranged in reverse chronological order, for example. This arrangement allows Cicero to dramatically enact his own, highly modified, appeal to nature in which he indicates our ethical origins should be located during a
time of rational maturity and philosophical engagement rather than in pre-rational infancy. It is not possible to consider Cicero’s own position as an interlocutor because interlocutors in each dialogue cannot see the ongoing critique of the various cradle arguments or the increasingly impressive philosophy that occurs over the course of the text. To the extent that it is possible to consider Cicero’s position, it must be from the perspective of a reader. The most perceptive readers will notice in addition that the reverse chronological order is Cicero’s dramatic reply to the content of the cradle arguments of the various schools.

Though the reader is in a superior position to understand what Cicero’s aims might be in *De finibus*, the philosophical work being done by the interlocutors is still meaningful. Most of the text’s important philosophical work is completed at the interlocutor level. The work of the interlocutors may not be as sophisticated as the training that the readers can receive from the text, but the direct participants in the dialogue are nonetheless benefitted by the discussion. *De finibus*, like Plato’s dialogues, is concerned with readers and interlocutors alike, the education of the former being in part conducted by means of the education of the latter. Recall that one of Cicero’s main Academic aims is to prepare others to practice philosophy to the extent that they are able. Part of this aim is served by withholding his own view so that the interlocutor or reader is not tempted to accept such a view on the basis of authority instead of critical evaluation. Even though Cicero is a participant in *De finibus*, in the tradition of Plato’s dialogues he Socratically avoids giving his own position. Though the immediate recipients of the cradle argument are the interlocutors, overall the content of the cradle argument and Cicero’s subtle interpretation of the cradle argument are directed at the readers. Both the discovery of Cicero’s alternative and one’s assessment of that alternative rest on the training and the judgment of the readers.
It is difficult, therefore, to overestimate the importance of education as a theme in Cicero’s *De finibus*. He develops philosophical education as a central theme in *De finibus* through three well-placed devices: (1) the opening passages are focused entirely on the introduction of philosophy to Roman culture, (2) Cicero’s stated preference for art over natural talent, and (3) the progression of the text reflects steady progress in philosophical learning, and the dramatic setting of books 3-5 are centered around education. The opening passages of the text anticipate disapproval of philosophy in general, disapproval of practicing or writing philosophy in Latin instead of Greek, and disapproval for Cicero’s personal involvement in both. Cicero uses these objections to create a space for philosophy in his Roman context. He insists wisdom is a commendable object of attention and that the discipline is best suited for the hard-working and mature person, particularly someone whose character (*persona*) and position (*dignitas*) are respected by Roman standards (i 2-3). He makes it so that those who resist his project because they prefer to read philosophy in Greek are shamefully choosing Greece over Rome. In addition to this political insinuation, refusing to engage philosophy in Latin also implies a philosophical problem, for if philosophy has but a single language and setting, then it is unlikely to be the pursuit of wisdom it aspires and claims to be.

Creating cultural space for philosophy in the Roman context makes philosophy a more appealing discipline for Romans to study, while justifying philosophy as in fact philosophy, and in effect preparing his readers to appreciate and engage in it. In addition to preparing his readers for philosophical education, Cicero also suggests that art, which is learned, is superior to innate natural talent. This is most clear when Cicero critiques the Epicurean and Stoic cradle arguments. Nature, in the pre-rational, biological sense that the cradle arguments appeal to, is an unreliable and potentially misleading origin for determining our nature, in the sense of essence or end (or
sumnum bonum). Proper training in an art produces better results more consistently than natural, untrained talent. Regular, non-accidental, and repeatable success is more likely to follow from the former than the latter. It also makes progress possible, both with respect to individual mastery over time and to progress of the discipline overall. In the case of ethics, Cicero suggests, education seems necessary to propel human beings from the biological origin to the sumnum bonum in a way that the cradle argument is unable to do.

The final device is Cicero’s increasing emphasis on education through dramatic setting and the philosophical proficiency of the interlocutors. After Cicero makes space for Roman philosophical practice, he presents the readers with two characters who, despite their literary interests, are philosophically inexpert and Torquatus is unable to defend his position against Cicero’s criticisms. In the second dialogue, Cicero’s interlocutor is Cato, who has a strong reputation as a Stoic and he proves to be a technically adept philosopher. Cicero opens the dialogue by having the two characters bump into each other at teenage Lucullus’ personal library. They agree that they will share responsibility for Lucullus’ education. In effect they are two characters of strong intellectual reputation discussing education in a scholarly setting. Recall that the third dialogue takes place during Cicero’s youthful philosophical studies in Athens. Cicero and his companions are in Athens with the sole purpose of gaining an education. They wander around the ruins of the Academy, marveling at the philosophical history of the place, when they begin their discussion. The emphasis on philosophical education is anything but subtle—and it is underscored by the fact that Cicero and Piso are vying for the educational commitment of Lucius, Cicero’s cousin. As Cicero increasingly emphasizes philosophical education over the course of De finibus, and the quality of discussion also increases.
Cicero refrains from giving his own position or from telling his interlocutors what they should believe. He rigorously critiques the positions of the Hellenistic schools so that the characters of the dialogues—especially those who are beginning their education—might be guided to make better choices for themselves. Both the interlocutors and the readers are guided to interrogate the existing ethical systems, and both can make progress over the course of the discussion. Yet Cicero’s emphasis on education is best understood, as previously indicated, as pertaining most crucially to the readers of the text, rather than merely the interlocutors. The readers of De finibus are in the best position to see the full trajectory of Cicero’s critical project, and to begin to see suggestions that there are alternatives to the doctrinal positions of the Hellenistic schools.

The chapters of this dissertation support this complexity of De finibus in four distinct areas. In chapter one, I show that Cicero gives flat, useful readings to the Hellenistic ethical positions to allow for eudaimonism to be promising while also rejecting its currently existing forms. The misrepresentations he devises share in the purpose of highlighting some common problems in philosophical process, namely, that most philosophers either fail to provide a politically viable ethics or fail to develop their ethics with sufficient philosophical rigor. Cicero’s own methods contrast with the other schools, suggesting they may avoid those same mistakes.

Having shown that Cicero likely allows eudaimonism but denies its current forms, I turn to the Hellenistic schools’ appeal to nature in the second chapter. The appeal to nature takes the form of the ‘cradle argument’ in De finibus, where the Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians each have their own version. I point out that Cicero’s rejection of the various forms never challenges the underlying desire to find an origin for ethics that is ‘natural’ for human beings. I argue that Cicero arranges the text to dramatically enact his own appeal to nature. Rather than appeal to the
non-rational infant, Cicero appeals to his rational educational prime, an age at which he was ready to make critical judgments, when the text concludes with a debate concerning the strongest philosophical position, set during Cicero’s philosophical education in Athens.

In the third chapter, I analyze Cicero’s usage of key terms that indicate some clear evidence for the line of interpretation I have been pursuing. He uses plane, for example, to indicate a position worth consideration. Apertus and perspicuus indicate value based on their context. Perspicuus is used in books 3 and 4 because perspicua are the starting point for Stoic ethics, but its ongoing importance in book 5 suggests Cicero uses perspicuus to represent legitimate references to compelling ideas. Apertus is context-sensitive so that it is used ironically by some interlocutors and not by others. Finally, clarus and illustris are generally reserved for examples of virtuous or otherwise admirable behavior. I argue that Cicero uses these five key truth-disclosive terms to accomplish two tasks. First, he uses them to challenge the presuppositions that his readers might have about Cicero’s own position and the possibility of being transparent in philosophy. Second, he arranges the usage of these terms in a way that leads the most astute readers to consider the relative strength of some positions against others in De finibus. In particular, he both suggests that the Antiochian position is strongest, and that the Stoic position remains influential for him.

In chapter four I argue that Cicero gives himself several roles in De finibus to obscure his own position, if he has one, in order to guide his readers into making their own philosophical judgments. When Cicero introduces the aims of the text and narrates each dialogue for Brutus, Cicero expresses the persona of author. This draws the attention of Cicero’s Roman readers to his authorial concerns as distinct from the concerns of the ‘Cicero’ character. Cicero adds to this effect when he emphasizes his work as a translator throughout De finibus, both through his own
narration and through the interactions of the ‘Cicero’ character. Finally, in his role as the character ‘Cicero’, he visibly adds to the complexity of his own position in two ways. First, ‘Cicero’ may agree or disagree with Cicero’s own position on each major point of argument. Second, ‘Cicero’ engages in imaginary conversations within the dialogues, further distancing Cicero from the text. Cicero’s use of personae provides him with several dimensions of obfuscation. As the translator, author, and character—particularly a character who appears at three separate times in his life, and who invents a new character ‘Cicero’ to engage in pretend conversations within the imaginary dialogue—Cicero has several avenues to disclose or withhold his own opinion. This is a useful strategy to prevent readers from attributing any position to Cicero himself.

The results of each chapter contribute some bit of insight toward Cicero’s own position and his overall aims for the text. When Cicero begins De finibus, he tells us: ‘nothing in life is more worth investigating than philosophy in general, and the question raised in this work in particular: what is the end, what is the ultimate and final goal, to which all our deliberations on living well and acting rightly should be directed?’ (i 11) In this dissertation, I examine four different aspects of De finibus that address the dialogue that occurs at the level of the interlocutors, the possible intended effects of that dialogue on the readers, and Cicero’s aims for the text to have an impact on the political future of Rome. His assessment of the other schools suggests that even the best available answer is unsatisfactory. It is therefore likely that the best practice in philosophy is to engage in classical skepticism. In effect, the participants in the

10 Though the distinction between ‘classical’ and ‘dogmatic’ skepticism collapses some important distinguishing features between different philosophers and different movements in the Academy, it is a reasonable way to divide skepticism in this case because the two will share some methodological features and differ concerning the possibility of knowledge.
dialogues are the readers, and Cicero’s way of doing philosophy is the lesson readers should take away from *De finibus*.
CHAPTER 1
THE AIMS OF *DE FINIBUS*

Many interpretations of Cicero have found him ‘unoriginal’. It has been suggested that such interpretations come from Cicero himself, since he ‘would never have dreamed of claiming originality in philosophical research’ (DeGraff 1940, 143). Interpretations of this sort are founded primarily on the content of the arguments Cicero presents, and the evidence seems compelling. *De finibus* appears to confirm a lack of originality insofar as the arguments Cicero presents in the text are not novel. They are stock arguments for and against the positions held by the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Antiochians, or the Old Academy. There are no apparent surprises and, for many readers, no real excitement. Yet when Cicero addresses the ethical systems of the Hellenistic schools in *De finibus*, he critiques their arguments and often distorts their initial form in the process. He turns each idea over so it is exposed in a way that it was not intended to be. Each turning indicates both rejection and his own offering, sometimes negative, indicating that the reader should not adopt that idea unthinkingly, and sometimes positive, indicating a superior alternative. Cicero presents his work as an elegantly strewn set of dialogues through which the reader must navigate, but the path has already been determined by the choices he made in creating that aggregation. The product is a thoughtful philosophical engagement that is Cicero’s own, comprised of parts that are like the ideas of the other Hellenistic schools, yet distinct in their distortion and assembled with insight. Cicero’s ‘original’ contribution, if we can call it that, is located in this ability to alter the philosophical landscape and craft a response with rhetorical aplomb.\(^{11}\) *De finibus* is, as a result, a highly contrived philosophical work that aims to

\(^{11}\) I include under ‘originality’ all indications of innovation and novelty.
train its Roman audience to improve in reading and practicing philosophy, where this practice is both philosophizing itself and leading a philosophically guided life.

In this chapter, I argue that Cicero uses the *De finibus* to instruct his Roman readers how to distinguish good philosophy from its imitations. The Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians are made into examples of how not to do philosophy. Together they suggest a few key qualities that philosophers should express. Philosophy should be support responsible politics. Philosophers should be competent. They should avoid unnecessary jargon. They should honor their predecessors, particularly when their predecessors have done good work. Finally, they should develop strong philosophical arguments that complement political engagement. Cicero rejects each of the schools for their failure to express one or more of these qualities. The Epicureans, Cicero argues, are incompetent and politically dangerous. The Stoics invent unnecessary jargon and fail to honor their predecessors, resulting in political difficulties. The Antiochians succeed in almost every aspect, and are the most viable politically, but Piso’s argument for the *summum bonum* is flawed. The other philosophical schools become silly, irresponsible foils to Cicero’s own project, which demonstrates a good way to do philosophy through Academic skepticism. The result of Cicero’s process is a sophisticated philosophical position that promotes eudaimonism, because it takes virtue seriously in a way that can support political activity, yet rejects the current eudaimonistic theories because they fail to meet Cicero’s philosophical or political requirements for Roman philosophy.

Cicero defends his own contribution

Cicero’s use of the concept of originality to critique the Stoics and Epicureans is interesting, and I should note that Cicero makes innovation a discussion point well before he
refutes the ethical theories of the schools. Despite never explicitly claiming originality in research, Cicero implicitly suggests that he is doing something new in the history of philosophy when he writes philosophy in Latin, at least insofar as he brings a new discipline into Roman culture. Before he begins any philosophical exposition, Cicero explains to Brutus, the audience of the text’s narration, that he expects to ‘incur criticism of various kinds’ (De fin. i 1). He anticipates three general categories of criticism: (1) disapproval of philosophy in itself, (2) disapproval of practicing and writing philosophy in Latin rather than Greek, and (3) disapproval that Cicero in particular should waste his time writing philosophy in Latin. Cicero aims to avert these criticisms with a defense of philosophy itself, of the translation of philosophy into Latin, and of his own participation in philosophy and its Latinization. The defense suggests either there is some resistance to his endeavor or Cicero wants us to think that there could be such resistance. Whether the criticisms are real or imagined, their inclusion bears a similar effect insofar as the reader is brought to consider Cicero’s actions as new and controversial.

Of course, this is not entirely true. Cicero may be innovative in applying his particular mode of evaluation to the Hellenistic schools, in Latin, for a Roman audience. Yet there are others writing philosophy in Latin. Cicero explicitly refers to Gaius Amafinius, who was publishing books about Epicureanism in Latin, in Tusculan Disputations iv 5-7. Schofield 2008 explains that Amafinius and his imitators are the likely targets of Cicero’s criticisms that Epicureans ‘cannot make the right distinctions nor organise their arguments, and they cannot write elegantly’ (68n14). With an even greater intellectual reputation, Varro was Cicero’s contemporary who wrote many treatises in Latin now lost to us, ranging from philosophy and the Latin language to agriculture.¹² He is also represented as a character in Cicero’s Academica. It is

¹² In the parts of Varro’s Rerum rusticarum that remain, Varro discusses agriculture and refers directly to his predecessor Cato. Cicero’s style of giving useful, flat readings to the other schools
therefore quite clear that there are other Romans writing philosophy in Latin, and Cicero knows about them. When he discusses his own project in the opening pages of De finibus as novel, he cannot be making a mistake from ignorance.

There are surely some who will maintain that Cicero’s claim of novelty here is the unsubstantiated boasting of an arrogant man. If Cicero is not making a sloppy error or indulging his own vanity, he may still ignore those other writers for other reasons. The most likely role of the opening criticisms is to allow Cicero to give philosophy a context in Roman culture. To criticism (1) and (3), for example, Cicero insists wisdom is a commendable object of attention and that the discipline is best suited for the hard-working and mature person (i 2-3). If wisdom is a commendable object, then it should be pursued by those who are well-suited by Roman standards to pursue such commendable objects. Cicero presents philosophy as a discipline that would suit someone of Cicero’s character (personae) and position (dignitatis) well. In addition, Cicero develops an identity for philosophy that is distinctly Roman. He expects criticism (2) to be held by Hellenophiles ‘learned in Greek and contemptuous of Latin…[who] say that they would rather spend their time reading Greek’ (i 1). Given that philosophy had been either a strictly Greek endeavor, or one undertaken in the Greek language, Cicero is cautious to avoid the accusation that he loves Greek culture too much. He claims that an excessive distaste for Roman culture and language is not comprehensible, particularly since, in his view, Latin is even richer than Greek (i 10). Furthermore, Cicero continues, since many already read Latin plays that are direct translations from Greek plays, they should be receptive to reading philosophy, a more worthy discipline, in Latin (i 4). More importantly, he includes that Hellenophiles complain that to further his own pedagogical aims may not be so novel if Varro is doing something similar. Yet the extent to which Varro is building from Cato, or misrepresenting Cato to provide himself an interesting position with which to engage, cannot be assessed here.
Latin translations are less refined than the Greek originals, and they lack readability. Cicero actually agrees that this is the case. Yet he attributes the problem to a translation from ‘bad Greek into worse Latin’, and his solution is complex (i 8). First, it is possible that the Greek originals are not worth reading in these cases, and they should be re-evaluated to determine their quality (i 8). Second, even bad Latin translations of worthy Greek originals are valuable (i 5, i 8). Cicero’s reasoning is as follows: if the bad translations of plays, literature, and other entertaining material constitute an essential part of a good Roman education, then philosophy, whose ends are admirable, translated from the greatest Greeks and Romanized, must be invaluable. Cicero makes it so that the only person who wouldn’t want to read a Latin work of worthy content and style is someone who obstinately chooses the Greeks over the Romans.¹³ No longer does philosophy belong exclusively to the aloof curiosities of the well-educated, Greek-reading elite. It now belongs to the best Romans. This is not to say that Cicero is motivated by strong democratic concerns, but rather that he wishes to add philosophy to the cultural repertoire of Rome as a labor of love and service to the state.¹⁴

The discussion carries a distinct patriotic tone that echoes Cicero’s public career and the duty he feels toward Rome as self-identified savior of the republic.¹⁵ Cicero’s perceived commitment to Rome is evident in his concern for Roman education, his praise of Latin over Greek, and his clear emphasis that philosophy does not interfere with his civic duties. He is walking a fine line on which he must present philosophy, the pinnacle of Greek culture and

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¹³ Such a person is represented in the example of Albucius at De finibus i 9.
¹⁴ It does, however, call into question excessive snobbishness of Cicero, inasmuch as he can work well in Greek, but he resists the exclusivity of the Greek-reading elite.
¹⁵ As consul, Cicero prosecuted Cataline and his alleged conspirators. Cicero considered this a high point of his career and in the extant letters and speeches he often models himself as the savior of the Republic. It is an ethos that Cicero appears to enjoy, as May 1989, 143-155 explains the return of this ethos in the Philippics. My reading thus allows Cicero to be both rather egocentric and a fair-minded sophisticated writer.

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civilization in Cicero’s eyes, without betraying his Roman sensibilities. He must transform the discipline formerly reserved for the disconnected Hellenophiles into something that all good Romans might benefit from on their own terms. He must show that the Greek and Roman culture can complement one another. This is why Cicero notes that his interest in philosophy, a traditionally Greek endeavor, does not interfere with his duties to Rome (i 10). He even identifies this project as an opportunity to take on a new duty, namely, to ‘improve the learning of [his] fellow-citizens’ (i 10).

His aim is not simply to represent the history of philosophy for his audience. Many commentators are most concerned with critically assessing the quality of Cicero’s work as a historian of philosophy. They examine the positions of the philosophers Cicero discusses to determine the accuracy of his reports. They are right to point out the many instances of Cicero’s inaccuracy, yet their focus on accuracy as such may make it impossible to see what else Cicero might be doing. In particular, such work tends to overlook that *De finibus* is consistently used to show what philosophy should look like and do in the Roman context. Treating his work even as a sophisticated report on the contemporary themes in philosophy is inadequate because he is layering Plato and Aristotle with all of their philosophical descendants from the various Hellenistic schools. Any indication of asymmetry is critiqued in order to discover the most fundamental, consistent set of ideas in philosophy and make them applicable in the final days of the Roman republic. I therefore assume that *De finibus* is a highly contrived, carefully constructed work produced by an exceptional writer. Cicero may very well be arrogant, but this is not likely to be the only reason Cicero has for opening the text as he does.

The aim of educating Romans reflects Cicero’s commitment to the Roman republic. Powell 2012, 40 notes that Cicero attributes the many problems of the republic to the ‘failings of
individuals’ rather than the constitution. Individual failings are best moderated through external motivations, including well-designed laws, and through proper education to develop good character and suitable interests. In some sense Cicero parallels Plato’s own position that philosophy seems vital for developing virtue in citizens who can, then, save their city or constitution.\(^\text{16}\) For Cicero, oratory shapes politics and therefore should be grounded in true knowledge of its subjects.\(^\text{17}\) His *De oratore* even suggests the best orator is a philosopher.\(^\text{18}\) Cicero writes at the end of the Roman republic and the beginning of rule by dictatorship. The republican ideals on which Cicero’s Rome was founded were being overpowered by the interests of ambitious individuals. He may very well have thought philosophy necessary to rebuild traditional Roman citizens and restore republican values. Not only would this allow Cicero to consider himself the savior of the republic for the second time in his life, but it would give his project of translation (and not mere translation) urgency for his audience.

Cicero’s defense shows his Roman readers that philosophy should have a Roman context. It also in effect argues for the validity of philosophy, translation, and his own personal engagement with both.\(^\text{19}\) Cicero does indicate that translation itself is an innovation, but he clearly thinks his role in *De finibus* extends beyond that of a translator. At i 6 Cicero writes, ‘What of it, if I do not perform the task of a translator, but preserve the views of those whom I consider sound while contributing my own judgment and order of composition?’ He is telling his

\(^\text{16}\) See, for example, Plato’s *Seventh Letter*, in which the opposite characters of Dion and Dionysius II embody different kinds of cities. Dionysius is a non-philosophical tyrant, while Dion shares Plato’s values and strives to liberate cities from tyranny.

\(^\text{17}\) Crassus holds this position in *De oratore* i, for example.

\(^\text{18}\) Not unlike Plato’s *Phaedrus*, where true rhetoric requires that the rhetorician understands the topic about which he speaks, that he appreciates the sorts of souls of his listeners, and that he uses his talents for persuasion to bring his readers to the truly good or beneficial (269d-270a).

\(^\text{19}\) Cicero’s defense appears to argue for the validity of translation. This remains a major issue in philosophy today both in analytic and continental traditions. It may be that the act of translation itself represents an innovation, and Cicero considers his work to extend beyond mere translation.
audience, including Brutus and other readers, that he does not aim to translate Greek into Latin verbatim. It is with an expert eye that he curates the arguments and their presentation while ‘[teaching] philosophy to speak Latin’ (iii 40). Thus we can expect the De finibus to be replete with Cicero’s own evaluation, his own judgment, and his own composition regarding the arguments that were already subject to debate among the schools at the time. In these ways, Cicero is offering a positive model for what philosophy should do. The positive model is subtle, especially in contrast with the extended refutations of the other schools. When Cicero challenges the dogmatic claims to which those schools adhere and discredits their underlying assumptions, he criticizes their ideas as wrong and as new. On the one hand, he criticizes the other schools’ innovations because they either fail to contribute something useful to philosophy or they actively detract from the discipline by making confused or false contributions. On the other hand, he criticizes them for not innovating enough. Together, Cicero implies that philosophers should critically assess all ideas and make useful contributions to philosophy, as he seems to think of his own work. They should not weaken philosophy or make it unnecessarily complex as the other schools do.\(^{20}\)

The Epicurean lesson

It is generally understood that Cicero’s treatment of the Epicureans is unfair in De finibus. He rejects their theory entirely, partially based on his misrepresentation of their key

\(^{20}\) Socrates, of course, warns against innovation in Plato’s Republic. It raises the interesting question about the relation between innovation and progress in philosophy. With every new philosophical method there is some novel approach to wisdom. Wisdom, perhaps, can never be attained, so philosophers must strive to innovate and approach wisdom from new directions. This seems especially relevant in the context of Cicero’s project of translating and adapting philosophy for his Roman context. Cicero subtly gestures to innovation as a crucial concept for his project and invites us to think about the expectations we should have for new contributions to philosophy, including his own.
ideas. In the relevant literature, some find Cicero’s misrepresentation more problematic than others. I address briefly Cicero’s rejection of the general contents of Epicureanism, and the misrepresentation of the theory, before I turn to Cicero’s rejection of their allegedly failed innovations. My brevity does not indicate that the problem is uninteresting or unworthy of further comment. Rather, I argue that Cicero has a pedagogical motive for giving the other schools a flat and distorted reading. His presentation of the Epicureans is important insofar as it serves this broader aim, to teach his Roman audience that they can do better than the Epicureans by practicing philosophy in the way Cicero himself does. There is also political urgency in dismissing the Epicureans. Insofar as the Epicureans advocate withdrawal from public life, they undermine precisely the kind of education that Cicero is trying to provide for his fellow Romans. On the one hand, Cicero suggests they prioritize a *summum bonum* that is unworthy of Romans. Indulgence in personal pleasure, Cicero suggests, is only possible at the expense of the virtue he wishes to restore. On the other hand, the example set by Epicurus in retreating to his Garden to live among friends without the burdens of public life would accelerate the republic’s fall.

Interpretations of the Epicureans’ treatment by Cicero in *De finibus* vary significantly. Some commenters find Cicero’s treatment ungenerous but correct in identifying the main problems of Epicureanism. Others, that he offers an unreliable, irresponsible misinterpretation of their theory. Some argue that Cicero misunderstands Epicureanism, others that he understands

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21 Commenters sometimes find Cicero’s understanding, reading, or presentation of the Epicureans unfair if not unreliable. Stokes 1995, 145-147 offers a nice overview of the debate concerning the accuracy of Cicero’s interpretation of Epicureanism. He details the position of Gosling and Taylor 1982 and Rist 1972, which might be roughly reduced to the views that Cicero is cavalier in his presentation and that he provides an irresponsible misinterpretation, respectively. His own position builds from Brunschwig 1986 and Mitsis 1988, arguing that Cicero understands Epicurus well and does not necessarily misrepresent his theory (150-153). Assessing Cicero’s accuracy as a historian of philosophy is not the point; instead we should consider why he misrepresents when and how he does.
Epicureanism exceptionally well and rejects it nonetheless. For my purposes, I maintain at minimum that Cicero’s presentation is sufficiently uncharitable to misrepresent the distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasure, their relation to pleasure and freedom from pain, and the Epicurean summum bonum itself. The misrepresentation amounts to a useful flat reading. Cicero is careful and purposive in his treatment, and his aim is to discredit.

By a ‘flat reading’ I mean the sort of summary account of a position such as offered by Plato and Aristotle. Such summary accounts take away much of the caution of the original articulation of a position, but they maintain in a more straightforward way some of the apparent power of the position. Thus a flat reading offers some of the appeal of the original position while preparing it for close scrutiny and rejection. The background thinking seems to be that philosophy in its striving for wisdom must aim for comprehensiveness. Such comprehensiveness can be achieved by taking thought to extremes that will circumscribe all the promising possible positions. A flat reading generally embraces some such extreme position. For example, Plato may suggest that Heracliteans have everything in motion in every way, while Parmenides rejects any change whatsoever (see, e.g., Theaetetus). Such flat readings take thought to an extreme position, permitting comprehensive reflection and prudent resistance to such simple and implausible positions.

One of Cicero’s fundamental criticisms of Epicurean ethics is that pleasure is ‘utterly unworthy of a human being’ (i 24). For Cicero, pleasure is a positive phenomenon best characterized by intense pleasures of the body. This is not necessarily what Epicurus or even Torquatus understands by ‘pleasure’. The greatest pleasure of all, for Epicurus, is the complete absence of pain. Epicurus writes, ‘the flesh’s cry is not to be hungry or thirsty or cold. For one

22 Key Doctrines, hereafter KD. See Epicurus’ KD 3: ‘the removal of all pain is the limit of the magnitude of pleasures’ (Long and Sedley 1987 translation unless otherwise noted).
who is in these states and expects to remain so could rival even Zeus in happiness’ \( (\text{Vatican Sayings} \, 33) \). Torquatus echoes the words of his master when he says ‘we do not simply pursue the sort of pleasure which stirs our nature with its sweetness and produces agreeable sensations in us: rather, the pleasure we deem greatest is that which is felt when all pain is removed…every release from pain is rightly termed a pleasure’ \( (i \, 37) \). Where one ends the other begins, such that the complete absence of one is the clearest appearance of the other.\(^{24}\) Thus Cicero shows his awareness that he somewhat abuses the position of the Epicureans.

Yet Cicero does not allow Torquatus to identify the highest pleasure with the absence of pain as identical. Cicero argues the Epicurean \textit{sumnum bonum} is both pleasure and freedom from pain, but that these two are distinct in sensation and in meaning. The positive phenomenon of pleasure Cicero identifies with the vivid pleasures of the body, and he calls this \textit{kinetic} pleasure; the absence of pain he calls \textit{katastematic} pleasure. The distinction between \textit{kinetic} and \textit{katastematic} pleasure is Epicurean. It is intended to distinguish the \textit{relieving} of pain, as eating when one is hungry, from the \textit{absence} of pain, as being sated.\(^{25}\) Cicero misuses the distinction to claim, first, that \textit{kinetic} and \textit{katastematic} pleasure represent two completely different kinds of sensations. This makes the Epicureans look foolish for claiming they are both equally called ‘pleasure’. Second, Cicero’s positioning makes it seem both kinds of pleasure reside in the body. This undermines fact that for the Epicureans pleasures and pains of the mind are more intense than those of the body, and that both \textit{kinetic} and \textit{katastematic} varieties of pleasure can be as

\(^{23}\) Italics added. \textit{Vatican Sayings}, hereafter \textit{VS}. See also \textit{KD} 18.

\(^{24}\) Epicurus links this to the distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘empty’ desires— and then the division of natural desires into the necessary and unnecessary ones. Human happiness is best attained and preserved by the satisfaction of natural necessary desires. One may also satisfy natural unnecessary desires so long as they are harmless. See \textit{Letter to Menoeceus} 127-32; \textit{Definitions} i 43-46.

\(^{25}\) Rist 1972, 105-110 provides a helpful summary of the \textit{kinetic} and \textit{katastematic} pleasure as presented by Epicurus and Cicero.
much mental as physical.

Epicureans insist, according to Cicero, that non-Epicureans misunderstand what pleasure really is. Cicero thinks this is absurd, in two related ways. First, it wrongly implies ‘people don’t know what *hedone* or *voluptas* mean’ (ii 12). ‘Pleasure’, Cicero explains, ‘every Latin speaker takes…to consist in the perception by the senses of some delightful stimulation’ (ii 14). The sources of both nominal and real definition are refused in favor of Epicurus’ ‘worthy but hardly erudite supporters’ that Cicero mockingly depicts as a mysterious, initiated class (ii 12). Second, Cicero insists that Epicureans mean the lesser, kinetic pleasure when they use the word ‘pleasure’ even though they praise absence of pain as the *summum bonum*. Rist 1972 correctly identifies the ‘absurd form’ Cicero assigns to the Epicurean ethical position: ‘since the natural impulses of children and animals are directed towards *kinetic* pleasure, therefore *katastematic* pleasure is the *summum bonum*’ (106).

Cicero’s treatment of pleasure and pain, central tenets of Epicurean ethics, reveals a gross misrepresentation of their system. The question must turn from the fairness of the presentation to its purpose. One obvious outcome of Cicero’s treatment—or mistreatment—is that Torquatus can recite the works of his master but cannot defend his position against Cicero’s skillful attacks. This suggests that there is a better way of argument and practicing philosophy than the Epicurean one. The point is underscored by Cicero’s handling of innovation in the hands of the Epicureans, first when he argues that they do not make improvements when and where they should, and then when he says that the things they do change undermine their own position. Further, very little of hedonism, even a sophisticated, moderate, and eudaimonistic hedonism, seems useful for saving the Roman republic because it seems to result in a life like Epicurus’: egocentric and exclusive of politics. By means of his flat reading, his refutation of hedonism, even in a supposedly moderate
form, exposes both Epicurean philosophical and political shortcomings. His rejection shows that Cicero uses Epicureanism as a negative example for his pupils, Roman readers.

The first criticism concerning Epicurus and innovation occurs when Cicero writes that Epicurean physics is ‘totally derivative (alienus),’ that is, unoriginal (i 17).\(^{26}\) *Alienus* suggests the theory is foreign, in this case Greek, or that it belongs to someone else, namely Democritus. Epicurus, Cicero explains, does not seem to deviate from any of the major tenets of Democritus’ physics.\(^{27}\) As a result, Epicurus ends up adopting the same errors Democritus had made. Both thinkers accept that atoms and void make up the world but, Cicero alleges, neither one provides any account of an efficient cause, or force that brings a thing into being (i 18).\(^{28}\) When Epicurus follows Democritus into error, he proves himself to be an insufficiently critical thinker.

The second criticism is that Epicurus’ own contributions, offered when he does not blindly follow Democritus, weaken the theory on which he depends. Epicurus changes some aspects of Democritean physics, according to Cicero, but he never improves it. Cicero identifies a number of errors proper to Epicurus’ contributions, the most egregious ones relating to his physics. Cicero tells us that Epicurus thought Democritus’ ‘solid and indivisible bodies move downwards in a straight line under their own weight and this is the natural motion of all bodies’ (i 18). Because of this, all atoms move down in parallel and cannot collide, leaving the world

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\(^{26}\) Cicero writes, *principio...in physicis, quibus maxime gloriatur, primum totus est alienus. Democritea dicit, perpaucu mutans, sed ita ut ea quae corrigere vult mihi quidem depravare videatur.* I am using Rackham 1914 for the Latin text unless otherwise noted.

\(^{27}\) Epicurus, Cicero explains, does not deviate from Democritus when he believes that atoms are bodies that are indivisible because of their density, that they move through the directionless void with eternal motion, that the void is infinite, that they move in such a way as to ‘coalesce’ when they collide, and that the results of these collisions make up all things.

\(^{28}\) Again, this may not be a fair presentation. The variable size and weight of atoms, and the swerve, may account for efficient cause.
completely determined. Having added weight to the qualities of atoms and created this problem, Epicurus’ solution ‘is a novel (commenticiam) one’: the swerve. The swerve is the absolutely smallest possible motion that will allow for atoms to collide with one another, thereby creating the world (i 19).

Cicero rejects Epicurus’ swerve for a few reasons. First, Epicurus invents a new motion that is itself generated by no clear cause. Cicero insists ‘the most unprincipled move that any physicist can make is to adduce effects without causes’ (i 19). Thus, when Epicurus makes his own contributions, he neglects the basic principles of inquiry in natural science and ‘he seems to me only to distort (depravare)’ the work of Democritus (i 17). According to Cicero, the motion generated by the swerve ‘groundlessly deprives atoms’ of what Epicurus had called their natural motion, and he produces new difficulties in its implications for atomic motion (i 19). Cicero challenges at i 20: either all atoms will be affected in the same way by the swerve, or some will swerve and others will continue to fall downwards in a straight line. If all atoms have the same nature, then they are likely affected in the same way by the swerve, but then ‘none will ever come together’. If different atoms are affected differently, then the inclination to swerve and the inclination to fall downwards represent two different kinds of atoms with two different motions and possibly two different natures, which is impossible for Epicurus’ and Democritus’ atoms. Cicero has Epicurus caught in a bind by his own invention. He must admit either that the swerve means all atoms move in parallel according to the swerve and thus cannot collide, or that there are different kinds of atoms dictated by different natures, which might eliminate the need for a swerve in the first place.

29 For Democritus, the void allows atoms to move freely and interact with one another according to shape (see 68A37, 67A16, 68A58, 67A16, and 68A47).
30 In another uncharitable reading, Cicero overlooks the possibility that swerves may happen unpredictably, as Lucretius describes them (De rerum natura ii 216).
Note also that Cicero uses the term ‘commenticiam’ to describe Epicurus’ swerve. The very word carries with it the sense of fabrication, and indeed Cicero goes on to call it a ‘childish fiction’ (i 18). He implies that fictions can understandably be devised and employed with explanatory legitimacy. This happens frequently in Plato’s works when myth is used to illustrate abstract ideas. Indeed, going outside of science to seek a scientific explanation, as Cicero claims Epicurus has done, would require both good justification and good results. Unlike Plato’s myths, Cicero maintains, Epicurus’ fabrication fails to provide his theory the results he needs (i 19).

Rejecting Epicurean physics is at least as important in overturning Epicurean ethics as rejecting Epicurean ethical doctrines directly, because physics is fundamental to Epicurean ethics. Indeed, Torquatus makes it clear that Epicurus ‘deemed physics to be of the very highest importance’ because it has direct bearing on one’s life and thought (i 63). That is, natural philosophy helps soothe human fears that accompany the ideas, grounded in ignorance of nature, that ‘celestial phenomena and death might matter to us’ (KD 11). Concerning ethics and securing happiness for oneself, the study of physics is indispensable. Epicurus writes ‘without natural philosophy there is no way of securing the purity of our pleasures’ and by extension the security of the summun bonum (KD 12). Physics connects more clearly with our happiness than any other field of study for the Epicureans. Through the study of nature Epicureans are able to ‘possess solid scientific knowledge, and hold to that criterion which has as it were been sent from heaven to enable us to understand all things, and to which we refer all our judgments, then we will never allow anyone’s rhetoric to sway us from our views’ (i 63). Expertise in physics makes it possible to have courage in the face of death and the strength to stand up to superstition. It gives peace of mind and enables self-control through knowledge of nature and its requirements. It even provides a criterion of knowledge, founding the basis of judgment and granting legitimacy to the force of
sense perceptions. When Cicero undermines Epicureans physics, he destabilizes the entire system.

Cicero’s treatment of the Epicureans therefore contains a number of valuable messages for educating his Roman audience. Concerning physics, Cicero’s criticisms of Epicurus are twofold: ‘when he changes Democritus he makes things worse; when he follows Democritus there is nothing original’ (i 21). First, Epicurus innovates in ways that make the philosophy he inherits from Democritus less plausible. Cicero implies that philosophers should make contributions that improve the discipline. They should make progress toward what is plausible, if not truth itself. Second, Epicurus’ failure to think critically keeps him from making changes where he should. Cicero is demanding his Roman readers become keen critical thinkers. He uses the derisive ‘commenticiam’ to label specifically Epicurus’ unscientific and unjustified contributions that make his theory worse than Democritus’. This applies as much to evaluation of existing philosophy as it does to developing new ideas, though it is especially important in the context of Epicureanism. The Epicurean system is made to be absurd in its physics so that its ethics has no ground. The ethical ideas prioritize pleasure over virtue, on Cicero’s reading. This makes it unsurprising that Epicurus uses his private Garden as the site of his community and place of respite from the challenges of daily and political life. Withdrawal from turmoil is always tempting, but it cannot save the republic from tyranny.

The Stoic lesson

Cicero uses Epicureanism as an example of how not to do philosophy. He does

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31 It is not clear from De finibus what Cicero’s view of Democritus is. When he implies that Epicurus should be improving on Democritean theory, Cicero also implies that Democritean theory needs improvement.
something similar in his treatment of the Stoics. Concerning Stoic contributions to philosophy, Cicero’s major criticism involves their new vocabulary. In this section I show that Cicero’s treatment of the Stoics can demonstrate for his readers that the Stoics are mistaken to develop their vocabulary because the concepts they express are not new, and because the new terminology makes the existing philosophical terrain unnecessarily complicated. Stoics, like Cato, depend on virtue for the *summum bonum* and as such need not elect to leave politics as the Epicureans do. Emphasizing virtue may even require service to the state. Stoicism is a better choice than Epicureanism because it is politically more tenable. Nevertheless, there are clear difficulties with their system. Stoic vocabulary makes philosophy more confusing and less accessible. This makes it more difficult for all serious Romans to be encouraged to participate in its practice. The invention of new terms is not in itself problematic, but Cicero implies new vocabulary should be developed only when expressing new concepts, or translating old ideas into a new language and context. Additionally, the identification of virtue as the only good makes it difficult for committed Stoics to hold public office and truthfully state their views. As a result, the astute reader should imitate Cicero instead of Cato.

Before attending to the precise neologisms and the concepts that underlie them, I wish to emphasize that the problems Cicero identifies are not in the development of a new vocabulary as such. Every specialized field requires a dedicated vocabulary to help determine the limits of a new discipline or, as Cicero explains, ‘designate the subject-matter of the relevant field’ (iii 3). Advancement of science and knowledge in all fields depends to some degree on the existence of specialized terms. Cicero explains that the more public and well-known disciplines such as rhetoric have specialized terms used in teaching, and the comparably unsophisticated crafts of artisans and farmers also have a special set of terms (iii 4). It is not surprising philosophy
similarly requires specialized language. New developments in philosophy therefore require new terms, and this challenge is amplified by Cicero’s project of translation. Cicero has maintained throughout this text that Latin is superior to Greek in wealth of vocabulary. We can expect that this will benefit Latin in philosophical vocabulary and discourse. Cicero explains two ways in which new Latin words are adopted. On the one hand, they are sometimes assimilated from the Greek arts, as in the case of ‘rhetoric’, ‘philosophy’, and ‘music’. On the other hand, new words are adopted as a result of innovation. This reflects well on Cicero’s own project. When he procures a philosophical vocabulary in Latin he does so on the grounds that ‘Romans…have to find a new vocabulary and invent new terms to match new concepts’ (iii 3). At iii 5 Cicero explicitly states that using formerly unknown terms is permitted for the learned when working with profound, demanding material. In dealing with this kind of material for the first time in Latin, it is all but imperative to draw on new vocabulary.

Cicero and the Stoics are like-minded in this aim. Because the mastery and progression of all arts and sciences use new terms to meet the needs of new ideas and disciplines, Cicero credits the Stoics for contributing new vocabulary insofar as it is a necessary and valuable service to Roman philosophy. Some of their inventions are not so necessary and valuable, however. The problem is evident in Cicero’s characterization of the Stoic founder Zeno as even more a real ‘inventor of words than new ideas’ (iii 5). Cicero suggests that Zeno and the Stoics have the process backwards, inventing terms and claiming they belong to new ideas. Their claim to introduce something new to philosophy with these terms is by Cicero’s measure unsuccessful. He writes, ‘the Stoics…have a way of arguing which is not so much subtle as obscure, even for the Greek reader, and thus far more so for us Romans’ (iii 5). Subtlety in writing and vocabulary are expected when the subject matter is new and complicated, but Cicero suggests the Stoics
make their philosophy unnecessarily difficult. Further, he presses, the Stoics discuss the very same subjects taken up by many thinkers before them. This means the terms they use cannot possibly reflect new ideas. There is no need for their presentation to be as obscure (spinosum) as it they make it. In sum, their new vocabulary makes their philosophy worse.

The alleged shortcomings of the Epicureans resulted in a complete rejection of their position and their abilities as philosophers. Cicero’s treatment of the Stoics does not bring the same result, for Cicero allows that the Stoics do make some good contributions to philosophy as it matures in the Latin language. Cicero praises Cato’s translation of Greek ideas into Latin, exclaiming ‘how lucidly your language conveys your exact meaning, Cato… You seem to me to be teaching philosophy Latin and, as it were, granting her Roman citizenship’ (iii 40).\(^{33}\) Given that this is consistent with Cicero’s own goals for *De finibus*, we might take this to be a self-congratulatory remark.\(^{34}\) There is no need to claim that this is the only purpose of such an exclamation, however. Cicero’s statement here affirms the project of the Stoics as much as himself insofar as they are committed to the same goal, bringing philosophy into Roman culture. Indeed, Cicero praises Cato’s ability to capture the meaning of some Greek philosophical terms in Latin. When Cato explains what should be pursued and avoided, for example, he states the ‘moral’ (*honestum*) is the highest good, and as such has a higher value than ‘the intermediate

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\(^{32}\) Obscurity may result from authorial intention, as is the case with Heraclitus, or because of the difficulty of the material itself, as is the case in Plato’s *Timaeus*. Cato insists that the difficulty here is ‘ingrained in the subject matter’ rather than ‘deliberate affection’ (iv 2).  

\(^{33}\) Philosophy is the pupil in this quotation. This might bring about two opposite interpretations. First, Cicero may intend to educate both his Roman readers about philosophy, and also to teach philosophy about Roman culture. Second, Cicero might also be suggesting through Cato’s example that the Stoics mistakenly treat philosophy as a pupil.  

\(^{34}\) Annas 2001, 78n22 observes that in congratulating Cato, Cicero congratulates himself. Annas is right in that we should be reminded that this is one of Cicero’s stated goals, and that he wants his reader to notice success when it comes. Annas does not comment on the fact that Cicero chooses to give Cato the success in this venture. I take it that Cato’s role as the mouthpiece of Stoic philosophy gives this success more significance.
objects it procures’ (iii 39). All immoral acts, by contrast, ‘flow from vices (vitia)’ for the Stoics, making the immoral the only evil. Cato notes that he chooses the word ‘vitia’ carefully over the Greek ‘kakiai’ from a number of already existing Latin possibilities. Cicero says that he is committing these terms to memory to use himself in reply (iii 40).

In praising Cato, Cicero highlights the ability of already existing Latin terms to express philosophical ideas. When the Stoics choose their vocabulary well, Cicero cheers them for promoting the cause they share in common. Since Cato chooses his words well here, Cicero can congratulate Cato earnestly for having the dexterity and mental acuity to find the right words in this case. These words, however, are not technical neologisms. Cicero clearly rejects the Stoics only when they make arguments and ideas appear to be more complicated than they really are, as Stoic jargon tends to do. The Stoics would have more success as philosophers, Cicero suggests, if they abandon their unnecessary new terms and take up with the already existing Latin words that can be integrated into philosophy.

Cicero’s own project aims to use Latin to discuss philosophical ideas. His success in this endeavor is sometimes debated. Douglas 1968 finds Cicero’s translation is inadequate because he does not create enough new terminology. Cicero’s love of the language keeps him from manipulating it more. He cites two general challenges for practicing philosophy in Latin, and one specific to Cicero. Latin lacks a definite article, which can inhibit clarity in philosophical writing, and it is a language that tends to ‘concretize’ in a way that makes its metaphors ‘too

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35 Cicero takes another jab at the Epicureans here. Cato’s success is highlighted as a significant achievement in contrast to sloppy and imprecise philosophers who ‘could express their doctrines in any language’ from a lack of care concerning definition and division (iii 40).
36 Palmer 1954 credits Cicero for developing many new terms, while Jones 1959 argues that Cicero is unsuccessful in his translation efforts that would make it possible to philosophize in Latin. Powell 1995 notes that Cicero’s translations span a broad range of accuracy. Unlike Jones, Powell does not equate inaccuracy with failure. He offers six possible reasons for Cicero’s variability in accuracy (excluding error) on page 274.
vivid to serve merely as vehicles for abstract ideas’ (Douglas 1968, 34). The Stoics appear to flee to abstract language too quickly, while Cicero seems to prefer drawing from already existing Latin terms as much as possible. He explains at De finibus iii 15, ‘my usual practice, where there is no alternative available, is to express a single Greek word by several Latin ones’. He notes specifically that he and his interlocutors should use a Greek word where there is no Latin equivalent to be found. Cicero is cautious in altering Latin too much because he wants to avoid scaring away those good Romans who are potential philosophers but may be wary of undertakings that have no direct practical application. Cicero must take care to avoid a criticism of philosophers that lingers today—that they use technical terms too abstract to have meaning.

Let us now turn to the specific terms the Stoics use and the ideas they represent. Cicero adopts a criticism that originates with Carneades. Though Stoic neologisms claim to reflect conceptual innovation, Carneades suggests there is no new content behind them. The Stoics, he maintains, simply apply new terms to old concepts. As a result, ‘there is no dispute between the Stoics and the Peripatetics other than a verbal one’ (iii 41). Cato insists there is a conceptual difference between them and the Peripatetics concerning the necessary and sufficient conditions for happiness. For the Stoics, he explains, complete virtue or wisdom is sufficient for happiness. The Peripatetics, by contrast, call health and wealth good and say that they contribute to the happy life. He claims the Peripatetics hold ‘the richer one is in bodily or external goods, the happier’, and even the wise cannot be completely happy unless they have a healthy body (iii 43). Health still has value for the Stoics and may be worth seeking, such that having health and wisdom at the same time is better than having wisdom without health, ‘but’ Cato explains ‘if each commands some value, it does not follow that the two together are worth more than wisdom on its own’ (iii 44). The value of health is far superseded by the value of virtue so that the sum
value of the two on the one hand could not outweigh the value of virtue alone on the other hand (iii 45). Bodily or external goods cannot have a determining role in happiness because they can never overpower the value of morality itself. If this is an important conceptual difference, then the Stoics would be able to justify using new terms on the question of things called ‘good’.

In highlighting what he perceives to be an important difference between Stoic and Peripatetic ethics, Cato points us to an important source of Stoic terminological change. It quickly becomes clear that the Stoics rely on a number of very slightly different terms to make their claims about the kinds of things that are commonly called ‘good’ in the Stoic view. To begin, some things are called good instrumentally because they bring about other good things (iii 49). Wealth, for example, is instrumentally good because it makes possible the pursuit of the arts. Virtue and wisdom, by contrast, are good in themselves and immeasurably more valuable.

Things that are good in themselves Cato divides into three categories. They are either ‘constitutive of the final end (ad illud ultimum pertinentia)’, ‘productive (efficientia)’ of that end, or both. The only goods constitutive of the final end are virtuous actions, while the only productive external good is a friend.

Wisdom, by contrast, is both constitutive and productive. In so far as wisdom is ‘harmonious action’ in accord with nature, it is a constitutive good. At the same time, and equally important, wisdom informs the choices that produce virtuous action.

Wisdom is therefore also productive of the end. (iii 55)

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37 This is why, Cato explains at iii 46-48, Stoics can endorse the otherwise strange view that happiness does not admit of degrees. Being happy through varied circumstances or for different durations of time has no effect on that happiness.

38 Goods constitutive of the final end and productive of the final end are also differentiated in Greek—telika and poietika, respectively.

39 Cato does not elaborate here. It seems that the Stoics understand friendship as an important external good because it encourages virtuous action.

40 Cato appears to call ‘wisdom’ both virtuous action and the disposition from which virtuous action is produced. No further clarification is given here.
More telling than this division of goods is Cicero’s treatment of those many and varied things that fall between virtue and vice. Most of the things human beings deal with on a daily basis fall somewhere between virtue, the only true good, and vice, the only true evil. To help guide daily action among such things, the Stoics generate a ranking system in which some things have a positive value, some the opposite, and others are neutral (iii 50). Those with positive value—including health, well-functioning senses, freedom from pain, honor, and wealth—are preferred (*anteponerentur*), which Zeno had called ‘*proe*gmenon’ (iii 51). Their opposites—pain, illness, loss of sense, and poverty—Zeno called *apoproegmenon*. The designation of *proegmenon* or *apoproegmenon* or not does not mean they are good or bad, respectively. They should be chosen or avoided where appropriate, as suggested by nature and reason. Cato calls these ‘intermediates’ (iii 59). Intermediates are chosen or rejected on the basis of what is appropriate at the time. Good health is almost always appropriately chosen over poor health, for example, but good health is not good absolutely.

Zeno’s *proegmenon* and *apoproegmenon* exemplify the unnecessary neologisms that Cicero is criticizing. Cicero claims the Latin equivalents for *proegmena* and *apoproegmena* are *praeposita* and *reiecta*, respectively, at iii 15. The discrepancy between Cicero’s choice of Latin words at iii 15 and Catos’ choice of *anteponerentur* at iii 51 is not examined more closely in *De finibus*. It appears to be one case in which the Stoics develop a specialized Latin term over a Latin term already in usage. Cicero in effect passes over an obvious sticking point while also explicitly discussing Stoic language as problematic. That is, it is possible that he intentionally

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41 Even the wise person performs appropriate action (*kathekon, officium*) and operates among intermediates, but appropriate actions are themselves neither good nor evil.

42 The Lewis & Short entries for the terms suggest *anteponerentur* is more specialized, appearing mostly in Cicero’s works where he writes about Stoicism. The entry for *praeposita* indicates wider usage across several areas.
leaves open this opportunity to critique the Stoics. This would allow for his more advanced, philosophically capable readers to detect the discrepancy and reach the same position Cicero has put forward about unnecessary Stoic innovation. The ‘ordinary educated’ reader, however, would accept Cicero says at face value and require nothing more.43

The _anteponerentur_ discrepancy aside, Cato’s Latin translations demonstrate close attention to language and terminology.44 At iii 53, he emphasizes his care in choosing terms for ‘advantageous’, ‘superior’, and ‘indifferent’. He notes,

> it is not the items that occupy the first rank, but rather the second, that should be called _proe_ _gmena_—that is, ‘preferred’. (This is the term we may use—it is literal. Alternatively, ‘promoted’ and ‘demoted’, or as we have long said, ‘advantageous’ or ‘superior’, and ‘to be rejected’ for the opposite. If the meaning is understood, we should be relaxed about the words we use.) (iii 52)45

Nevertheless the distinction between ‘preferred’ things and their opposites, and the relation of both to the good and evil remain difficult. Cato appears to sense the challenge and draws on two analogies to help explain what the Stoics mean. The first is a political rank analogy from Zeno, where he claims no one would say to be king is ‘preferred’. Some lesser position that approaches the king’s rank most closely would be one that is ‘preferred’. Thus, things that occupy the second or other good ranks are ‘preferred’ while the highest thing is not preferred, exactly, but simply

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43 Douglas 1968, 27 makes this claim historically about how Cicero was read until the rise of Hellenism in the 1800’s. I am suggesting that this simple way of reading Cicero similarly characterizes Cicero’s Roman audience, which might simply accept a synonymic relationship between _anteponerentur_ and _praeposita_.

44 Despite the meticulous distinction between his terms, Cato suggests at iii 52 that the exact words used are not so important if his interlocutors understand his meaning. This appears to be inconsistent with his use of _anteponerentur_ instead of _praeposita_—if the exact terms do not much matter, why use the more obscure term?

45 ‘… _sic in vita non ea quae primo ordine sunt, sed ea, quae secundum locum obtinet προηγμένα, id est, producta nominentur; quae vel ita appellantus (id erit verbum e verbo) vel promota et remota vel, ut dudum diximus, praeposita vel praecipua, et illa reiecta. Re enim intellect in verborum usu faciles esses debemus._’
good (iii 52). Applied to the value of various goods, the thing that is good has the first rank, while advantageous things are ‘indifferent’ though they might have moderate value and be ‘preferred’. The complementary analogy relies on the strategy of throwing a knuckle-bone. A knuckle-bone can be thrown in a number of ways, but throwing it a certain way is advantageous to get it to land upright (iii 54). Throwing it another way isn’t ‘bad’ but merely less advantageous to obtain the desired outcome. Goods work the same way. Some are more advantageous in developing virtue and attaining happiness, and others are less advantageous. An advantage in attaining an outcome is not a part of the end desired. Similarly, material things may be advantageous in becoming virtuous, but they do not constitute the ‘essence and nature’ of the Stoic end.

One of the main differences between Zeno and his predecessors is in the rank or worth of the things called ‘good’. Good health, sound senses, and freedom from pain are not properly called ‘good’ for the Stoics (iv 20). It is not the aim of the Stoics to do away with all distinctions between good and bad or health and disease. They simply mean that none of these things are themselves good or bad, but only preferred or dispreferred. Cicero is dissatisfied with the terminological shift because ‘everything that the ancients referred to as good is actually “preferred”, not good’ (iv 20). Soundness and strength of body were considered worth seeking for Aristotle and the other ancients. For the Stoics, these are not worth seeking, but might be worth ‘adopting’. Everything that the ancients had called ‘good’ are on the Stoic view not more

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46 At iii 52, Cato insists that if we understand the concept he is referring to and his meaning here, then the language becomes less important.
47 Foolish and wise alike choose intermediates that each thinks will best promote and support, directly or indirectly, the love of self and preservation that all people possess. Such choices are not necessarily directed at the only truly good thing, the moral. Because such actions are common to all, ‘it is here that its involvement in what we call intermediates arises’ (iii 59). By contrast, determining the primary objects of nature and which things are in accord with or against nature belongs properly to wisdom and the wise person.
worth seeking than any alternative—they are only more worth ‘adopting’ than those alternatives.

Stoic neologisms and terminological hairsplitting are frustrating for Cicero, but they also pose a practical challenge for the Stoics. Cicero uses the example of the effective ruler who, to rule well in times of war, would have to commit to saying that slavery, death, or loss of homeland are evils. Stoics are not able to call those things evil, but only dispreferred. This would be ineffective, of course. Cicero further suggests the Stoic ruler in such a position is not conceptually obligated to call slavery and death ‘dispreferred’ instead of evil. When the Stoics say freedom, for example, is not ‘good’ but merely ‘preferred’, those who call these things ‘good’ do not in fact value them more highly than the Stoics, who call them ‘preferred’. (iv 23) The end result is therefore more or less the same, but the new terminology makes the Stoic ruler look ridiculous. The Stoic understanding of and response to all things other than virtue and vice as intermediates may be effective in helping secure happiness in the form of tranquility for the individual, but it does not appear to be valuable when considering human affairs on a larger, political scale. The Stoics, like the Epicureans, present a philosophy that seems unlikely to save the Roman republic. Unlike the Epicureans, the Stoic position at least prioritizes virtue in a way that might help develop citizens capable of defending the constitution, that is, if they are able to resist the accompanying doctrine that nothing else is good.

Cicero praises Cato’s exposition as clear and accurate (iv 1). This reminds us that the Stoics are capable philosophers, and points to their linguistic competence. In Cato’s view, Zeno was forced to craft new terms to grapple with the difficult concepts he was introducing. Cato reports that Zeno, ‘for all the abundance of the Greek language…still availed himself of new and artificial words’ (iii 51). Cato laments that this freedom that Zeno was granted is denied to the Roman Stoics in Latin. Cato thinks that the need to develop new terms in Latin is even more
pressing because, conversely to Cicero, Cato thinks the Greek language is richer than Latin.

Cicero posits a related challenge concerning Cato’s claim that these new terms are necessary to match difficult new concepts. Cicero maintains that the Peripatetics outline the same doctrines, and they are easily understood without the Stoic inventions. Cicero recounts the unity of the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic philosophy at iv 3 to demonstrate the impressive force of the Stoic predecessors. The immediate followers of Plato (Speucippus, Aristotle, Xenocrates) and their own pupils, Polemo and Theophrastus, he claims, ‘put together a system of thought full of richness and refinement’. The doctrines they provide, the ones the Stoics rely on, Cicero calls comprehensive and complete. He argues that Zeno would have little reason to disagree with his teacher and earlier predecessors. Cicero thus enlists the power of the predecessors to dispute the necessity, and by implication the value, of the Stoics’ terminological contributions. It is not clear that the distinctions between what is good and what is ‘advantageous’ or ‘preferred’ amount to more than a discussion of the different kinds of goods as useful but not good in themselves, consistent with Aristotle. New Stoic terms are worthless and offer nothing substantially innovative. These innovations discard ‘tried and tested’ terminology for the sake of novelty that serves no purpose (iv 7). It threatens the reputation that Cicero is trying to establish for philosophy as a discipline for serious and mature people.

The extent to which the Stoics follow in the footsteps of their predecessors is fairly extensive, but they fail to imitate their precursors when they fail to write well. Cato’s predecessors divide philosophy into ethics, logic, and physics. Cicero explains that both early Peripatetics and Academics develop ethics fully and with care, insisting that ‘the difference here

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48 For example in his *Nicomachean Ethics* i 8-9 and viii 2, 5.
49 Annas 2001, 91n6 claims that the tri-fold division is Stoic, but was later projected back to Xenocrates, and Antiochus projected it back to what he called the unified tradition.
between these schools was verbal rather than substantial’ (iv 5).50 Cicero explains that the work in natural science available to Zeno was thorough, complete, and well-written. In physics or the study of nature, the Peripatetics ‘explain how and why natural phenomena occur’, relying on ‘a wealth of highly convincing arguments to account for every aspect of nature’ (iv 13). Cicero argues that the Stoics generally follow the Peripatetics in physics. He allows that Zeno disputes some minor points, ‘but on the central question he agreed that the whole of the universe and its greatest parts were governed by a divine intellect and nature’ (iv 12). After Zeno, Chrysippus makes some valuable contributions as a Stoic, developing physics ‘to its fullest extent, but Zeno’s contribution was far less than that of the ancients’ (iv 9).

Cicero maintains that Zeno has no reason to change anything that has come before him in terms of content, and that his contributions are worse than his precursors’ in style. His emphasis is on the enormous value of the tradition. The neologisms of Zeno and his followers are presented as evidence of Stoic disregard or disrespect for their predecessors who launched the same ideas first. He explains that the Stoics ‘fail to acknowledge the extent of their debt to the real pioneers (inventoribus)’ (iv 13). This suggests the Stoics are prideful in a way that is not consistent with philosophy.51 The Stoics in general do not admit how indebted they are to their predecessors when they claim to have new ideas behind their new vocabulary, and the ancients overshadow any novel contributions they do make. Cicero suggests that this is inappropriate for

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50 Cicero’s claim is distorting. The Stoic position that soul is *pneuma* and the Aristotelian position that soul is form, for example, likely reflects a conceptual difference rather than a verbal one. Annas 2001, 95 claims that he ‘greatly understates the differences between Stoic and Aristotelian physics and metaphysics’. Cicero has a purpose in distorting Stoics in this way, namely to distinguish his own project from theirs: where the Stoics make changes that do not reflect new concepts, Cicero’s way of doing philosophy relies efficient use of terminology and strength of concepts.

51 Recognition of what one does not know and the humility that should accompany it seem necessary for education. This can be attributed to Socrates’ strategies for refutation, as Vlastos 1994 identifies it in the ‘standard elenchus’.
philosophers. Instead, philosophers should only be making changes that improve the discipline. Cicero makes Chrysippus an example of a good philosopher from the Stoic school, for he does natural philosophy well and makes contributions that develop the discipline to its fullest capacity in Cicero’s view.

Cicero applies the same basic criticism to Stoic ethics as well. Zeno’s predecessor Polemo famously claimed that the supreme good is to live in accordance with nature (iv 14). Cicero offers three Stoic interpretations of this. First, he suggests, it means to live applying your knowledge of nature. This may have been Zeno’s own interpretation, in which we ought ‘to live in harmony with nature’ (iv 14). Second, it might mean to ‘live performing all or most of the intermediate appropriate actions’ (iv 15). Third, it might mean to ‘live in enjoyment of all or the most important things that are in accordance with nature’. In this case, the *summum bonum* is not entirely within the control of an individual’s conduct. Instead, virtue is enjoyed on the same level as the possession of things that are in accordance with nature but outside of our control. Cicero credits Xenocrates and Aristotle with this interpretation. Because it entails virtue, this interpretation means that the supreme good is only available to the wise (iv 15).\(^52\)

Cicero uses Zeno as an example of an ambitious thinker who fails to make valuable contributions to philosophy. He is a negative example for Cicero’s audience. He is used to show the audience how not to do philosophy with respect to style, content, innovation, and political application. Had Zeno relied on ordinary language, had he not been ‘seduced by the grandeur of language’, his philosophy would be no different from Aristo’s or Pyrrho’s (iv 60). Cicero is

\(^{52}\) Several problems with Cicero’s treatment of the Stoic definition of happiness are detailed in Annas 2001, 95n15. Her assessment makes it clear that Cicero (or Antiochus, or his source) are not giving a fair or complete presentation of Stoic happiness. This represents another example of Cicero’s possible manipulation of the philosophical schools to underscore the contrast he wants his readers to see between their project and his own.
directing his Roman readers away from this kind of practice. Every new term, he suggests, must refer to a new concept or idea. He also makes a few suggestions about the appropriate relationship between philosophers and their predecessors. Cicero claims the Stoics avoid holding Aristo’s position by depending on the Peripatetic one with some slight terminological variations. Cicero thinks the misleading practice is made worse by the style with which the Stoics defend their neologisms, lacking the grace of their predecessors. The Stoics’ failure to recognize just how much they borrow from their predecessors represents a failure of character that is inconsistent with the serious and respectable person that should be doing philosophy. Cicero’s project, by contrast, seeks the strongest consistent core for philosophy among all existing positions. If he is successful, his project will be able to avoid the frivolous and prideful innovations of the Stoics. He therefore turns to classic skeptical method to approach such a core.

The Antiochian lesson

Cicero’s criticisms of the Epicureans and Stoics are designed to highlight the flaws that would make philosophy distasteful for his Roman readers. The Epicureans represent the most significant failure both with respect to philosophical content and the impossibility of applying their philosophy to save the Roman republic. The Stoics are problematic in more subtle ways. The Stoic priority of virtue is preferable to the Epicureans’ instrumental use of it, but the Stoics still fail to provide a philosophy than can be fully effective in political application. They also engage in terminological hair-splitting that would not be compatible for a Roman context, and their disrespect for their philosophical predecessors indicates a character flaw inconsistent with

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53 Cicero notes some exceptions to the rule at iv 79. Panaetius, for example, rejected this harsh style, offering more clear and easy doctrines and drawing readily from his predecessors. Cicero even advises Cato to study the authors that Panaetius relied on for his own edification.
philosophy in general. These shortcomings are incompatible with the image of the philosopher Cicero builds at the beginning of *De finibus*. When Cicero addresses Antiochus and the Old Academy in book 5, he shows his Roman readers the most promising model yet for practicing philosophy. Despite his own professed allegiance to the New Academy, Cicero suggests the Old Academy has many advantages over the other schools because of its deep respect for the tradition, its practitioners’ competence, and its avoidance of unnecessary jargon. Though it has many strengths, the Antiochian position, as given by Piso, has an inconsistent account of goods and their relation to the *sumnum bonum*. Cicero thereby returns us to the strength of the position itself and the ideas at its center. The most important strength of the philosopher, whatever character qualities or formal training she might have received, is her contribution. When a philosopher excels in every other area, Cicero suggests, we should still only be persuaded if the idea is likely true.

Cicero highlights the strengths of the Old Academy in its respect for its historical roots, the competency of its practitioners, and its straightforward use of terms. That Cicero emphasizes the Old Academy’s respect for its predecessors is evident in three ways at the beginning of book 5. First, any interpretation of book 5 must admit the strangeness of its setting compared with the rest of *De finibus*. It takes place in Athens, at the ruins of the Academy, when Cicero and the other characters are studying in their youth. The tone is nostalgic both for Cicero writing the scene and for the characters, all of whom envision the likenesses of their philosophical inspirations who are long gone (v 1-4). Second, the opening lines are given to Piso, who marvels at the evocative power of place. Standing at the ruins of the Academy, he thinks of Plato, Speucippus, Xenocrates, and Polemo (v 2). The same phenomenon occurs when he looks on the Senate-house in Rome and thinks of his own grandfather in addition to Scipio, Cato, and Laelius.
The young Roman with intellectual and political aspirations appropriately acknowledges the great men who have come before him. Third, Piso notes this power of the Senate-house is strongest in ‘the original old Hostilia; its enlargement seems to me to have diminished it’ (v 2). This means Piso, the spokesperson for the Antiochian position, both expresses admiration for his predecessors and implies that the changes made to the Senate-house to modernize it have changed it in a way that diminishes its connection to history.

When Cicero engages the Old and New Academy in debate, the power of the tradition becomes clear. In De finibus v Cicero’s nephew, Lucius Tullius Cicero, wishes to learn about Carneades of the New Academy, but cannot find much information on him and is constantly being lured by Antiochus of the Old Academy because there is ‘no one else to hear’ (v 6). According to Antiochus, the Old Academy contains Academics (Speucippus, Xenocrates, Polemo, Crantor) as well as the early Peripatetics, headed by Aristotle (v 7). Piso speaks in favor of the Old Academy and Antiochus, and he appears to win the young Lucius over in part by reaffirming the continuity of the Old Academy’s philosophical tradition. The tradition offers many useful and profound insights wherein Lucius can find ‘a complete liberal education, a complete history, and a complete manual of style’, according to Piso (v 7). Cicero’s character, speaking on behalf of the New Academy, agrees with Piso. The comprehensive, thorough, and strong treatment of a number of questions by these philosophers was detailed in De finibus iv when Cicero challenged Zeno’s innovation. When Cicero introduces the Antiochian position, he does so with an emphasis on their respect for the philosophical tradition that precedes them and their acknowledgment of the strong work put forward by their predecessors.

Piso uses the Old Academy to represent a viable and superior set of philosophers to study
over the New Academy as embraced by Carneades and Arcesilaus. Piso contrasts the methods of the New Academy with Aristotle, Piso’s positive example for the way philosophy should be conducted. Aristotle, Piso explains, examines all the points on either side of an argument, ‘with the purpose not of contradicting everything like Arcesilaus’, or simply to be clever, but instead with the more honest goal of ‘revealing every point which could be made on either side’ (v 9).

In addition to using good methods, the Peripatetics are interested not only in the ‘organization of one’s private life but in the good conduct of public affairs as well’ (v 11). Studying their works is good intellectual training, but it would also prepare any person for personal reflection and living well in their private and public lives. This point is important for Piso. He tells Lucius explicitly that enthusiasm for studying philosophers or other thinkers from the past must always serve some purpose, namely ‘the emulation of great individuals’ (v 6). All of these considerations lead Piso to insist that Lucius is sure to find what he seeks from Carneades in the writings of the Old Academy (v 6).

Piso acknowledges that the Old Academy appears to have some inconsistencies in the theories put forward by its various thinkers, particularly regarding the supreme good. The variations do not arise from incompetence, Piso explains, but from the existence of exoteric and

54 The Old Academy as a formal school develops out of the New Academy in response to the New Academy’s radical skeptical position. The extent of the differences and similarities between them remains disputed. See Brittain 2001 and Sedley 2012 for a complete treatment.
55 Cicero and Piso enjoy skepticism of different types. The Antiochian position is often called ‘mitigated skepticism’ because it more readily adopts plausible things as true. Antiochus even goes so far as to suggest that some true sense perceptions do not have indistinguishable false perceptions (Görler 1997, 41). Cicero, by contrast, tends to identify himself with the position of Arcesilaus and Carneades, who engage have more firmly skeptical practices.
56 Carneades wrote nothing, and his own view remains a matter of dispute. Cicero considers Carneades as one of the New Academy, and interprets Carneades as a radical skeptic in the manner of interpretation headed by Clitomachus. The alternative view, that Carneades is a mitigated skeptic advocated by Philo of Larissa and Metrodorus, consistent with the views of the Old Academy, was also strong. This is a central concern of Cicero’s Academica, and Charles Brittain gives excellent accounts in Brittain 2001 and 2006.
esoteric works (v 12). One of the greatest sources of variation concerns the *summum bonum*, and whether happiness is up to the wise person or depends on external factors that are subject to forces outside of our control (v 12). In examining the question of the *summum bonum*, Piso explains that it is held nearly unanimously that practical reason is concerned with the attainment of something that is well suited and adapted to our nature, attractive in itself and arousing desire for itself (v 17). Piso relies on a Carneadean division, something that Antiochus relied on as well, to give a comprehensive overview of the theories that exist on the basis of the natural attachments they claim and the ultimate ends they therefore endorse (v 16). There are three basic positions one might adopt, according to Piso: (1) the most basic desire is pleasure and the most basic aversion, pain; (2) the basic desire is for freedom from pain and the basic aversion is to pain; (3) the basic desire is for primary things ‘in accordance with nature’. Things ‘in accordance with nature’ are namely the preservation of a sound body, good senses, freedom from pain, and other goods of the body, as well as analogous mental goods and attributes that are ‘sparks and seeds of virtue’ (v 18). Desire or repulsion is with respect to one of these things as objects, and practical reason guides our lives and makes decisions according to these things. Each of these basic positions has two possible modes. In the first, the person seeks the attainment of the object. In the second, the person seeks to act in accord with these ends without necessarily attaining the object. There are thus six possible ethical theories that emerge from this division (v 20). The disagreement over the first principles among the schools corresponds directly to the

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57 The emphasis placed on honoring the good work of the predecessors remains dominant here. Piso provides a brief overview of the different philosophers following after Aristotle, Nicomachus, and Theophrastus. With varying talents, the successors also have varying aptitude and insight concerning philosophy, but Piso favors those who imitate or adhere to the ancients that came before. Unsurprisingly he finds that ‘my own teacher Antiochus seems…to follow the views of the ancients with the most care, and he tells us that the positions of Aristotle and Polemo were the same’ (v 14). Despite variation, Piso suggests, the Old Academy is united.
disagreement over the highest goods and evils.

Piso’s adoption of a Carneadean division reflects important points that demonstrate the superiority of the Old Academy over the Stoics. First, it demonstrates that Piso is willing to adopt the good work of what has come before him and use it for his own discussion. This is consistent with the respect for his predecessors already discussed, but it represents a concrete application of a pre-existing argument form that we had not seen in the case of the Stoics. It seems to be a more straightforward or honest way to acknowledge the valuable contributions already available. Second, it represents one appropriate way to incorporate borrowed philosophical tools into a new discussion. Philosophical tools and concepts can often serve multiple purposes. When the Stoics create new terms to discuss old ideas, they limit the language of each philosopher, and the ideas they represent, to the domain of their creators. They give the impression that a Peripatetic idea can only be used in Stoic discourse if given a Stoic name. Piso’s willingness to use ideas and terms from Carneades represents a better way of doing philosophy that values exchange across schools of thought, promoting unity and progress in the discipline.

Piso’s elimination of viable ethical positions further emphasizes the superiority of the Old Academy over the Stoics and Epicureans in demonstrating Piso’s competency. He immediately rejects those that have no defenders and those that do not account for virtue and are therefore unsuitable to discuss the supreme good (v 21-23). The remaining, most suitable theory is that of the ancients, the one that Piso himself endorses.\(^{58}\) This theory begins with self-love and self-preservation in ethics, which Antiochus and the Stoics have in common (v 24). Beginning with this desire, the young person develops, becomes self-aware, and begins to understand why some

\(^{58}\) By ‘ancients’ Piso refers to Academics and Peripatetics (v 21).
things are desired and others are avoided. Eventually the young person actively chooses the former and rejects the latter, bringing that person to attain the highest good by living according to the ‘best and most suited natural condition possible’ (v 24). Human nature includes both mind and body (corpore et animo) and ‘the human, for its part, has a constitution that provides it not only with sense perception, but with the dominant element, intellect’, which possesses reason, understanding, knowledge, and all the virtues (v 34). Piso diverges from the Stoics in emphasizing the close connection between the mind and body. Cicero criticizes the Stoic treatment of human nature. Though the Stoics maintain human nature concerns mind and body, Cicero claims they also abandon half of human nature when they minimize the importance of the body. The Stoics, he explains, expect human beings to disregard the body and factors that affect the body for the sake of virtue (iv 32-34). The result is self-denial that appears to contradict the Stoic doctrine of self-love and self-preservation. Since book 5 has a dramatic setting prior to book 4, Piso is unaware that Cicero raises this challenge for the Stoics. His account nevertheless appears to avoid this imbalance. Rather than deny that the body is important, Piso explains that we seek the development and nurturing of all parts of ourselves, and the most valuable parts of ourselves will be those that are most desirable (v 38). In human beings, the most valuable and

59 Note the difference between animus and anima here. Piso is referring to animus, the source of intellect and perception, not anima, the source of life. Cicero uses animus to refer to the principle of intellect and perception as mind, intellect, or the specifically rational soul in Tusculan Disputations, De officiis, De senectute, Academica, De re publica, and elsewhere. It might be possible to translate animus in the same way as anima, i.e., referring more broadly to ‘soul’ or the principle of life, but Cicero appears to attend to differences between the terms. This care might be a product of the Stoic-Academic engagement, since for the Stoics soul is entirely rational, lacking the Platonic and Aristotelian non-rational parts of soul.

60 While mind is more important than body, mind and body are analogous to one another in end, strength, and weakness (v 35). For Piso, there is a certain way of using the body that is most in accord with nature, which can go wrong with distortion or deformity, or presumably injury. The same is true analogously in the case of the mind. Most interesting is Piso’s account of the ways in which mental flaws manifest themselves physically. Slouching and looking lazy, he says, are contrary to nature and markers of a weak or decadent personality (v 35).
thus most desirable parts amount to the intellect.

Piso wants to establish a hierarchy within our nature that is united with the Stoics and maximizes the significance of mind as our best constituent part and the key to best preserving ourselves without dismissing our corporeal nature. This understanding of human nature helps us live in a way that fulfills both mind and body to the fullest. Once we possess mind and body ‘in their fullest natural perfection’, there is a stopping-point ‘where nature rests’ that is crucial to the ethics of the Old Academy. The limit is the maximal activity of the parts of our nature, the flourishing of both mind and body, that is the supreme good (v 44). Piso thus establishes our supreme end both as a surge in activity and as a limit or resting point. Our nature, insofar as it wants its parts to be maximally realized, seeks to have a bodily condition that maximally accords with nature. An ill, pained, or weak body cannot maximally accord with nature and thus brings our whole nature to suffer (v 47). Though the mind is more important than the body, Piso makes it clear here that the body cannot possibly be overlooked.

That Piso is a competent philosopher also speaks well of Cicero’s criticism of Stoic neologisms. For Cicero, Piso’s position is superior to the Stoics’ in part for his avoidance of jargon. What Zeno called preferable and more worthy of selection, Piso claims, his own system calls happier (v 88). This means that Piso openly admits there is only a terminological difference between the Old Academy and the Stoics concerning external and bodily goods. As discussed earlier, new terms devoid of new meanings are useless. Piso appears to share this view and acknowledges that his system has a terminological benefit over the Stoics. He claims his own vocabulary is better than theirs precisely because he calls familiar things by familiar names instead of making up new words (v 89). One of Piso’s strengths, then, is in avoiding the meaningless invention of empty jargon.
Piso is thus united with the Stoics in the tradition of the ancients, yet he avoids the problems that emerge from distinctly Stoic claims. Since the supreme good is in the peak development of mind and body, human beings are not meant to be idle but to act (v 54-58). The natural course of human development shows that work proper to human beings begins with ‘seeds of virtue’ that build slowly but surely to finer things in the realization of virtue itself (v 59). Developing virtue is more worthwhile than the excellences of body, and is inherently concerns our interactions with others (v 60, 67). It is the nature of virtue to bring the individual into relation with the community. Through virtue, therefore, Piso is able to establish the naturalness of the city and politics. Engaging in virtuous activity helps us to appreciate and preserve things that are good in themselves (v 69). Things good in themselves include on the one hand mind and body, where the ultimate good is realized, and on the other hand, external goods like friends, family, and country. Though these things are good in themselves, they cannot be a part of the supreme good. If they were, the supreme good would be outside of the individual’s control and unrealizable, which is unacceptable for Piso, the Stoics, and, arguably, the Epicureans (v 68). Piso’s adherence to Peripatetic ethics through the Old Academy is fairly comprehensive and reflects his competency as a well-learned philosopher.

Piso concludes his overview of Antiochian ethics by urging Lucius to consider the full value of virtue. He contends, ‘You will then be left in no doubt that those who possess the high-minded character and the uprightness to attain them live happy lives… It is true that what we count as bodily goods do make a contribution to the happiest life. But a happy life can exist without them’ (v 71). Piso is attempting to reconcile the Stoic idea that virtue is sufficient for happiness with the Aristotelian position that happiness requires virtue and other some other
goods. Cicero says that he would like to give virtue as much power as possible, but he cannot figure out how Piso could comfortably reject the Stoic notion that virtue is the only good and also hold that virtue is sufficient for happiness. If there are good things other than virtue, Cicero presses, then how could virtue be sufficient for happiness? (v 77) Since Piso’s own view, in contrast to the Stoics, seems to use the notions of good and evil that are applied in daily life—where sound body and wealth are called ‘good’ things and disease and ugliness are called ‘evil’ things—then wisdom or virtue is not sufficient for happiness, and the wise person is vulnerable to evils (v 81).

The Antiochian position represents a politically compelling ethics. Antiochians prioritize virtue, but they also care about external goods. Virtue seems necessary to restore Roman values and save the constitution. Insofar as Cicero is concerned with using philosophy to save the Roman republic, he must be invested in promoting an ethical system that places exceptionally high value on virtue. Yet virtue’s high value cannot overpower the value of other goods if we are to avoid the political pitfall of the Stoics, namely, that vice alone—not death, enslavement, and loss of one’s home—is to be actively avoided. The position that Piso presents is far more sensible and more likely to raise a capable, virtuous generation to save Rome.

Though Piso’s position is strong in many ways, the attempted reconciliation between Stoic and Aristotelian ethics is unsuccessful. Piso maintains ‘being wise is indeed insufficient for the happiest (beatissime) life…but is certainly enough for a happy (beate) life’ (v 81). He allows for many different goods, and he maintains that the Stoic notion that the wise person is happy without qualification regardless of his or her circumstances is foolish. Yet he cannot successfully

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61 Here I am agreeing with Annas 2001, 141n50.
62 In Zeno’s case, virtue was sufficient for happiness because nothing else was properly considered ‘good’. In this way, no matter what challenges fortune throws at a Stoic, that Stoic is not in fact being afflicted by real evils and can remain happy.
respond to Cicero’s question about the relationship between the sufficiency of virtue for happiness and the role of external and bodily goods. Piso’s Antiochian position has many strengths over the other positions presented in the text, and Piso’s exposition is exceptionally well done. Annas 2001, 150n70 astutely claims ‘Piso has won the rhetorical battle…Cicero leaves it to the reader to judge the importance of the philosophical argument against the elegantly presented theory’. The importance of philosophical argument must be more important than all of the other features of good philosophical contributions for Cicero. Piso’s presentation and Cicero’s reply therefore suggests that the philosopher must prioritize the strength of the argument.

Cicero’s lesson

Cicero’s treatment of the Hellenistic schools is often distorting. He gives flat readings to their positions in order to highlight something. I have argued that Cicero presents the schools as he does in order to educate his readers about the best and worst practices in philosophy. Contrasting himself with the negative example of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians, Cicero demonstrates a better way of doing philosophy. Philosophers should be competent. They should avoid unnecessary jargon. They should honor their predecessors, particularly when their predecessors have done good work. Above all, they should develop strong philosophical arguments. The Epicureans demonstrate incompetence, and the Stoics fall on account of their jargon and lack of respect for their predecessors. Piso’s Antiochian account falls because, though it is politically promising, it is not a sufficiently plausible theory.

In this final section I review the ways in which Cicero does possess the qualities he claimed the other philosophers lack, and argue that Cicero’s demonstration of a better
philosophical practice engages the basic features of classical skepticism. In the Introduction, I draw from three major features of Academic skepticism that Harald Thorsrud elucidates: ‘(i) relieving others of falsely believing they know what they don’t, and (ii) revealing the most probable solutions to the problems discussed while (iii) concealing his own opinion so as not to interfere with the rational autonomy of the participants’ (Thorsrud 2018, 51). In addressing De finibus specifically, I make a few adjustments to (i) and (ii). I apply (i) as the rejection of positions that do not withstand scrutiny, (ii) as the suspension of judgment that accompanies such rejection in addition to the use of Carneadean probabilism to advocate indirectly for qualified, skeptical eudaimonism. To (iii) I assume that ‘concealing his own opinion’ applies primarily to Cicero’s explicit statements.

Cicero rejects the other philosophers for failing to possess the qualities identified above. Those positions fail to withstand Academic scrutiny. Cicero challenges each position with the aim of undermining the dogmatic confidence of his interlocutors. He exposes internal inconsistencies and prematurely drawn conclusions. His own method contrasts theirs. If Cicero considers himself a teacher to his readers when he manipulates other philosophers to contrast with himself, he must show how he possesses the qualities he claims they lack. The opening pages of De finibus analyzed earlier attest to Cicero’s competence and avoidance of jargon. Recall that Cicero argues that philosophy is most appropriate for someone with the reputation Cicero has (i 1-12). His knowledge of the schools is on display for the entire text, and he calls attention to the appropriateness of developing specialized vocabulary and the translation of

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63 ‘Dogmatic’ skeptics claim that nothing can be known; ‘classical’ skeptics make no such claims (Burnyeat and Frede 1998, 127-128). Arcesilaus, Carneades, and Pyrrhonians all belong to the classical category. Despite their many differences, they all seem to depend on a practical criterion such as Carneades’ to pithanon or probabilis. This makes it possible for the skeptic to withhold assent and still act.
Greek into Latin. Cicero’s respect for his predecessors, and his fellow philosophers in general, is more complex. Cicero is not giving a very charitable presentation of his fellow philosophers in *De finibus*, but this does not necessarily mean that he fails to honor his predecessors. For each philosophical school, Cicero names potential points of revision and agreement. He agrees with Epicurus’s claim, for example, that ‘there is as much pleasure to be derived from the humblest provisions’ as from extravagant feasts, ‘if this amounted to a denial that the qualities of one’s supplies has any bearing on the happiness of one’s life’ (ii 90). Cicero claims that this is not what he thinks Epicurus had meant, but his possible agreement suggests that there are parts of the Epicurean position that could be revised and accepted. This is also clear when he criticizes Epicurus’ concept of pleasure and states that he would accept static pleasure as the first drive of infants because it is consistent with self-preservation (i 31). Cicero suggests he is open to the full meaning of the Epicurean end, if he were to give it a fair presentation.

He does the same with the Stoics and the Antiochians on more than one occasion. Concerning intermediates, Cicero claims ‘if Chrysippus is saying that certain [goods of the body] are eclipsed or disappear [compared to virtue], then I would agree’ (iv 29). He also suggests that the Stoics improve their argument about human nature: ‘Instead of saying that every animal, as soon as its born, is devoted to loving itself and is concerned with self-preservation, why not say the following? Every animal is devoted to the best part of itself and is concerned with the security of that one part; no other nature has any other aim than to preserve whatever is best in itself’ (iv 34). Some aspects of Stoic theory that are compelling, but the Stoics would do well to make some revisions to strengthen that position and make it a more viable view. Similarly, he offers a way out of Piso’s problems with the happy and happiest life if Piso allows there are

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64 This is evident in *De finibus* i 6-12 and in Cicero’s praise for Cato’s translation at iii 40.
65 Cicero would agree, but ‘enthusiastically so, since he would be speaking the truth’.

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different degrees of happiness (v 81).

In undermining the other positions, Cicero expresses all of the qualities he suggests a philosopher should possess. It is additionally important that a philosopher should develop philosophically strong arguments and ideas. For the Academic, this means Cicero must in practice not accept any ideas or arguments that seem implausible. Epicurean ethics is implausible, he claims, because it advocates for pleasure without limit. Virtue, on this reading, is subservient to pleasure and cannot keep the pursuit of pleasure from causing harm to well-being (iv 37). As such, it is unlikely to nurture virtue in a way that might save the Roman republic. Stoic ethics is implausible because it requires that we attend to virtue alone. This neglects half of one’s good and makes it unlikely that Stoics can be effective political agents. Upon rejecting the positions that could not withstand scrutiny, Cicero brings his readers to consider the Antiochian position.

Piso presents by far the best position under explicit consideration in De finibus. He gives the strongest possible position to virtue, yet he allows that external and bodily goods play an important role in securing one’s happiness. Cicero swiftly eviscerates the idea that the happy and happiest life can be distinguished as a reconciliation between Stoic and Peripatetic ethics. Though Cicero’s reply matches the strength of Piso’s presentation, he does not prevail over his interlocutor here as he prevails over Torquatus and Cato. There is some suggestion that Piso depends too much on eloquence, but the readers are left with the impression that they have just witnessed an excellent philosophical discussion.

Though the other characters accept the Antiochian position, Cicero suspends judgment about the best possible theory. The closing of book 5 is likely a dramatic representation of the relationship between an exoteric and esoteric view. The interlocutors resemble most readers of
De finibus. They accept the Antiochian position as the best and most politically useful one. This is a safe and effective theory for many to accept. Cicero’s unwillingness to accept that position is a suggestion that the classical skeptic will not be persuaded by Piso’s exposition. The esoteric position maintains the best philosophy suspends judgment.66 Thus, upon rigorous analysis and critique of the Epicurean, Stoic, and Antiochian *sumnum bonum*, Cicero’s judgment remains somewhat inexplicit and unarticulated; his ‘scepticism is an emergent property of the dialogue as a whole’ (Brittain 2016, 26).

The esoteric skepticism that Cicero practices would be ineffective if placed in the hands of unprepared individuals. Suspension of judgment applies to arguments and sense-perceptions, and is grounded most clearly in the Academic response to the cognitive impressions Stoics rely on as the criterion of truth.67 By abolishing the criterion of truth, the Stoics reply, Academics cannot act on any impressions, and therefore cannot act at all. In response to this, Carneades develops his own criterion, often called a ‘practical’ criterion, that allows someone to ‘assent to non-cognitive but probable impressions, as long as he realizes that he may be wrong’ (Allen 1994, 89). Accepting what is probable allows for the Academic to act according to what seems best and be confident in, but not absolutely certain of, that acceptance. Under the guidance of Carneades, skeptics can say that knowledge is not likely possible without becoming dogmatic skeptics and asserting that no knowledge is possible. In the words of Michael Frede, ‘it is a matter of probability for Carneades that nothing can be known’ (Burnyeat and Frede 1997, 141).68

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66 Brittain 2016 argues specifically that this reflects the skepticism of the New Academy rather than the Old Academy. He defends this position in part on the grounds that he is similarly non-committal in his *Academica* concerning the possibility of knowledge.

67 Academics maintain that false and true impressions can almost always be mistaken (see, for example, *Academica* ii 48, 56-57).

68 This is also expressed at *Academica* ii 110.
Cicero does not clearly reject the Antiochian position in the same way he does for the Stoics and Epicureans, but neither does he accept it. He never explicitly gives an alternative to Piso’s position. He thus appears to suspend judgment between accepting and rejecting the Old Academy. He leaves his audience to form their own judgment about the Antiochian position. Without articulating eudaimonism explicitly, Cicero assumes a eudaemonist position throughout the course of the text and he does not challenge the fundamental premise that human beings strive for happiness and well-being. He even has Piso make use of the Carneadean division, which suggests we must take virtue seriously to have a worthwhile end. This worthwhile end is most plausibly a eudaimonistic one. Upon rejecting the best ethical positions available, Cicero leaves us with one plausible but unarticulated position: we likely should accept eudaimonism but reject all currently existing paths to happiness. The esoteric view, a nuanced skeptical relationship to eudaimonism, is effectively kept from all but the most careful readers best suited to adopt the kind of skepticism Cicero practices.

Having an esoteric and an exoteric position makes good sense given the political circumstances under which Cicero writes. The Academic skepticism that he himself practices might not be useful—and could perhaps be harmful—if used improperly. Improperly used skepticism would be a dogmatic refusal to consider or provisionally accept that which seems plausible. In action, misapplied skepticism results in a failure to defend worthy causes. When used properly, Academic skepticism could help maintain political stability. Since Academic skeptics defend no dogmatic doctrines and are always ready to further evaluate what seems plausible, they are unlikely to lead the state into ideological, unnecessary, or unwinnable conflicts. While Cicero aims to aid his readers in their philosophical training, he demonstrates his Academic skepticism esoterically because he only wants his readers to take up such a practice.
when they are ready to do so effectively. For those who are less prepared to practice Academic skepticism, Cicero suggests the exoteric, Antiochian position. The Antiochian position accepts eudaimonism that is constituted primarily by virtue and secondarily by the possession of other goods. Most, or arguably all, who adopt this position will be benefitted individually by the Antiochian system. Furthermore, nearly every citizen could adopt without risking damage to the state.  

Cicero’s presentation of the different theories in *De finibus* is carefully constructed. He manipulates the positions of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians in order to show his readers that philosophers should express a few key qualities. Cicero’s criticisms of the schools highlight their failure to express one of more of these qualities. This is especially true when he considers the concept of originality and the innovations specific to different schools. In addition, Cicero himself appears to possess all of the qualities that he attributes to the philosopher. Over the course of *De finibus*, therefore, Cicero helps teach his readers how to do philosophy and identify good philosophers from mere imitators. He guides them to identify the qualities of the philosopher, and to recognize that Cicero’s own position, adopting eudaimonism but rejecting the positions of the Hellenistic schools, appears to be the best of all available options.

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69 This also reflects a sophisticated Platonism in which the best philosophers are most qualified to rule. Cicero therefore suggests the best sort of philosophy, while encouraging his readers to embrace a more obviously politically useful philosophy.
Cicero’s *De finibus* is arranged in an unusual way. It develops over the course of three fictitious philosophical dialogues, each dedicated to the ethical position of a different Hellenistic school, divided into five books. The first dialogue, centered around the presentation and refutation of the Epicurean position in book 1 and 2, respectively, has the dramatic date of 50 BCE. The next two books are set in 52 and contain the second dialogue, detailing and refuting the Stoic position. The final book is slightly different from the rest of the text in that it contains both the exposition of and rebuttal to the position of the Old Academy or Antiochus, but it stands out most notably on account of its dramatic setting. Book 5 takes place long before the others in 79, at the ruins of the Academy in Athens, when the interlocutors were studying abroad in their youth. There are two compatible ways to interpret this arrangement: (1) the arrangement reflects the progression in argument quality from lowest to highest, and (2) some argument in the text will require that we return to Cicero’s youth for an answer. The first interpretation is consistent with those who argue that the absence of a book 6 to rebut book 5 indicates Cicero favors the Old Academy as the best philosophy. The second interpretation entails the identification of a suitable argument that would bring Cicero to address something from his youth. I consider the best candidate to be what Brunschwig calls the ‘cradle argument’, an important argument that appears in several forms throughout the text.

In this chapter I develop the second interpretation in a way that is consistent with the first, arguing that Cicero arranges the dialogues of *De finibus* to mirror dramatically the ‘cradle argument’ ubiquitous in Hellenistic philosophy. A ‘cradle argument’ makes an ethical claim
through an appeal to nature that emphasizes the desires and behaviors of the very young. When the Hellenistic schools appeal to nature, they look to the ‘cradle’, or infancy, as an uncorrupted source from which we may determine our appropriate human end. Hellenistic philosophy is indeed replete with references to the very young. The Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians each have their own versions of the cradle argument in *De finibus*. My argument begins with an examination of the basic contents and criticisms of the ‘cradle argument’ as presented by Torquatus, Cato, and Piso. I find that Cicero rejects the cradle arguments as presented by each Hellenistic school, especially the Epicureans and Stoics, because of their contents. In particular, he most consistently objects to their use of pre-rational infants to determine what is good, bad, or best for rational human adults. Cicero’s criticisms of the arguments’ contents do not imply that he rejects their desire to find a natural foundation for ethics. Next, I show that Cicero actively seeks such a foundation and locates the origin of ethically relevant ends in his youthful philosophical studies, when he had already attained the intellectual maturity necessary to begin philosophizing. The reverse chronology of *De finibus* allows Cicero to appeal to his youth in years but maturity in reason at the end of the text, in the philosophically and rhetorically most impressive section. This allows Cicero to replace the most problematic aspect of the appeal to origins, the reliance on pre-rational infants, with an origin located in his educational prime, already rational and improving himself through philosophy.

**Rival appeals to the young**

*At De finibus* v 55 Piso, representing the Antiochian position, proclaims ‘all of the ancient theories, especially the one I espouse, visit the cradle, in the belief that the easiest way of

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70 This argumentative strategy was coined the ‘cradle argument’ by Brunschwig 1986.
understanding nature’s intentions is to look at early childhood.’ An appeal to the natural origin is the general approach of the ‘cradle argument’; I apply the phrase ‘appeals to the young’ to represent what occurs in the dialogue. Stoics, Epicureans, and Antiochians all attempt to discern the proper human end from observable infant behaviors. Accordingly, all appeals to the young in De finibus are similar in structure and contain the same three features: (i) they begin as close as possible to the birth (natum) of an infant, (ii) they ascertain the first desires of the newborn from its behavior, and (iii) they draw conclusions concerning the summum bonum from those desires.

The Epicurean cradle argument in book 1 guides us from newborns toward the pursuit of pleasure and freedom from pain. Torquatus presents the Epicurean ‘cradle argument’ at i 30 when he states,

> Every animal as soon as it is born seeks pleasure and rejoices in it, while shunning pain as the highest evil and avoiding it as much as possible. This is behavior that has not yet been corrupted, when nature’s judgment is pure and whole. Hence he denies that there is any need for justification or debate as to why pleasure should be sought, and pain shunned. He thinks that this truth is perceived by the senses, as fire is perceived to be hot, snow white, and honey sweet. In none of these examples is there any cause for proof by sophisticated reasoning; it is enough simply to point them out. He maintains that there is a difference between reasoned argumentative proof and mere noticing or pointing out; the former is for the discovery of abstruse and complex truths, the latter for judging what is clear and straightforward.

The first feature (i) of the Epicurean appeal to the young is justified on the grounds that their ‘behavior is not yet corrupted’ (depravatum). Observable infant behavior is understood as an undisturbed reflection of nature’s inclinations. The extent to which the argument is based on empirical observation is disputed. This matters little to the basic interpretation of the argument, however. Infants might cry when they are uncomfortable, lonely, hungry, or feeling pain for some other reason. Caregivers soothe them by attending to one of these unpleasant sensations. Generally the infant stops crying upon the satisfaction of its desires when the unpleasant
sensation is relieved. Thus the second feature (ii) identifies desires from these observable behaviors. In other words, the Epicureans frame newborn behavior as pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding. The third feature (iii) should demonstrate an inference to the *summum bonum*. Instead, Torquatus claims the Epicureans require no inference. Pleasure-seeking behavior in infants, and arguably adults, is so obvious to the Epicureans that it requires only ‘mere noticing or pointing out’ rather than ‘argumentative proof’. The prescriptions of nature as observed in the infant behavior, behavior that reflects nature without distortion, are practically self-evident.

The Stoics, like the Epicureans, adopt the first feature (i) on the grounds that the inclinations of nature are uncorrupted in infants. They differ from the Epicureans with respect to the other two features. Cato explains,

> Every animal, as soon as it is born (this is where one should start), is concerned with itself and takes care to preserve itself. It favours its constitution and whatever preserves its constitution, whereas it recoils from its destruction and whatever appears to promote its destruction. In support of this thesis, the Stoics point out that babies seek what is good for them and avoid the opposite before they ever feel pleasure or pain. This would not happen unless they valued their own constitution and feared destruction. But neither could it happen that they would seek anything at all unless they had self-awareness and thereby self-love. So one must realise that it is self-love which provides the primary motivation. (iii 16)

Assuming that nature is most present or visible in the very young, the second feature (ii) of Cato’s cradle argument interprets infant behavior in terms of survival. Shelter, food, and comfort are things that promote the survival and thriving of the infant. It is possible that the same things that preserve the infant’s constitution (milk and clothing, if not human affection) are also pleasant. Though these objects might also be pleasant, Cato’s brief summary emphasizes that survival is primary and pleasure secondary. Nature appears to be inclined more to preserve itself than to experience pleasure, so the infant desires self-preservation ‘before they ever feel pleasure

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71 This is supported, no doubt, by the Epicurean doctrine that sense-perceptions are true (see *Epicurus’ Letter to Herodotus* 46-53).
or pain’. 72 Pleasure can even serve self-preservation by indicating the body is in good working order.

Stoics and Epicureans diverge concerning features (ii) and (iii). They differ significantly in feature (iii) because the Stoics depend on argument where the Epicureans deem argument inappropriate. Torquatus made it clear that some truths, including the pleasure-seeking behavior of infants, were so evident that there should be no formal argument but only ‘pointing out’. Cicero emphasizes the point when he narrates ‘Epicurus himself said that pleasure is not a matter for argument, since the criterion for judging pleasure is located in the senses’ (iii 3). The Stoics, of course, depend on a more technical and rigorous incorporation of argument at every level of philosophy than the Epicureans.

The Stoic emphasis on argument is notable in at least two ways in this passage. It is immediately present when Cato emphasizes the birth of the animal as ‘where one should start’, a methodological point. Additionally, their identification of self-preservation as a first desire depends on familiarity with Stoic system since self-preservation is itself a complex concept. Infant behaviors that are self-preserving are in accord with nature that is itself, over time, revealed to be rational. For the Stoics, everything has a place in the general rational order of things. The infant, driven by the instinct to preserve itself, engages in actions that are ‘appropriate’ for its nature. Cato explains the development of human nature at iii 20:

the initial ‘appropriate action’…is to preserve oneself in one’s natural constitution. The next is to take what is in accordance with nature and reject its opposite. Then such selection becomes continuous, and, finally, stable and in

72 Desire for self-preservation may be temporally prior to any experience of pleasure or pain, or it might be prior in the sense of being primary. Pleasure might supervene on the acquisition of objects of self-preservation, making the acquisition primary and the pleasure secondary. Brunschwig 1986, 134 maintains that Cato holds the former, temporal position. This is in stark contrast to the position of fellow Stoic Hierocles, who argues that sense-perception is present at birth (140). The diversity of cradle arguments does not pose a difficulty here, as Cato means first and foremost to distance his position from the Epicureans.
agreement with nature. At this point that which can truly be said to be good first appears and is recognized for what it is.

As the infant matures over the course of her life, she is able to engage with nature in different ways. Eventually she gains the insight that ‘appropriate’ actions fit her needs (Cooper 1999, 437). In other words, self-preservation is each living being’s relation toward its own nature as much as it is that being’s relation to external objects, or nature more broadly. It acts, in this sense, as a middle term in a syllogism. Through self-preservation, the human infant relates to itself and to its nature as a benevolent, rational being, since self-preserving behavior requires some self-awareness with attendant self-love. Feature (iii) of the Stoic appeal to the young has a different basis from that of the Epicureans, logical argument rather than mere observation.

The Epicureans stand out most for their identification of pleasure as the first object of desire of infants and also the highest end for adults. Cato draws hard line between the Epicureans and Stoics concerning the first objects of desire and the use of argument. Cicero’s treatment of the Old Academy highlights their similarities with the Stoics more than their differences. This is largely due to the fact that the Old Academy claim a united history, inclusive of Stoicism, beginning with Socrates. In the words of Inwood 2014, 46, ‘given the shared pedigree of the Stoics and Aristotelians—all roads lead back to Socrates and in this case both lead to Socrates via the same intermediary, Plato’.

The shared tradition that the Old Academy endorses has significant influence over their appeal to the young. For example, Piso’s view that ‘the whole question of ends, and as it were

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73 Striker 1996, 229 endorses a similar position, arguing the insight of the mature person might not be simply that she is rational, but rather that nature’s order is best.
74 Antiochus’ position is difficult to establish with certainty on account of the complexity of his exchange with the Hellenistic schools and the limited textual evidence that remains. Striker 1996, 269 finds that Antiochus unifies the Old Academy and Peripatos to criticize Stoic theory. Her position is not inconsistent with the one I adopt here—Antiochus adopted some parts of Stoicism but was critical of others.
the outer limits of good and evil, begins from what we described as being well-adapted and suited to our nature’ indicates that the Old Academy, like the Stoics, emphasize self-preservation (v 23). He explains (v 23-24):

Let us follow the tradition of the old schools, one that the Stoics also utilize, and begin in the following way: Every living creature loves itself, and as soon as it is born strives to preserve itself. For the purpose of its life-long protection, nature bestows on it from the beginning a desire for self-preservation and for maintaining itself in the best possible state according to nature. At first the arrangement is vague and uncertain, so that the creature merely gives itself some basic protection regardless of what species it belongs to. It has no understanding of what it is, or what it might become, or what its own nature is. Then it develops a little, and starts to realize how things affect it and are related to it. It gradually begins to acquire self-awareness, and to grasp the reasons why it possesses the desire that I spoke of. So it sets about pursuing things which it perceives to be suited to its nature, and shunning their opposites. The object of every creature’s desire, therefore, I take to be found in what is adapted to its nature. Hence we arrive at the highest good, to live in accordance with nature in the best and most suitable natural condition possible.

Piso, like the Stoics, begins with self-love and self-preservation for feature (ii). For both schools, we seek objects that are best suited to our nature because they preserve out nature and self-preservation is the first desire. The main difference is that the Stoics allow that goods of the body might be worth pursuing, but they clearly prioritize mind over body in asserting that the only object of real value is virtue (iii 50-58). The Antiochians and Old Academy maintain that preserving both mind and body is valuable. Caring for mind and body and satisfying their desires in a way that brings them to ‘their fullest natural perfection’ is ‘where nature rests’ (v 44).

Cicero’s apparent rejection of the cradle arguments

Each cradle argument is challenged in De finibus. Cicero rejects the Epicurean argument

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75 Note here (as in footnote 48 of chapter 1) there is a distinction between animus, the source of intellect and perception, and anima, the source of life. The former is translated as ‘mind’, the latter as ‘soul’.
for failing to connect the kinetic pleasure he claims they identify as the first object of desire with the mature pursuit of freedom from pain. The Stoic cradle argument is rejected because its first object of desire, self-preservation, is contradicted by Stoic neglect of the body for the sake of the mind. The Old Academy’s version is rejected because it leads to a problematic end. In this section I examine Cicero’s challenges to each school in order of appearance and show that he finds the same flaws in all of them: they fail to reconcile our natural or biological origin with our ethical end, and they begin with infancy. This is important because it allows Cicero to posit a new origin to consider, as I address in the next section.

Cicero’s objections to the Epicurean cradle argument has two components. First, he objects to their identification of pleasure as the highest end and first inclination. Second, he claims that they fail to reconcile the two kinds of pleasure they identify. His rejection of pleasure is grounded primarily on the Epicureans allegedly ‘[giving] pride of place to what [they] claim nature herself ordains and approves, namely pleasure and pain’ (i 23). He argues that humans are made for better things than mere pleasure, citing bravery in the face of danger and even the refusal of natural duties and affections, i.e., father’s love, for the sake of virtue (i 23-25). Cicero is arguing for virtue to be taken seriously. Epicurus, he claims, makes virtue the servant of pleasure so that it has only instrumental value in bringing about pleasure and freedom from pain (ii 37, 69).

Pleasure in itself is an inappropriate human end for Cicero, but the position is made worse by Epicurus’ lack of clarity about by the term. The Epicureans distinguish two kinds of pleasure, kinetic and static. Torquatus explains ‘a quenched thirst is a ‘static’ (stabilitatem) pleasure, whereas the pleasure of having one’s thirst quenched is ‘kinetic’ (in motu)’ (ii 10). Cicero entertains the possibility that Epicurus might mean kinetic pleasure, taken to be sensory
delight to be the highest good. He maintains this is a very weak ethical position, easily overturned by his objection at i 23. The alternative to positive, delightful sensory pleasure, or kinetic pleasure, is a concept of pleasure as absence from pain, or static pleasure. Static pleasure is more independent than kinetic pleasure and more consistent with the higher, intellectual pleasures that human beings can enjoy. Cicero prefers static pleasure as the *summum bonum* over kinetic pleasure. He goes so far as to claim that static pleasures would be derived from self-preservation, implying his potential endorsement of such a position (ii 31).

On Cicero’s assessment, Epicureans do not clearly prioritize static pleasure over kinetic pleasure. In the cradle argument, Cicero contends, Epicureans rely on infants and children, who seem to choose kinetic pleasures over static ones and need guidance to choose the objects of static pleasure. We might understand this with a simple example from daily life. If a small child is presented with a large plate piled high with cookies, she will take more than one serving. Left to her own devices, she is likely to consume cookies until she gets a stomach ache. The mature ability to limit one’s consumption of pleasant things is akin to pleasure as freedom from pain, which is the proclaimed highest end. Any such proclamation is first challenged by Epicurus’ own admission in that he ‘cannot imagine anything good without Aristippean pleasure’, according to Cicero (ii 20). The priority of static pleasure is thus called into doubt. Second, the Epicurean cradle argument bases its identification of static pleasure as the highest end on the basis of the natural drive infants have. On Cicero’s reading, this means Epicurus grounds static pleasure in

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76 This is a misrepresentation on Cicero’s part, as the Epicureans do not say that pleasure—even kinetic pleasure—is delight of the body. It is better understood to be the alleviating of some discomfort or the satisfying of a need, physical or psychological. Rist 1972, 105-110 and 122-126 provides a helpful summary of the *kinetic* and *katastematic* pleasure as presented by Epicurus and Cicero. In particular, he argues Cicero overlooks the distinction between *aponia* and *ataraxia*, which characterize freedom from pain with respect to the body and mind, respectively (105).
kinetic pleasure.\textsuperscript{77} Epicureans fail to see the logical problem of grounding the more independent, self-sustaining static pleasure on the dependent, fleeting kinetic pleasure.\textsuperscript{78} As a result, Cicero rejects the Epicurean appeal to the young because it selects an unsuitable end and lacks logical support. He does not condemn the inclination to appeal to the young.

Cicero does not reject the Stoics’ cradle argument on account of the first object of desire they identify. He is sympathetic to self-preservation as the first desire. His criticism unfolds from the Stoics’ concept of human nature, which consists of both mind (animo) and body (corpore). If our first natural desire is for self-preservation, it should therefore encompass care for both mind and body. Cicero explains that the Stoics expect human beings to disregard the things that affect the body for the sake of the mind in general, and virtue in particular (iv 32-34). Stoic self-love requires that humans minimize an essential component of the human self. Cicero maintains that if the Stoics would emphasize preservation of the best part of oneself, then the conflict would be resolved (iv 34).\textsuperscript{79} They could then minimize the need for sound body and maximize concern for developing virtue and wisdom that they extol as the human telos. Without this the Stoic path to virtue involves contempt for half of human nature, according to Cicero. The desire for self-preservation identified in the infant, our natural origin, conflicts with the expectation that we should reject the body for the sake of virtue as adults. In other words, the Stoics cannot reconcile the first identifiable desire with the highest end.

\textsuperscript{77} Cicero gives the Epicurean argument an absurd form: ‘since the natural impulses of children and animals are directed towards kinetic pleasure, therefore katastematic pleasure is the sumnum bonum’ (Rist 1972, 106).

\textsuperscript{78} In a move likely designed to highlight Torquatus’ inadequate argumentative training, Cicero has Torquatus rely on the difference between the kinds of pleasure without ever formally establishing that difference.

\textsuperscript{79} Cicero claims the Stoics could avoid inconsistency if they would say ‘every animal is devoted to the best part of itself and is concerned with the preservation of that one part; no other nature has any other aim than to preserve what is best in itself’ (iv 34).
Cicero offers less criticism against the Antiochian cradle argument. He remains sympathetic to self-preserving desires, as he did in the case of the Stoics. Piso’s account is consistent with oikeiosis, by which the Stoics say we become familiar with that which is suited to our nature. Even though Piso has adopted some of the most fundamental Stoic points, he deviates enough to avoid their flaws. Cicero had criticized the Stoics on the one hand for emphasizing the mind to the detriment of the body, turning Stoic self-love into a kind of self-destruction (iv 32). Piso, on the other hand, maintains ‘we all by nature think of ourselves desirable in our entirety…[and] it must be the case where a whole is desired on its own account, its parts are too’ (v 46). Virtue is extremely valuable in its own right, but this does not require casting off concern for sound body and good health, which are also valuable in themselves. Piso also does not require self-awareness and self-knowledge from birth as the Stoics do. He is thus able to preserve the best of Stoic theory without necessarily committing to its problematic components.

It might be that Cicero is personally endorsing the cradle argument as the Old Academy and Piso take it up. While they still assume it is possible to make assertions about the nature of a living being and deduce from it the highest end for the human being, they at least seek a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of all possibilities before settling on what they think the most appropriate answer is. It is possible that he accepts their assumption that turning to young beings tells us something about their nature, and that their nature tells us something about their proper end. Recently it has been argued that Cicero has an Antiochian trajectory in the De finibus because he appears to favor the Old Academy and Antiochians in two ways. First of all, Cicero adopts an Antiochian position here by saying Antiochus was right to say that the disagreement between Stoics and Peripatetics was only verbal (Schofield 2012, 243). Second, the structure of the text implies that Cicero does not object to Antiochus’ theory as much as he does to
Epicureanism and Stoicism (246). In response to this, some maintain that Cicero does indeed favor the Academy in *De finibus*, but that the Academy is not necessarily the Old Academy (Long 2015, 188-197). The arrangement of the text leads perhaps to a stalemate on the question of Cicero’s possible endorsement of the Old Academy. This is reinforced by his professed allegiance to the New Academy, which adheres to no official doctrine. The acceptance of any fact or theory from such an Academic can be only provisional. Remaining is the fact that Cicero’s objections to the particular commitments of Epicureans and Stoics in the cradle argument do not require a complete rejection of their turn to nature. If this does amount to some kind of acceptance, it is tenuous acceptance and little more.

The cradle argument Piso presents seems to be the best option of the three, but the Antiochian position may go too far to preserve both mind and body, discussed in book 5 as virtue and external goods. Piso explains that the first desire of self-preservation helps the human being pursue things well-suited for its nature and ‘live in accordance with nature in the best and most suitable natural condition possible’ (v 24). The Old Academy’s commitment to self-preservation requires that they value external and bodily goods in addition to virtue. Since the Antiochians ‘regard the bodily attributes as goods’, he maintains, they must also say ‘what conduces to them’, including friends, family and wealth, are good as well (v 80). This means that virtue can be sufficient for the happy life for Piso and the Old Academy, but the happiest life would require other good things (v 81). Where the Stoics had denied too much of human nature for the end to be consistent with the first desire they identify, the Antiochians seem to indulge human nature too much and end up with the implausible distinction between the happy and happiest lives as the highest end.

Cicero’s criticisms of the different cradle arguments suggest he expects a cradle argument
to be consistent with the broader theory to which it belongs, and to unite the proposed beginning with the highest end. They may reveal a tension between two senses of nature found in ancient ethical theories.\(^{80}\) One sense, ‘mere nature’, refers to biological necessity and development, while the other fuller sense, ‘nature’, refers to the end pursued in ethics (Annas 1993, 144).\(^{81}\) The cradle argument in all of its forms is designed to lead us from the mere nature of the infant to nature as mature \textit{telos}, reconciling what is necessary and given with that which is chosen. This is especially clear in Stoic \textit{oikeiosis}, through which natural familiarization to what is naturally good for us is supposed to occur, and habituation to virtuous action brings human development from its early stages (characterized by mere nature) to its full nature (Annas 1993, 149).\(^{82}\)

Cicero’s dissatisfaction, especially with Stoic and Epicurean appeals to the young, may be understood in light of ‘mere’ nature and nature as an end. An appeal to the young should connect young humans and their first desires to their \textit{sumnum bonum}, but Stoic and Epicurean doctrines fail sufficiently to reconcile beginning with end. Their starting point is either inconsistent with the end prescribed or, for the Epicureans, leads to depravity. A good appeal to the young must find a starting point that is worthy of human beings in order to bring these two senses together. In the next section I argue that Cicero’s own appeal to the young, through which he indirectly posits a highest end that is worthy of human beings, reconciles the two senses of

\(^{80}\) In her chapter ‘Aristotle: Nature and Mere Nature’ Annas 1993 discusses the two senses of nature in Aristotle, particularly the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}. ‘Mere nature’ is given and necessary, while ‘nature’ is given a stronger sense as an end (145-146). She argues that the two senses of nature are relatively minor in Aristotle but precipitate the two senses of nature central in Hellenistic philosophy. She credits Irwin’s glossary in the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} for making this distinction.

\(^{81}\) See also Holmes 2014, 570 that argues for these two senses of nature: that which is given and that which is a goal. She argues moreover that the Stoics attempt to bridge the gap between the two senses of nature through \textit{oikeiosis}.

\(^{82}\) This may also hold for the Epicureans insofar their Epicurean cradle argument supposes we begin by desiring kinetic pleasures, but with experience of pleasure and pain and the development of virtue, humans come to realize the superiority of static pleasures.
nature.

The final critique Cicero offers against all presented versions of the cradle argument is that their appeal to infancy is a mistake. A successful cradle argument should help propel human beings from one sense of nature to the other, but art seems to be a more reliable method to guide such a transformation. To Cicero, mere nature is unreliable. He explains, ‘in truth I have no faith in the judgment of animals. Their instincts can be corrupt without being corrupted. One stick may deliberately be bent and distorted, another grow that way. So too an animal’s nature may not have been corrupted by bad upbringing but of its own nature be corrupt’ (ii 33). Cicero reduces the pre-rational newborn to mere animal behavior that cannot be trusted for purposes of ethical argument. The arts are central in Cicero’s response to Cato, for example. The comprehensive breadth and vast depth of the work of Stoic predecessors, namely, successors of Plato and Aristotle, is extolled by Cicero. Particularly important to him are the arts pertaining to rhetoric. Reasoning and oratory are carried out by two arts for Cicero—the arts of discovery and argument (iv 10). The great benefit of art is the possibility of progress. The hard work of those who have come before can teach the young and provide the foundation for further development. Cicero writes, ‘there may be some of great natural talent who acquire verbal fluency without systematic study. But in this field art is a safer guide than nature. To pour out words like a poet is one thing. To arrange what one says in a methodical and organized manner is quite another’ (iv 10). His preference for art over natural talent reflects his preference to choose a suitable end for humans over seeking its origins in early childhood development.

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83 It is not unusual for a philosopher with a skeptical affiliation, particularly an affiliate of the New Academy but perhaps for the Old Academy as well, to withhold assent over even a rare exception. Contemporary and later movements in skepticism also uphold this. Sextus Empiricus, for example, uses conflicting appearances and other similar counterexamples to rule out the possibility of certain knowledge for the Pyrrhonists.
There are some suggestions that the other schools have some reservations about nature to qualify their appeals to the young. Stoic appeals to the young do not always refer back to the cradle. They sometimes appeal to children ‘whom we can observe taking delight in having worked something out for themselves even where there is no ulterior motive’ (iii 17). Such children have rational development and abilities beyond the infant. Thus they may be a more reliable source for the highest end than the infant. Even the Epicureans, depicted as incompetent by Cicero, hold that learning about nature by mastering physics is important to successfully adopt Epicurean maxims. Cicero likely minimizes these ideas because they aren’t represented in the cradle arguments the schools use. Through Cicero’s eyes, we can imagine, the Stoics and Epicureans are making a mistake not to use these ideas, which make the origin more amenable to learning the arts and more capable of reaching the highest end.

Cicero’s own appeal to the young

Despite Cicero’s criticisms of the various cradle arguments, he is consistently neutral or sympathetic to the identification of self-preservation as the first object of desire and the general inclination the schools all have to find a natural foundation for ethics. His rejection of the cradle arguments of the Stoics and Epicureans, and to a lesser extent the Antiochians, is more precisely a rejection of the specific details. Cicero does not completely reject an appeal to the young. In this section, I argue that Cicero actually offers his own highly revised appeal to the young with

84 The pursuit here seems to be pleasure in itself, outside of any practical concerns, and Brunschwig 1986, 135 notes that this appears to conflict with the claim that children pursue what is useful without concern for pleasure.
85 It is unlikely that Cicero is ignorant of the Epicurean emphasis on studying nature. It is most plausible that he resists acknowledging this study of nature because mere or biological nature can be unpredictable and possibly lead us astray from the higher goods that we most appreciate upon reaching intellectual and biological maturity.
two component parts in *De finibus*: first, and more subtly, he arranges the text to demonstrate the true human *sumnum bonum*. Second, and more directly, he emphasizes the role of art in intellectual and personal development. I explain both these strategies Cicero uses to arrive at his account of the human end and to resolve the tension between the two kinds of nature. In these ways he can plausibly argue for a human end without relying on a dogmatic system.

The *De finibus* divides into three dialogues over five books. Their progression from Epicureanism to Stoicism into the Old Academy is not unexpected. It parallels Aristotle’s presentation of the three possible lives in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 1095b17-19, where the life of gratification comes first and is to be avoided; second is the life of politics, a suitable but not ideal life; third and best, the life of contemplation. Cicero claims Epicurean philosophy is the easiest and most well-known of the contemporary ethical theories, making it a good entry point for the discussion (i 13). Cicero characterizes Epicureanism as the bottom of the philosophical ladder and unfit for human beings, particularly serious and politically involved Roman citizens. He dismisses everything about their philosophy from their physics to their ethics. He objects to their relative ignorance of argument and blames Epicurus for his neglect of definition and scorn for a liberal education.

After Epicureanism, Cicero moves on to the Stoics in books 3 and 4. In turning toward the Stoics, Cicero has his readers and interlocutors take a definite step toward a more

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86 Rist 1972 argues that Cicero completely misrepresents Epicureanism. Gosling and Taylor 1982 argue the softer position that Cicero underestimates Epicurus and his followers. Stokes 1995, 147 allows that Cicero misrepresents Epicurus’ position, but emphasizes that ‘one ought to characterize as justly as possible Cicero’s way of arriving at such an interpretation’. Warren 2016 and Frede 2016 both admit Cicero’s treatment of Epicureanism is unfair, but maintain that his criticisms focus on important problems in their philosophy. Morel 2016 also admits unfairness but interestingly argues that Cicero’s portrayal of Epicureanism is a carefully engineered foil to his own concept of virtue as intrinsically good.

87 This occurs in several places and most prominently *De finibus* i 19-20, 22 and ii 18, 27.
methodological, respectable philosophy than Torquatus could provide in book 1. The tone is immediately more scholarly. Cicero happens to encounter Cato upon arriving at Lucullus’ library to borrow some Aristotle notebooks, both men actively pursuing philosophy in their free time (iii 7-10). Their discussion begins when they both express their concern for Lucullus’s education and join responsibility for his intellectual development (iii 8-9). The characters are being shown in the most scholarly light possible. This anticipates the more technical discussion. The Stoics are better trained in argument than the Epicureans, and they build from the significant contributions that came before them to push argument form and content as far as possible. Cato’s presentation of Stoic philosophy meets the scholarly expectations established by the tone of the dialogue. With great care for language and clear mastery of both Greek and Latin, he outlines the many fine distinctions of Stoic ethical theory. He selects terms for technical Greek Stoic terms, including axia, homologia, and kathêkon. Cicero congratulates Cato for speaking precisely and clearly about Stoic philosophy at iii 40, even ‘committing to memory all of the vocabulary you are using to express your themes’. The Stoics represent a more advanced stage in development, consisting in a better understanding of argument and the history of philosophy than the Epicureans.

Readers would expect the final dialogue to contain the most refined and admirable philosophy, and they would not be disappointed. Piso’s presentation of Antiochus and the Old Academy appears to offer the most sophisticated of the theories examined in De finibus (even though Cicero is not convinced).88 This is because mastering the philosophy of the Old Academy

88 The Old and New Academy represent a divide in Academic skepticism. The New Academy, to which Cicero states his allegiance in Academica, is characterized by radical skepticism that rejects the possibility of knowledge. Philo of Larissa posits a unity thesis in which radical sceptics are said to allow for knowledge that is uncertain, i.e. non-Stoic, in some circumstances (Brittain 2001, 22). Antiochus, the student of Philo of Larissa, eventually appears to allow Stoic forms of knowledge, but it is unclear whether Antiochus thinks the Stoics correct
requires comprehensive understanding of all ancient philosophy. The discussion is also advanced because Piso is the most rhetorically polished interlocutor in *De finibus* except, perhaps, Cicero himself. His presentation is clear, direct, and eloquent. Cicero thinks eloquence is not a requirement for good philosophy, but good philosophy that is presented well is best of all, and it proves effective here. Cicero’s cousin Lucius, whose philosophical allegiance is at stake, is won over immediately by Piso’s speech (v 76). The dialogue draws to a close when Cicero claims Piso must strengthen his argument, but the other interlocutors are deeply impressed by Piso’s exceptional speech. Cicero’s reply matches the strength of Piso’s presentation, yet he does not prevail over his interlocutor here as he does in the first two dialogues. While there are suggestions that Piso depends too much on eloquence and not enough on philosophical might, the readers are left with the impression that they have just witnessed an excellent philosophical discussion.

The philosophical depth and respectability of the theories presented clearly increases over the course of *De finibus*, and the implication of this progression continues to be the subject of much debate: Cicero could be agreeing with Antiochus, agreeing with Piso, agreeing with the

Ancient thought, or if Stoic theory replaces that of the Ancients (compare Bonazzi 2012 and Brittain 2012).

89 At i 14-15 Torquatus states that Cicero and Triarius dislike Epicurus because he is less eloquent than other philosophers, but Cicero insists that he does not demand eloquence of philosophers. Elsewhere he praises the union of eloquence and good philosophical argument (see *Ac*. i 8-10, *De fin.* iv 6, 24, v 1).

90 By contrast, the first dialogue ends when Torquatus expresses the ability or perhaps need to refer Cicero to other ‘authorities’ and ‘more experienced practitioners’ (ii 118). Though he seems confident that better philosophers can come up with answers to Cicero’s challenges, he is not himself capable. The second dialogue ends with Cato asking Cicero to promise to hear his refutation soon, but Cicero has the final word (iv 80).

91 Cicero at v 85 says that the conversation is ‘wandering from the point’ and attempts to bring Piso back to the philosophical question at hand. Pomponius’ approval of Piso’s exposition at v 96 is entirely on the basis of presentation and excellence in speaking.
Academic tradition, or synthesizing his own position through Piso.\textsuperscript{92} I will not address these questions here, but rather direct my attention to the inverted correlation between the improvement in quality of discussion, and the regression of the text through time. The first dialogue takes place in 50 BCE and the second in 52, but the third occurs long before, in 79, meaning that the last dialogue occurs at a quite different historical time.\textsuperscript{93} The circumstances under which the characters are living in the early 50’s are strained. Civil war is erupting in 50, and the readers know the characters will be dead soon after the dialogue occurs.\textsuperscript{94} At 52, the time at which the second dialogue is set, the characters are on the eve of that war, and we know that Cato will die according to Stoic principles, choosing death over submission to Caesar’s rule. In 79, by contrast, we find ourselves in Athens during the youthful philosophical studies of Cicero and his friends. The overall effect is a regression through time that abruptly drops the reader at the beginning of the adult lives of these men whose careers occur in times of tremendous conflict and loss.

The reverse chronological order means that the arguments that appear in the later books cannot depend on the arguments that appear in earlier books. Since the books operate with relative independence, the three dialogues could have been arranged in any order of Cicero’s choosing. In fact, arranging the dialogues chronologically might have made more sense for the audience. So why order them in reverse? Some of Cicero’s motivation may be personal. Writing in the difficult times, Cicero may be returning wistfully to the simpler, happier days of his youth.

\textsuperscript{92} These positions are suggested by Tsouni 2012, 32; Schofield 2012, 246; Long 2015, 195 and Inwood 2014, 72, respectively.
\textsuperscript{93} The dramatic date of the first two dialogues is less certain. Tsouni 2012, 131 dates \textit{De fin. i-iv} at 52. If Tsouni is correct, my main point, that the dramatic date of the final dialogue is unexpected and philosophically meaningful, does not change.
\textsuperscript{94} Annas 2001, xvi deduces Torquatus is killed in 48 following military defeat, citing Mitchell 1966, 32-31.
when the republic was stable. However well-grounded such historical and psychological arguments are, they do not rule out the possibility that Cicero has philosophical reasons for structuring the text as he does. So what might his arrangement contribute philosophically? I have already suggested that the arrangement of the dialogues provides a course in philosophical development Cicero hopes to provide his reader, but a further philosophical point emerges from the reverse chronological structure of his text.

This subtle point gained from the arrangement is that Cicero manages to have the entire text enact a version of the cradle argument. Part of Cicero’s resistance to Stoic and Epicurean appeals to the young is grounded in the fact that he sees nothing of value in mere or biological nature for ethics. Biological nature can be unpredictable and could quite possibly lead us astray from the higher goods that we most appreciate upon reaching intellectual and biological maturity. Cicero makes this clear to Torquatus when he says, ‘in truth I have no faith in the judgment of animals…an animal’s nature may not have been corrupted by bad upbringing but of its own nature be corrupt’ (ii 33). For Cicero, ‘mere’ nature would include natural talent that can be juxtaposed to the end of the acquired arts. Cicero therefore appeals to the young who are engaged in education and cultivation of skill over the young who simply have undeveloped talent. Therefore, Cicero appeals to his youthful engagement with philosophy as the suitable starting point from which to seek the *summum bonum*.

There may be several advantages of perfected art over raw natural talent, three of which are relevant for Cicero’s appeal to the young. First, art provides a more stable foundation for action than natural talent. In response to Cato’s Stoic position, for example, Cicero demonstrates the superiority of the art in rhetoric through discovery and argument. He writes, ‘there may be

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95 Annas characterizes the text as ‘nostalgic’, and others argue that Cicero uses philosophy as therapy in the difficult years leading up to his death, including White 1995.
some of great natural talent who acquire verbal fluency without systematic study. But in this field art is a safer guide than nature. To pour out words like a poet is one thing. To arrange what one says in a methodical and organized manner is quite another’ (iv 10). Second, art makes progress possible. When a person begins to learn some art, she makes progress toward mastery over time. Third, the art itself progresses when individuals learn from and build upon the foundation established by those who have come before them. This means that art and education propel human beings from what is given and necessary to what is chosen—they propel us from one sense of nature to the other in a way that Stoic and Epicurean appeals to the young were not able to do.96

Cicero’s preference for art over natural talent is reflected throughout the entire text in two ways. The first I have shown above, namely, that the progression of the text parallels improvement in philosophical discussion. Second, Cicero increasingly emphasizes education as the text progresses. Cicero builds his educational theme to have a weak presence in the first dialogue, a strong presence in the second, and an indisputably central presence in the third.

In the first dialogue, the characters are not philosophically effective. Cicero notes that Torquatus is ‘learned in every philosophical system’, but this learning does not appear to help him much in the discussion (i 13). Julia Annas summarizes Torquatus’ participation well when she says he is ‘depicted as having got hold of a few simple ideas, presenting them in a crude, bludgeoning way and unable to argue for them or meet criticisms; he is constantly deferential to Epicurus, reverently quoting or paraphrasing the Master’s words’ (xvi). In addition to Torquatus, Gaius Triarius, ‘a young man of exceptional seriousness and learning’, is present but doesn’t participate (i 13). Triarius offers nothing of philosophical relevance himself. He complains that

96 This is further developed by the depiction of Cicero and Cato in the most scholarly light possible at De finibus iii and iv.
Cicero is being too harsh in his assessment, usefully giving Cicero the opportunity to explain that disagreements in philosophy must be clearly stated without ‘ill-tempered dispute, and willful controversy’ which are ‘unworthy of philosophers’ (i 27). In other words, Triarius is a kind of prop that allows Cicero to explain the practice of philosophy explicitly.

Torquatus can recite the works of his master, but struggles to defend his position against Cicero’s skillful attacks. Cicero suggests Epicurus himself should be blamed for his inadequately trained interlocutor. After all, Epicurus ‘despised dialectic’ (ii 18). According to Cicero, Epicurus’ relative ignorance in argument, neglect of definition, and scorn for a liberal education disadvantages his followers in every important philosophical area. Cicero’s treatment establishes Epicureanism as the least respectable philosophy with the least qualified practitioners. As a philosophical system that emphasizes pleasure over virtue, it is unfit for human beings, particularly serious and politically involved Roman citizens.

Education therefore seems most apparent in the first dialogue because it is neglected by the Epicureans. As a result of this neglect, Epicureans fail to make progress both individually and as a group. The problems of Epicurean physics, for example, are the result of Epicurus’ resistance to education beyond physics. To Cicero, Epicurus’ physics is weak for two reasons: he follows Democritus too much, and where he does deviate from Democritus he makes bigger mistakes. Cicero writes that Epicurean physics is ‘totally derivative (alienus)’, that is, unoriginal (i 17). Because Epicurus fails to critically assess Democritus’ theory, he ends up adopting the same errors Democritus had made. Both thinkers accept that atoms and void make up the world but, Cicero alleges, neither one provides any account of an efficient cause, or force that brings a thing into being (i 18).\(^97\) Just as Epicurus failed to improve on Democritus, so too Torquatus fails

\(^97\) For a more complete account of Cicero’s critique of Epicurean physics, see chapter 1.
to defend the Epicurean position in discussion with Cicero.

The second dialogue has a more scholarly dramatic setting: Cicero happens to encounter Cato upon arriving at young Lucullus’ library to borrow some Aristotle notebooks, both men actively pursuing philosophy in their free time (iii 7-10). They begin discussing their concern for Lucullus’s education and agree to take joint responsibility for his intellectual development (iii 8-9). Their shared concern for philosophical education suggests the Stoics and Academics place similar value on education. This is part of why Cicero’s critique centers around the success or failure of the Stoics to acknowledge their debts to their interlocutors and their development of new terminology. Becoming proficient in philosophy means studying the work of one’s predecessors in order to critique and improve the discipline over all. In other words, it demonstrates the process by which an individual becomes proficient in an art as much as it reflects the process by which a discipline advances over the course of several generations of practitioners.

The final dialogue contains the strongest, most respectable philosophy in a dramatic setting that is unequivocally and completely educational. The dramatic setting places the characters in Athens in 79 BCE, during Cicero’s youthful philosophical studies. Cicero and his companions are in Athens with the sole purpose of gaining an education. They wander around the ruins of the Academy, marveling at the philosophical history of the place, when they begin their discussion. The emphasis on philosophical education is anything but subtle—and it is underscored by the fact that Cicero and Piso are vying for the educational commitment of

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98 Lucullus was born in 64 BCE, which makes him a teenager during this dialogue. This means that his education is at stake when he is old enough to engage with philosophical positions. The setting of the second dialogue therefore reinforces Cicero’s rejection of the appeal to the cradle argument and his turn instead to the rational human for guidance about the best human end.

99 See chapter 1 for a more complete treatment.
Lucius, Cicero’s cousin. This increased emphasis on education matches the Old Academy’s ability to demonstrate what progress in philosophy looks like. Antiochus posits the unity of the philosophical tradition, which is complemented by the Old Academy’s considerable knowledge of the history of philosophy. Antiochus and his followers readily acknowledge that they, the Stoics, and the rest of the inherited tradition all share in the same starting points of self-love and self-preservation (v 23-24). Whereas the Stoics lose humility when they make progress in philosophy, the Old Academy is suitably modest in recognizing its debts to its philosophical precursors. The Old Academy appears to represent the next progression in philosophy from the Stoic position. As such, it is the most promising position for developing the expertise of individuals and for advancing philosophy as a discipline.

Unlike natural talent, education allows for progress at the level of the individual and the level of the discipline, and it produces consistently superior results. In philosophy, therefore, Cicero’s search for a suitable origin for the best human end is satisfied by the youths practicing philosophy together in De finibus v. A starting point in young adulthood rather than infancy has a number of benefits. First, Cicero is able to rely on the rational development and intellectual pursuits of the philosophy student. Epicureans and Stoics would undoubtedly object that social demands and expectations would corrupt our desires before a philosophical education begins. Yet meaningful relationships and education inherently depend on the influence of other people

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100 For example, see v 7 and 12-17.
101 Including Piso’s explicit adoption of Carneades’ ethical division (v 16).
102 Cicero’s turn to rational maturity and the origins of philosophical study to determine the best human end represents an appeal to origins that a rational person would prefer. In some sense, Cicero’s appeal to rationally mature youth embraces Carneadean probabilism. The _probabile_ is not just that which seems clear and distinct by sense-perception. The _probabile_ is the position that is determined to have the most rational support upon rigorous critical examination.
and society more broadly. Furthermore, some good things are only possible with the aid of such relationships and education in the first place. The dialogues suggest first of all that philosophy is not done in isolation, for example. Lively and respectful discussion among friends is the most fitting setting for the pursuit. The true corruption, implied by the nostalgic tone, comes with the struggles of adults dealing with crooked political schemes or structures that bring about political decay. Second, the starting point and end point are brought more closely together than they are in the arguments of the Stoics and Epicureans. Thus Cicero argues his own appeal to the young, emphasizing young adulthood over infancy, in a way that preserves his position-less Academic method. He uses the structure of his text so that the end of the text features the very origins he considers most appropriate for the *summum bonum*. 
Cicero’s training in rhetoric and his career in the forum suggest that he is invested in the power of words. The craftsmanship evident in *De finibus* proves as much. In the preceding chapters, I have shown that Cicero is more purposeful and clever in writing *De finibus* than most commentators through the 19th and most of the 20th centuries allow. They generally find Cicero’s assessments of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians misleading. Recently, great strides have been made in restoring Cicero’s philosophical reputation. Fresh interpretations argue the apparent unfairness in Cicero’s presentation is the purposeful product of useful, flat readings of other philosophers. I have shown that flat readings allow Cicero to create space for philosophy in the Roman context, and specifically for a skeptical eudaimonism in ethics, in my first chapter. In my second chapter I show that he readily manipulates the cradle argument of the other philosophers in order to convey his own more subtle appeal to youth and education. Increasingly it seems that nearly every detail in *De finibus* is laden with purpose. Cicero’s care is often manifest in the complexity of his writing. Though the ‘cradle argument’ occurs at three discrete times in the text, for example, Cicero’s analysis cannot be understood unless the reader, perhaps against intuition, considers the structure of the entire work.

Cicero’s craftsmanship is equally evident in his use of terms related to transparency and the disclosure of truth. In this chapter, I argue that Cicero’s use of truth-disclosive terminology indicates that we should take some positions presented in *De finibus* more seriously than others. Some recent research on Cicero’s philosophical works has taken note of Cicero’s use of

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103 Morel 2016 argues that Cicero’s rejection of Epicureanism is a carefully engineered foil to his own concept of virtue as intrinsically good.
language, including Barnaby Taylor 2016 and Silvia Pieroni 2016. Pieroni is thorough in
documenting the use of habeo plus the perfect participle across Cicero’s works, sensitive to
context and grammatical purpose. Taylor argues Epicurus uses ordinary language instead of
definition because it is clearer ‘in two significant senses: first, terms feature transparent
psychological connections to the primary conceptions subordinated to them that enable the
inquirer to access each primary conception with ease’ and ‘[second], the primary conception that
is subordinated to a term is self-evident and so stands in need of no proof or demonstration’
(Taylor 2016, 56). Though Pieroni’s work does not directly apply, my analysis adopts Taylor’s
emphasis on transparency in access to concepts.

I have focused my analysis on a handful of key words in the De finibus that relate to
transparency insofar as they refer to the presence or disclosure of truth: apertus, perspicuus,
plane, clarus, and illustris. 104 I call these terms ‘truth-disclosive’ insofar as they disclose some
relation between truth and argumentative claims or observations. 105 Among these, apertus,
perspicuus, and plane are used most consistently to reflect some relation to truth; clarus and
illustris are used to illustrate some ‘clear’ example of moral goodness. 106 These terms seem of

104 My usage summation for each term under consideration includes all of its forms (verbal,
adjectival, adverbial, comparative, etc.). I set plane apart in the adverbial form to reflect its usage
in the text.
105 I understand ‘truth-disclosive’ terms to function as either ‘truth-telling’ or ‘truth-indicating’.
In ‘truth-telling’ they may express what is taken to be true directly, and in ‘truth-indicating’ they
may signal the presence of truth in some indirect way. An analysis of the usage patterns of truth-
telling and truth-indicating functions of these terms might be productive in the study of De
finibus and Cicero’s other philosophical works, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter.
106 I have excluded praeclarus from my analysis of clarus here for three reasons. First, it is
difficult to discern whether when Cicero uses the prefix prae- it is intended to intensify clarus or
to improve the sound and general rhythm of any sentence. Second, praeclarus well outpaces
clarus in usage to the point that most of the subtlety in usage is lost. Third, there are a few places
where praeclarus may be used to indicate clarity of evidence, but the translation could equally
refer to that evidence as a shining example in a way similar to clarus (see iii 19, 26; v 79). The
relationship between moral examples and clarity in perception and knowledge in this text
deserves further attention but is beyond the scope of this chapter.
special interest because they stand juxtaposed to the intentional obscurity of Cicero’s writing.

Cicero’s use of truth-disclosive terms serves two purposes. First, it challenges careful readers to consider the concepts of transparency and obscurity in philosophy, casting some doubt on their ability to discern Cicero’s own position. Second, it suggests the Stoic and Antiochian positions are stronger than the Epicurean one because they use better terms to disclose truth.

To this end I show there are clear usage patterns for the truth-disclosive terms through my analysis of term usage, in effect validating *De finibus* as a highly contrived work of philosophy. Next, I argue the roles of *plane*, *apertus*, and *perspicuus* suggest Cicero’s own position is undecided between the Stoics, Antiochians, or suspension of judgment. Since an answer cannot be given with certainty concerning Cicero’s own position, I finally show that the highly contrived nature of the work employs the terms under investigation specifically to aid the readers to become more careful thinkers and ask the most talented to judge for themselves the theory that seems most plausible.

Cicero’s use of truth-disclosive terms reveals several patterns across the five books of *De finibus*. All but the first are represented visually in Tables 2 and 3. In sum, I find:

1. All truth-disclosive terms under investigation appear in book 1. Torquatus uses all terms except *plane*, but Cicero’s character is selective and appears to privilege *plane*,
2. *apertus* and *plane* share the same frequency in books 1 and 2,
3. *apertus* and *plane* share the same frequency of usage in book 3, after which *apertus* remains infrequent but use of *plane* rises,
4. *apertus* and *plane* peak in book 2, where *perspicuus* drops to its lowest frequency,
5. *perspicuus* peaks in book 4, where *apertus* and *plane* are at their second-lowest frequencies,
6. *plane* and *perspicuus* share the highest frequencies in book 5,
7. *clarus* and *illustri* follow similar paths; they have the lowest frequencies in book 4 and 3, respectively, and peak with the same frequency in book 5.
In the sections that follow, I discuss the usage of these terms and the interpretive value of all seven observations, organized by participating term(s). In the first section I analyze *apertus* and *plane* to demonstrate that Cicero is choosing his words carefully and using them artfully. In the second section, I analyze the meaning and usage of *perspicuus* compared to *apertus* and *plane*. My analysis suggests there is an overarching pattern or organization for the various truth-telling terms that help the ideal reader differentiate what is in fact clear or straightforward from what is not. *Plane* is given special status on account of Cicero’s exclusive usage of the term in books 1-4. In Book 5 the reversal in character usage is surprising and suggests Cicero privileges the Antiochian position. That *perspicuus* and *plane* are the two most frequently used truth-disclosive terms in book 5 suggests Cicero is also sympathetic to the Stoic position. In the third section, I show that *clarus* and *illustris* are straightforward in a different mode than the rest of the terms under consideration. Taken together, these truth-disclosive words suggest that Cicero is struggling to choose between the Stoic and Antiochian positions and may suspect judgment about them. This demonstration helps turn his most careful and qualified readers to grapple with the relative strengths of the Stoic and Antiochian positions and make their own judgment.

**Table 1**

Truth-disclosive terminology in *De finibus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>apertus</em></th>
<th><em>clarus</em></th>
<th><em>illustris</em></th>
<th><em>perspicuus</em></th>
<th><em>plane</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>book 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>book 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>book 5</td>
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</table>
Of all of the truth-disclosive terms considered here, *apertus* and *plane* are especially important. They are involved in most of my observations, and their relationship demonstrates some level of careful consideration in word selection. Let us begin by clarifying what the terms mean. *Apertus* means ‘without covering’ or ‘uncovered’. It is the perfect passive participle for the verb *aperio*, which has a literal and a more figurative meaning. Literally, it can mean to uncover or lay bare physical objects; to make visible, show, or reveal. Figuratively, it may refer to mental objects, in which case it means to disclose something unknown, to unveil, reveal, make known, unfold, prove, or demonstrate. *Apertus* also describes mental objects that are open, clear,
plain, evident, manifest, or unobstructed, and may refer equally to written and verbal expression. Adverbially, it means plainly, clearly, freely, without reserve.\textsuperscript{107} The figurative and adverbial meanings of \textit{apertus} have the most overlap with the meanings of \textit{plane}. \textit{Plane} is an adverb derived from the adjective \textit{planus}. \textit{Planus} literally refers to a surface that is flat or level; figuratively it may refer to objects of thought, including ideas and language, as plain, clear, distinct, and intelligible. \textit{Plane} is often used figuratively and translated as plainly, evenly; simply, clearly, distinctly, intelligibly. Though their literal senses diverge, the figurative senses of \textit{apertus} and \textit{plane} emphasize the same meaning such that the two terms are similar by definition.

The similarity in definition is reflected by their similar usage frequency in the early sections of \textit{De finibus}. Both \textit{apertus} and \textit{plane} occur four times in book 1, eight times in book 2, and once in book 3, yielding the same frequencies per paragraph at .056 in book 1, .067 in book 2, and .013 in book 3. They are the most frequently used truth-telling terms under consideration in books 1 and 2, when Cicero writes about Epicureanism. The relative frequencies of \textit{apertus} and \textit{plane} compared with the other terms in book 1 suggests that Cicero chose to use those terms in particular when examining Epicureanism. By contrast, they are among the least frequently used terms in the presentation of Stoicism in book 3, which relies on other terms to describe similar qualities.\textsuperscript{108}

\textit{Apertus}, and \textit{plane} in \textit{De finibus} i-ii

\textit{Apertus} and \textit{plane} have much in common. Their meanings can often overlap, and they are

\textsuperscript{107} For general definitions and typical usage, I consult Lewis and Short’s \textit{Latin-English Lexicon} 1879 and \textit{Oxford Latin Dictionary} 1968.

\textsuperscript{108} I will address this further in the next section, when I analyze the use of \textit{perspicuus}. 

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used with the same exact frequency through most of *De finibus*. Distinguishing between them, however, is of the utmost importance in *De fin.* i. In this part of the text, the two are dissimilar in a few key ways: they are used by different characters, they refer to different kinds of things, and they seem to have different levels of respectability. I address these differences before I move on to a very brief treatment of *De fin.* ii. I argue that *apertus* is made to be an expression of certainty founded upon rash naivety, while *plane* is a more serious term that describes the clarity of its object.

Despite occurring at the same frequency in book 1, *apertus* and *plane* are starkly divided by character. Cicero is the only character to use *plane* in book 1. He uses it to describe the straightforward, direct, and simple expression of what appears to be true. *Plane* is also the only term that Cicero’s character uses to indicate some kind of disclosure of what seems to be true. Torquatus, by contrast, does not use *plane*. Only Torquatus uses the term *apertus*—in fact, he freely uses all of the other truth-disclosive terms under consideration except for *plane*—and he consistently uses the term with zeal. Take, for example, his evaluation of Epicurus’ ethics at i 57:

‘What a splendid path to the happy life this is—so open, simple and direct!’

This enthusiasm is not problematic in itself. We should all be enthusiastic to find a simple path to a happy life, if in fact that path is true. Yet there is some reason to doubt the reliability of Torquatus’ judgment in using the term *apertus*. He uses it to make the bold claim at i 32 that he will ‘make the whole subject clear and expound the very doctrines of that discoverer of truth, that builder of the happy life,’ namely, Epicurus.

Torquatus enthusiastically uses *apertus* to praise Epicureanism, but he borders on hyperbole in his assessment of Epicurus’ insights and his own abilities to ‘make the

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109 *O praeclaram beate vivendi et apertam et simplicem et directam viam!*

110 *...totam rem aperiam aeque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo.*
whole subject clear’. Doubts raised about Torquatus’ judgment are intensified by the contrast between his high praise of Epicureanism and Cicero’s own scathing assessment. Cicero’s criticism of Epicurean ethics both before and after Torquatus’ presentation characterizes Epicureanism as an inappropriate and lowly ethical doctrine for human beings (i 23). Cicero chooses not to have his character use apertus to describe something Torquatus takes to be the straightforward, easily observable truth, and emphatically describes as apertus. This is a more subtle way to hint at Torquatus’ and Epicureanism’s shortcomings.

Though apertus occurs with the same frequency as plane through books 1 and 2, their use by different characters with different levels of caution implies the terms’ different uses in De finibus. This point is further supported by the referents of plane and apertus. Note that Torquatus uses apertus in De fin. i when he refers to Epicurean ethical theory and its contents. When Cicero uses plane, he never refers to the contents of Epicurean ethical theory. Instead, he initially uses it to establish the purpose and position of the dialogue with respect to its audience. Cicero opens Book 1 by introducing his project of providing philosophy for Romans to enjoy in Latin, in addition to or in place of the work of the Greeks. He anticipates criticism for writing philosophy in Latin when plane first appears. He explains at i 7, ‘even if I were to translate Plato or Aristotle literally, as our poets did with the Greek plays, I hardly think I would deserve ill of my fellow-citizens for bringing those sublime geniuses to their attention’.111 Those who would insist on chastising Cicero for writing philosophy in Latin must have an unreasonable love of Greek culture and ‘would want to read Greek plain and simple’ (i 8).112 Plane refers to the uncorrupted and straightforward presentation of Plato and Aristotle in translation on the one hand and the

111 Quamquam si plane sic verterem Platonem aut Aristotelem ut verterunt nostri poetae fabulas, male, credo, mererer de meis civibus si ad eorum cognitionem divina illa ingenia transferrem.
112 Nisi qui se plane Graecum dici velit...
stubborn desire to read unspoiled Greek texts instead of translations on the other. *Plane* in effect directs the reader away from Epicurean ideas altogether.

Cicero uses *plane* to approach Epicureanism obliquely when he comments on Epicurus’ training and language selection. At i 15, for example, Cicero redresses Torquatus’ assumption that Cicero would reject Epicurus because his writings are unsophisticated and unrefined. He remarks, ‘you are quite mistaken, Torquatus…It is not the style of the philosopher which offends: his words express his meaning, and he writes in a direct way that I can comprehend’. In this case, *plane* describes a strength of Epicurus’. The ability to write ‘in a direct way’ is valuable. In contrast to this strength, *plane* appears at i 22 to highlight one of Epicurus’ major oversights: ‘Take next the second main area of philosophy, the study of inquiry and argument known as logic. As far as I can gather, your master is quite defenceless and destitute (*inermis ac nudus*) here’. Cicero’s direct references to Epicureanism denote the simple or clear qualities of Epicurus’ exposition (but not his theory), and Epicurus’ apparent inadequacy in logical training. Whereas Torquatus’ references to Epicureanism through *apertus* contain his praise for the theory and express his intent to clarify its contents, Cicero’s use of *plane* directs the reader away from Epicurean theory. Even when he uses it in reference to Epicurus, he does not actually address any idea from Epicureanism.

Not only does Cicero signal to his audience that he is using *plane* and *apertus* differently by assigning them to different characters, but the kinds of things to which those terms refer is also significantly different. I have already discussed Torquatus’ use of *apertus* as earnestly and

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113 *Vide quantum,* inquam, *fallare, Torquate. Oratio me istius philosophi non offendit; nam et complectitur verbis quod vult et dicit plane quod intellegam*.

114 *Iam in altera philosophiae parte, quae est quaerendi ac disserendi, quae λογική dicitur, iste vester plane, ut mihi quidem videtur, inermis ac nudus est.*
enthusiastically endorsing Epicurus and his ethics. Because he uses the term simply, and because the character Cicero does not use it, *apertus* is made to stand out as a naïve choice that indicates Torquatus has accepted something without sufficient scrutiny. *Plane*, by contrast, attributes some sense of plainness to its object. Cicero implies that merely literal translation of Plato and Aristotle is less admirable or less exciting than his project. When he uses it to discuss those who insist on reading only Greek, he implies that they lack refinement of taste despite their extensive education. That Epicurus’ writing is strong insofar as it is *plane* could easily read as a backhanded compliment. Thus on the one hand, *plane* indicates something that is truly straightforward and clear, but on the other, it may indicate unsophistication. Cicero adjusts his usage slightly to alter its meaning.

Saying one thing but meaning another is a hallmark of Socratic irony. When Cicero says that something is straightforward (or says something that is straightforward) but means something different, he draws on Socrates’ ironic legacy.\footnote{In this case, Cicero both (1) says something himself that is straightforward and (2) claims that Epicurus is being straightforward as a strength. Yet Cicero is neither being straightforward in his assessment (since *plane* is condescending) nor does he mean simply that Epicurus’ directness is a strength.} In this case, he utilizes that legacy to undercut the status of Epicureanism in book 1 and simultaneously introduce additional complexity to the role that *plane* has. This is especially clear when Cicero refers to Epicurus as *plane* at i 15 and i 22. In both cases, Cicero implies that Epicurus lacks sophistication. In both cases Cicero also implies some measure by which he makes his assessment. When Cicero determines ‘ut mihi quidem videtur’, literally ‘as indeed it seems to me’, that Epicurus is ‘*plane*...*inermis ac nudis*’ in logic, he must already have in mind an idea of what good logical training is and how it informs philosophical argumentation. Cicero also refers to logic as the ‘second main area in philosophy’. This is an allusion to the formal division of philosophy that
the Stoics promote: physics, logic, and ethics. Epicurus’ inadequacy is, as a result, determined both from Cicero’s own judgment and from comparison with his philosophical rivals. The association of plane with some form of measure or comparison is a further dimension of plane that gives the term a complex role in the text.

*Plane* can be used in at least three roles at this point: (1) it might have a simple role, namely identifying something that is straightforward; (2) it might have an ironic role, wherein being called straightforward means something else (unsophistication); or (3) it might be used to refer to an evaluative context in which that which is plane is compared to other theories, ideas, or impressions. The complex role Cicero gives to plane makes Torquatus’ use of apertus look even more questionable. The most painful contrast appears at i 30, shortly after Cicero introduces the term’s association with the third, complex role of plane. Torquatus notes that Epicurus ‘maintains that there is a difference between reasoned argumentative proof and mere noticing or pointing out; the former is for the discovery of abstruse and complex truths, the latter for judging what is clear and straightforward’.  

Epicurus, he explains, does not think that argument is always necessary. But for Cicero, we should always be evaluating the objects we observe, the quality of appearances of those objects, and the quality of the judgments we derive from those objects. Cicero’s use of plane implies that we should exercise caution even in accepting what seems plainly to be the case. To say that something, upon suitable analysis, seems obvious or plain (plane) is a significant improvement from Torquatus’ unfounded affirmations of Epicurus. Having linked plane with the critical examination of objects that seem obvious, Cicero in effect gives plane greater authority than apertus. The enhances the authority of this term in two ways.

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116 Here Torquatus is introducing Epicurus’ ‘cradle argument’ wherein we determine the best human end from observations of infant behavior: *altera occulta quaedam et quasi involuta aperiri, altera prompta et aperta indicari.*
First, Cicero’s earlier pejorative use of *plane* indirectly undermines the authority of that which is *apertus*. Second, Cicero’s later uses suggest it is reasonable to scrutinize even those objects or claims that seem obvious, again undermining the legitimacy of *apertus* as a condition for accepting some impression or claim as true. In particular, this makes *plane* more credible with respect to gaining and furthering knowledge. Cicero’s uncharitable criticisms of Epicureanism are explicit, but the text itself is subtle. Cicero provides two levels from which his readers can doubt the strength of Epicureanism. The view available to all readers is expressed in Cicero’s explicit criticisms and it guides all readers to reject Epicurean ethics. The most talented readers, however, should notice the subtlety of *plane* and its roles in comparison to *apertus*. At a minimum, *plane* introduces some expectation for critical evaluation prior to the acceptance of a claim for careful readers of the text. The most capable few could observe from *plane* and *apertus* that there may not be a *planus* or *apertus* answer in ethics.

*Apertus* and *plane* in *De finibus* iii-v

*Apertus* and *plane* differ in book 1 in that different characters use them, their referents are different, and they have different levels of respectability. Despite their similarities by definition, these differences are sufficient to justify a claim that they are opposed to one another in *De fin.* i. Their contrasts, however, do not persist for the duration of the text. Cicero uses *apertus* more frequently in book 2 than Torquatus did in book 1, for example.¹¹⁷ Half of these appearances of *apertus* occur in contrast to language that emphasizes opacity and darkness, such as *occulte*, *occultus*, *opertus*, and *obscurus*.¹¹⁸ This suggests that there is a significant difference between

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¹¹⁷ Torquatus uses *apertus* three times in book 1 at a rate of .056 times per paragraph; Cicero uses it eight times in book 2, at .067 times per paragraph.

¹¹⁸ See ii 5, 15, 54, and 85. Clarity is also juxtaposed to the ‘unclear’ and ‘difficulty’ at ii 18.
that which is laid bare or uncovered and that which is hidden. In contrast to that something that is hidden, *apertus* loses its naïve and enthusiastic connotation.

The term’s rehabilitation is most evident in books 3 and 4, ultimately bringing it about that *apertus* and *plane* are both respectable truth-disclosing terms that are appropriately used by good philosophers. The rehabilitation process begins in book 3 where *apertus* is used in a more solemn argumentative context than Torquatus could muster. The Stoics and Academics engage in significant and complex debate concerning the central questions of epistemology and ethics. Cato, with the reputation of being a serious person and well-trained Stoic, engages the

‘absurd…supposed view of the Academy that the final good and supreme duty of the wise person is to resist appearances and resolutely withhold assent to them’ (iii 31). Cato’s reading of the Academic position is a poignant response to Cicero’s subtle suggestion that we should scrutinize even appearances that seem obvious. Unwillingness to assent to appearances on the Stoic view amounts to being unable to choose beneficial objects over harmful ones and the inability to act or attain wisdom. He explains ‘it is perfectly clear (*apertius*) that if one does away with the notion of choosing between what is in accordance with nature and what is against, then that highly sought after and hallowed virtue of practical reason will be completely abolished’ (iii 31). Practical reason is fundamentally the ability to choose appropriate objects of desire and appropriate actions. By removing the distinction between what is appropriate and what is inappropriate, the ability to discern and choose between them is eradicated.\(^{119}\) Cato’s reputation lends *apertus* a serious tone, and the tight reasoning implied by his claim demonstrates a rigor that Torquatus, and indeed Epicurus, were said to lack.

\(^{119}\) In the case of medicine, for example, eliminating the normative distinction health and disease makes it impossible to determine appropriate from inappropriate courses of treatment.
Cato’s use of *apertus* redeems the term significantly, but its rescue is completed when Piso uses the term in book 5 in connection with one of the most important arguments in the text.\(^\text{120}\) That is, Piso uses *apertus* when he discusses his version of the cradle argument. The cradle arguments of the different schools maintain a palpable presence throughout the text, and the appeal to nature on which they depend is ubiquitous in ancient philosophy. The appearance of *apertus* occurs when Piso rounds off his cradle argument at v 34 and therefore seems important. Piso claims: ‘It is now sufficiently clear that everyone by nature loves themselves. We must next examine what human nature is’.\(^\text{121}\) This is significant for two reasons. First, it concerns one of the central and enduring arguments in the ethical system Piso advances. By linking *apertus* with such an important argument, Cicero in effect gives the term the responsibility of supporting the appeal to nature that is a cornerstone in all Hellenistic ethical theories. Second, *apertus* is given an inferential role in that argument, signaling a shift from presenting evidence to determining a conclusion. Thus *apertus* not only is used in association with a crucial argument, but it plays a crucial role in drawing a conclusion concerning that crucial argument. Having given *apertus* such an important place in Piso’s account, Cicero appropriately makes the final usage of *apertus* underscore an important feature of philosophy itself. Recall that Cicero is centrally concerned with promoting philosophy and defending his project of adding philosophy to Rome’s cultural repertoire. It is significant, therefore, that the last usage of *apertus* concerns the intrinsic value of knowledge. Piso maintains that human beings take joy in pure knowledge

\(^{120}\) Torquatus uses the term at i 30 to justify the Epicurean cradle argument when he explains we need ‘mere noticing or pointing out…for judging what is clear and straightforward’. Though this is an important argument, we cannot take *apertus* very seriously because of Torquatus. He uses it with even greater naïve enthusiasm when he claims he will explain the entire theory of pleasure and pain in detail (i 32).

\(^{121}\) Deinceps videndum est, quoniam satis apertum est sibi quemque natura esse carum, quae sit hominis natura.
without regard for practical advantage, and naturally pursue knowledge (v 48). He uses examples from literary, anecdotal, and commonly observable sources before offering at v 51, ‘there is little purpose in inquiring further into such an obvious matter’ (v 49-53).

Compared to its naïve application in book 1, apertus is given significant responsibility in book 5. The rehabilitation of apertus reveals two points to aid in interpretation of the truth-disclosive terms. First, the term apertus is not itself problematic. When Torquatus and like-minded enthusiastic Epicureans use it, they do so prematurely. That is, they use it inappropriately. It is important to note that the imprudent use of apertus resembles Epicurean imprudence elsewhere in their ethics. Cicero maintains that pain and pleasure are unworthy criteria by which human beings can judge good and bad courses of action. In using apertus poorly, Torquatus acts out the failures of Epicurean theory. The failure to use a term correctly seems trivial, but its significance emerges in the broader context of De finibus. One of the major challenges facing the Epicureans is their apparent inability to value anything without regard for its utility—in their case, the amount of pleasure it brings. Recent work focusing on the conflict between utility and friendship in Epicureanism points out that the Epicureans appear to value friendship intrinsically. Despite this purported valuation of friendship, however, even the best friendships among Epicureans cannot firmly establish such intrinsic value. The imprudent use

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122 Sed quid attinet de rebus tam apertis plura requirere?
123 Even pleasure itself is in some sense instrumental to the happiness.
124 Frede 2016, 99 points out in footnote 9 that VS 52, 78, and 23 highlight the intrinsic value of friendship.
125 I am agreeing here with Frede 2016. She argues that the three versions of Epicureanism that Torquatus explains can be quite noble, but they never quite get around friendship’s utility understood ‘exclusively in terms of material goods and external protection’ (113). Cicero’s characterization of this utility may be unfair, but insofar as Epicureans make pleasure their end, even the strongest and most enduring friendships ‘remain quite superficial if the desire for the pleasure is not to be frustrated’ (116).
of *apertus* is thereby one symptom of many indicating the problems of Epicureanism more broadly.\(^\text{126}\) Second, Cicero does not limit his philosophically strong characters to one term for discussing objects, ideas, or judgments that are straightforward. Piso is arguably the strongest character in *De finibus*, rivaling Cicero’s own namesake character. When Piso uses *apertus*, he does not emphasize that obvious facts need no explanation like Torquatus and Epicurus. Rather, he has already given an account of the joy humans take in learning such that ‘inquiring further’ is unnecessary. As a result, Piso gives *apertus* the meaning that *plane* had in book 1.

Though *apertus* is redeemed over the course of the text as a serious truth-disclosive word to the point that it approaches the respected meaning of *plane* in book 1, ultimately there remain differences in usage between the two. In fact there are several significant differences between them that should not be overlooked. First, and most basically, the status of *plane* remains by and large unchanged throughout the text while the status of *apertus* shifts. Second, *apertus* and *plane* diverge in frequency in book 4 and 5. *Apertus* occurs at a rate of .013 per paragraph in book 4, and .021 in book 5. This means that, even though it is used well by Piso, *apertus* is used infrequently. *Plane*, like *apertus*, has its lowest usage in book 3 at .013 per paragraph. It is also infrequent in book 4, where it is used .025 times per paragraph. Unlike *apertus*, *plane* makes a dramatic rebound in book 5 with a staggering usage of .063 per paragraph, tied with *perspicuus* as the most used truth-disclosive term under consideration. The third difference pertains to the characters that use the terms. On the one hand, *apertus* is freely used by Torquatus, Cicero, Cato, and Piso over the course of the text but *plane* is used by Cicero’s character exclusively in *De fin*.

\(^{126}\) Epicurean inability to account for things that are good in themselves without regard for practical benefit is prominent in *De fin*. iii and iv. At iii 70, Cato emphasizes that the Stoics refuse to endorse friendship and justice for their utility because ‘the same utility might ruin or corrupt these. There can be no justice of friendship at all except where sought for their own sake’. The Stoics tend to rely on the concept of utility with respect to the body rather than immaterial things (see iii 17, 18, 62).
On the other hand, Quintus, Pomponius, and Piso all use *plane* in book 5, but Cicero’s character does not. It follows that *apertus* and *plane* do not become fully synonymous.

*Apertus* and *plane*: conclusion

The points of dissimilarity between *apertus* and *plane* produce more problems than solutions. If *plane* is the truth-disclosing word with the most integrity in book 1, for example, why is Cicero the only major character who does not use it in book 5? Why does the usage of *apertus* and *plane* suddenly diverge in books 4 and 5 after an extended synchronization in *De fin.*? Still, these differences disclose a good deal about *De finibus* and its author. It is unlikely mere coincidence that Cicero avoids having Torquatus, his least expert interlocutor, use the term *plane* to discuss ideas or claims that seem obvious, reserving the term nearly exclusively for his own character’s use. Similarly, it is unlikely mere coincidence that *plane* is used more often than the others in the most philosophically and rhetorically subtle section of the text, book 5.

My analysis above confirms that Cicero is selecting and applying truth-disclosive language carefully. I highlight the transformation that *apertus* goes through and its use by various characters in the context of specific philosophical problems to show that the respectability of the term depends on its context. *Apertus* is used by the philosophically admirable and objectionable alike, in better and worse ways. *Plane*, by contrast, appears to hold a place of privilege for Cicero. It is set apart from its peers because it is most often used to refer to clarity of language and of argument. Given Cicero’s goals for his project to translate and introduce philosophy to Romans, an emphasis on language directs *plane* to the heart of Cicero’s project. Furthermore, Cicero reserves the term for his own character’s usage until book 5. On the

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127 There is one exception in book 2, when Torquatus uses it in what Lewis and Short call the ‘transferred’ sense, loosely meaning ‘absolutely’ or ‘completely’.
one hand, this could indicate that Cicero privileges *plane*. On the other hand, shifting *plane* from Cicero to the other characters may interrupt the expectations of the readers. Why, after all, would Cicero not use *plane* in the dialogue that contains the strongest ethical position? Above all, it is unlikely that the patterns of usage in the case of *apertus* and *plane* are a product of mere chance. The dynamics of *plane* in particular suggest that the readers should be diligent in subjecting even things that seem obvious to scrutiny.

*Perspicuus*: definitions and usage frequencies

*Perspicuus* is the most frequently used truth-disclosive term in books 3, 4, and 5. The frequency with which *perspicuus* occurs provides a very different pattern than that of *apertus* and *plane*. Cicero uses *perspicuus* only three times in book 1 and once in book 2. Its frequency per paragraph is .042 and .008, respectively. This is extremely low compared to *apertus* and *plane*, but the frequency of *perspicuus* rises abruptly in book 3 and remains high throughout the rest of the text. The shift is both dramatic and sustained. From book 2 to book 3, its frequency per paragraph jumps from .008 to .079. The highest frequency follows in book 4 at .100 uses per paragraph, and remains strong with .063 uses per paragraph in book 5.

*Perspicuus* is the fourth principle part of *perspicio*, and it can be translated as ‘transparent’, ‘clear’, ‘evident’, or ‘manifest’. Thus it may refer to objects that can be seen through, objects that are clearly perceptible by the senses, or objects that are clear to the understanding. The first two kinds of objects I consider the ‘literal’ uses of *perspicuus*. The third kind of object, pertaining to the understanding, I consider the ‘figurative’ use of *perspicuus*. Though the literal uses of the term do not appear independently in *De finibus*, the figurative uses may also evoke the literal sense. The figurative sense of *perspicuus* can be further divided into
two applications: evidentiary and inferential. Evidentiary applications refer to the clarity of evidence that is being used in support of some conclusion. These in particular often imply the literal use of *perspicuus*. Inferential applications refer primarily to the certainty with which a conclusion follows from its premises.

*Perspicuus*: general usage patterns

Because of its notable frequency, *perspicuus* has a dominant presence, especially in books 3 and 4. It differs from *apertus* and *plane* in at least two other ways. Most obviously, *perspicuus* stands out from the others on account of the characters that use it. Recall that *plane* is used almost exclusively by Cicero’s character until book 5, when every other major character uses it, but Cicero does not. *Perspicuus*, by contrast, is generally used by the main speakers in each section of the text: in the exposition of Epicureanism in book 1, only Torquatus uses the term *perspicuus*; Cicero alone uses it in book 2’s refutation of the Epicurean presentation; Cato uses it in book 3, where he presents the Stoic view; Cicero uses it in book 4 to refute the Stoic view; the Antiochian presentation dominates book 5, where only Piso uses the term.128 The main speaker of each section, no matter how well or poorly trained, uses the term similarly. Character usage, which in the case of *plane* provides helpful clues to suggest when the term is being used sincerely or not, will provide no such clues in the case of *perspicuus*. In fact, the use of *perspicuus* by main speakers in each section indicates the consistency of the term. A common meaning unites the evidentiary and inferential applications of *perspicuus* for all of the characters that use the term throughout the text. In this capacity, *perspicuus* further differs from *apertus* and

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128 The refutation of the Antiochian view is also in book 5. Though it is equally important and impressive, the interlocutors judge in favor of the Antiochian theory. On this basis I make the claim that the Antiochian theory is dominant, making Piso the main speaker for the section.
plane. I have shown above that plane has one primary meaning but a complex role that allows it to be used almost ironically to undermine the purported clarity of some bit of evidence or idea. Similarly, all of the characters would define apertus in the same way, but its meaning in the text is colored by the character who uses it. The meaning of the terms depends on the context in which something is called plane or apertus. Perspicuus offers an alternative pattern to apertus and plane that reinforces my conclusion in the previous section and adds support to a context-dependent interpretation of truth-disclosive language.

The consistency of the meaning of perspicuus persists through both inferential and evidentiary applications of the term. These two primary applications of perspicuus are apparent from the beginning of De finibus. Torquatus draws from both applications in book 1. The evidentiary application is present when Torquatus uses perspicuus to indicate that some point he makes is apparent or manifest. He uses the inferential application when he uses the term to reinforce the certainty with which a conclusion follows from premises that might be called perspicuus in the evidentiary application. Torquatus applies the term inferentially when he says, ‘This being so, it is evident that a thing is rendered right and praiseworthy just to the extent that it is conducive to a life of pleasure’ (i 42). Having presented Epicurus’ account of the human end from i 29-42, Torquatus thinks he has demonstrated his point sufficiently to warrant a shift to his conclusion that good things are called good because they bring pleasure. This is slightly different from his use of perspicuus at i 70 when he explains that one theory of Epicurean friendship is rooted in the idea that there is a ‘pact to love one’s friends as much as oneself. We

\[129\] Quod cum ita sit, perspicuum est omnes rectas res atque laudabiles eo referri ut cum voluptate vivatur.
certainly recognize that this can happen, and often observe it happening. In this case, *perspicuus* can only describe the quality of Torquatus’ observations of friendships in his lived experience, and is completely unrelated to the call for the transition from premises to conclusion or the strength of premises that lead to a particular conclusion. The applications differ because the object to which they refer. The evidentiary application refers to some evidence in support of a further conclusion. The inferential application represents the act of judgment by which a conclusion is drawn from evidence. Though different by referents, in both cases the term depends on its figurative sense to identify the object in question as ‘evident’ or ‘manifest’.

Though *perspicuus* is used to claim the evident or manifest nature of some evidence or conclusion, it does not always signal that those claims are well-supported. Torquatus uses it in earnest and with complete self-assurance. Yet in sections of the text involving Epicureanism, *perspicuus* generally refers to acts of judgment that are unsupported. This contributes to the characterization of Torquatus and his philosophy as having less sophistication and depth than the other schools represented in the text. As a result, Torquatus’ use of *perspicuus* tends to emphasize how unlikely it is that the object in question is as obvious to others as it seems to him. This means that when Torquatus uses the term to talk about fundamental positions of Epicurean ethics, he accidentally undermines the theory he defends.

Torquatus’ certainty in using *perspicuus* to explain and defend Epicurean ethics is contrasted by Cicero’s singular usage of it in book 2. Cicero, unlike Torquatus, uses an image at

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130 *Quod et posse fieri intellegimus et saepe evenire videmus, et perspicuum est nihil ad iucunde vivendum reperiri posse quod coniunctione tali sit aptius.*

131 Consider that Torquatus uses *perspicuus* in book 1 to refer to three key themes in Epicureanism: in establishing that all behavior and action stems from pleasure and pain (i 42); in establishing ‘that great mental pleasure or pain has more influence on whether our life is happy or miserable than does physical pleasure or pain of equal duration’ (i 56); and concerning the kinds of friendship (i 70). On each of these points, Torquatus inadvertently rouses suspicion.
ii 59 to illustrate his claim ‘It is obvious (perspicuum) that if fairness, honesty, and justice do not originate in nature, and all merely serve utility, then there is nobody good to be found’.

In the image, Cicero says that it would be wrong to fail to warn your enemy that he was about to tread on a viper, even if you could benefit from his death with impunity by not warning him. The act—or omission, in this case—is wrong regardless of how useful it would be for your enemy to die. In effect, the image supplies the audience with an example from which they could decide that fairness, honesty, and justice cannot merely serve utility (utilitas). While perspicuus suggests that the point he makes is obvious, Cicero supports the claim with an argument from example. It is surely not a rigorous argument, but the image provides at least minimal support for Cicero’s claim that something is perspicuus or obvious to him. Torquatus’ self-assurance is thereby designed to be unfounded; his self-assurance may disclose a hint of intellectual vanity or rashness.

Cicero appears to have two additional motives for using perspicuus as he does. The first motive is pedagogical, and the second is methodological. Because Cicero exhibits both applications of perspicuus in books 1 and 2, he also introduces them to the reader in anticipation of the more technical discussion to come in De finibus iii and iv, where perspicuus is used more frequently than any of the other words under consideration. The reader might well need preparation for the Stoic section of the text. It is lengthy, detailed, and deals with some close vocabulary and translation work that Cicero calls ‘nit-picking’ (iv 6). Attentively reading such material is a challenging and tedious endeavor, and as such it would require some training. The methodological motivation is really focused on Stoic methods rather than Cicero’s. It becomes

132 Cicero implies a modus ponens for the Epicureans: (P1) If a person acts according to things that are not given by nature but only on utility, then that person is a good person; (P2) People act according to things that are not given by nature but only on utility; (C) Therefore, people are good. The argument by example is directed at proving (P2) false.
important for Cicero to demonstrate the use of *perspicuus* adequately before reaching book 3 because *perspicuus* represents a fundamental component of Stoic argument method. Cicero explains that the Stoic system ‘begins from propositions that are evident and [proceed] methodically through to the right conclusion in each individual case’ (iv 8). Thus the likelihood that the reader will encounter *perspicuus* both to refer to the quality of their evidence or observations and the necessity of proceeding to their conclusions is all but certain. Cicero’s motives for using *perspicuus* in the way that he does may be multiple. Nevertheless all of his uses for the term—emphasizing Torquatus’ poor judgment, inferential and evidentiary applications, and a possible pedagogical or methodological strategy—entail the same fundamental understanding of its meaning. *Perspicuus* always describes that which the speaker takes to be straightforward. The consistency of the term develops further as the text progresses. In book 3, for example, both Cicero and Cato use *perspicuus* consistently to indicate what is obvious. In one exchange at iii 19, Cato uses *perspicuus* when he has explained that his plain style seems necessary for a discussion of ‘the basic elements of nature’, while a grander topic would call for a grander style. Cicero replies that this is most fitting, and that ‘still, in my view, when a worthy theme is expounded with clarity, it is thereby expounded with distinction. It is surely childish to want to discuss a topic of the present sort in a rhetorical style. For one of learning and intelligence, a clear and straightforward exposition is the aim’. In this case, *perspicuus* describes the outcome of Cato’s stylistic choice to speak simply about simple concepts. Cicero and Cato appear to be in agreement that the style and ideas involved here are in

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133 *Iam argumenti ratione conclusi caput esse* faciunt *ea quae perspicua dicunt; deinde ordinem sequuntur; tum quid verum sit in singulis extrema conclusio est.*

134 ‘*Est ut dicies,* inquam; *sed tamen omne quod de re bona dilucide dicitur, mihi praecclare dici videtur. Istiusmodi autem res dicere ornate velle puerile est, plane autem et perspicue expedire posse docti et intellegentis viri.*’
fact *perspicuus*, and with respect to the aptness of using a straightforward style to discuss straightforward objects. This bears a striking contrast to Cicero’s sardonic praise of Epicurus’ strength, namely writing in a direct or *plane* manner that is easy to understand at (i 15). Thus the complexity of *plane* may be absent from *perspicuus*. The consistent, straightforward meaning of *perspicuus* sets it apart from *apertus* and *plane*.

**Cato and the *perspicuus***

I have argued that the term *perspicuus* is different from *apertus* and *plane* insofar as its meaning remains consistent throughout. In particular, the kind of complexity that *plane* was able to exploit does not apply to *perspicuus*. A lack of complexity, however, does not indicate a lack of depth. Rather than play with irony and sincerity, Cicero uses *perspicuus* in ways that emphasize central Stoic arguments and themes in *De finibus* iii and iv, as well as Cicero’s main points against them. These include the Stoic doctrine of selecting appropriate objects and actions, the Stoic emphasis on deductive argument structure, and Cicero’s main criticism of Stoic ethics. The correlation between *perspicuus* and these crucial Stoic themes shows that Cicero chose *perspicuus* over the other truth-disclosive words to highlight themes and arguments that deserve extra attention.\(^{135}\)

Our first clear example of the role of *perspicuus* comes at iii 19, when Cato explains that he intentionally chose to use a simple style to discuss simple concepts. Further consideration of the passage suggests that Cato is not only discussing rhetorical style. Instead, his comment draws attention to the idea that one can choose appropriate styles of discourse for different subjects.

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\(^{135}\) There is also a likely connection between Cicero’s use of *perspicuus* in books 3 and 4 with the Stoic-Academic exchange concerning epistemology, particularly since the Academics distinguish *perspicua* from *percepta* (*Academica* ii 34).
When Cato and Cicero agree that ‘a fullness of style is…scarcely appropriate’ to discuss ‘the basic elements of nature’, they actually endorse the idea that appropriate acts are praiseworthy.\textsuperscript{136}

The question of appropriate action (\textit{kathekon}) is a fundamental building block of Stoic ethics.\textsuperscript{137}

The correlation between the \textit{perpiscuus} and the \textit{kathekon} is strong. Out of the six occurrences of \textit{perpiscuus} in book 3, five of them are arguably related to appropriate action. In addition to iii 19, Cato rails against misreadings of Stoicism. Misreadings can be understood as one way of using another’s doctrine inappropriately, but Cato makes more direct reference to appropriate action when he says of his reply to them, ‘obvious ripostes do not need to be long ones’ (iii 31).\textsuperscript{138} In both cases, Cato is demonstrating the appropriate action by selecting a simple style at iii 19, and by keeping his reply brief at iii 31.

The connection between Cato’s language and appropriate action is subtle in the beginning of book 3, and they refer primarily back to Cato’s method of exposition. The association grows stronger when he uses \textit{perpicius} to refer to the contents of his arguments as his account progresses. Cato refers to a number of claims concerning his Stoic position as \textit{perpicius}, including: that the distinction between the Peripatetics and Stoics is not merely verbal (iii 41); that wise people must ‘act in the sphere of intermediates’ or indifferents, and judge that action appropriate (\textit{kathekon}) (iii 59); that even fools ‘will act appropriately by remaining alive’ if they have some ‘things in accordance with nature’ (iii 61); that love of one’s offspring is as natural

\textsuperscript{136} More literally, this phrase might read ‘one can hardly put to use the richness of language’: ‘\textit{Haec dicuntur fortasse ieiunius; sunt enim quasi prima elementa naturae, quibus ubertas orationis adhiberi vix potest’.

\textsuperscript{137} I focus on \textit{perpicius} and the way in which the \textit{perpicius} calls attention to the \textit{kathekonta}. A detailed treatment of \textit{kathekonta} is therefore beyond the scope of this chapter, but note that Cato connects reason, appropriate action, and moral goodness at iii 58-59. For a more complete treatment, see Engberg-Peterson 1986; Inwood 2007, 24; Frede 1999; Sellars 2009, 140.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{His singulis copiose responderi solet. Sed quae perspicua sunt longa esse non debent.}
and obvious as aversion to pain (iii 62). These uses share many similarities. They all depend on evidentiary application of the term and they all bear some relation to appropriate action. About the differences between the Stoics and Peripatetic ethical theories, for example, Cato announces, ‘to my mind nothing could be more obvious than that the dispute between these schools is substantial rather than verbal’ (iii 41). Cato is responding to the old Carneadean argument that the Stoics and Peripatetics use different language to express the same concepts about what objects are called ‘good’. With this claim, Cato clarifies the parameters of ‘intermediates’ that will be chosen for the sake of ‘good’ objects. Intermediates then prepare the way for wise people to undertake appropriate action at iii 59. When Cato examines the choiceworthiness of ending or continuing one’s life at iii 61, he is in fact providing the reader with an important example of a key intermediate, namely life itself. Like any other intermediate, life itself can be used appropriately or inappropriately. Cato suggests that our actions, even in choosing life or death, are determined from the guidance of nature itself (iii 62).

The correlation of *perspicuus* with concern for appropriate action in *De finibus* iii suggests that Cato places significant value on the term. When Cicero replies to Cato in book 4, he does not seem to use *perspicuus* with similar reverence. He instead uses *perspicuus* to refer to a variety of claims, ideas, or observations he thinks are obvious against the Stoic ethical position, in which appropriate action is central. In particular, he criticizes the Stoics for their use of appropriate action as a guide at all. At iv 46, for example, he uses *perspicuus* to address what could be interpreted as a rare strength of the Epicureans over the Stoics: ‘For those whose supreme good lies in pleasure, observe how obvious it is what actions should be done or not

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139 Those ‘intermediates’ are exactly the same as things called ‘good’ by the Peripatetics, according to Carneades and Cicero (*De finibus* iii 41, iv 2, 5, 60).
Of course Cicero does not endorse the Epicureans, but he appears to value the fact that their position provides everyone with a simple measure by which to guide their actions. The Stoics, in his view, fail to do this and thus provide little positive direction for their adherents. Cicero’s character, then, seems to think the Stoics would benefit from readily applicable practical guidelines. Instead, they have sophisticated language that fails to connect to their lived experience.

Choosing appropriate objects among intermediates and choosing appropriate actions are two lynchpins of Stoic ethics. Cato’s use of *perspicuus* closely correlates with these themes in *De finibus*. However strong the arguments are, and however closely they correlate to *perspicuus*, the term is also used to critique the Stoics. Cicero maintains the Stoics appear to prioritize sophisticated terminology over practical guidance, for example. He understands this to be a practical failure. Furthermore, Cicero suggests that this failure indicates a more extensive problem with clarity that the Stoics must contend with. Thus he poses to Cato the question, ‘should the evident clarify the doubtful or be refuted by it?’ (iv 67). He charges that the Stoics ‘try to overturn the evident with the doubtful, when you should be illuminating the doubtful with the evident’. He refers specifically to the Stoic tendency to complicate concepts that were simple for their predecessors, as when the Stoics allow ‘there is progress towards virtue’ but not a ‘reduction in vice’ or even an increase in virtue within such progress (iv 67). The criticism applies as much to practical concerns as to clarity of concepts and justification. Cicero

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140 *Videsne ut quibus summa est in voluptate perspicuum sit quid iis faciendum sit aut non faciendum?*

141 *Utrum igitur tandem perspicuisne dubia aperiuntur an dubiis perspicua tolluntur? Atqui hoc perspicuum est, vitia alia alis esse maiora; illud dubium, ad id quod summum bonum dicitis ecquaeam fieri possit accessio. Vos autem, cum perspicuis dubia debeatis illustrare, dubiis perspicua conamini tollere.*
summarizes the problem at iv 7 when he states, ‘Look how they proceed: coining new words and disregarding tried and true ones.’ Rather than clarify concepts that already exist, he claims, Stoics riskily posit new terms for them that are less useful than the ones they replace. Cicero’s criticism may be directed to subtly differing components of the system Cato defends, but the meaning and usage of *perspicuus* nevertheless remains consistent. The term’s meaning remains unchanged from Cato’s appeals to appropriate action to Cicero’s demand for clear justification in the case of practical action and knowledge.

The use of *perspicuus* is not limited to the contents of Stoic ethical arguments and counterarguments. The term is also used discuss fundamental rules of deduction. Take, for example, Cicero’s rejection of the Stoic conclusions ‘that all who are not wise are equally miserable; that all who are wise are equally happy’ (iv 55). He allows that such declarations are appealing, but upon examination they cannot be accepted on the basis of ‘common sense, the facts of nature, and truth herself’ as embodied in what ‘logicians teach us [namely]…that if whatever follows from a premise is false, then the premise from which it follows is itself false’ (iv 55). *Perspicuus* once again highlights an important feature of Stoic philosophy. The Stoics understand logic to be one of the three constitutive branches of philosophy, and a necessary area of knowledge to understand the rational order of the cosmos.

Insofar as *perspicuus* emphasizes something important in Stoic philosophy, its use is uninteresting here. Its application, however, adds interest to its usage at iv 55 and after, at iv 68. Cicero’s claim is notably grounded by an appeal to the authority of the logicians. While *perspicuus* appears to have an inferential application here, grounding the judgment of what is *perspicuus* in the observation of experts shifts the term into an evidentiary application. The

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142 I evaluate this issue more thoroughly in chapter 1.
inferential characteristics of the term’s use are muted here by its evidentiary characteristics. Still, Cicero’s reference to the logicians emphasizes the fact that Cicero’s objection is more firmly grounded than mere observation; it bears the demonstrative force of a *modus tollens*.\textsuperscript{143} There is some sense in which *perspicuus* is used inferentially here, but it is not especially strong because it calls attention to the authority of dialecticians rather than the strength of their arguments.

Cicero’s final use of *perspicuus* at iv 68, when he claims it is obvious that not all vices are equal, depends on observation. It is unclear whether the evidentiary application of *perspicuus* at iv 68 is intended to amplify the term’s evidentiary application at iv 55 or if it is intended to contrast its inferential characteristics at iv 55. Regardless of the intended effect of *perspicuus* at iv 68, the term seems to be able to maneuver between inferential and evidentiary applications more freely in book 4 than we have seen elsewhere. In the end, the evidentiary applications appear to have a primary role over the inferential applications. It follows that the primary role of *perspicuus* in book 4 is to ‘point out’ what appears to be obvious based on experience.\textsuperscript{144} This is significant in turn because it returns us to the use of *perspicuus* in its methodological role, where it is the point of observation on which all argument is grounded.

Though the underlying meaning of *perspicuus* does not change in the text, it still has significant depth in *De finibus*, particularly when it is used in the context of Stoicism. Cicero chooses this term over the others in close correlation with some of the most important Stoic themes, including the process of deduction itself. He additionally begins to overlap evidentiary and inferential applications of *perspicuus* in book 4, where he ultimately appears to weight the evidentiary application of the term slightly more heavily. Thus *perspicuus* plays a crucial role in

\textsuperscript{143} Cicero uses the form explicitly when he writes ‘if A then B; but not B; so not A’ (iv 55).

\textsuperscript{144} My use of ‘pointing out’ is meant to remind us of Epicurus’ tendency to avoid rigorous argument unless absolutely necessary.
the context of Stoicism to link together major ideas as well as get back to the source of all Stoic argument in noting what is *perspicuus* through observations of nature.

*Perspicuus* in book 5

Like Cicero in book 4, Piso in book 5 relies primarily on the evidentiary application of *perspicuus*, where the term is used to identify something that appears to be obvious. Also like Cicero, the evidentiary priority does not prevent Piso from overlapping the evidentiary and inferential applications of the term. Piso also uses *perspicuus* almost exclusively to discuss his cradle argument, which is of central importance. This also reflects Cicero’s use of *perspicuus* to discuss three central Stoic themes in books 3 and 4. The reader is left with the impression that *perspicuus* is an important, respectable term.

The evidentiary priority of *perspicuus* is clear from the beginning of book 5. Though the evidentiary application remains important, it also complements the inferential application for Piso in book 5. The first use of *perspicuus* in book 5 occurs when Piso announces at v 16 that he agrees with Carneades’ claim that ‘no branch of knowledge can be based on itself’, which Piso takes to be obviously true and justifies with the support of examples. The evidentiary application of *perspicuus* is strengthened when Piso discusses human nature. Piso states at v 31, ‘indeed it is perfectly obvious that we not only love ourselves, but do so with a passion’. This reaffirms the Antiochian position Piso defends, in which the proper end for human beings is

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145 Cato the term to discuss the selection selecting appropriate objects and actions, and the Stoic emphasis on deductive argument structure. Cicero’s character uses it in his main criticism of Stoic ethics.

146 *Nihil opus est exemplis hoc facere longius; est enim perspicuum nullam artem ipsam in se versari, sed esse alius artem ipsam, alius quod propositum sit arti.*

147 *Quamquam quid est quod magis perspicuum sit quam non modo carum sibi quemque, verum etiam vehementer carum esse?*
firmly rooted in self-love. The passage at v 31 appears to contain an evidentiary application of *perspicuus*, the full importance and strength of which is amplified in the lines that follow, which I explain momentarily. Before I analyze v 31 further, it is worth noting that Piso uses *perspicuus* as well when speaking about human nature in concrete terms. He states, ‘evidently human beings consist of mind and body, but the mind and its components are primary, the parts of the body only secondary’ (v 34). He repeats it soon after, at v 37, when he introduces the nature of mind and body ‘enough to give an outline of the requirements of human nature’. He uses it again to emphasize human nature when he posits: ‘Here are some even clearer cases from nature—in fact absolutely obvious and indubitable ones—of the desire, most evident in humans but also present in animals, for constant activity. Continual rest is unendurable under any circumstances’ (v 55). In all of these cases, Piso relies on what he deems to be ‘obvious observation’.

The evidentiary application of *perspicuus* in book 5 is primary, but it also enters into a dynamic relationship with the inferential application in Piso’s discussion of human nature. At v 31, Piso utilizes an evidentiary application of *perspicuus* to emphasize how easily it can be observed that humans by nature love themselves. As he expands on the subject, Piso introduces a complementary use of evidentiary and inferential applications. All actions, he continues, are driven by self-love. We derive pleasure from objects that benefit us, and recoil from things that harm us (v 28-31). We feel pain when we must leave our preservative friendships and families in death (v 32). Piso claims ‘this whole area reveals more clearly than any other the power of our nature’, namely to love ourselves (v 32). This use of *perspicuus* appears to be primarily an

148 *Atqui perspicuum est hominem e corpore animoque constare, cum primae sint animi partes, secundae corporis.*

149 *Sunt autem etiam clariora vel plane perspicua minimeque dubitanda indicia naturae, maxime scilicet in homine sed in omni animali, ut appetat animus agere semper aliquid neque ulla condicione quietem sempiternam possit pati.*
evidentiary application. We plainly observe fear behaviors in the face of death, and we plainly observe human nature in those moments. Yet this use does seem to bring both evidentiary and inferential applications very close together. It is equally possible that our nature is made evident by human fear of death and that certain conclusions about nature follow obviously from the evidence that is human fear of death. The two perhaps need not be exclusive. Piso seems to use the inferential and evidentiary applications of *perspicuus* to support one another. This suggests that *perspicuus* may be multifaceted in the right hands. It may be capable of reconciling argumentative inference with empirical observation, at least in the case of human nature.

While book 5 does not introduce any new senses of *perspicuus* and appears to use it in uninteresting, straightforward ways, it does introduce a new dimension to the analysis of *perspicuus’* use. With the exception of v 16, Piso uses *perspicuus* only to describe truths that are related to his cradle argument. As I have discussed earlier, the cradle argument represents a central tenet not only of Antiochian ethics, but Hellenistic ethics more broadly. Though *plane* was sometimes used in connection to the cradle argument (see v 55 and perhaps v 35, v 58), the use of *plane* in book 5 is overwhelmingly related to clarity of argument, language, and learning. Similarly, *apertus* in book 5 is used once concerning the cradle argument at v 34, but its role applies directly to the argumentative movement of Piso’s account of the argument, not the claims of the argument itself. The other use of *apertus* in book 5 states the obviousness of the fact that human beings take joy in pure knowledge without regard for utility (v 51). Thus *perspicuus* is reserved for one of the most important arguments in ancient ethics. It is given a position of privilege in book 5.

There is additional support for the privileged position of *perspicuus* in its definition. Recall that *perspicuus* is an adjective that means ‘transparent’, ‘clear’, or more figuratively,
'evident', or ‘manifest’, referring to either objects of sense or intellect. Cicero relies on the figurative sense, which I then divided into evidentiary and inferential applications. If we step back from the applications and back to two senses of *perspicuus*, we find that the literal and the figurative are not as opposed as they might have seemed. *Perspicuus* is the adjectival form of *perspicio*, which literally means ‘to look over or inspect thoroughly’, or to scrutinize. We scrutinize not only the objects of sense before is, but also mental objects. This is how *perspicio* means equally ‘to examine mentally, study, investigate’. Sensory and intellectual discernment, though different in important ways, are two sides of the same linguistic coin. The division that I impose on *perspicuus* in the figurative sense is artificial, and can be detrimental if it obscures the close relationship between the scrutiny of sensory objects and the scrutiny of mental objects. It might be that *perspicuus* has more agility than the other truth-indicating terms, since it applies to mental and sensory objects equally.

**Perspicuus: conclusion**

In conclusion, it is clear not only that Cicero is choosing words carefully, but that we might be able to develop a way to determine which terms he uses when, and some possible reasons why. Upon analyzing the use of *perspicuus* in *De finibus*, especially book 5, the evidentiary/inferential division I impose on the term is limited for two reasons. First, evidentiary applications of *perspicuus* often refer to empirical observation, in which case sensory objects are necessarily implicated and the literal sense of the term invoked. Since my division was only meant to apply to figurative senses of the term, every evidentiary application entails a divisional distortion. Second, as argued above, *perspicuus* is emphasized at a crucially important section of

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the text, in which the best philosopher, Piso, discusses a central ethical argument, the cradle argument. The most important feature distinguishing *perspicuus* from the other words under consideration is not that there is a literal and figurative sense—many have both senses. What sets it apart is its responsibility for the all-important cradle argument.

The context-dependent interpretation of *perspicuus* cannot be denied. Torquatus uses *perspicuus* in earnest, but it highlights the fact that what he says is not in fact so obvious as he thinks it is. There are a few complicating factors to take into account in a basic analysis of *perspicuus* in the Epicurean context. First, Cicero says the Epicurean measure of goodness, pleasure, is better than the Stoic theory insofar as it makes it easy to determine the best course of action for an individual to take (iv 46). Second, Cicero might be suggesting that we can sometimes defer to the Epicurean preference to merely ‘point out’ what is truly obvious. Whether these factors amount to a significant redemption of Epicureanism is unclear, but Cicero’s motivations for using *perspicuus* are in any case different when dealing with Epicureans than his motivations in using the term with the Stoics. In the case of the Stoics, Cicero established that which is *perspicuus* as the fundamental starting point for Stoic inquiry and argument that they share with their predecessors (iv 8). This accounts in part for the prevalence of the term throughout books 3 and 4. Book 5, by contrast, appears to be motivated primarily by associating Piso’s perception of the Antiochian cradle argument as obvious. Given the Old Academy’s adoption of Stoic ideas, the presence of a fundamental Stoic term like *perspicuus* is expected.

Just as the analysis of *apertus* and *plane* provoked further questions, the same may be true here. The most pressing question is likely, which of these motivations reflect Cicero’s own view? There is not enough evidence to decisively answer this question, but one might speculate
as to a few possible explanations. In addition to relying more on context than its peers, *perspicuus* might have an overarching development through the text as well. Such a course of development might be useful. One possible account of the term’s development is that Cicero could be using *perspicuus* in order of decreasing irony. It seems that Torquatus’ use of *perspicuus* is overzealous when referring to argument and most appropriate when limited to the Epicurean realm of sense-perception and pleasure.\(^{151}\) In the case of the Stoics, *perspicuus* is often used appropriately as the origin of all inquiry and method. Cicero criticizes the Stoics because their philosophy does not differ from the Peripatetics with respect to *perspicuus* or concepts. Cato’s claim that the disputes between the Stoics and Peripatetics concerning the objects worthy of choice and rejection are substantial rather than verbal is unconvincing for Cicero (iii 41). By contrast, Cicero regularly and rigorously refers to the merely verbal alterations the Stoics make to already existing philosophy (iv 60, 74). Finally, this is complicated in book 5. Though *perspicuus* appears most straightforwardly in book 5, this is where the Old Academy takes up the term from the Stoics. Sensory and mental objects are examined with equal aplomb in the cradle argument as evidentiary and inferential applications of the term come together. Despite the relative strength of Piso’s position, Cicero does not explicitly endorse the Old Academy and praises the Stoics’ consistency over the Old Academy’s. Cicero’s forceful rejection of Cato and the Stoics is less certain in the context of *perspicuus* in book 5.

*Perspicuus* undergoes a subtle course of development. As such, it is not immediately apparent to the casual reader. It might represent an esoteric use of *perspicuus* that would suggest Cicero endorses the Antiochian theory—at least as it manifests itself in the cradle argument—more than the others. The possibility that Cicero might consider adopting the Antiochian cradle

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\(^{151}\) This is in itself playful. Perceptions are true for Epicureans, and so the distinction between sensory clarity and mental clarity are collapsed.
argument must be considered adjacent to the evidence that Cicero rejects the Old Academy. The use of *perspicuus* thus draws the readers to think critically about Cicero’s own transparency or obscurity. In particular, it calls attention to the difficulties of binding Cicero to any one position in *De finibus*.

*Clarus* and *illustris*

Among the words related to truth-telling that I examine, *clarus* and *illustris* have the most varied translations. *Clarus* has three basic categories of meaning: visual, mental, and moral. Consequently it might refer to the visually clear, bright, shining, or brilliant; the mentally clear, manifest, plain, evident, intelligible; or the morally brilliant, celebrated, renowned, illustrious, honorable, famous, glorious. *Illustris* similarly can be divided into the visual, the mental, and the moral. It can be used with respect to visual objects to describe something that is lighted up, clear, or bright; it can also be used as a synonym for *clarus* in cases of mental clarity and moral respectability or eminence. In this section I argue first that all three of these usages for *clarus* and *illustris* appear in *De finibus*, and second, that the best interpretations of the words shift both according to the portion of the text in which they occur and according to the character using the terms.

*Clarus* and *illustris* unite

*Clarus* and *illustris* are sometimes united in meaning and location. They work together to emphasize the visual, mental, or moral brilliance of an object. This is initially significant in the

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152 Some of this evidence is detailed in chapter 2.
153 For general definitions and typical usage, I rely on Lewis and Short’s *Latin-English Lexicon* 1879.
earliest appearances of *clarus* and *illustris* in *De finibus*, which correspond primarily to Cicero’s use of *exempla*. Cicero’s *exempla* demonstrate good acts and the incompatibility of Epicureanism with those acts. One of Cicero’s paradigmatic examples of good action is drawn from those among Torquatus’ ancestors that demonstrated great bravery and concern for duty above all else (i 23-24). In response to Cicero’s examples, Torquatus defends Epicureanism at i 36 when he says,

The kind of oratory you practice, and especially your own particular brand, with its keen interest in the past, makes great play of recalling brave and distinguished men and praising their actions for being motivated not by gain but by the simple glory of their honorable behavior. But this notion is completely undermined once that method of choice that I just mentioned is established, namely that pleasures are foregone when this means obtaining still greater pleasures, and pains endured to avoid still greater pains.

*In quo enim maxime consuevit iactare vestra se oratio, tua praesertim, qui studiose antiqua persequeris, claris et fortibus viris commemorandis eorumque factis non emolumento aliquo sed ipsius honestatis decore laudandis, id totum evertitur eo delectu rerum quem modo dixi constituto, ut aut voluptates omittantur maiorum voluptatum adipsendivarum causa aut dolores suspicientur maiorum dolorum effugiendorum gratia.*

*Clarus* here clearly refers to the men (*viris*) who are also identified as strong or brave (*fortibus*), making it most reasonable to translate *clarus* in the moral sense. This is also true of i 37, where Torquatus declares, ‘enough has been said here about distinguished people and their illustrious and glorious deeds’.* 154* *Clarorum* clearly refers to the human beings in question, while *inlustribus* and *gloriosis* refer to their deeds (*factis*). Though their referents differ in this line, both *illustris* and *clarus* are used in their moral sense and consequently match the sense of *clarus* used earlier in i 36.

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154 *Sed de clarorum hominum factis illustribus et gloriosis satis hoc loco dictum est.*
Clarus and illustris appear together one more time at i 71, where they both depart slightly from the moral sense used above. Torquatus delineates that we owe a great debt to Epicurus ‘if the philosophy I’ve been describing is clearer and more brilliant than the sun; if it is all drawn from the fount of nature; if my whole speech gains credibility by being based on the uncorrupted and untainted testimony of the senses’.155 Inlustriora and clariora, respective comparatives for illustris and clarus, have no explicit relation to the nobility and dignity of ethical role models here. Instead, they draw primarily on the clarity of sense perception, referring to what Torquatus considers to be the immeasurably enlightening qualities of Epicurean theory.156

Though the sense in which something is clear may shift in book 1, clarus and illustris nevertheless remain united in that they change together. The two terms consistently mean the same thing in book 1. At i 36-37, both terms clearly express their moral sense. The terms at i 71 appear to refer to the objects of sense perception more than anything else, but it is noteworthy that they appear to shift their meanings together. The shift in meaning does not appear to alter the impression the reader has of clarus and illustris at the end of book 1. Despite Torquatus’ shift, the meaning of clarus and illustris in book 1 remains primarily moral.

Clarus and illustris diverge

In book 1, clarus and illustris held meanings that were bound together. Beginning in

155 Quapropter si ea quae dixi sole ipso illustriora et clariora sunt, si omnia hausta e fonte naturae, si tota oratio nostra omnem sibi fidem sensibus confirmat, id est incorruptis atque integris testibus

156 We might, however, consider the way in which the Form of the Good shines light on all of the other Forms in Plato’s Republic and makes it possible for us to know them. Torquatus evokes a similar image of the highest good in Epicureanism, i.e. pleasure that is absence from pain, that is brighter and presumably more illuminating than the sun. Insofar as the concept of the Good for Plato or the highest good for Epicurus is illuminating, the visual, mental, and moral components of the word can be identified as one.
book 2, the two begin to diverge. Cicero continues to use *clarus* in the moral sense in *De finibus* ii and iii. At ii 67, Cicero’s character refers to ‘those of greatest renown’ (*claris viris*) among whom Torquatus should be able to find support for his ethical system, if it is in fact a good one. In book 3, Cicero’s character uses *clarus* again to refer to the ‘honorable occupation’ of Cato’s reading books at his leisure (iii 7). Though Cato’s ‘honorable occupation’ does not embody the moral sense of *clarus* in the same way that the *exempla* do, it is a representation of admirable qualities and actions. While *clarus* largely retains its moral sense for Cicero’s character, he develops *illustris* independently of *clarus*. Unlike *clarus*, *illustris* shifts away from its moral sense at ii 15 when Cicero’s character explains ‘Now Epicurus, in my view, does not set out to avoid speaking plainly and directly. Nor is his subject difficult, like the physicist’s, or technical, like the mathematician’s. Rather it is a clear and straightforward topic, widely familiar to the public’. *Illustris* here refers to the easy and widely-known subject matter of Epicurus’ philosophy, most likely drawing on the sense of *illustris* that pertains to mental clarity. In book 4, Cicero’s character uses *illustris* once in the moral sense and once to discuss indirectly Panaetius, whose ‘doctrines were gentler, and his style more lucid’ (iv 79). Books 2-4 therefore allow for the mental sense of *illustris* in addition to the moral sense, but *clarus* remains primarily a moral word.

Piso is the only character to use *illustris* in book 5, and he uses *clarus* almost exclusively in the same section. Each term occurs four times in book 5, concurrently only once at v 48. Here Piso is announcing that he is going to discuss ‘the components of the mind, which provide

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157 Epicurus autem, ut opinor, nec non vult si possit plane et aperte loqui, nec de re obscura, ut physici, aut artificiosa, ut mathematici, sed de illustri et facili et iam in vulgus pervagata loquitur.

158 Note that the report is indirect because Cicero’s character gives credit to Piso for this interpretation of Panaetius.

159 Cicero’s character uses it once, but Piso uses it the other three times.
an altogether nobler array. The more lofty they are, the more certainly they indicate the presence of nature’. The translation has *illustris* refer primarily to the nobility of the parts of soul or mind (*animi*) over the parts of the body discussed in v 47, but their nobility should be attributed to Cicero’s use of ‘*excelsiores*’, which unequivocally conveys superiority. The Latin allows that the parts of mind could ‘look more clear’ to Piso, which would depend on a mental sense of *illustris* rather than the moral one. On this interpretation, *illustris* and *clarus* would be similar, if not precise synonyms. If we admit the translation as it stands, then *clarus* could have a significantly different translation from *illustris*. Earlier in *De finibus*, *clarus* and *illustris* could be used as synonyms; here, they could either both refer to mental clarity, or they could point on the one hand toward a value-laden moral sense, on the other toward mental clarity.

Other uses of *illustris* in book 5 might aid in interpreting its use at v 48. All other occurrences of *illustris* in *De finibus* v are directed at descriptions of objects as noble and illustrious or perhaps illuminating. Two of them are concerned with philosophy itself and the life it fosters. At v 7 and v 11, Piso praises the course of study made possible by the work of the ancients and the quality of their writing about the contemplative life, respectively. Piso aims the final occurrence of *illustris* at the cradle argument he advances, particularly as it relates to the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiosis*. At v 65, Piso observes ‘in the whole moral field that we are discussing there is nothing so noble or wide-ranging as society between human beings, that alliance, so to speak, of shared interests, and the mutual affection of the human species’.

*Illustris* here indicates that mutual affection among human beings on the basis of shared interests

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160 *Videamus animi partes, quarum est conspectus illustrior; quae quo sunt excelsiores, eo dant clariora indicia naturae.*

161 *In omni autem honesto de quo loquimur nihil est tam illustre nec quod latius pateat quam coniunctio inter homines hominum et quasi quaedam societas et communicatio utilitatum et ipsa caritas generis humani.*
is admirable. If Piso is using the term consistently, then he most likely uses *illustris* in the moral sense at v 48. Insofar as the moral sense of *illustris* elsewhere in book 5 also comments on the superiority of a certain mode of philosophy and mental life, Piso implies the mental sense of *illustris* alongside the moral sense. As a result it seems unlikely that *clarus* and *illustris* are synonymous at v 48, for *illustris* seems to have this affiliation with moral valuation that *clarus* lacks.

Of the three remaining appearances of *clarus* in *De finibus* v, two seem to rely on the moral sense of the term, and one seems to be completely separate from the moral sense. The non-moral sense of *clarus* appears at v 55. This is a paragraph in which Piso declares that all of the Hellenistic schools justify their ethics on the basis of observations of infants.\(^\text{162}\) Piso begins the paragraph, ‘here are some even clearer cases from nature—in fact absolutely obvious and indubitable ones—of the desire, most evident in humans but also present in animals, for constant activity. Continual rest is unendurable under any circumstances’.\(^\text{163}\) *Clarus*, here ‘*clariora*’, refers directly to the observable and explanatory qualities of the examples he is about to use, invoking the sensory and mental senses of the term. The moral sense is approached only insofar as the cradle argument brings to mind the origin and terminus of ethical development. The moral sense of *clarus* is more present elsewhere in book 5. Cicero’s character uses it in this way when he expresses agreement with Piso at v 4, for example. He notes, ‘it is a fact that the stimulus of place considerably sharpens and intensifies the thoughts we have about famous individuals

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\(^{162}\) For a thorough analysis, see Brunschwig 1986. Piso’s Antiochian version of the cradle argument may hold significant influence over the rest of *De finibus* (see Schofield 2008, Long 2014). I offer a new reading in my own cradle argument chapter.

\(^{163}\) Sunt autem etiam clariora vel plane perspicua minimeque dubitanda indicia naturae, maxime scilicet in homine sed in omni animali, ut appetat animus agere semper aliquid neque ulla condicione quietem sempiternam possit pati.
Given the nostalgic tone and the context of praising philosophical predecessors in this section of the text, the translation here of ‘famous’ for ‘claris’ should retain its moral sense of being renowned and celebrated. Piso uses it when he declares at v 74 ‘it is our system alone which is worthy of the student of the liberal arts, worthy of the learned and distinguished, worthy of princes and of kings’.

In sum, the moral senses of clarus and illustris dominate book 1. Clarus retains its moral sense in book 2, while illustris shifts to emphasize clarity of Epicurus’ language rather than moral examples. In book 3, the moral sense of clarus describes a good way to pass one’s time rather than an exemplary human being. Illustris uses its moral sense once in book 4, and visual or mental sense once to describe the clarity of Panaetius’ style. Both terms are used most often in book 5, where they express a variety of meanings in praising noble deeds and honorable courses of study, and in seeking clarity of understanding concerning noble things. It does not seem possible to determine set rules for the usage of clarus and illustris in De finibus. They can be used to represent all three of their senses, depending on context. Clarus and illustris demonstrate the increasing complexity of the philosophical positions, concepts, and the abilities of the most talented readers over the course of the text. Initially, the simpler moral sense is dominant. The ordinary reader might assume that clarus and illustris only express moral brilliance but after that the two terms are applied in increasingly diverse, contextually differentiated ways.

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164 It is possible for the visual or mental sense of clarus to be used here to emphasize the brilliance of the predecessors, or to describe their example as a model that shines brightly across time and space. In this case, whichever interpretation one chooses, the general message is relatively unchanged; the predecessors are excellent role models and giants in philosophy.

165 Ita relinquitur sola haec disciplina digna studiosis ingeniarum artium, digna eruditis, digna claris viris, digna principibus, digna regibus.
The patterns I have detected in the usage of truth-disclosive language in Cicero’s *De finibus* reveal that Cicero selects his terms and crafts their application with care. As a result, he develops the vocabulary surrounding the disclosure of truth in playful, thought-provoking ways. Some terms can have both ironic and direct significations; others rely less on irony and more on the senses of the term as belonging to the literal or figurative domain, or as belonging to the realm of sense-objects, mental objects, or moral objects. A full understanding of any of Cicero’s truth-disclosive terms, however, appears to depend on the context in which they are used. This means that those readers of Cicero’s philosophical works that underestimate the care with which he composed them overlook some of his most fundamental philosophical talents.

Cicero’s use of truth-disclosive terms has several implications for *De finibus*. First, his use of the terms encourages his readers to think about claims of certainty with respect to objects of perception and knowledge. When Cicero contrasts his own conscientious care with the laxity of Torquatus’ use of the terms, for example, he implies apparently obvious claims or judgments might be misleading. Readers should perform due diligence to determine the plausibility of each major contributing idea in the text. Second, diligent observation of these terms suggests that some terms reflect a better, more serious position than others. *Plane* and *perspicuus* ultimately indicate that the Stoics and Antiochians offer the strongest positions. Third, truth-disclosive terms do not disclose Cicero’s own position to his readers. Cicero resists endorsing the Stoic and Antiochian positions despite their strength. This represents a dramatic suspension of judgment. As a result, the readers must draw their own conclusions from the positions detailed in the text.

By all accounts, Cicero’s *De finibus* is a highly contrived work of philosophy in which he
carefully chooses the terms he uses to assess general clarity of one’s position and expression, the quality of evidence in argument, and the necessity of the conclusions they precipitate.
Cicero’s philosophical works discuss a wide range of topics in Hellenistic philosophy, but they all share a common dialogue form. In the preceding chapters I argue that Cicero is purposefully crafting *De finibus* to help his readers become better prepared for philosophy and engage his most talented readers in sophisticated ways. He aims to assist his readers in living better lives through critical thinking, leading them to critically assess for themselves the various positions presented. Dialogue form is one of the most effective means to attain these ends. Cicero undertakes this project in part to teach philosophy to Rome and encourage Romans to engage in philosophy, likely with the underlying aspiration that philosophical training will make prominent, well-educated citizens better people who can, then, save the republic. These aims are served well by the dialogue form. In reading a philosophical dialogue, the reader is encouraged ‘to reflect in some way upon the arguments being offered’ (Ford 2008, 33). This helps cultivate philosophical depth and critical thinking. This form also provides the audience with a strong model for the practice of philosophy since dialogue form ‘allows for disagreement and candid exchange, and is thus an inherently non-authoritarian medium’ (Long 2008, 45). The readers are thereby induced to philosophize in accord with a cooperative dialectical model (Ford 2008, 33). For Cicero, the dialogue form is thus an ideal medium to instruct his Roman readers about the contents and practice of philosophy. He uses it to demonstrate the nature of philosophy for his audience, and some of the practical considerations involved in philosophizing successfully, such as having leisure and defining one’s terms. Most importantly, he uses it to promote ‘intellectual
discoveries, teaching discoveries to others and converting others to the life of philosophy’ (Long 2008, 48).

Cicero’s self-identification as an Academic makes dialogue an especially appealing medium. Academics argue on either side of a problem in order to discover the most probable view with the most rational support. Cicero explains the value of this approach in Academica ii 60 when he offers the following exchange:

There remains their statement that for the discovery of truth it is necessary to argue against all things and for all things. Well then, I should like to see what they have discovered. ‘Oh,’ [the Academic] says, ‘it is not out practice to give an exposition.’ What pray are these holy secrets of yours, or why does your school conceal its doctrine like something disgraceful?’ ‘In order,’ says he, ‘that our hearers may be guided by reason rather than by authority.’

Cicero values the non-authoritarian quality of the dialogue form that is crucial in encouraging the readers to engage in philosophical practice and critical assessment on their own. Yet, as an Academic, he goes beyond a non-authoritarian approach. He should conceal his own view as much as possible. Philosophical dialogue provides him with a unique opportunity to obscure and withhold his own view. Authors of a philosophical dialogue might choose to include their own voices or not. Cicero could include himself as a character, absent himself and leave the discussion entirely to other characters, stand in as an omniscient narrator, or develop his presence in the text in more creative ways. In De finibus, he chooses to include himself in the text as the author, character, and translator. Cicero’s use of himself calls attention to the different aims each iteration of himself has in De finibus, in effect distancing himself from the readers. This

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166 Italics are Long’s.
167 I use ‘Cicero’ to distinguish the character in the dialogue from Cicero in his other roles. Even as the character ‘Cicero’, Cicero gives us snapshots of his engagement with philosophy at three different times, possibly thinking different things at each time.
distance prevents readers from attributing views to Cicero and, without an authority to appeal to, they must draw their own conclusions about the theories presented.

In this chapter, I argue that Cicero calls attention to himself in his many roles for two reasons. First, he aims to obscure his own position so that he can lead readers to think for themselves about the ethical positions at hand. Since his aims and method are thoroughly Academic, Cicero is suggesting to us that his own position should be irrelevant for us when we read *De finibus*. This is especially important for Cicero in his role as author and character. Cicero aims not to be interpreted directly for his character ‘Cicero’. This protects Cicero from being assigned any position that he has his character take up for investigation. One of Cicero’s central authorial concerns must be keeping his own view, if he has one, from his readers so as not to unduly influence their judgment. Second, he aims to spark critical thinking in his readers about the uses of transparency and obscurity in philosophy so that they begin practicing his Academic method and weigh and determine the strongest position for themselves.

Cicero the author, character, and translator

The authorial Cicero is most visible in *De finibus* at the beginning of books 1, 3, and 5, when he introduces each school of thought. This draws attention to Cicero’s authorial role in a way that alienates his readership just enough to make them aware of the fact that they are not the immediate audience. At the beginning of the text, Cicero addresses Brutus directly and dedicates *De finibus* to him. Cicero uses the introduction to explain the goals and challenges of his project to Brutus. His goals include translating Greek philosophy into Latin and contributing some of his

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168 As a translator, Cicero intends to create distance for interpretation between himself and his character, but the intentional generation of obscurity likely ends here. There is no evidence that Cicero uses intentionally obscure terminology to translate important ideas.
‘own judgment and order of composition’ (i 6). The challenges include objections to Cicero writing philosophy at all, or specifically philosophy in Latin (i 2-4). The introduction to book 1, the most significant and extensive in *De finibus*, anticipates potential objections of the readers and preemptively rebuts them. The reader is therefore made aware of the fact that Cicero is approaching this text with some concern for the subject matter at hand in addition to an acute awareness of his cultural context as an author rather than a character. The authorial Cicero has different interests from the character ‘Cicero’. Awareness of the author operating independently of both his namesake and audience diminishes the connection between them. Because the author Cicero and his character have different aims, the reader is also less likely to directly attribute the words of Cicero’s character to Cicero himself.

The distance generated in book 1 between the authorial Cicero and his audience is intensified in book 3. The opening paragraphs of book 3 prepare the reader for an astute philosophical debate with the Stoics (iii 2). *De finibus* iii and iv are more rigorous than their preceding books, making it unlikely that they are intended merely to educate the uninitiated. The authorial Cicero directly engages Brutus, ‘an erudite student of philosophy’ (iii 6). Cicero notes it would be inappropriate to lecture Brutus as if to educate him, and instead calls on him to stand as ‘the most impartial critic and judge’ (iii 6). The readers are invited to observe the more philosophically impressive debate in which Brutus is the direct audience and judge. It might serve as a model for them, or a tool to help them grow from the more basic analysis of Epicureanism to a more sophisticated critique of the Stoics. The readers are thus invited to be more active philosophical participants, but only indirectly.

The introduction to *De finibus* v is significantly shorter than the other two. Book 1’s introduction is comprised of twelve paragraphs; book 2’s is made up of six. Book 5’s
introduction is contained entirely in a single paragraph. It is barely an introduction by comparison, but it stands out from the rest of the dialogue because Brutus is again explicitly addressed. The abbreviated introduction might result in a less stark separation between the authorial Cicero and his readers than was established in earlier books, but there is also less need for that separation because of the dramatic setting. The setting of book 5 stands out for a number of reasons: the characters are in their youth; the dialogue takes place long before those of the other four books; the dialogue takes place at the ruins of Plato’s Academy in Athens; the presentation and refutation occur in a single book; the tone appears to be nostalgic rather than academic. Cicero’s readers are unlikely to read the authorial Cicero into the young ‘Cicero’ character because of the surprisingly unconventional circumstances of *De finibus* v. Cicero is able to displace his own views without relying on a long preamble.

The introductions of *De finibus* i, iii, and v illustrate that the concerns of Cicero as author may differ from those of the characters, including the one called ‘Cicero’. This means that Cicero, calling attention to himself as author, equally calls attention to ‘Cicero’. The character role confirms the separation that Cicero’s authorial presence creates in part by involving other thinkers in brief imaginary exchanges. At *De finibus* ii 28, for example, ‘Cicero’ engages ‘Epicurus’ in a pretend dialogue. ‘Cicero’ explains that Epicurus’ tendency to rely on sensory delight as the model for pleasure is problematic because it allows that ‘no deed is foul enough to consider refraining from so long as it is done for the sake of pleasure and no one is watching’. As if prompted by this unkind assessment, Epicurus appears to ‘[take] refuge in the claim that nothing can be added to the pleasure of one who feels no pain. But that static condition of not being in pain is simply not called pleasure.’ The character ‘Cicero’ steps out of his conversation with Torquatus to make this critique even though there is no reason to think that Cicero himself
would not have stood by it. It seems that the point of this imaginary exchange is to remind the reader that ‘Cicero’ is fictional, as is the Epicurus he draws into debate. ‘Cicero’ in addition has ‘Epicurus’ say ‘I am not concerned with names’. This passage represents one of the main arguments Cicero presents against the Epicureans, that the term pleasure (*hedone, voluptas*) is inadequate to account both for painlessness and sensual pleasure.\(^{169}\) The position Cicero gives to ‘Epicurus’ is consistent with Epicurean theory. There is no reason to think that Cicero would not have stood by this critique, yet he has ‘Cicero’ disengage Torquatus to make this critique against an imaginary Epicurus. The character ‘Cicero’ devises a conversation with a fake character named ‘Epicurus’ and a fake character named ‘Cicero’. It seems that the point of this exchange is to remind the reader that ‘Cicero’ is fictional, as is the ‘Epicurus’ he draws into debate.

Translation also obscures Cicero’s own perspective in a few ways. First, it gives Cicero the opportunity to use the others’ words instead of his own to refute positions. At *De finibus* ii 48 and 49, for example, Cicero’s translations emphasize the paradigm of sensual pleasure on which Epicurus allegedly depends. Cicero’s critique borrows legitimacy from Epicurus’ own words against the Epicureans. In some cases, Epicurus’ words are held against Epicurus himself. Cicero’s translation of Epicurus’ letter to Hermarchus is one strong example. After a lengthy translation, Cicero comments ‘I do consider the letter I have just translated virtually word for word to be highly laudable, even though it is utterly inconsistent with the central tenets of Epicurus’ thought’ (ii 100). Cicero translates Epicurus in order to use Epicurus’ own words to undermine Epicurean theory.\(^{170}\)

\(^{169}\) For a full treatment of Epicurean pleasure in *De finibus*, see Warren 2016. Concerning the adequacy of *voluptas* as a translation for *hedone*, see Powell 1995. 
\(^{170}\) This should remind us of Socratic *ad hominem* arguments.
Second, translation makes explicit the dimension of textual meaning and interpretation. It also raises questions about the legitimacy and even the possibility of translation. *De finibus* opens with a defense of Cicero’s ‘putting into Latin themes which philosophers of the highest talent and most refined learning have dealt with in Greek’ (i 1). Translation is not the only concern Cicero has, a point he makes explicit at *De finibus* i 6, but it is central to his project. He frequently includes brief translations of passages from Greek philosophy, sometimes asking for verification that the translation is accurate, and sometimes insisting that his translation work is superlative. The first announced translation Cicero provides asks for validation from Torquatus.

At ii 20-21, Cicero asks Torquatus to

consider carefully…whether I am translating this particular saying correctly: ‘If those things in which the indulgent find pleasure freed them from fear of the gods, and from death and pain, and taught them the limits of desire, then we would have nothing to reproach them for. They would have their fill of pleasures in every way, with no element of pain or distress, that is, of evil.’

Torquatus verifies that these are in fact Epicurus’ words, but that Cicero fails to understand their meaning. Despite being technically accurate, at least the context of Cicero’s translation fails to capture Epicurus’ meaning. This passage demonstrates one way in which Cicero surpasses Plato, in that he encourages the reader to see that translation itself contains a problem of expression: what constitutes an adequate translation? Can a translation ever capture what the original thinker meant?¹⁷¹

Despite these difficulties, Cicero gives us an idea of what the best translations might be—they are the ones that are easy to understand. Cato’s translations are always made with exceptional care. This is clear when he considers the translation for ‘disturbance’ at iii 35:

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¹⁷¹ The interrelated problems of translation, language, and meaning receive much attention in the history of philosophy, but I am focusing on Cicero’s purpose here rather than his position.
emotional disturbances, which make the lives of the unwise a harsh misery (the Greeks call such disturbances \textit{pathe}, and I could have literally translated the word as ‘illnesses’, but it would not suit all cases. One does not usually call pity or indeed anger an ‘illness’, but the Stoics call each a \textit{pathos}. So let our term be ‘disturbance’—the very name seems indicative of vice.)

Cato not only gives an adequate translation, but he explains that he has chosen ‘disturbance’ for \textit{pathos} because it includes as many cases as possible. Cicero rewards Cato’s efforts, exclaiming at iii 40 ‘how lucidly your language conveys your exact meaning, Cato’. Piso’s translations are likewise praised at \textit{De finibus} v 96 for their ‘aptness of expression and clarity’.

Cicero effectively maintains a central emphasis on translation in his \textit{De finibus} by incorporating so many translations and by drawing explicit attention to acts of translation as they occur. The attention Cicero draws to translation makes it stand out as its own enterprise with its own aims and challenges. Consequently the concerns of the authorial Cicero and the ‘Cicero’ character can be viewed independently of the translator Cicero. Each represents a different mode through which Cicero may or may not say what he means, or through which he can mean several things at once. Any reader that wishes to understand what Cicero himself thinks about any given concept or question must scour each of these roles and build an interpretation that supports all of them. Cicero plays with the concept of saying what one means in its own right, and nurtures it as a philosophical device it at every level of interpretation in \textit{De finibus}. One cannot say if Cicero ever says what he means in this dialogue without qualifying which Cicero is being discussed. Cicero in all three of the modes addressed here permeates every section of \textit{De finibus}, each with distinct though related goals. While this would not make sense for a philosopher working to develop a system of concrete claims, Cicero’s philosophical allegiance to the New Academy means that he has little use or interest in developing such a system. His philosophy cannot be
reduced or expressed simply. He relies on all three of the modes, his trifold role in *De finibus*, to conduct philosophy at all.

Cicero the obscure

Cicero incorporates himself into *De finibus* as author, character, and translator. This provides three different avenues through which Cicero may disclose or withhold his own view. Cicero’s Academic directive to conceal his own view appears to contradict the emphasis Cicero places on saying what one believes and being straightforward in philosophy. At the beginning of book 2, Cicero suggests that his contemporaries have wandered too far from this kind of transparency and earnestness in discourse because they are not invested in the positions they advance. He writes:

> the practice with other philosophers is that a member of the audience states a view, and then is silent. This is in fact what currently happens in the Academy. One who wants to hear the philosopher’s view says perhaps: ‘In my opinion pleasure is the highest good.’ The philosopher then puts the contrary position in a continuous discourse. Evidently, then, the one who had declared that such-and-such was their view did not really hold that opinion but simply wanted to hear the opposing arguments. Our procedure, though, is a better one. Torquatus stated not only what he thought, but why he thought it. (ii 2-3)

The better procedure, modeled by Torquatus, is characterized by what I am calling transparency: the disclosure of detailed opinions actually held by the speaker. Epicurus in some ways occupies a better position than many of Cicero’s contemporaries and can be a model for philosophy insofar as he is transparent. Torquatus, the representative of Epicureanism, is similarly imitable because he truly holds the views he expounds, just as Cato does in book 3 (i 34, 72).

Truth-telling and transparency are used as important ideals over the course of the text. Epicurus, too, is praised for his transparency. Cicero claims ‘his words express his meaning, and he writes in a direct way that I can understand’ (i 15). Over the course of Cicero’s refutation in
book 2, however, Epicurus falls from model transparency to confused opacity such that Cicero can infer, ‘he cannot, in my view, be saying what he really thinks’ (ii 90). Epicurus’ descent is grounded in his understanding of pleasure. Cicero translates ‘pleasure’ as *voluptas*, emphasizing forms of pleasure that involve the body directly, sensory delight (i 23). Torquatus does not dispute Cicero’s translation, but he insists Cicero misunderstands Epicurus’ meaning. Epicurus, he maintains, held the absence of all pain to be ‘not only true pleasure, but the highest pleasure’ (i 38). If Epicurus says what he means when he calls pleasure the highest good, he must admit that his ethics is absurd. If he concedes that by ‘pleasure’ he really means something other than the most universal interpretation of the word, then he is not being straightforward.

Cicero’s analysis of pleasure, especially its relationship to virtue, contributes significantly to his judgment that Epicurus cannot really be saying what he means when he makes pleasure, in its common and correct usage, the highest end. Cicero suggests that his criticism must already be obvious to the Epicureans themselves, for they are inconsistent in putting their theory into practice. They ‘act in ways that make it clear [they] are pursuing not pleasure but duty’ (ii 58). Pursuing duty over pleasure is ostensibly an abandonment of Epicurean ethics that means, for Cicero, Epicureans avoid becoming bad people. Epicureans do not generally pursue every depraved pleasure they can. Cicero maintains that this is because their good nature keeps them from practicing what they approve in theory. Cicero would undoubtedly prefer they recognize that they have adopted a theory that would destroy their good character if they practiced it scrupulously. More importantly, the apparent abandonment signifies the difficulties of exercising the tenets of Epicurean ethics. For example, Cicero alleges that Epicureans find pain ‘unbearable

\[172\] Cicero allows that Epicureans are good people for reasons non-philosophical (including his friendship with Atticus and former studies with Phaedrus) and philosophical. Friendship is highly valued in Epicurean theory, for one important philosophical example. For a complete treatment see Frede 2016.
when…fixing some punishment for the wicked. But when you require the wise person to have
more goods than evils, it becomes quite tolerable’ (ii 57). From the fact that Epicureans cannot
express their position consistently, Cicero determines they must not be transparent.

Cicero further suggests that lacking transparency indicates the presence of something
shameful. Cicero asks Torquatus to consider ‘how it would look if a man of your name, talent,
and distinction…dare not reveal in a public forum the real object of his actions, plans and
endeavors…his real view about the highest good in life!’ (ii 74).\textsuperscript{173} Virtue is central in public
circles. Epicureans in general, especially those with ambition for public office, must conceal
what they think. They live in clandestine duplicity, forced to ‘dress up just for show, but the truth
is hidden within’ (ii 77). Cicero makes himself the philosophical foil to the undesirable
Epicurean position, purporting to hold the following view: ‘beliefs are those that are honourable,
praiseworthy and noble, the sort which can be openly expressed before the Senate and the
people, in every assembly and gathering. You should not be unashamed to think what you are
ashamed to say’ (ii 77).

The Epicureans possibly could use deception to hide their real views from non-
Epicureans, but more likely they simply fail to see that they do not hold the kind of true beliefs
Cicero describes. This is in some ways a more likely explanation given the lack of clarity in
central concepts and the Epicurean rejection of many conventional forms of critical thinking.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{173} Cicero does not elaborate here on the political involvement of Epicureans. One major
problem Cicero has with Epicureanism is its disassociation with political life (see chapter 1). If
Epicureans do not live public lives, they may avoid Cicero’s criticism. In the context of De fin. i
and ii, however, Torquatus holds the praetorship (the second most prestigious position in the
cursus honorum) and is looking forward to becoming consul (the most prestigious position) like
his father (Annas 2001, xv-xvi).

\textsuperscript{174} Epicureans famously accept sense-impressions as true without requiring further criterion of
certainty. Cicero also alleges their rejection of mathematics and logic. Scholarship tends to agree,
Epicureans find intellectual pursuits worthwhile only to the extent that they contribute to the
Still, if their beliefs were ‘honourable, praiseworthy and noble’, then it is difficult to understand why the Epicureans market their position in different ways to different groups. There remains at least an untrained, intuitive sense that inconsistency is undesirable. There is something unpalatable in their theory that they don’t want the rest of the world to see.¹⁷⁵

In addressing Epicurean ethics Cicero emphasizes the importance of saying what one means. When Epicurus fails to say what he means, the reader has a negative model for the character of philosophical inquiry; philosophers should directly convey what they mean, unlike Epicurus and his followers. Cicero’s treatment of the Stoics bears a similar message. The Stoics, Cicero claims, ‘have a way of arguing that is not so much subtle as obscure’ (iii 3). It is clear that Stoic theory will face criticism for being unclear, particularly since the lack of clarity is both unnecessary and unjustifiable. Cicero allows that there are two legitimate reasons philosophers use unclear language. He explains, ‘there are two circumstances in which this might be excusable: first, if it is done deliberately, as in the case of Heraclitus… Second, if the difficulty is caused by the obscurity of the subject-matter itself, as with Plato’s Timaeus’ (ii 15). Cato claims ‘the obscurity is ingrained in the subject-matter’ so that any difficult language the Stoics employ should be excusable. Cicero remains unconvinced and replies, ‘when the Peripatetics expound the same doctrines I understand every word’ (iv 2). If Zeno did not firmly establish any conceptual changes when he broke with his predecessors to found Stoicism, one would expect there to be some other differences significant enough to warrant the break. Though their ideas might not be different, for example, perhaps the terms the Stoics invent should still be

¹⁷⁵ Cicero does not require that all of those possessing true beliefs have the same view: ‘We can leave to the frivolous Greeks the perverse practice of heaping personal abuse on those whose personal view of the truth differs from their own’ (ii 80). Different approaches to truth seem to be valuable in philosophical inquiry for Cicero.
meaningful. They should alter the way that people engage the philosophy and transform themselves. The new vocabulary should promote a perspective that fundamentally changes how the same ideas were understood before. At least, this is what Cicero suggests when he says the new Stoic arguments ‘should change our lives, our plans and our wills, not just our terminology’ (iv 52). In Cicero’s view, the Stoics fail to do this consequently cannot justify their break with the Old Academy. When they introduce their new terms, they appear not to ‘change our lives’. They take up the old concepts and make them less clear.

In addition to demeaning Stoic terminology, Cicero also challenges the Stoics’ ability to disclose their position publicly. For the Stoics, objects typically called ‘evil’, including illness, enslavement, and the loss of family, property, or life, are not considered evil. Instead, these things are the counterpoint to ‘preferred’ objects. Just as, given the chance, one should choose health over illness as a preference, similarly one should, given the chance, reject illness in favor of health. However promising this view might be in managing one’s fear, it is not a viable public philosophy for Cicero. He asks us to ‘imagine an orator addressing a public assembly, with Hannibal at the gates and spear flying over the city walls. Would the orator declare that captivity, enslavement, death and the loss of one’s homeland are not evils?’ (iv 22). Advancing Stoic ideals during an emergency does not seem to be in the city’s best interest. The demands of public office require that the orator or Senator take a stand with regards to the very objects that the Stoic finds merely ‘preferred’ or ‘rejected’. Like the Epicureans, Stoics cannot fully embrace the tenets of their system and also respectfully hold public office. Cicero asks, ‘what sort of philosophy is it that speaks a common language in public, but its own language in its treatises?’ (iv 22). Cicero

176 Unlike the Epicureans, the Stoic reliance on virtue might make their position defensible. In the image Cicero offers, the Stoic orator could appeal to courage to protect the city and not be inconsistent with his philosophical identity.
has forced the audience to consider whether public officials with Stoic values can say what they really think in public.

Cicero attacks Stoic transparency in two ways. On the one hand, the Stoics have an abundance of new terms, none of which ‘expresses any ideas’, or at least any new ideas (iv 22). If the Stoics were transparent, they would only be endorsing one of their predecessors. On the other hand, the Stoics cannot be forthcoming about their views in public. The Stoics never seem as poorly equipped as the Epicureans, however. Epicurean failure to be transparent is reflected by inconsistencies within the theory or between theory and practice. The Stoics, even when they lack transparency, do not endure the same allegations of inconsistency. When Cicero addresses Piso and the Antiochians, the cohesion of the Stoic system is contrasted with comparably uneven Antiochian theory. Even when the public might doubt Stoic claims that great personal loss is not evil, however outrageous the claims appear, none could find the Stoics inconsistent with themselves (v 85). Cicero advises Piso, ‘your own system is not like this’ (v 83). He even goes so far as to call Piso’s account self-contradictory (v 85). What preserves the Stoic system from the same fate as the Epicurean one is likely Cicero’s marvel at the cohesion of the Stoic system.

The precedent for discussing truth-telling in philosophy had already been established for Cicero by Plato. Socrates and his interlocutors indicate that they should ‘say what [they] believe’ in several dialogues. The directive for truth-telling has been taken up as a theme in Plato’s dialogues by some scholars. Gregory Vlastos posits the imperative to ‘say what you believe’ as one of two requirements that make the Socratic elenchus successful (Vlastos 1994, 7). He argues that truth-telling crucially separates the rigorous and philosophically suitable elenchus from vicious eristic, by making it possible to test the truth of the question and the sincerity of the

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177 The other requirement is that the participants refrain from making speeches.
interlocutors, as well as allowing Socrates to challenge an interlocutor’s way of life (Vlastos 1994, 8-9). One might find Socrates’ efforts to shame his interlocutors dubious, but Vlastos’ interpretation suggests that an emphasis on sincerity, an essential component of the elenchus, strengthens Socrates’ examination.

Plato is widely accepted as Cicero’s model in practicing philosophy. He is ‘extolled as Cicero’s idol, as one who set a standard for all future philosophers and as supreme master of literary excellence’ (Degraff 1940, 147).\(^{178}\) The evidence supporting this view is overwhelming. Cicero openly praises Plato, and he appeals to Plato’s texts and ideas frequently. Central ideas and arguments from Plato’s *Phaedo, Apology, Republic, Lysis, Crito, Gorgias,* and *Protagoras* are all present in Cicero’s works (Degraff 1940). Translations of the *Gorgias* and *Menexenus* appear in the *Tusculanae Disputationes,* and we know Cicero translated Plato’s *Protagoras* and *Timaeus* (Degraff 1940, 145-146).

There are several challenges for Vlastos’ interpretation within Plato’s works. The *Protagoras* contains several passages that do not fit the ‘standard elenchus’ Vlastos identifies. Plato neither consistently has Socrates ask an interlocutor to ‘say what you believe’, nor does he have Socrates appear to offer his own truly held opinion. On the one hand, Socrates implies the value of saying what one thinks in the *Protagoras.* This is clear when he insists that he and Protagoras be direct with one another. He exclaims ‘It’s not this “if you want” or “if you agree” business I want to test. It’s you and me I want to put on the line, and I think the argument will be tested best if we take the “if” out’ (331c5-7). By removing conditional statements, they each

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\(^{178}\) Degraff highlights passages in Cicero’s *Academica, De divinatione, De finibus, De legibus, De re publica,* and *Tusculanae Disputationes,* among others, to establish Plato as Cicero’s ‘standard for all future philosophers’. As the ‘supreme master of literary excellence’, Degraff cites *De divinatione, De officis, Tusculanae Disputationes, Brutus, De oratore,* and *Orator,* among others.
would be forced to deal with the views of the other directly. Socrates suggests that the use of ‘if’ introduces a distance between one’s beliefs and the position one discloses. That distance insulates the speaker from the challenges posed by the other, making it less likely that those challenges could effectively improve false opinions. On the other hand, he tells Protagoras, ‘it makes no difference to me, provided you give the answers, whether it is your own opinion or not. I am primarily interested in testing the argument’ (333b6-333c7). Socrates does not criticize Protagoras for using evasive tactics or lecture him on the importance of saying what one thinks. He instead announces that it does not matter where they begin so long as Protagoras completes the argument. Socrates thereby propels the discussion forward for the sake of philosophical inquiry. Even if Protagoras refuses to say what he means, the argument at hand is worth scrutinizing. Protagoras helps demonstrate that the truth a complete argument can uncover is more important than the individual views of the interlocutors.179

At this point, I have shown that Cicero uses the dialogue form to preserve his Academic priorities and conceal his own position from his readers. Yet it is also clear that Cicero’s emphasis on truth-telling and transparency appears to contradict those efforts. Cicero appears to be giving the advice that philosophers should say what they really think, but not acting according to that advice. In some sense, Cicero’s hypocrisy reflects his shared criticism of the Epicureans and Stoics, that they cannot be transparent in public. In addition to his suggestions that we be transparent in philosophy, Cicero sometimes suggests the opposite. The Protagoras demonstrates the complexity of the idea that we should ‘say what [we] believe’ in philosophy. This kind of truth-telling may generally be a good idea, but it is easy to imagine circumstances in which saying what we believe is inappropriate or unproductive. Plato’s treatment is complex, and so is

179 My reading of the Protagoras is consistent with Terence Irwin’s response to Vlastos (see Irwin 1993 for a more thorough critique of the ‘standard elenchus’).
Cicero’s. Cicero does not always adhere to this ‘better method’ Torquatus uses. Sometimes
Cicero turns away from this method by shifting his emphasis from transparency to consistency.
At other times, he appears to disregard that method altogether. This is an apparent contradiction
in Cicero’s various postures surrounding truth-telling and transparency. Cicero’s aim for this
confusion, I suggest, is to make it nearly impossible for the reader to interpret whether he says
what he thinks. As a result, Cicero reinstates himself as a model for Academic skepticism.

Cicero sometimes suggests that the interlocutors need not be transparent in *De finibus.*
The first clear example occurs at *De finibus* ii 69 after Cicero has given a detailed account from
Cleanthes of Assos describing the relation between pleasure and virtue for the Epicureans:

> [Cleanthes] would ask his audience to imagine a painting of Pleasure, decked out
> in gorgeous regal attire, sitting on a throne. By her side are the Virtues, depicted
> as servants who consider their whole duty and function is to minister to Pleasure
> and whisper her warnings (if this can be conveyed pictorially) to take care not to
do anything unwittingly which might offend public opinion, or bring her pain in
> any way. ‘We Virtues’, they cry, ‘were born to serve you. We have no other
> business.’

Pleasure is given every privilege and luxury in this image, though her dazzling appearance does
not indicate any strength of character. Virtue, etymologically and culturally understood to be
one’s strength, is recast as a group of sycophants in slavish service. The image is meant to be
shocking and perverse. Cicero uses this description to illustrate his point that Epicurus’ theory, if
taken at its word, inverts traditional values and debases virtue.

Cicero anticipates Torquatus’ response at ii 70: ‘you will reply—and this is your strong
point—that Epicurus denies that one can live pleasantly unless one lives morally. As if I care
what he affirms or denies! My question is rather this: what can someone who treats the supreme
good as pleasure affirm consistently?\textsuperscript{180} Epicurus’ best defense is that he was a good person who maintained that there was still a role for virtue in his ethics, despite making pleasure the sumnum bonum. Yet Epicurus cannot consistently say that virtue matters while also subverting it to pleasure. Failures in transparency can be detected through inconsistencies between words and deeds. Inconsistency in words alone is equally undesirable, but contrary to expectation, Cicero casts the imperative aside. He claims not to care what Epicurus says at all. Cicero shifts his emphasis from transparency in philosophy to consistency. Because Epicurus cannot be consistent, we cannot rely on his own views, but only what follows rationally.

In De finibus v, the challenge to the imperative involves replacing transparency with consistency and, more starkly, Cicero’s refusal to disclose his own opinion. Both emerge from a when Piso asks Cicero to judge in the case of Quintus Metellus, explaining that

He saw his three sons become consuls, and one of those was a censor too and celebrated a triumph; a fourth son was praetor; he died leaving all four safe and well; his three daughters were married; and he himself had served as consul, censor and augur, and had celebrated his own triumph. Assuming that he was wise, surely he was happier than Regulus, who died in enemy hands of sleep deprivation and starvation, even if Regulus was also wise? (v 82)

Piso defends the idea that being virtuous (i.e., being wise) is sufficient for a happy life, but insufficient for the happiest life. Both men being wise, it is ridiculous for him to suppose that Metellus and Regulus are equally happy. The Stoics, however, insist that virtue is sufficient for happiness, so the virtuous or wise person is happy regardless of his circumstances. Thus Cicero tells Piso that the question would best be directed to the Stoics themselves (v 82). In effect, he refuses to pass judgment and give his own opinion. Piso is not deterred, however, and asks

\textsuperscript{180} At negat Epicurus (hoc enim vestrum lumen est) quemquam qui honeste non vivat iucunde posse vivere. Quasi ego id curem quid ille aiat aut neget; illud quaero, quid ei qui in voluptate sumnum bonum ponat consentaneum sit dicere.
Cicero to start the conversation over from the Stoic perspective. Cicero insists ‘we are wandering off the point’ and demands that we figure out what the commitments of each party are. Again, he blatantly refuses to answer the question and is returning to designations of what is consistent. Piso, dedicated philosopher that he is, keeps trying to get some commitment out of Cicero and asks ‘are you in agreement with Theophrastus’ great work On Happiness?’ (v 85). Cicero again avoids the question, repeating his observation that they ‘are wandering from the point’ (v 85).

The central focus of Cicero’s evaluation is consistency rather than transparency. It appears to turn the criterion of good philosophy away from transparency and toward mere consistency. Cicero makes Stoicism the more cohesive counterpart against Antiochus. By comparison the Stoics make obvious Piso’s own lack of consistency and cohesiveness. Piso, by making external goods necessary for the happiest life must also accept that poverty, for example, is an evil so that ‘no beggar can be happy, however wise’ (v 84). Cicero compares the Old Academy with the Stoics and claims that many might reject Stoicism because it is hard to understand how anyone ‘would be happy even when inside the bull of Phalaris’, but they cannot be accused of inconsistency (v 84). Piso, on the other hand, would be accused of inconsistency as well as the unlikelihood of a wise person being happy in the bull of Phalaris on account of his wisdom.

Two modes of evasion are used. First, Cicero shifts from transparency to consistency. Second, he refuses to disclose his own position; he ostensibly removes his views from the conversation. This facilitates a kind of objectivity that might otherwise be lost while fully adhering to the imperative to say what one thinks. In effect this may very well demonstrate the extent to which saying what one thinks can be put to use in philosophy. When Cicero checks the conversation to keep it from ‘wandering’, he emphasizes that the quality of the debate remains
important, even though definite claims cannot be made about his own position. It might be best
to be able to identify, at least, what one’s deepest allegiances are, and to speak directly about
those views, but Cicero also leaves open the possibility for philosophy that does not depend on
the expression only of what one thinks. Indeed, his own Academic affiliation encourages him not
to express what he thinks when he is teaching others.\(^{181}\)

Cicero’s rejection of the transparency he praised at the beginning of \textit{De finibus} ii is not a
contradiction. Not only does Cicero have defensible reasons for developing this tension, but he
also has a clear precedent in Greek philosophy. Socrates similarly advances and overturns the
requirement that his interlocutors ‘say what [they] believe’. The context-sensitive approach to
transparency in \textit{Protagoras} and in \textit{De finibus} is sensible. It allows for individuals to adopt
different positions as needed, and it makes it possible for the philosopher both to care about
earnest conversation and also keep his own position out of view as needed. This is how Cicero
can lead the readers through a serious discussion about ethics while also remaining free from
commitment to philosophical doctrines.

Many commentators seek to uncover Cicero’s own position in \textit{De finibus}. The standard
interpretation has Cicero endorse the position of the Old Academy.\(^{182}\) The less conventional
interpretation maintains that Cicero is too radical a skeptic to endorse the Old Academy.\(^{183}\) The
precise position that Cicero holds in \textit{De finibus} should be a secondary concern. Academic

\(^{181}\) He does give a kind of provisional acceptance of Theophrastus, but the position is never
confirmed and never denied (v 85).
\(^{182}\) See n. 88.
\(^{183}\) Brittain 2016 is an excellent work arguing in favor of Cicero’s radical skeptical methods in
\textit{De finibus}, but he emphasizes first that Cicero’s apparent endorsements of the Antiochian
position are superficial and then argues that Cicero suspends judgment between the Stoic and
Antiochian position. This suspension of judgment, he maintains, parallels Cicero’s suspension of
judgment in \textit{Academica}. The more standard interpretation of \textit{De finibus}, however, is that he
adopts a mitigated skeptical position along the lines of Antiochus (see Schofield 2008 and
Ioppolo 2016 for two examples).
skeptics (Old or New) argue for the unimpeded critical evaluation of every idea, and the word of an authority figure might impede one’s ability to critically assess an idea (Griffin 1997, 10-12). More important than Cicero’s own view in the text is the readers’ ability to practice philosophy well. This requires a good teacher that refuses to allow students to accept any idea on the basis of authority rather than rational assessment of its plausibility.

In conclusion, Cicero considers himself to be that teacher. He uses the dialogue ‘as a means of avoiding commitment and authority’, just as Plato does (Press 2012, 267). Cicero and Plato engage with the philosophical use of transparency and obscurity in similar ways. Unlike Plato, Cicero hides his own position by making his *persona* visible. Cicero as author, character, and translator complement the discussions throughout the text concerning the value of transparency in philosophy. Together they challenge readers to scrutinize the arguments presented in a new way. The readers should question the positions of each school, and the connection between the ideas of those schools and the actions of their practitioners. They should only accept that which has the most rational support. That is, casting doubt on transparency allows for at least the most talented readers to begin engaging in Cicero’s Academic philosophical practice. Dialogue is a suitable philosophical medium for a number of reasons. In the case of *De finibus*, the dialogue form challenges the audience to reconsider what it might mean for any of the characters to say what they think in philosophical debate. This is all the more true in the case of the Cicero character that need not represent the views of the author Cicero.
CONCLUSION

Each chapter of this dissertation offers some insight concerning Cicero’s aims for the De finibus. I show that Cicero develops flat, useful readings of the dominant positions without rejecting eudaimonism itself, that he offers his own alternative to the cradle argument on which the dominant positions rely, that he uses truth-disclosive terminology to suggest the relative strength of different positions, and that he obscures his own position, if he has one, in several ways over the course of the text. These features serve the two primary, interdependent aims I find in Cicero’s project: the critical assessment of the dominant ethical positions, and the education of his readers.

In the first chapter, I argue that Cicero uses the De finibus to instruct his Roman readers how to distinguish better and worse philosophical positions. This requires that he present the Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians as examples of how not to do philosophy. Cicero’s assessment of the other Hellenistic schools has often been criticized for being inaccurate, but such criticisms overlook that Cicero’s assessments are carefully conducted in service of his pedagogical aim. That is, Cicero’s treatment of the other schools highlights some key qualities that philosophers should manifest. Philosophers should be competent, avoid unnecessary jargon, honor the good work of their predecessors, and develop strong philosophical arguments that complement political engagement. Cicero rejects each of the schools for its failure to express one or more of these qualities. The Stoics and Epicureans especially become models of irresponsible philosophers in contrast to Cicero’s own project, which demonstrates a good way to do philosophy through Academic skepticism. The result of Cicero’s process is a sophisticated philosophical position that promotes eudaimonism, because it takes virtue seriously in a way that
can support political activity, yet rejects the current eudaimonistic theories because they fail to meet Cicero’s philosophical or political requirements for Roman philosophy.

In the second chapter, I show that Cicero suggests at least one positive position in *De finibus* when he arranges the text to enact dramatically an alternative to the ‘cradle argument’ ubiquitous in Hellenistic philosophy. Cicero rejects the cradle arguments as presented by each Hellenistic school, especially the Epicureans and Stoics, because they seek the *summun bonum* of rational adults in the behaviors and inclinations of pre-rational infants. Instead of appealing to infancy, Cicero suggests the origin of ethically relevant ends are better sought during an intellectually mature engagement with philosophy. The reverse chronology of *De finibus* allows Cicero to appeal to such a time in his youthful philosophical studies, within the context of the philosophically and rhetorically most impressive dialogue of the text.

Thus the results of Cicero’s critical assessments have both a negative outcome, rejecting the dominant positions, and a positive outcome, suggesting alternative positions. These positive contributions are subtle but, depending on the aptitude and training of the readers, powerful. Cicero additionally uses his authorial choices in *De finibus* to serve both the aims of critical assessment and instruction. In the third chapter, I argue that Cicero uses his position in *De finibus* as author to select and employ terminology carefully. In this text, Cicero employs terminology to express the clarity of evidence and conclusions carefully both with respect to the terms he chooses and the ways in which he uses them. Cicero generally uses *clarus* and *illustris*, for example, to refer to strong moral examples, i.e., examples of virtuous or otherwise admirable behavior, but other truth-disclosive terms to refer to strong philosophical examples. *Plane* generally indicates a position worth consideration. *Apertus* and *perspicuus* indicate value based on their context. *Perspicuus* is used in books 3 and 4 because *perspicua* are the starting point for
Stoic ethics, but it remains important in book 5. This suggests *perspicuus*, and thus the Stoic position, remains worth consideration even after Cicero criticizes it in book 5. I argue that Cicero uses these truth-disclosive terms to (1) challenge any presuppositions Cicero’s readers might have either about his personal position, or about the directness with which ideas should be presented in philosophy, and (2) lead the most astute readers to consider the relative strength of some positions against others, namely, that the Antiochian position is the strongest candidate and the Stoic position remains influential.

The final chapter extends this discussion of Cicero’s role as an author to include the other roles he creates for himself in *De finibus*. Cicero chooses to include himself in the text in three distinct roles, effectively obscuring his position from the readers, in order to guide his readers into making their own philosophical judgments. Cicero calls attention to his presence in the text as an author, translator, and character. In his narrations and introductions, Cicero expresses the *persona* of author. The authorial *persona* alone is concerned with communicating with Brutus and justifying his work. This generates distance between Cicero and his audience by introducing three different recipients of the philosophical debate contained in the text: the interlocutors, Brutus, and whatever other readers take up the work. As translator, Cicero calls attention to the language used in the text. He claims to be engaged in translation as a part of his project, and he praises Cato’s translation of important Stoic terms. Unlike the authorial Cicero, the translator is not concerned with obscuring Cicero’s own position. The translator Cicero does, however, force his readers to recognize his complex concerns. Finally, in his role as the character ‘Cicero’, he forcefully obscures his own position. In the first place, Cicero’s own position may be consistent or inconsistent with ‘Cicero’ on each major point of argument. Additionally, ‘Cicero’ engages in imaginary conversations within the dialogues, further distancing Cicero from the text. The triple
roles prevent the readers from attributing any position to Cicero himself in order that they engage with and evaluate the philosophical positions themselves and without concern for the authority that Cicero’s personal endorsement of any position would carry.

Through each of these four areas, Cicero directs *De finibus* both at the interlocutors and at the readers. The demonstrations that Cicero uses at the level of the interlocutors, however, serve the interest of the readers’ philosophical education. Cicero seeks to show his readers the general improvement of philosophizing over the course of the text, and the circumstances under which that philosophy takes place. The relative successes and failures of philosophical positions in the dialogue instruct the readers about the general terrain of ethical discourse. In learning about ethics, the readers are ideally thinking more critically about the principles on which they guide their lives and become better people. As better people, they might also become the virtuous citizens who could steady Roman politics again. Cicero is in some sense concerned with the impact of *De finibus* on the political future of Rome even when he deals with the minutiae, down to the knuckle bone, of Hellenistic ethics.¹⁸⁴

The best philosophical practices to help restore order to Roman politics and save the republic from tyranny belong to the Academics. Cicero demonstrates several features of Academic skepticism in *De finibus*. Cicero refrains from having his character set forward any positive position, focusing instead on the comprehensive criticism and dismissal of every other position. This feature is centrally concerned with the Socratic aim of ‘relieving others of falsely believing what they don’t’ (Thorsrud 2018, 51). In addition, he sometimes offers some

¹⁸⁴ *De finibus* could also be considered a protreptic for philosophizing. The choice to be sufficiently critically engaged to practice philosophy is an ethical one. Because ethics is fundamentally eudaimonistic for Cicero, the clarification of appropriate eudaimonistic thinking necessarily supports philosophy. This could be a crucial protreptic toward philosophy for Cicero’s Roman audience.
alternative positions that might be stronger than what is currently available, as in his dramatic enactment of the appropriate appeal to origins as an alternative to the cradle argument. This demonstrates that in his critical assessment and some creative presentation Cicero suggests ‘the most probable solutions to the problems discussed’ while also ‘concealing his own opinion so as not to interfere with the autonomy of the participants’, which applies to the interlocutors as much as the readers (Thorsrud 2018, 51). Yet even the best available answer in De finibus, the Antiochian position, is unsatisfactory. It is therefore likely that the best practice in philosophy is to engage in classical skepticism and either extend provisional acceptance of the position that has the most rational support via Carneadean probabilism, or suspend judgment where no view is better supported than the others.

The appropriate adoption of Academic practices among the interlocutors is reflected only in ‘Cicero’. In the case of De finibus, it seems that the best ethical ideas are grounded in eudaimonism, but the existing eudaemonist approaches of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Antiochians are all problematic for different reasons. If the interlocutors were good philosophers, they would all be turned away from their positions and toward further inquiry or more careful discernment with respect to the strongest and weakest component parts of their theories. Yet Torquatus, Cato, Piso, and the minor characters of book 5 all fail to do this. At the end of the first dialogue, Torquatus attempts to pass ‘Cicero’ off to an Epicurean better suited to defend Epicurean ethics against Cicero’s criticisms. Though he claims he could reply to Cicero’s criticisms, he would prefer to ‘leave it to more experienced philosophers’ (ii 119). At the conclusion of the second dialogue, Cato is similarly unmoved by the criticisms of ‘Cicero’. Both Cato and ‘Cicero’ express an interest in continuing the conversation together another time, but Cato insists that ‘Cicero’ remember the conversation thus: ‘you really accept all of our opinions
save for our terminology, [while] I on the contrary do not accept any of the tenets of your school’
(iv 80). Cato thinks that his own position remains untarnished by ‘Cicero’, and furthermore that
the position of ‘Cicero’ is somehow weaker than Cato’s because of his provisional acceptance of
the what seems plausible. The conclusion of the third dialogue indicates that ‘Cicero’ is the only
interlocutor who is not convinced by Piso’s position and exposition. Lucius, whose education as
at stake, is ‘completely won over’ without even waiting for the rebuttal from ‘Cicero’ (v 76).
Quintus, a minor character in book 5, asserts that Piso’s position is ‘already quite secure’ against
‘Cicero’s’ insistence that Piso must strengthen his position (v 96). Piso remains unchanged in his
position.

The interlocutors are unable to understand the full force and sophistication of the
Academic school and its methods. ‘Cicero’ cannot get the interlocutors to accept the major errors
of their theories that he exploits. This indicates the necessity for an esoteric and exoteric
position. For those who are unable or unwilling to see the strength of the Academic position
against the others, there must be some position in De finibus that would help them become better
people and citizens. The Antiochian position is best suited for these readers. For those who are
able and willing, however, there is a better way of practicing philosophy. Cicero’s Academic
practice is only discernible for his readers, not for his interlocutors. There is some suggestion,
then, that the readers should make better progress in philosophy than the interlocutors made. The
subtlety of Cicero’s writing, however, makes it so that only the most careful readers who are
most capable of practicing Academic skepticism well would be able to discern the Academic
features operating in the text. Thus Academic skepticism becomes an esoteric position that is
only available to those who can use it appropriately. In effect, the real participants in De finibus
are the readers, and the strongest participants should take Cicero’s way of doing philosophy as a main lesson of the text.

Additionally, by presenting interlocutors unconvinced even when they seem to be refuted, Cicero follows Plato’s example of often having Socrates’ interlocutors unconvinced or unmoved. A likely purpose of this sort of display is to show that the intellectualist understanding of the formation of patterns of opinion and thought is questionable. People maintain their opinions due to their interests and desires as much as their intellectual perspicacity and honesty. Cicero, similarly to Plato, shows unconvinced interlocutors in order to challenge the readers to be better interlocutors and philosophers than the participants in the depicted dialogue.

In order to appreciate Cicero’s *De finibus*, then, it is necessary to appreciate both the contents of the explicit arguments contained in the text as well as the dramatic context of those arguments. Like the excavationists, good readers of *De finibus* should evaluate the arguments for strength, detail, and accuracy. Yet they should also borrow from the contextualists and interpret how those arguments appear within the context of the *De finibus* overall. This allows good readers of *De finibus* to avoid attributing Cicero’s misrepresentations of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Antiochians, to careless error. Given the context of the entire work, it is evident that these misrepresentations are purposeful. They are useful, flat readings of existing philosophical schools that can be helpful in teaching philosophical novices about the worst positions in order that they might be able to recognize and generate better alternatives for themselves. We must, then, gain better appreciation of Cicero’s strength as a philosophical writer of contrived dialogues having many features in common with Plato’s dialogues.
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