

reflect a political virtue that remains fragile absent the support of active wisdom (119).

The Platonic dialogues are rich enough to complicate even the most illuminating readings. Two complications may need more attention. First, as finally revealed, active wisdom radiates serene confidence in its own rectitude (246; cf. 111, 183, 210). Yet the Socrates of these interpretations relentlessly tests himself in experiments with others (2, 24, 128–29); some experiments may be politically damaging (25, 129). Seen in light of Socratic practice, active wisdom seems less assured and more reckless than Pangle’s concluding judgment suggests. Would assurance be tempered and recklessness diminished by Socrates’s irony? Can we say more about the place of Socratic irony within the practice of active wisdom?

Separating philosophic from civic virtue (5,7, 113, 130, 150, 178, 215), we might hazard that irony is only necessitated by the shortcomings of Socrates’s interlocutors (49, 137). Optimally, irony would give way either to active philosophic wisdom or to calm civic strength (242–43). However, a second complication questions the finality of these alternatives. Pangle gives us reasons for asking. By ending her book with reflections on the *Laws*, she prompts more attention to the differences between Socrates’s and the Athenian stranger’s approaches to politics. While the Athenian’s wisdom is politically applied (212), Socrates’s philosophy is politically embedded, social practice (100; cf. *Phaedrus* 230d) rather than simply intellectual eminence. Would this sort of philosophy flourish as easily within the stranger’s “small, rooted communal polis” or the Sparta puzzlingly valorized by Socrates in *Protagoras* (171–73), both apparently preferred to “the more cosmopolitan and liberal Athens” (5)? As educational practice, however, Pangle’s book surely belongs more in Athens. *Virtue Is Knowledge* elides distinctions between philosophers and citizens by rightfully insisting that its readers somehow be both.

—Gerald Mara
Georgetown University



Jed W. Atkins: *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason: The “Republic” and “Laws.”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xiv, 270.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670515000121

Jed Atkins has written an engaging and excellent book, and it is his first. It represents a high point in the Ciceronian revival of the last generation and a half. After many scholarly articles and collections of such, the monographs

that reflect this renaissance have begun to appear. In this same year Jonathan Zarecki published *Cicero's Ideal Statesman in Theory and Practice* (Bloomsbury, 2014); earlier Yelena Baraz gave us *A Written Republic: Cicero's Philosophical Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2012), and Timothy Caspar put out *Recovering the Ancient View of Founding: A Commentary on Cicero's "De Legibus"* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2011). Atkins's book, as the others, shows how the revival over the years has moved past an emphasis on defending Cicero the thinker against the hostile caricatures launched above all in the nineteenth century, to a sense of discovery and celebration of the subtleties and overall wisdom of Cicero's political philosophy.

Atkins benefited from two developments in scholarship that contributed to the new (let us say "renewed" in a longer view of history) appreciation of Cicero. One was that of the rich and fertile scholarship of the last two generations on Hellenistic philosophy. The dissertation behind this book was directed by Malcolm Schofield, a key figure in that development. Atkins shows a good awareness of the claims regarding sources for the texts of Cicero he scrutinizes, and he engages a Cicero not reducible to those sources. His work is testimony to the apparent truth that, in the "end," the late-twentieth-century flowering of scholarship in Hellenistic philosophy can contribute as much to freeing Cicero from his sources as illuminating them and in turn Cicero's own thought.

Atkins has also participated in the fruits of the revival of political philosophy, especially classical political philosophy and notably on the American scene in the last half of the twentieth century. It seems that his undergraduate mentoring brought him to a high level of understanding of the tradition of political philosophy. This close study of two texts of Cicero entails a more than passing engagement not only with certain of Cicero's predecessors, especially Plato and his *Laws*, but also with the likes of Machiavelli, Burke, Arendt, and Roger Scruton. This study of two dialogues heralds and manifests the importance of "sustained and careful study" and the complexity of sound interpretation of primary sources (13) in seeking to find the coherent meaning of the author. Such then are the very special resources that one sees at work in the task Atkins undertakes in offering a commentary and interpretation of Cicero's *Republic* and *Laws*.

The lost portions (seemingly more than half) of the *Republic* and *Laws* further counsel modesty in interpretative efforts, and Atkins explicitly embraces the need; his tone in stating conclusions is nearly always appropriately modulated. Yet he is bold in taking on nearly all the important interpretive challenges of these two works, and we should be happy for that, because his working conclusions are so often persuasive and helpful. Along the way toward his overarching conclusion about "the limits of reason," his interpretive skills lead him to argue that the *Republic* and *Laws* are to be taken as complementary in understanding Cicero's "philosophical project" (4) of the 50s. That is, the *Laws* are seen to give us the legal structure for the regime commended in the *Republic* (not so for Zarecki). Atkins attends more than most do to Cicero's oration of 56, *Pro Sestio*, in enriching our understanding of the

“philosophical project”; on much the same good grounds for doing this, Atkins might have integrated more a consideration of Cicero’s important dialogue *De oratore*, which just precedes and possibly overlaps with his work on the *Republic*. Wanting to look more at the wholeness of Cicero’s understanding of the nature of politics in that first decade after his consulship, he resists the tendency to treat the Dream of Scipio, the closing portion of the *Republic*, as a separate text not readily relatable to rest of the dialogue. One of the highlights of Atkins’s book is how he interprets the Dream and understands it in relationship to Cicero’s political teaching of the 50s.

One important interpretive point on which this reviewer demurs is Atkins’s pressing, it seems too hard and inflexibly, the notion of tension between the philosopher and the city on the dramatic personae of Scipio and Laelius in the *Republic*. This appears to push the Laelius of the heavily fragmented Book III into a position he need not be seen to embrace and makes difficult accounting for other words and appearances of Laelius in this and other texts of Cicero. Scipio and Laelius may be two sides of Cicero’s soul, and as iconic friends they are in deep accord about the most important divine and human matters, truths partially recognized in Atkins’s interpretation.

Atkins emphasizes that Cicero’s project of this decade can only be well understood in the light of what he draws both from the masters of Greek political theory and from the Roman legal and constitutional tradition. Atkins’s claim is that these two dialogues are “products of the appropriation, transformation, and transcendence of Greek thought” (8). These dual resources for Cicero’s thinking lead him to make the persuasive claim that Cicero has incorporated “a conception of rights into his theory of political society” (152). Given, then, Cicero’s elaboration of the classical tradition, “rights talk” is not alien to it. However, this development does not turn out to be the “rights language” of modern individualism. Atkins, showing his best in moderation and sensitivity to contemporary relevance, writes of Cicero prompting “us to entertain the possibility that rights and shared purposes are not mutually exclusive alternatives.” Though rights may limit “what a government may do in pursuit of the good,” still Cicero gives priority to “a substantive notion of the good” (234).

Atkins’s argument about rights is facilitated by the importance he gives to Cicero’s *Laws* and how he incorporates this work’s teaching into his overall interpretation. His intent, however, is broader and is realized in this book, for he seeks no less than to restore the “*Laws* to its rightful place as an important and sophisticated treatment of natural law theory” (12). Among the ways Atkins shows his sensitivity to Cicero’s sophistication is in his exploration of Cicero’s “skeptical fingerprints” on his affirmation of natural law. In the end, however, his claim for nature’s role in Cicero’s political theory is large and significant. He writes that “Cicero has bequeathed to us the most impressive and comprehensive treatment of the relationship between nature and custom prior to Thomas Aquinas” (226).

Atkins’s treatment of another bequest of Cicero’s work of the 50s opens to us an especially enlightening and richly relevant dimension of the book. This

is his treatment of the idea of mixed government, including constitutional change, and how Cicero draws from and yet is critically different from his primary source in this matter, Polybius. It turns out that Polybius is seen here as an ancient stand-in for Machiavelli and thus as one who has no use for the ideal or utopian constructions of political thinkers. Cicero's realism and learning from history and tradition are coupled with an apparent reading of Plato that allows the critical role for utopian thinking in, once again, the synthesis that Cicero will embrace. From this dimension of the book we are brought closest to the large thesis of the book. Cicero's philosophical position respecting politics is that it is a sphere for reason's application but also one revealing reason's limits. With much good argument and interpretation, Atkins has come to support and embrace a finding that had emerged in the recent renaissance of Ciceronian studies, namely, that Cicero's model or ideal is not, of course, the literal one of Plato's *Republic*, nor is it simply Rome as frequently thought. Rather, instructed by Plato's own full and subtle teaching, Cicero utilizes Rome as "the best exemplification of the best practicable regime" (232).

Finally one is led to think that it is the power and significance of Cicero's writings that, when carefully attended to, brings once again a Ciceronian revival. Jed Atkins admirably attends with scholarly care and a critical imagination to Cicero's central political works. This reader is reminded of Elizabeth Rawson's observation, ten years after her initial publication of a biography of Cicero during which she became ever more the expert on the intellectual life of Cicero's time, that "closer knowledge of Cicero tends to breed greater appreciation" (*Cicero, a Portrait* [Bristol, 1983], vi). As he closes, Atkins reminds his readers of the specific teaching he emphasizes in this study, that given our persistent human aspirations to justice, we need a periodic return "to works that ask us to consider the extent to which such aspirations to justice might be realized" (238).

—Walter Nicgorski
University of Notre Dame



David N. Levy: *Wily Elites and Spirited Peoples in Machiavelli's Republicanism*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014. Pp. xv, 147.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670515000133

David Levy provides a lucid and concise analysis of Machiavelli's republicanism. His arguments are well supported by textual evidence. Although his reading of the *Discourses on Livy* and the *Prince* turns up little that will be