

A Brief Introduction to Marcus Tullius Cicero's *De Re Publica* and *De Officiis*  
By David Rosenblatt

- *De re publica* is a dialogue by Cicero, written in six books between 54 and 51 BC. It is written in the form of a Socratic dialogue and uses Plato's *Republic* as his model.
- The dialogue takes place in Scipio's estate, during three consecutive days.
- Large parts of the text are missing: especially from the 4th and the 5th book only minor fragments survived. All other books have at least some passages missing.
- The largest part of the surviving text was uncovered as a palimpsest in 1822.

**Book one:** Contains a discussion between the protagonists of the political situation of their time. The theme of the work is given and some comments are made about the theory of constitutions.

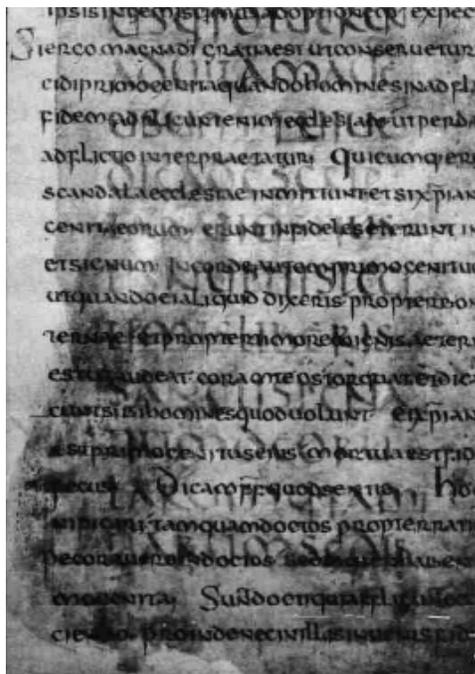
**Book two:** An outline of Roman history and the development of the constitution.

**Book three:** The role of justice in government is examined, as are the different types of constitutions.

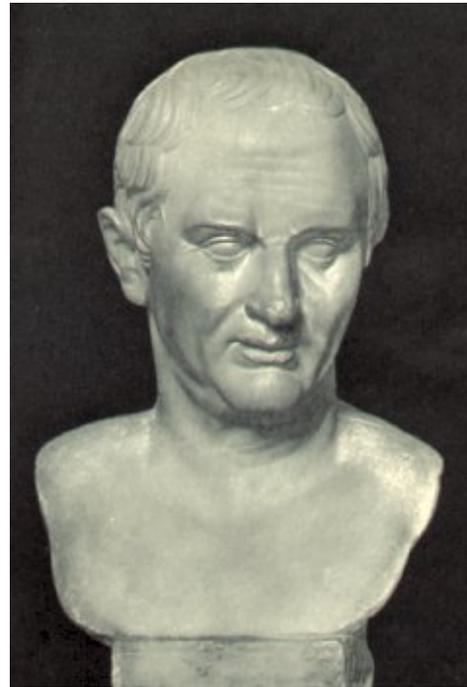
**Book four:** A discourse about education.

**Book five:** The characters converse about the qualities of the ideal citizen in government.

**Book Six:** Little of this book survives except the *Somnium Scipionis*, which functions as the conclusion to the work.



4<sup>th</sup> Century Palimpsest of *De Re Publica*, Vatican



Bust of Cicero, Prado Gallery, Madrid

- *De Officiis* (*On Duties* or *On Obligations*) is an essay by Marcus Tullius Cicero divided into three books, where Cicero explains his view on the best way to live.
- *De Officiis* was written in the year 44 BC, Cicero's last year alive, when he was 62 years old, in the form of a letter to his son of the same name, who was studying philosophy in Athens.

Some quotations from *De Officiis*:

Wars are to be undertaken in order that it may be possible to live in peace without molestation.

[Bella suscipienda sunt ob eam causam, ut sine injuria in pace vivatur.]

- *De Officiis* (I, 11)

Let war be so carried on that no other object may seem to be sought but the acquisition of peace.

[Bellum autem ita suscipiatur, ut nihil aliud, nisi pax, quaesita videatur.]

- *De Officiis* (I, 23)

In prosperity let us most carefully avoid pride, disdain, and arrogance.

[In rebus prosperis, superbiam, fastidium arrogantiamque magno opere fugiamus.]

- *De Officiis* (I, 26)