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CICERO

On Duties

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Editors' Note

There has been consultation and collaboration between us on every aspect and at every stage. The primary division of responsibility, however, is as follows. The Introduction was written by Miriam Griffin, who also furnished the list of Principal Dates, the Bibliography, the Biographical Notes, and most of the annotations on the text. The translation was the work of Margaret Atkins, who also prepared the Plan of the Hellenistic Schools, the Summary of the Doctrines of the Hellenistic Schools and the Notes on Translation. She also contributed to the Biographical Notes and the annotations. The Synopsis of *De Officiis* was a joint enterprise.

Miriam Griffin is grateful to Quentin Skinner for his comments on the Introduction and to the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton for providing ideal conditions for the project. Margaret Atkins would like to thank Malcolm Schofield and Merton Atkins, each of whom read earlier drafts of the translation with generous attention and contributed greatly to the final version.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Rawson.

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Introduction

The author

Marcus Tullius Cicero was born in 106 BC and was thus an exact contemporary of Pompey the Great and slightly older than Caesar the Dictator. Members of the last generation of the Roman Republic, all three were to die by violence in the decade of the forties, when the Republic itself was in the death throes of civil war. Pompey had said in public that, without Cicero's service to his country as consul, there would have been no Rome to witness his third triumph (*Off.* 1.78); Caesar had written of Cicero's service to Latin letters: 'You have won greater laurels than the triumphal wreath, for it is a greater achievement to have extended the frontiers of the Roman genius than those of Rome's empire' (Pliny *NH* VII.117). Yet these were two of the greatest generals in a state that admired, above all, military victory and conquest. What feats of statesmanship and eloquence had made such praise, or flattery, appropriate?

Unlike his great coevals, Cicero was a 'new man', the first of his family to hold public office (see p. 54, n. 1). He came from Arpinum, a town that had enjoyed Roman citizenship since 188 BC and had so far produced one great Roman general and statesman, Gaius Marius, who had saved Rome when a barbarian invasion threatened from the north in the decade of Cicero's birth. The Cicerones were local aristocrats, landed, leisured, educated, and involved in local politics. Cicero's grandfather had attracted attention at Rome by his conservative zeal in opposing the introduction of the secret ballot in Arpinum (see p. 30, n. 3). His father, sickly and thus confined

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to scholarly pursuits, was nonetheless set on giving his two sons, Marcus and his younger and less talented brother Quintus, the opportunities necessary for entering Roman public life. He took them to Rome where, at the house of the great orator L. Licinius Crassus, they were entrusted to the best teachers of rhetoric.

At the same period Cicero made his first acquaintance with law and philosophy, encountering among others the Stoic Diodotus, who was later to live and die in his house, and Philo of Larissa, the head of Plato's Academy in Athens, who fled to Rome in 88 BC to escape the invasion of King Mithridates of Pontus. Cicero then went to Greece in 79–77 to continue his study of rhetoric and philosophy. When he says in *De Officiis* that philosophy had not only been a great interest of his youth (II.4), but the source of his achievements in public life (I.155), he was thinking of its importance in the training of an orator. Diodotus had taught him dialectic; the Peripatetics, who had developed the theory of rhetoric, taught one to argue both sides of a question; the Academics taught one to refute any argument. They remained the most important for Cicero. While abroad, he had heard two charismatic philosophers, Antiochus of Ascalon (see p. xxxvi), and Posidonius, the Stoic polymath; but Cicero remained essentially true to Philo's early sceptical teaching, rejecting the possibility of certain knowledge and asserting his right to adopt what position seemed most persuasive on any occasion (II.7, III.20, cf. I.2, I.6).

Cicero had made his debut in the lawcourts during Sulla's dictatorship (II.51). After his return to Rome, he was elected to his first public office, that of quaestor, or financial officer, in Sicily. Six years later he prosecuted the rapacious governor Verres on behalf of the island (II.50). He went on to hold the aedileship, in which he gave the expected public entertainment but at moderate expense; despite this frugality, he tells us, he secured election to the two top offices ahead of the other candidates and at the earliest possible age (II.59). He thus became praetor at the age of forty and consul at the age of forty-three. It was a remarkable feat for a man of his origins.

The consulship of 63 BC, in which he completely overshadowed his colleague, was the summit of his career. He had no desire to command armies or govern a province of the empire, though some years later when he was sent to Cilicia, he performed his administrative, judicial, and indeed military duties conscientiously, while working to ensure his prompt return to Rome. The boastful allusions

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to his consulship that adorn every book of *De Officiis* (I.77, II.84, III.3) give only a faint idea of the importance Cicero attached to it. He celebrated it in Greek and Latin, in prose and verse, 'not without cause, but without end', as Seneca later remarked. For the conspiracy of Catiline, which Cicero provoked by frustrating both radical proposals for debt relief and the electoral ambitions of the blue-blooded Catiline, and which he then exposed and thwarted, would certainly have meant bloodshed and social upheaval. Cicero was shortsighted in ignoring genuine grievances in Rome and Italy, but he showed no lack of courage in confronting the consequences.

His prompt action, which included the execution of Roman citizens without trial, was resented in some quarters, and Pompey, though prepared to praise him, did nothing to prevent the tribune P. Clodius sending him into exile in 58. In retrospect, Cicero saw his suffering as that of a patriotic martyr (II.58), though Pompey secured his recall in the next year.

There was indeed a sense in which Cicero's change of fortune was linked with that of Rome. For the political alliance of Pompey, Caesar and Crassus, formed in 60, not only restricted the influence and activity of men like Cicero, but also subjected to military coercion the institutions of the Roman Republic – the popular assemblies which elected and legislated, the annual magistrates who convened them, and the Senate, composed of ex-magistrates, which provided the one element of continuity in policy.

Cicero had once suggested to his brother that his consulship was the realization of Plato's dream of the philosopher ruler (*Qfr.* I.1.29). Now, impeded in his service to Rome as a statesman, he turned to instructing her in rhetoric and political philosophy, writing dialogues inspired by the literary masterpieces of Plato. After his governorship and his subsequent involvement on Pompey's side in the civil war, Cicero was pardoned by Caesar, now Dictator, and resumed his literary activity: with the defeat of the Republican cause, independent and hence honourable political activity, he felt, was closed to him (*Off.* II.2).

Cicero turned to philosophy partly because it provided distraction and comfort, which became particularly necessary after the death of his beloved daughter Tullia in February of 45. It was also an honourable use of his leisure for the public good (*Off.* II.4–6), and a challenge that could bring honour to himself and to Rome. The

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challenge was to appropriate for Latin high culture yet another Greek creation, perhaps indeed the most difficult of all, given the resistance of the Roman outlook and the Latin language to abstract thought. The Romans had recognized from the start the superiority of Greek culture and had already had some success in creating a literature using Greek forms and Greek poetic metres, while Cicero himself had raised Roman oratory to a height that matched the best of Greek. Philosophy in Latin, however, had scarcely been attempted.

Between 46 and 44 BC, Cicero not only added to his works on rhetoric but created what amounted to an encyclopedia of Hellenistic philosophy, covering epistemology in the *Academica*, ethics in *De Finibus*, and natural philosophy in *De Natura Deorum*. These dialogues breathe the spirit of the sceptical Academy, for in them spokesmen for the major philosophical schools present their views and are subjected to exacting criticism. But Cicero also used the licence accorded by his sect to produce more dogmatic works on particular subjects, of which *De Officiis* is the last.

The political context of *De Officiis*

The great event that throws its shadow over *De Officiis* is the assassination of Caesar on the Ides of March 44 BC. Not only is Cicero at pains to justify the deed, over and over again, as tyrannicide (II.23–8, III.19, III.32, III.82–5), but he never misses an opportunity to castigate Caesar, by name or anonymously, for his unlawful ambitions (I.26, III.36, III.83), his demagoguery (I.64, II.21, II.78), his resultant rapacity towards men of property (I.43, II.29, II.83–4, III.36), and his harsh treatment of Rome's enemies and subjects (I.35, II.28, III.49). Though Cicero's intimate letters show that he sometimes took a more realistic view of the problems Caesar confronted and of his aims, they also show that at all times, before and during the dictatorship, as after, he believed that Caesar wanted tyrannical power (e.g. *Att.* X.1.3, X.4.2, X.8.6) and was bent on revolutionary social and economic measures. He also distrusted his much-advertised clemency (p. 19, n. 2; p. 71, n. 1).

The tragedy was that, in the view of Cicero and his friends, the Ides of March had not restored the Republic. The 'Liberators' had not thought any further steps necessary, not even convening the Senate as Cicero advised. With Antony in charge as consul, an amnesty

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was declared, and the office of dictatorship was abolished, but the dead Dictator's measures were maintained and his plans implemented. The two leading tyrannicides, Brutus and Cassius, held the office of praetor but were actually afraid to be in Rome. Then, in April, the Dictator's grand-nephew Octavian arrived in Italy, a formidable rival to Antony for the affections of Caesar's veterans and supporters. Antony, driven to more and more extreme measures of self-preservation, became in Cicero's eyes the real enemy whom the tyrannicides should have killed with Caesar, and whose killer would similarly deserve praise and glory.

The way in which Cicero expresses his uncertainty and anxiety about the fate of the Roman Republic in *De Officiis* fits into a pattern familiar from his letters and other works of the period. Cicero thought, at the time and afterwards, that peace bought with concessions to Caesar in 49 would have left the Republic alive, however debilitated (I.35, cf. *Fam.* VI.1.6); even during the civil war, he believed that a timely peace with the victorious Caesar could preserve the Republic, which had been weakened but was still strong enough to revive (*Fam.* XV.15.1, IX.6.3, VI.10.5); just after the Ides of March he could say that he had always believed that the period of rule by one man was merely a phase in a cycle of constitutions as described in Plato's *Republic* (*Div.* II.6–7). Yet, during the war between Pompey and Caesar and during the dictatorship, as indeed even earlier, he sometimes described the Republic as lost (e.g. *Att.* IX.5.2, IX.7.1, *Fam.* VI.21.1) – an exaggerated way of expressing disappointment with its present condition. Similarly, in *De Officiis*, Cicero talks, on the one hand, of there being no *res publica* at all (I.35, II.3) or refers to the *res publica* as lost, fallen, overthrown or murdered (II.29, II.45, III.4, III.83). On the other hand, he exhorts his son Marcus to follow in his own footsteps (II.44, III.6, cf. I.4); he teaches him how to succeed within the Republican political system where military glory, forensic eloquence, legal expertise and public liberality could earn one fame, influence and power (I.116, II.45–51, II.58–60); and he enjoins it as a duty on those suited to public life to endure the labours and political risks involved (I.71). When we find in *De Officiis* laments about the end of eloquence and jurisprudence (II.65–7), combined with assertions about the importance of mastering both (II.47, II.49, II.65 *fin.*), we are reminded of the *Brutus*, written under the dictatorship, where Cicero expressed gloomy resignation over the death of eloquence

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(21–2) and jurisprudence (157), yet ended by hoping for a revival of the *res publica* and exhorting Brutus to strive to excel in oratory (332).

These contradictions are neither signs of irrationality in Cicero, nor simply the results of rhetorical exaggeration. In *De Officiis*, as in the *Brutus* (157), they reflect Cicero's view of the present political situation as temporary and transitional: he speaks of 'the *interruption* – not to say the destruction – of eloquence' (II.67) and he says, ostensibly of the period of Caesar's dictatorship, 'Freedom will bite back more fiercely when *suspended* than when she remains undisturbed' (II.24). Just as he knew in 46 that there was a villain, Caesar, who could be removed, so after his removal he blamed particular men, Antony and his adherents, for continuing Caesar's policies and confiscations (II.23, II.28), his autocratic and violent form of rule (II.22–3, II.65, III.1) and his mistreatment of Rome's subjects (III.49). They were engaged in destroying Rome, as others had been in the past (I.57). But the others had failed, and so might they. Although Cicero occasionally lets his mind dwell on how men come to subject themselves through fear and greed to the power of another (II.22) or on a way of life in which the patronage exercised by the upper classes would amount to seeking favours from those with the power to help (II.67), he continues to regard as the norm the situation in which people like himself and his son are the recipients, not the purveyors, of flattery (I.91), except when tempted to play the demagogue (II.63). For him the Republic was too vital a force to be extinguished so quickly.

The complexity of the political situation, as Cicero presents it in *De Officiis*, matches the complexity of his own position, as he portrays it in his letters. In April of 44 BC, before Octavian landed in Italy, Cicero felt there was no place for him in politics any more (*Att.* XIV.6.2). Even before the Ides of March he had planned to go to Greece to supervise his son's education; afterwards he had held back thinking he might be able to advise Brutus. He had moments of hope, such as the occasion when his son-in-law Dolabella repressed pro-Caesarian demonstrations (*Att.* XIV.19.1). But in July, after hoping to accompany Brutus and thus make his trip a dangerous and patriotic venture (*Att.* XVI.4.4), he finally set out alone. Then he returned, when the winds proved contrary and a compromise between Antony and the Liberators seemed imminent (*Att.* XVI.7, *Fam.* X.1.1). On the last day of August he entered Rome in triumph (*Fam.* XII.25.3) and

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two days later he delivered in the Senate the first of his attacks on Antony, the Philippic Orations, which were ultimately to lead to his proscription and death. Of the Fourth, delivered on 20 December of 44, Cicero later wrote that he had regained hope of liberty and laid the foundations of the Republic (*Fam.* XII.25.2). Despite moments of despondency, he never hesitated again or lacked courage to pursue his ill-conceived policy of defeating Antony at all costs. The man he thereby raised up was more competent and more dangerous. But even he, as Augustus the founder of the Principate, had to take account of Caesar's murder and of the passionate belief in the Republic for which Cicero and others had died, and dress his autocracy in its faded garments.

The political assumptions of *De Officiis* are not therefore unrealistic, for it was a time of genuine political ambiguity, and the concern of the work with the difficulty of moral decision exactly suits the corresponding moral ambiguity that individuals faced. Even his friend and confidant Atticus, more cautious and less volatile than Cicero, wavered in his political assessments, changed his mind about the right course for Cicero to take, and asked his advice about his own conduct (*Att.* XVI.7.3, XVI.13.4). As in 49, Cicero's personal letters at this time show him using in his deliberations the same concepts he treats in *De Officiis*: *honestum*, *decorum*, *turpe*, *utile*, *incommodum*, *officium* itself (see Notes on Translation). He rejects the Epicurean solution of staying out of politics, but cannot find a way to participate (*Att.* XIV.6.2, XIV.20.5). Both he and Atticus look for comfort to Cicero's discussion in the *Tusculan Disputations* of death as a refuge (*Att.* XV.2.4), but Cicero broods on the suitability of suicide, Cato's solution, in his own case (*Att.* XV.20.2). And when he writes to Atticus in August of 44 about firmness of purpose (*constantia*, which for him was a key Stoic concept), 'In all the many writings on the subject, no philosopher has ever equated a change of plan with lack of firmness' (XVI.7.3), we are reminded of what he says at *De Officiis* I.112 about the conduct of Cato and others in the civil war, or at I.120 about the correct way to make a necessary change of career.

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The composition of *De Officiis*

The links between Cicero's surviving correspondence and *De Officiis* also reveal just why, when and how Cicero came to write the work.

In the first four chapters, at the end, and in the introduction to Book III (5–6), Cicero relates his choice of topic and his manner of treatment to the education of his twenty-one year old son to whom the essay is addressed. Letters to Atticus make it clear that Cicero planned the work with his son in mind: 'I am addressing the book to Marcus. From father to son what better theme?' (*Att.* XV.13a.2, cf. XVI.11.4). Young Marcus, Cicero's second child and only son, had been in Athens for a year studying both oratory and philosophy, and there is ample testimony in letters of the period to Cicero's concern with the progress of his education. He writes to Atticus about his son's well-written letters (*Att.* XIV. 7.2, XV.16.1, cf. Quint. I.7.34); bombards his teachers with requests for reports (*Att.* XIV.16.3, XIV.18.4), and is clearly perceived by his friends, and by young Marcus himself, as expecting a great deal of him (*Fam.* XII.16.2, XVI.25). All of this accords very well with what Cicero says in *De Officiis*: Marcus will be able to practise his Latin by reading Cicero's philosophical discussion (I.1, I.2); he must satisfy the expectations created by his superior education and his illustrious parentage (III.6).

In the last chapter Cicero explains that *De Officiis* is a substitute for a visit to his son that he would have made had political reasons not prevented him. Seven years earlier, in 51 BC when Marcus was fourteen, he and his older cousin Quintus went out with Cicero to his province, Cilicia, and, under his careful supervision, the two boys pursued their studies with a tutor. Now, as he tells Atticus, he felt that a visit to Athens 'would do much to keep Marcus steady' (*Att.* XIV.13.4). There can be no doubt then that what Cicero says in *De Officiis* about its relevance to his son is true. In keeping with his sceptical beliefs, however, he represents himself as using sweet reason to cajole an independent person, entitled to his own views (I.2, III.33, III.121), rather than putting pressure on a rather ordinary, but docile, young man whom his older cousin regarded as bullied (*Att.* XIII.37.2).

Even the form of the work reflects something of the true relationship. The fact that young Cicero was studying with the Peripatetic philosopher Cratippus while Cicero bases himself here on the Stoics, might have pointed to dialogue form, with the son defending the

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Peripatetic position against his father. But Cicero was always concerned that the roles he gave his speakers should seem appropriate to them, despite the freedom that the conventions of literary dialogue allowed. In the little work on oratory written some time before, the *Partitiones Oratoriae*, Marcus had been allowed to ask questions like a schoolboy; in *De Officiis* Cicero treats him as a student with his own ideas, but makes it clear that he was not yet ready to discuss philosophy with Cicero as well as listen to him (III.121).

The literary inspiration for this 'guidance and advice' that young Cicero is to keep with his notes on Cratippus' lectures (I.4, III.121) is, in fact, the Letter to a Son. Cicero cites several examples including letters of advice and reproof from King Philip to his son Alexander (II.48, II.53), and a letter of warning from the Elder Cato to his son (I.37). The tone of paternal guidance, encouraging but firm, is pervasive. Even in the midst of the argument, young Marcus has the lesson, that civil achievements are better than military ones, brought home to him by a slice of paternal autobiography, complete with an unashamed boast specifically addressed to him (I.77–8). On the philosophical level, while the relevance to the addressee is made clear in the deference paid to his Peripatetic leanings (e.g. I.2, I.89 (on The Mean), II.56–57, III.33), Cicero prefers to exhort him in Stoic terms, because that sets a higher standard (III.20).

De Officiis is, however, neither a general tract disguised as a personal address (like the *Pamphlet on Standing for Office* ostensibly addressed to Cicero by his brother Quintus), nor a piece of personal admonition disguised as a general essay (like the letter on how to govern a province addressed to Quintus by Cicero (*Qfr.* I.1)). It is both genuinely appropriate to Marcus Cicero and also directed at others, particularly young Romans of the governing class. In another philosophical work of this period, Cicero expresses the hope that he is helping to instruct the young of Rome (*Div.* II.4–5), and in *De Officiis* he often makes it clear that he has in mind those who have to decide on their way of life and need to learn from the advice and example of older men (e.g. I.117, I.121, I.147, II.44–51). It is important to bear in mind here the Roman belief in respect for age, imitation of ancestral achievement (II.44), and practical apprenticeship for public life (II.46). So Cicero has in mind, not only his son Marcus, but men like his son-in-law Dolabella (cf. *Att.* XIV.17a) and his nephew Quintus, clearly more gifted than his own son (*Att.* VI.1.12, X.11.3, X.12a.4)

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but easily seduced politically, first by Caesar and then by Antony (*Att.* X.7.3, XIV.17.3). Only months before Cicero composed *De Officiis*, he wrote of his nephew to Atticus, 'So complete has been the change in him produced by certain writings of mine which I have in mind and by constant talk and advice, that his political sentiments are likely in future to be just what we desire' (*Att.* XVI.5.2). The 'writings' are probably *De Gloria*, a lost work which, like *De Officiis* itself, combined what we would call moral and political instruction, and which actually overlapped in subject with the later work, as Cicero expressly indicates (II.31). It is clear that Cicero believed that such philosophical teaching could have a beneficial effect, particularly on the young.

It therefore seems natural not only that St Ambrose, in writing a work of moral advice for young priests whom he regards as his sons (*De Officiis* I.24), should choose Cicero's *De Officiis* as an appropriate model, but also that Machiavelli, in writing *The Prince*, a handbook of practical advice for the politically ambitious, should regard the same work as a rival worthy of attack (chaps. 16–18). For, as we shall see again, the young whom Cicero had particularly in mind were those whose place in society entitled them, and in his view obliged them, to attempt a career in politics.

It is possible to date the composition of *De Officiis* with reasonable precision. At the beginning of Book I we learn that young Marcus has already been in Athens for a year. Therefore Cicero is writing after 1 April, 44 BC, for a letter concerned with the vital matter of his son's annual allowance gives that as the date on which Marcus' first year of study came to an end (*Att.* XV.15.4). At the very end of the work Cicero alludes to his abortive journey to Athens to visit his son, and letters show that Cicero embarked for Greece on 17 July (*Att.* XVI.6.2, XVI.7.2). Finally, the letters enable us to date Cicero's situation, described at III. 1 as moving about from villa to villa because of the fear of violence from his enemies, to between mid-October and 9 December, after his first speeches attacking Antony (*Fam.* XII.23.4, *Att.* XV.13a.2, *Fam.* XI.5.1). Confirmation comes from two letters to Atticus about *De Officiis* itself. The first (*Att.* XV.13a.2) written from Cicero's villa at Puteoli (or possibly Cumae) about 28 October gives the subject of his work in Greek and promises that 'there will be work to show for this absence of mine'; the second sent from the same place on 5 November (XVI.11.4) reveals that he has been using a work of the philosopher Panaetius on that same subject to write

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and complete the first two books of his essay. Therefore Books I and II were completed between *c.* 28 October and 5 November of 44.

In the second letter Cicero tells Atticus that his work is being held up while he waits for Greek philosophical material that he expects to help him with the topic covered in Book III. One of the works that Cicero sent for had arrived by the middle of November (*Att.* XVI.14.4). He returned to Rome on 9 December and was soon deeply involved in politics. Even if we assume that Cicero started writing before October, that he polished Books I and II while waiting for his new material, and that he made revisions after his return to Rome, we cannot escape the conclusion that *De Officiis* was written quickly, given its size and complexity. A certain carelessness in structure and argument, a tendency to repetition and, occasionally, irrelevance can be connected with that fact. Some scholars have, however, gone further and tried to argue that, in so short a time, Cicero could not have done more than transcribe his Greek sources.

In *De Officiis* Cicero used his licence as a sceptical Academic to adopt the arguments that he found, at that time and on that subject, the most convincing, which were those of the Stoa (III.20). In making use of Stoic writings, he tells us, he retained the right to exercise his judgement and critical faculty: he was not merely translating or expounding them (see Notes on Translation, p. xlvii). The work he particularly followed (III.7) was the celebrated treatise *On Duty* (*Peri tou kathekontos*) by Panaetius, the Rhodian aristocrat who lived from about 180 to 109 BC, visited Rome, was the teacher and intellectual companion of Scipio Africanus Aemilianus, and became head of the Stoic school in Athens in about 129 BC. His treatise, written about thirty years before his death (III.8), hence in 140/39 BC, was now nearly a century old, but Cicero still preferred it to a later and fuller one by Panaetius' pupil Hecaton (III.63, III.89). Cicero could expect his friend Atticus and his readers in general to have heard of it, if we can judge from the abrupt way he refers to it, but not to know its structure in detail (*Att.* XVI.II.4, *Off.* I.7). Two centuries later it was still read and admired (Gell. *NA* XIII.28), but, sadly, it has not come down to us, and most of what we know about it comes from Cicero's treatise.

Panaetius apparently treated his subject in greater detail than Cicero, who condensed the subject matter of his model's three books into two (III.7, II.16 with n.1), but Panaetius' treatise was unfinished. Cicero may have known that from the start, for, in explaining to

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Atticus his need for material for Book III, he says that he has already sent for a work on the subject by Posidonius, Panaetius' gifted pupil, and asked a contemporary Stoic philosopher for an abstract, apparently of the same work (*Att.* XVI.II.4).

This defect in Panaetius' work would have been outweighed for Cicero by the merits that had recommended it to Greek and Roman readers (see p. 99, n.1). Panaetius had a more agreeable style than most Stoics (*Fin.* IV.79), and he was interested in giving practical advice to the good man who was not a sage (*Fin.* IV.23, Seneca *Ep.* 116.5). In writing for the general educated public, as in this work, he was happy to use moral concepts like 'good' and 'virtuous' in their ordinary sense rather than in their more restricted and elevated Stoic sense (II.35). He also had no interest in the Cynic strain of Stoicism which ridiculed conventional euphemisms and institutions (I.128, I.148).

For Cicero at least, there were other attractive features as well. Panaetius, though an orthodox Stoic, was influenced by Plato and Aristotle (*Fin.* IV.79), and Cicero wished in this work to minimize the difference between the Stoa, his own Academy, and the Peripatetic teaching to which his son was exposed. Moreover, Panaetius held up as a living model (II.76, cf. I.90) Scipio Aemilianus, one of Cicero's heroes (*Off.* III.1–4) and the chief speaker in *De Re Publica*, where his opposition to Tiberius Gracchus, one of the villains of *De Officiis* (I.76, I.109, II.43, II.80), is celebrated. But even more important than Panaetius' views were the interests he shared with Cicero. Panaetius treated the duties of men involved in public life, men who pleaded in the lawcourts (II.51) and endowed public buildings (II.60). He had anticipated Cicero in discussing exhaustively the means of winning repute and political support, while neglecting more commonly sought advantages like health and wealth (II.86, cf. II.16). Also suggestive is Atticus' response to Cicero's suggestion of translating the Greek word for duty as *officium*: he wondered if it would apply to public life as well as to private (*Att.* XVI.14.3). Atticus can only have asked that question on the basis of what he knew of Panaetius' work, for he had not yet seen a word of Cicero's.

As for the Posidonian material which Cicero had sent for (above, p. xix), that proved to be brief (III.8) and disappointing. Though it was useful, as Cicero had expected, for dealing with the subject of duties in particular circumstances relevant to Book III (see p. 62, n. 1), Cicero declares himself dissatisfied with all the material he found

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for that book and hence thrown back on his own resources (III.34).

Scholars have nonetheless asserted Cicero's dependence on Posidonius. Yet, even with regard to Books I and II, where we are on firmer ground, it is difficult to know how dependent Cicero is. On the one hand, he avows more often and more formally than in any of his other philosophical writings, his debt to one work in particular; on the other, the Elder Pliny (*NH* pref. 22–3), praising Cicero for his honesty in admitting dependence on Greek sources, compares the role of Panaetius in *De Officiis* with that of Plato in *De Re Publica*, where only the most general kind of inspiration is involved. Moreover, Cicero clearly expected his readers to accept his claim to be using Panaetius selectively and critically, for he feels it necessary to tell them occasionally that he has Panaetius' support for a controversial view (II.51, II.60). In fact, the similar philosophical terminology in his letters of the period, as well as his own allusions to his recent works on the principles of ethics (I.6, III.120), on glory (II.31), old age (I.151 and n. 2) and friendship (II.31), suggest that much of the thought in *De Officiis* antedates the actual time of composition. In any case, when we consider how marked the work is by contemporary events and how closely it mirrors Cicero's views elsewhere, we must conclude that Panaetius' work was too thoroughly digested and reworked by Cicero for us to separate the contributions of the two authors now. In an earlier work, Cicero had said that, in general, he did not simply translate the views of Greek philosophers but added his own judgement and arrangement of topics (*Fin.* I.5–6). The special dependence on his source that he avows here may lie in his decision to adopt and follow closely the structure of Panaetius' treatise, which he frequently mentions (e.g. I.9–10, II.9, II.88, III.7 ff., III.33–4). Even so, he added two supplementary topics to the three Panaetius adduced.

Themes and Perspectives

Each book of *De Officiis* deals with one of these three types of deliberation governing human conduct: honourable or the reverse; beneficial or the reverse; how to resolve apparent clashes between the two. The two supplementary topics, choosing between two honourable courses of action and choosing between two beneficial courses, form the conclusions to Books I and II respectively. (See the Synopsis, pp. xlviii–li.)

The modern reader may be struck at the outset by the inclusion,

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indeed the prominence, of the 'beneficial' or 'expedient' in a discussion of ethical conduct. This approach is not peculiar to Cicero but derives from the essential character of Greek and Roman ethical thinking. All the dogmatic schools of Greek philosophy held that the aim of life was the individual's *eudaimonia*, a word usually rendered as 'happiness' or 'well-being', and that the key to this blessed condition was provided by nature (including human nature). The schools offered different views on what constituted *eudaimonia* and hence on what the goal of life prescribed by nature was (see Summary, p. xxxv). But even for those that championed virtue, this pursuit was not opposed to, or even separate from, the pursuit of self-interest *properly understood*, for in pursuing the natural goal man fulfils his nature and achieves well-being. Cicero's readers would not then have been surprised to find him approaching the question of how one should behave by considering first 'the honourable', then 'the beneficial', and expecting the answers to agree in general, despite the existence of problematic areas in which the two appear to conflict.

One way to grasp the particular perspective of *De Officiis* is to consider what Cicero omits. The work is not a discussion of the nature of ethics or of the first principles of morality, such as Cicero had essayed in *De Finibus* (I.7, III.20). Cicero takes for granted the Stoic doctrine of the identity of the honourable and the beneficial, which he calls the 'rule' (III.81) and compares to the postulates of geometry (III.33); he states without argument that the Academic and Peripatetic moral principles would yield similar precepts (I.6) and be compatible with the *formula* for resolving apparent conflicts (III.20); he censures rather than rebuts the Epicurean doctrine of pleasure (I.5, III.39, III.117–20). Since even the basic principles of ethics are not examined, *a fortiori* there can be no treatment of the metaphysical foundations of ethics by which all these schools set considerable store.

De Officiis is concerned instead with practical ethics, with giving advice on the basis of the 'rule'. In Book I the 'honourable' is analyzed into four principal virtues to which our *officia*, defined as actions for which a persuasive justification can be given, are assigned (I.15, I.8, cf. I.101). These actions can be performed by 'good men' (in vulgar parlance), though when the wise man performs them, the understanding behind his choice and the consistency of his actions give them a higher moral value (III.14). Cicero is thinking primarily of those who wish to make moral progress and who will not choose

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the personally advantageous over the honourable, if they understand what really is honourable and advantageous on particular occasions (III.17–19). He cannot hope to set out a complete code of behaviour that will cater for every occasion. What he teaches is how to make moral decisions, how to analyze different possible courses of action: we should be, he says, 'good calculators of our duties' (I.59).

What has given this particular work of *practical ethics* an important place in the history of *political thought*, however, is its emphasis on social and political morality. Though at the outset (I.4) Cicero says that precepts about duty apply to the whole of life, what interests him is the behaviour of men in society, which is presented as the natural and best condition for human life (I.11, I.157–60, II.12–15). In Book I Cicero devotes much of his brief discussion of the first virtue, wisdom, to insisting that love of learning should not be allowed to draw us away from a life of action. The virtue that he regards as paramount is the second, justice, which governs social behaviour (III.28).

The extended discussion devoted to justice, however, reveals that Cicero is not equally concerned with *all* the social obligations of *all* men. Though he touches on our duty to mankind in general (I.50–3), later stating that the *formula* forbidding one to profit at another's expense applies there (III.30, III.42), he also makes it clear that no material sacrifices are required at this level (I.51–2). In discussing the different degrees of fellowship and the corresponding order of priority of our obligations (I.53–9), Cicero considers family relationships, friendships, duties to neighbours, to fellow-citizens and to those of the same race and language, giving priority in practical services to one's country and then to one's parents (I.58; see p. 62, n. 2). Of the relationships regularly included in Roman discussions of such priorities (e.g. Gell. *NA* V.13), guest-friendship (*hospitium*) and guardianship (*tutela*) receive only brief mention elsewhere (I.139, II.64, III.61, III.70), and clientship is only noted as a relationship regarded as so humiliating by those of any social standing that they would rather die than enjoy patronage or be called clients (II.69 with n. 1). The omission of the last two is indicative of Cicero's general lack of interest in obligations towards recognized social inferiors. Though he notes that we have obligations even towards the lowest, i.e. slaves (I.41, cf. II.24), we hear nothing, not only of duties to clients (ties that may have been weakening in the late Republic), but of the relation-

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ship of patron to ex-slave. We hear only about patronage towards subjects of Rome and Italian towns (I.35, II.50, cf. II.27, III.74), just as the only hospitality that interests Cicero is that shown to illustrious foreigners on public business (II.64, cf. I.149): the liberality of Cimon to all those in his district is not furnished with a Roman parallel. Cicero only alludes vaguely to the advantages of favouring the poor in showing generosity (I.49, II.62–3, II.69–70). Of course, some of the relationships of mutual obligation he describes would be more unequal in reality than in theory, but Cicero, in presenting an ideal of conduct, respects their theoretical equality.

As the treatment of patronage and hospitality already suggest, Cicero is as selective about the subjects as about the objects of obligation. He is primarily interested in those who take part, or reasonably aspire to take part, in public life. This helps to explain the long passage about the just behaviour of states in war (I.34–40), which is to be followed up later with discussions of the inexpediency of founding an empire on fear and exploitation (II.26–9) and of the true expediency of generous and honourable conduct by states towards their enemies, subjects and citizens (III.46–9, III.86–8). This also explains why, in the treatment of the third virtue (courage or greatness of spirit), all but one of the twenty-three chapters (I.69–91) devoted to the performance of great and useful deeds are concerned with the civil and military activities of public life, including actually being in office (72–85). This is shown to be the best arena for demonstrating contempt for adversity and danger, though ambition must always be kept within the limits dictated by justice (86–7).

When Cicero comes to the fourth virtue (I.93–152), he is again concerned with his peers, though towards the end he mentions that foreigners, non-citizen residents and citizens generally have particular duties and alludes to professions honourable for the lower orders (I.151). The core of the discussion is the notion of *decorum*, 'seemliness', which dictates that we choose a form of life appropriate to our individual talents and our material and social position (see Notes on Translation p. xlvi). Cicero reverts often to those with illustrious ancestors to imitate (I.116) and his examples are drawn from the civic and military leaders of the past. He expects even elderly members of the governing class to serve the Republic (I.123). The emphasis on success goes with that on observing social norms and not giving offence (I.99, I.148). Cicero's detailed discussion of social conduct, including one's

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external appearance (I.130–1) and one's house (I.138–40), and of the art of civilized conversation (I.132–7) are clearly geared to aristocratic behaviour, and some of his advice, e.g. on the total avoidance of nudity (I.129), is severely restricted to Roman society. It may have been Cicero's awareness of the social disruption caused by the civil upheavals of his time that led him to codify the manners he wished to preserve. In any event, ethical teaching here becomes indistinguishable from tips on social expertise, particularly useful for those not necessarily born to it but ambitious to rise.

When Cicero comes to compare the obligations under the different virtues (I.152–61), he is again at pains to emphasize our duty to society, for the claims of each of the other three virtues are compared with those of justice, not of each other.

This emphasis is continued in Book II, where the support of one's fellow men is quickly identified as the most useful or beneficial thing an individual can acquire (II.11–19). But only one chapter (30) is devoted to friendship, the kind of support that is attainable by both outstanding men and ordinary men. It is to the outstanding men that Cicero offers his advice on winning glory through good will, faith and honour (31–51), and his precepts on liberality (52–85). The financial aspect of liberality (55–64) provides the occasion for a discussion of public entertainments and buildings, the key forms of aristocratic largesse in the ancient world. The other aspect is liberality in services, and here most of the discussion (72–85) concerns what those in office can do for all or particular groups of the citizenry. It would not seriously misrepresent *De Officiis* to describe it as a handbook for members of the governing class on their duties to their peers in private life and to their fellow-citizens in public life.

The third book deals with the topic that Posidonius pronounced the most essential in all of philosophy (8). Cicero first reconstructs the lines of Panaetius' missing argument, adopting as the *formula* for resolving apparent conflicts between the honourable and the beneficial the notion, already implicit in the discussion of justice in Book I (21, 42 *fin.*), that it is contrary to nature to secure a benefit for oneself at someone else's expense. He then proceeds to his own development, which he represents as compatible with either Stoic or Peripatetic premises (p. 112, n. 1). The word *formula* is borrowed from Roman civil law (p. 107, n. 3) which also supplies Cicero with some of his most interesting cases of conflict. These alone would have made the

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work more accessible to his Roman readers, more of whom would have had the traditional legal training for public life than would have probed the intricacies of Greek philosophy. But the legal material is not confined to illustration. Cicero found an analogy in Roman legal thinking for the casuistry or analysis of moral cases practised at a high level by the philosophical schools (III.91). The fascination that the category of duties in particular (i.e. exceptional) circumstances held for the Stoics (I.31, III.32, III.92–6) is symptomatic of this interest. In it Cicero found his justification for tyrannicide and, in particular, for the murder of Caesar by men who had been his friends. For if the *formula* prohibits individuals *and states* from benefiting at another's expense (p. 115, n. 1), it does not prohibit citizens who have a duty to their country, their friends, and mankind in general, from injuring someone who harms his community and places himself outside the pale of human society by his subhuman behaviour (III.32, cf. III.19).

Roman law and jurisprudence are relevant to Book III at a deeper level even than technique, for they have an obvious connection with justice, which here again, as the social virtue, is given priority. Though Cicero professes to be treating the apparent conflict of the beneficial with each of the four divisions of the honourable (III.96), the conflicts that occupy most of the book are those between justice and self-interest posing as wisdom or 'good sense' (40–96). Even the clash with courage (97–115) involves discussion of the justice of keeping oaths (102–110, 111–115, cf. I.39), and the clash with temperance (116–120) turns into an attack on the Epicureans in which Cicero particularly condemns their adoption of the virtues as means to pleasure because, in his view, justice cannot be accommodated in this way. The attack on apparent 'good sense' brings Cicero into issues of fraud and good faith in which Roman law had made great progress in his own time through the use of the praetor's edict (p. 14, n. 1) to establish new types of legal action. Cicero describes the task of philosophy as raising human conduct to the standard set by natural law, but he also thought that human law codes should aspire to that standard (69–78). A man like Q. Mucius Scaevola the Pontifex, who set himself a higher standard of honesty than existing law required, also worked, as a judge, to raise legal standards (III.62, III.70). In Cicero's own lifetime legal actions offering protection against 'malicious fraud' were devised (60–1). Cicero also makes great play with the legal notion of the 'good

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man' (70, cf. p. 9, n. 1) and its relation to the higher philosophical conception (77).

This awareness and approval of recent legal developments combines uneasily with Cicero's equally strong conviction that the traditional Roman aristocratic code of behaviour exemplified the norms enunciated by the Greek philosophers, for he shared the conventional view of his contemporaries that they lived in an age of moral decline (III.III–II2, cf. II.65–6) and should return to the *mos maiorum* ('the way of our ancestors'). Thus Cicero makes strenuous efforts to show that the wars through which Rome had acquired her empire were undertaken only as a last resort in seeking to establish peace (I.35, I.38, II.26–7, cf. III.46) and that her ancestral procedures for declaring war instantiated the philosophical conception of a just war. Cicero planned from the start to use as the climax of Book III, and thus of the whole work, the extended example of M. Atilius Regulus, a patriotic martyr of the mid-third century BC (*Att.* XVI.II.4). His recital of how Regulus sacrificed himself in order to protect Roman interests while keeping faith with the enemy, concludes with a tribute to the seriousness with which Romans of the past regarded oaths (III–I5). The Roman ancestors are shown to have practised by instinct what the Greeks could only preach.

That had already been the message of the works of political philosophy that Cicero had written a decade before, *De Re Publica* (now only partially preserved) and the unfinished *De Legibus*. *De Re Publica* is the Roman answer to Plato's *Republic*, presenting as the ideal, not a theoretical construct, but the ancestral Roman state, analyzed as the mixed constitution of Greek theory and restored to its idealized past condition. *De Legibus* presents a skeletal law code to go with the ideal state. Backed by a theory of natural law derived from Greek philosophy, the code itself is similar in most respects to existing Roman law or custom, except for certain innovations clearly inspired by Cicero's own political experiences. In *De Re Publica* Cicero makes it clear that only a governing class educated to a high standard of conduct can restore the Republic to a healthy condition: the evils that threaten this process are ruthless imperialism and self-seeking demagoguery (cf. *Off.* II.60), just the ones that, in the later work, are held responsible for the perilous condition of the Republic. In *De Legibus* natural law or *ius gentium* is the standard to which the Roman *ius civile* can and should conform, just as in *De Officiis*, the

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principle of not profiting at another's expense (III.23) particularly through fraud and cunning (III.68–72), a principle that belongs to *ius gentium*, is shown penetrating Roman legal procedures through the principle of 'good faith'. Together these three works present Cicero's formula for the regeneration of the Roman governing class, a fusion of Greek philosophical precepts with the traditional values of the great Roman statesmen of the past.

Throughout *De Officiis* Cicero's own political orientation is apparent. We have already noted how closely his view of Caesar and Antony here fits that in his personal letters. Other enemies including Clodius and Crassus are turned into negative moral examples (II.58, I.25, I.109, III.73, III.75). Cicero's own insistence on the *concordia ordinum* ('harmony of different classes') and the maintenance of financial credit, particularly during his consulship, are defended (II.84). The same lack of imagination with which he had confronted as a politician the social and economic problems of his day shows here in the one solution he offers in opposition to the *popularis* programmes for land distribution and debt relief (II.72–4, II.78–84). In place of his enemies' schemes for redistributing existing wealth, he suggests the acquisition of new wealth through imperialism (II.85). How was this to be reconciled with his demand for just wars and the equitable treatment of Rome's subjects?

Even if Cicero did not always succeed, he did at least try to use the tools of Greek philosophy, not only to analyze and raise Roman standards, but to live and act rationally. Even his partisan belief in the sanctity of private property, whose preservation he here suggests is the chief purpose of organized society (II.73), is grounded on a view of human nature as fundamentally social (I.158), on a theory of how society develops (I.11–12, I.54), and on a conception of how human law, which protects such institutions (I.21, I.51), is related to natural law (III.68–9, III.72). To this extent *De Officiis* transcends its particularity – its contemporary allusions, Roman prejudices, political bias. Very different societies at very different times have found in it, not only a repository of political experience, but an example of the sharpened insight that political crisis can inspire in a truly educated statesman.

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Principal Dates

BC	Major Historical Events	Life of Cicero	Theoretical Works
106	Birth of Pompey	Birth of Cicero, 3 January	
104	C. Marius consul II triumphs over Jugurtha		
103–101	Marius consul III–V defeats the Cimbri and Teutones		
100	Marius consul VI. Birth of Julius Caesar		
95	L. Licinius Crassus and Q. Mucius Scaevola consuls pass Lex Licinia Mucia resented by Italian allies		
91–88	Murder of reformer M. Livius Drusus leads to Social War between Rome and her Italian allies who are defeated but offered Roman citizenship	Serves under Pompey's father in Social War Studying law with Q. Mucius Scaevola (Augur)	
88	L. Sulla marches on Rome and goes East to fight Mithridates. P. Sulpicius reformer killed	Hears Philo of Larissa in Rome Studying oratory	
87	Marius seizes Rome. Posidonius in Rome on embassy	Studying law with Q. Mucius Scaevola (Pontifex)	
86	Death of Marius		*De Inventione* (written after 91)

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BC	Major Historical Events	Life of Cicero	Theoretical Works
83–81	Sulla returns to Rome, orders proscriptions, becomes Dictator		
80	Sulla consul	Defends Sextus Roscius, his first public case	
79–8	Sulla in retirement and dies	Travels and studies in Greece and Asia: hears Antiochus of Ascalon, Posidonius, Zeno and Phaedrus (Epicureans)	
75–4		Quaestor at Lilybaeum in Sicily	
73–1	Slave revolt led by Spartacus		
70	First consulship of Pompey and Crassus	Prosecutes Verres for extortion in Sicily	
69		Aedile: gives games	
67	Pompey clears the Mediterranean of pirates		
66	Pompey given command against Mithridates	Praetor. Speaks for Pompey's command	
65		Birth of his son Marcus. His brother Quintus is aedile	
63	Catilinarian conspiracy exposed	Consul with C. Antonius. Executes conspirators without trial	
62	Pompey returns to Rome in December	Quintus Cicero praetor	
61	Pompey triumphs over Mithridates	Testifies against P. Clodius on sacrilege charge	
		Quintus Cicero governs Asia (61–58)	

60	Pompey, Caesar and M. Crassus form 'First Triumvirate'		
59	C. Julius Caesar consul uses violence to legislate		
58	Caesar begins his conquest of Gaul	Measures of P. Clodius send Cicero into exile in March	
57	Pompey put in charge of the corn supply for five years	Q. Cicero serves under Pompey (57–6) Recalled from exile; returns to Rome in September	
56	Renewal of 'First Triumvirate' at Luca	Cicero warned and ceases to oppose them	
55	Pompey and Crassus consuls II: both receive five-year commands; Caesar's command in Gaul renewed		*De Oratore*
54	Crassus leaves for Syria to fight the Parthians; Pompey governs Spain from Italy through legates	Quintus Cicero serves under Caesar in Gaul (54–52)	*De Re Publica* begun
53	Defeat and death of M. Crassus	Elected augur in place of M. Crassus	
52	Pompey elected sole consul after murder of P. Clodius and other violence		
51	First attempts in the Senate to recall Caesar from Gaul before his command expires	Goes to govern Cilicia, arriving 31 July. Quintus serves under him.	*De Re Publica* published *De Legibus* begun
50		Leaves Cilicia (30 July) and reaches Italy (24 November)	

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BC	Major Historical Events	Life of Cicero	Theoretical Works
49	In January Caesar crosses the Rubicon into Italy, has himself named Dictator In March Pompey leaves Italy for the East	Cicero continues peace efforts, though assigned a command by Pompey In June leaves Italy to join Pompey	
48	In August: Pompey defeated by Caesar at Pharsalus In September: Pompey murdered in Egypt	Cicero returns to Italy and waits for Caesar's pardon at Brundisium	
47	Caesar makes Cleopatra queen of Egypt In September returns and begins legislation Leaves to fight Republicans in Africa	In July pardoned by Caesar along with Quintus and his nephew Quintus jr.	
46	In April Caesar defeats Republicans in Africa at Thapsus: suicide of Cato In November Caesar leaves Rome to fight the Republicans in Spain led by Pompey's sons	Divorces Terentia Delivers *Pro Marcello*, thanking Caesar for his clemency, in the Senate Marries Publilia	*Brutus* *Paradoxa Stoicorum* *Eulogy of Cato *Orator*
45	In March Caesar defeats Republicans in Spain at Munda	In January Tullia gives birth to a son but dies in February In April young Marcus begins his studies in Athens	*Consolation to himself **Hortensius*: exhortation to philosophy *Academica* *De Finibus* *Tusculan Disputations* and *De Natura Deorum* begun

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