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978-0-521-82788-1 - Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic

Myles McDonnell

Excerpt

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INTRODUCTION – MANLINESS AND VIRTUS

On the fifth of December in 63 the Roman senate met to discuss a grave crisis.¹ Senators and a sitting praetor had been accused of conspiring to murder the chief magistrates and overthrow the state. Over the previous seventy years, the old and aching Republic had suffered terrible violence, but seldom if ever had men from the inner circles of power been accused of such crimes. In the debate to decide the fate of the accused senators, three of Rome's leading figures gave speeches that would become famous. Cicero's *Fourth Catilinarian* became a classic of Latin oratory, mined for examples of urbane wit.² Even more celebrated were the speeches delivered by Caesar and the younger Cato, which were immortalized by the historian Sallust, writing some twenty years after the event.³ A central concern of Cicero's speech, and of the words Sallust placed in the mouths of Caesar and Cato,

¹ All dates are B.C. unless noted otherwise.

² It was a source for Domitius Marsus' *De urbanitate*. See Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.109 and E. S. Ramage, *Urbanitas* (Norman, 1973) pp. 100–6. The present form of the *Fourth Catilinarian* was published by Cicero three years after it was delivered with considerable revision; Cic. *Att.* 2.1(SB 21).3, with G. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World, 300 B.C.-A.D. 300* (Princeton, 1972) pp. 176–82, esp. p. 177, n. 45.

³ Caesar's speech is at Sallust, *BC* 51, Cato's at *BC* 52.2–36. The debate between Caesar and Cato was famous; notices of it appear at Dio. 37.36; Plut. *Cic.* 20–1; App. *BC* 2.6 (20–2); Suet. *Jul.* 14, but all that survives of the speeches are Sallust's renderings. The relationship between the speeches Sallust gave to Caesar and Cato to what they actually said does not affect the point made here, which is the concerns shared by the contemporary participant Cicero and the near contemporary historian Sallust. Many other eminent senators also spoke that day; for the consular speakers, see Cic. *Att.* 12.21(SB 260).1 with E. G. Hardy, *The Catilinarian Conspiracy in Its Context: A Re-Study of the Evidence* (Oxford, 1924) pp. 89–97.

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was the decline of ancestral standards of manliness.⁴ Given that some of the men charged with planning to slaughter their peers had held the highest offices of the Roman state, and were the descendants of men who had made Rome great, this is not surprising.⁵ “Manliness” – what it was and how it had been perverted – was, in a real sense, what the debate and the crisis were about.

The Latin word for manliness is *virtus*, from *vir*, meaning man,⁶ and *virtus* designates the activity and quality associated with the noun from which it is derived; *virtus* characterizes the ideal behavior of a man.⁷ In all accounts of ancient Roman values *virtus* holds a high place as a traditional quality that played a central part in war, politics, and religion. So close was the identification of *virtus* with Rome that when *virtus* was honored with a state cult, the image chosen for the cult statue was the same as that of the goddess Roma herself: an armed amazon. *Virtus* was regarded as nothing less than the quality associated with, and responsible for Roman greatness, and was central to the construction of the ancient Roman self-image. The place of *virtus* in

⁴ For example, *Sit Scipio clarus ille cuius consilio atque virtute Hannibal in Africam redire atque Italia decedere coactus est.* – “Celebrate that Scipio by whose intelligence and manliness Hannibal was forced to return to Africa and to leave Italy.” Cic. *Cat.* 4.21; see also Sall. *BC* 51.42 and 52.22.

⁵ Conspirators included men from noble families and some patricians, as well as ex-consuls and praetors. See E. S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley, 1974, repr. 1995) pp. 418–22, and pp. 282–4, and Florus 2.12.3.

⁶ A primary meaning of *vir* is man as opposed to woman or child, but *virtus* rarely denotes this sense. *Vir* is one of a number of Latin words that denote a man. It is usually carries positive connotations, and often refers to a politically active man, as opposed to *homo*, which is frequently coupled with an adjective that denotes the status a man is born into (*nobilis*, *novus*, *Romanus*), or with a pejorative adjective. It is the close connection between *vir* and Roman citizenship that informs the usages of *virtus*. On *vir* and *homo*, see G. Landgraf, *Kommentar zu Ciceros Rede Pro Sex. Roscio Amerino* (Leipzig, Berlin, 1914) p. 115; T. Pulju, “*Vir* and *Homo* in Cicero’s *Pro Milone*,” *LACUS Forum* 19 (1994) pp. 567–74; also P. Hamblenne, “*Cura ut vir sis!* . . . ou une *vir(tus)* peu morale” *Latomus* 43 (1984) pp. 369–88 (376, and n. 26 on *vir* and *civis*); S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford, 1991) p. 7; F. Santoro L’Hoir, *The Rhetoric of Gender Terms, ‘Man’, ‘Woman’, and the Portrayal of Character in Latin Prose* (Leiden, 1992) pp. 9–28. Another Latin word, *mas*, denotes man as the males of the species.

⁷ The word is formed from *vir* and the suffix *tut*, which conforms to a pattern seen in *iuventus-iuvenis*, *senectus-senex*; see A. Ernout, A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*. 4th ed. (Paris, 1960) p. 739.

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ancient Roman values is well expressed by Cicero in a speech he gave before the Roman populace in 43:

crudelitatem mortis et dedecus virtus propulsare solet, quae propria est Romani generis et seminis. hanc retinete, quaeso, Quirites, quam vobis tamquam hereditatem maiores vestri reliquerunt. [quamquam] alia omnia falsa, incerta sunt, caduca, mobilia: virtus est una altissimis defixa radicibus, quae numquam vi ulla labefactari potest, numquam demoveri loco. hac [virtute] maiores vestri primum universam Italiam devicerunt, deinde Carthaginem exciderunt, Numantiam everterunt, potentissimos reges, bellicosissimas gentis in dicionem huius imperi redegerunt.

But *virtus* usually wards off a cruel and dishonorable death, and *virtus* is the badge of the Roman race and breed. Cling fast to it, I beg you men of Rome, as a heritage that your ancestors bequeathed to you. All else is false and doubtful, ephemeral and changeful: only *virtus* stands firmly fixed, its roots run deep, it can never be shaken by any violence, never moved from its place. With this *virtus* your ancestors conquered all Italy first, then razed Carthage, overthrew Numantia, brought the most powerful kings and the most warlike peoples under the sway of this empire. *Philippics* 4.13⁸

Virtus is the special inheritance of the Roman people, and it was by this *virtus*, this “manliness,” that Roman supremacy had been built. The Romans believed they were successful because they were “better” men.⁹ In order to understand the ancient Romans, therefore, one must understand their concept of manliness, and to understand that, one must understand *virtus*.

Yet *virtus* is a notoriously difficult word to translate.¹⁰ As in most cultures, in ancient Rome the term for manliness had a number of different denotations. Yet it is striking that a word whose etymological connection to the Latin word for man is so apparent, can be attributed

⁸ The text and translation (adapted slightly) is that of D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero Philippics* (Chapel Hill, London, 1986). For similar sentiments about *virtus*, see Cic. 2 *Verr.* 4.81 and Sall. *BC* 53.2–5.

⁹ Cf. Plin. *NH* 7.130, in the context of a discussion of *fortuna*. Although Romans did attribute *virtus* to some of their enemies, commonly to Gauls, see Claudius Quadrigarius, frag. 10b *HRP*, p. 208, and Caesar, *De bello Gallico*, where the attribution is common; cf. Sall. *BC* 53.4; and subsequently in Chapters IX and X.

¹⁰ D. C. Earl, *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* [henceforth *MPTTR*] (Ithaca, 1967) p. 20, claimed that *virtus* is untranslatable.

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not only to women, but to deities, animals, abstract ideas, and inanimate objects.¹¹ As a purely linguistic phenomenon this is noteworthy, but since *virtus* was regarded by the Romans as a preeminent social and political value, its wide and sometimes odd semantic range has implications that go beyond philological significance.

The phenomenon has received less attention than it deserves primarily because scholars have viewed *virtus* as an unchanging Roman value and have construed the word as having a semantic range intrinsically so elastic as to make almost any use of the word unremarkable. The general opinion among philologists and political historians is that *virtus* was an essentially unchanged concept, which from earliest times had a wide semantic range. Moreover, *virtus* is said to have been a single, all-embracing concept that subsumed other cardinal Roman virtues. It has been termed “homogeneous” or “undivided Roman *virtus*,” and its significance sought in a “*virtus* complex” of moral ideals. The prevailing view is that whatever changes may have occurred in the meaning of *virtus* were minimal and insignificant.¹²

¹¹ It is clear from usage that *virtus* struck the ear of an ancient Roman much as “manliness” does that of the English speaker; see James J. O’Hara, *True Names-Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor, 1996) pp. 107 and 127–8. But the semantic range of manliness is much more restricted. Although manliness may qualify an abstraction, e.g., “the silent manliness of grief,” Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* (OED, s.v., “manliness,”), unlike *virtus*, it cannot qualify something like farmland.

¹² W. Eisenhut, *Virtus Romana* [henceforth *VR*] (Munich, 1973) pp. 14–22, acknowledged the influence of Greek words, but argued that from the beginning *virtus* had broad semantic significance centering around the idea of general capability. The same view is found in Eisenhut’s entry on “*virtus als göttliche Gestalt*,” *RE*, Suppl. XIV (1974) cols. 896–910. K. Büchner, *Humanitas Romana* (Heidelberg, 1957) pp. 310–13, wrote of *einheitliche römische virtus*. For the *virtus* complex, see D. C. Earl, “View Complex,” *MPTR*, pp. 11–43, esp. pp. 34–6; see also “Political Terminology in Plautus,” *Historia* 9 (1960) pp. 235–43; *The Political Thought of Sallust* [henceforth *PTS*] (Cambridge, 1961) pp. 18–40; “Terence and Roman Politics,” *Historia* 11 (1962) pp. 469–85. To a great extent, this evaluation of *virtus* is derived from ideas formulated by earlier philological studies of the principal Roman virtues – ideals such as *pietas*, *constantia*, *gravitas*, *dignitas*, *auctoritas*, etc. – that dominated German scholarship between the two world wars; see, e.g., U. Knoche, “Der römische Ruhmesgedanke,” *Philologus* 89 (1934) p. 115, reprinted in *Vom Selbstverständnis der Römer* (Heidelberg, 1962) p. 23. Similar views were expressed by V. Pöschl, *Grundwerte römischer Staatsgesinnung in den Geschichtswerken des Sallust* (Berlin, 1940) pp. 12–26; cf. M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa* (Göttingen, 1948–9) II, p. 134 ff. For a caustic evaluation of the whole approach, see A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom* (Cambridge, 1975) p. 16.

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The central ideals of a society are, however, seldom entirely static. Speaking at a time of civil war, when he was rallying forces to defend traditional senatorial government against generals who challenged it, Cicero in the *Philippics* strove to present *virtus* as both traditional and unaltered. But, as Cicero knew, the meaning of *virtus* had changed over the course of centuries. Many Latin texts certainly do present *virtus* as a wide-ranging and all-encompassing ethical concept, but such texts, almost without exception, date to the period of Cicero or later. A general weakness of philological analyses of *virtus*, and other Latin values as well, has been their tendency to impose usages found in late-republican and imperial literature on to occurrences of *virtus* found in early (pre-Classical) Latin.¹³ The consequence of this myopic emphasis on uses of *virtus* found in Classical Latin has been, on one hand, to undervalue the meaning of *virtus* that predominates in early Latin – martial prowess or courage – and, on the other hand, to underestimate seriously the extent of Hellenic influence on *virtus*. That the Latin language was greatly influenced, especially in its lexicon, by borrowing from Greek, is certainly the case. In addition, the idea that *virtus* had an intrinsically wide semantic range is at odds with the conclusions of historians of ancient Roman institutions, religion, and art, who in examining the evidence for its cult, have agreed that *virtus* was primarily a martial concept.¹⁴

¹³ See, e.g., K. Büchner, “Altrömische und Horazische virtus,” *Die Antike* 15 (1939) pp. 145–64, reprinted in Büchner’s *Studien zur römischen Literatur III Horaz* (Wiesbaden, 1962) pp. 1–22, = *Römische Wertbegriffe*, ed. H. Oppermann (Darmstadt, 1967) pp. 376–99 where the picture of “old Roman *virtus*” draws very heavily on the works of Publilius Syrus; H. Dahlmann, “Das römische Mannesideal,” in *Mannestum und Heldenideal*, ed. F. Müller, (Marburg, 1942) pp. 22–35; reprinted as “Virtus Romana,” in H. Dahlheim, *Kleine Schriften* (Hildesheim, New York, 1970) pp. 9–22. J. Hellegouarc’h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et les partis politiques sous la république*. Publications de la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Université de Lille, vol. 11 (Paris, 1963) pp. 242–4, emphasized the political aspect of *virtus*, but his study is based almost entirely on late-republican texts; as noted by J. Sarsila, *Some Aspects of the Concept of Virtus in Roman Literature until Livy* (Studia Philologica Jyväskyläensia 16, 1982) p. 90. Early Latin is that before the time of Cicero’s literary productions (before c. 80 B.C.); Classical Latin is that written from c. 80 and c. A.D. 20.

¹⁴ E. Saglio, “Honos,” Daremberg-Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, III 1 (Paris, 1889) col. 248; G. Wissowa, in W. H. Roscher *Aus Führliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* I. 2 (Leipzig, 1886–90) “Honos,” p. 2707; IV (1924–37) “Virtus,” p. 336; and Wissowa, *RKR* (Berlin, 1902) p. 135; H. L. Axtell, *The Deification*

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It is Latin usage itself, however, that makes the notion of *virtus* as a wide-ranging ethical ideal untenable. This will be demonstrated in the following chapters, but two passages are worth noting here. In his tragedy *Hectoris Iytra* – *The Ransom of Hector* – the Latin poet Ennius, who lived from about 239 to 169, has Priam state that justice – *ius* – is better than *virtus* because bad men often possess *virtus*:

Melius est virtute ius: nam saepe virtutem mali
Nanciscuntur: ius atque aecum se a malis spernit procul.

justice is better than *virtus*, for bad men often acquire *virtus*:
justice and fairness take themselves far away from bad men.
155–6 Jocelyn = sc. 188–9 Vahlen = 200–1 ROL

The lines repeat a famous Socratic dictum about justice – δική – and courage – ἀνδρεία,¹⁵ and it might be argued that Ennius' characterization of *virtus* merely reflects the paucity of Latin vocabulary that compelled the single word *virtus* to regularly translate both ἀνδρεία, the Greek word for courage, and ἀρετή, the Greek word for excellence. Indeed, ἀρετή was a broad-ranging and decidedly ethical concept, and *virtus* was the standard Latin word used to translate it.¹⁶ But in Greek literature one does not find ἀρετή contrasted with ethical ideals as Ennius here contrasts *virtus* to *ius*. Quite the contrary, as early as the mid-seventh century, the poet Theognis expressed the view that “the whole of ἀρετή is summed up in justice” – ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνη συλλήβδην πᾶς ἀρετὴ ἴστιν. (147 West). By the mid-fourth century

of *Abstract Ideas in Roman Literature* (Chicago, 1907) pp. 22 and 25; E. Samler, “Honos,” *RE* VIII. 2 (1913) cols. 2292–4; J. A. Hild, “Virtus,” *Daremborg-Saglio* V (1917) col. 926; G. DeSanctis, *Storia dei Romani*, IV ii 1 (Florence, 1953) p. 302; K. Latte, *RRG* (1960) pp. 235–6; Combès, pp. 205–12; G. Dumézil, *ARR* (Paris 1974) p. 252. W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* [henceforth *WIRR*] (Oxford, 1979) p. 20. Contra Eisenhut, “*virtus als göttliche Gestalt*,” *RE* Suppl. XIV (1974) cols. 896–910.

¹⁵ Xen. *Sym.* 3.4; Pl. *Prot.* 329E; also Isoc. 4.197; cf. O. Ribbeck, *Die römische Tragödie im Zeitalter der Republik* (Leipzig, 1875, reprinted Hildesheim, 1968) p. 30. H. D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius* (Cambridge, 1968) p. 295. Earl, *Historia* 11 (1962) p. 476 and Eisenhut, *VR*, p. 30, commented on the “un-Romanness” of the lines.

¹⁶ For ἀρετή as an ethical concept, see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Sappho und Simonides, Untersuchungen über griechische Lyriker* (Berlin, 1913) pp. 169–89; and A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960).

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this idea had become proverbial.¹⁷ Ennius' lines, however, which were recited before a Roman audience, draw a clear contrast between *ius*, an overtly ethical quality, and *virtus*, and stand in stark contradiction to the theory that *virtus* was conceived of as an ethical ideal representing the sum of the qualities valued by Romans.¹⁸

Some might argue that the view of *virtus* expressed in these lines of Latin tragedy are poetic, Greek-influenced, and somehow un-Roman. Such things, however, cannot be said of its appearance in the prose work of a quintessentially Roman author. In Book Three of *De bello civili*, Julius Caesar writes of two Allobrogian brothers named Raucillus and Egus, who commanded Caesar's Gallic cavalry at the battle of Dyrrachium in 48. Caesar states that he had given them position and wealth because of the great *virtus* they had displayed in war:

... singulari virtute homines, quorum opera Caesar omnibus Gallicis bellis optima fortissimaque erat usus. his domi ob has causas amplissimos magistratus mandaverat atque eos extra ordinem in senatum legendos curaverat, agrosque in Gallia ex hostibus captos praemiaque rei pecuniariae magna tribuerat locuplesque ex egentibus fecerat. hi propter virtutem non solum apud Caesarem in honore erant sed etiam apud exercitum cari habebantur;

... men of outstanding *virtus*, whose excellent and very brave services Caesar had employed in all his Gallic wars. Because of this he had given to them the highest offices in their own country, and had seen to it that they, extraordinarily, were enrolled in the senate, and had awarded to them land in Gaul captured from enemies and a great amount of very valuable booty, and

¹⁷ Aristot. *EN* 1129B29; see Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*, p. 78. On δίκη and ἀρετή, see also Phocylides, 16, and note the reluctance of Thrasymachus to contrast the two at *Pl. Rep.* 348D. Sarsila, p. 42, cited Xenophanes (frag. 2 Diels-Kranz) contrasting ἀρετή to βῶμη – “strength;” not at all to the point. See Cicero, *Off.* 1.62, where in translating Panaetius Cicero uses *fortitudo* for ἀνδρεία, *virtus* for ἀρετή; cf. A. R. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De Officiis* (Michigan, 1996) pp. 191–2. The ethical meaning of ἀρετή predominates in Greek literature of the fourth century and later, especially Middle and New Comedy; see Chapter III.

¹⁸ This is true, whatever specific meaning *virtus* might have in Ennius' lines; on which see Chapter I. A connection between *virtus* and unethical conduct is also found in two unattributed fragments of Latin tragedy. In one, an act of violence that is characterized as *virtus* is also described as ethically repugnant, *inc. inc. fab.* 197–9 Ribb. = 102–4 *ROL*, p. 617 (on which see later Chapter I). Another fragment suggests that *virtus* is ethically neutral, and that while it is best to make ethical use of it, *virtus* could also be employed in the sacrilege of sacking a temple, *inc. inc. fab.* 30–31, Ribb. = 98–9 *ROL*, p. 617 (see Chapter I).

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had turned them from poor to rich men. Because of their *virtus*, these men were not only held in honor by Caesar, but were also dear to the army;

BC 3.59.1–3

Succumbing to greed, however, the brothers embezzled the pay of the soldiers under their command. This conduct is described as an ethical failing by Caesar, who writes that it brought public scorn as well as guilt to the two Gauls.¹⁹ Caesar, however, decided to put off any punishment of the brothers, and did so, he tells us, in large measure because of their *virtus*.²⁰

Caesar neque tempus illud animadversionis esse existimans et multa virtutum eorum concedens rem totam distulit; . . .

Caesar, deciding that it was not the time for punishment, and conceding much to their *virtus*, postponed the whole business; . . .

BC 3.60.1

The statement of Caesar, who was famous for his precision with words,²¹ that he had temporarily excused the ethical failings of Raucillus and Egus because of their *virtus*, makes little sense if *virtus* were normally considered a single all-inclusive and ethical concept. The contention that *virtus* comprised a “complex” of moral ideals that was “regarded by the Romans themselves as embodying the specially Roman ideal” is, therefore, demonstrably untrue.²² Yet it is the case that Caesar’s contemporary Cicero both states that an ethical usage of *virtus* (as the quality that engenders and preserves friendship) is its meaning in colloquial speech – *ex consuetudine vitae sermonisque nostri* –, and not infrequently employs *virtus* as a unified, all-embracing, ethical

¹⁹ Caes. BC 3.59.3. *Magnum tamen haec res illis offensionem et contempionem ad omnis attulit, idque ita esse cum ex aliorum obiectionibus tum etiam ex domestico iudicio atque animi conscientia intellegebant.* – “Nevertheless, this affair brought to these men [Raucillus and Egus] great discredit and scorn in the sight of all, and they realized that this was not only a result of the aspersions of strangers, but also of the judgment of their friends and of their own conscience.” (BC 3.60.2).

²⁰ Here, as almost always in Caesar’s works, *virtus* has a martial meaning, see Chapter IX.

²¹ For Caesar’s careful and pure diction, see Cic. *Brut.* 261.

²² Earl, *MPTR* p. 36. Hellegouarc’h, p. 568, saw that in the late Republic, *virtus* was not used as a moral term in ordinary language. Hamblenne, *Latomus* 43 (1984) pp. 369–88, came to a similar conclusion about the political uses of *vir*.

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term.²³ *Virtus* was a far more complex value than modern scholarship has supposed, and how it came to be used in various and contradictory ways requires explanation. But a study that privileges usages of *virtus* found only in Classical Latin will not do.

The first three chapters of this book examine the various meanings of *virtus*, from its earliest occurrences, with each instance of the word evaluated on its own terms by paying close attention to both textual and historical contexts. The influences of Greek words and ideas, in particular ἀρετή, on some of these meanings are evaluated, as are the socio-linguistic mechanisms by which these influences were effected. From a philological perspective, this will be seen to be largely a process by which Latin *virtus* came to take on the modern meaning of “virtue.” But analyzed as a purely ethical concept, *virtus* is inevitably a poor cousin to the more semantically wide-ranging and philosophically sophisticated Greek concept ἀρετή, from which many of the ethical references of *virtus* were adopted. A proper study of *virtus* must situate the Roman concept in its cultural and historical context as well as concentrate on the basic meaning of the term, which is “manliness,” and how it functioned in Roman society.

It will be seen that the pervasive influences of Hellenism on mid- and late-republican Rome, not only altered the meaning of the word *virtus*, but the idea of manliness itself. As a consequence, two distinct conceptions of the term developed – one traditionally Roman and essentially martial in nature, the other Greek-influenced and primarily ethical.²⁴ Not only that, but beginning in the late-second century, the divergent meanings of the term denoting Roman manliness were publicly debated, and the contested meaning of *virtus* played a critical

²³ Cic. *Amic.* 21. *sed haec ipsa virtus amicitiam et gignit et continet nec sine virtute amicitia esse ullo pacto potest* – “but this very *virtus* both engenders and preserves friendship, nor can friendship possibly exist without *virtus*” Cic. *Amic.* 20. For Cicero’s use of *virtus* as an all-embracing ethical term, see, e.g., *Off.* 3.13; *De or.* 3.136; *Mur.* 30; *Imp. Pom.* 64.

²⁴ The distinction between the two meanings of *virtus* seems to have been appreciated and employed by Machiavelli; see J. H. Hexter, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation* (New York, 1973) pp. 188–92. Most recent classical scholarship has followed Earl and Eisenhut. Those who have not are disappointing. C. A. Barton, *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2001) p. 57, renders *virtus* as “effective energy,” referring, pp. 41–2, to the dubious semantic connection between *virtus* and *vis*; on which see Chapter II, n. 3. Most of what Barton writes about *virtus* is impressionistic.

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ideological role in the crisis that shook and finally ended the Roman Republic.

Anthropological and sociological studies have shown that despite differences of content and definition, in most cultures manhood is regarded not as a status gained merely by coming of age, but as something that must be demonstrated or won, a concept that is precarious, elusive, and exclusionary. Moreover, in most cultures the term denoting manliness comprises a variety of qualities, emphasis on one or exclusion of another depending on societal values.²⁵ This book, therefore, also addresses the fundamental questions of what it meant to be a man – *vir* – in ancient Rome, how the status was attained, and how it changed over time. Institutions that taught and encouraged the aggressively martial types of behavior that Roman manliness traditionally comprised are examined, together with the ways in which manliness was demonstrated. Of great importance for understanding the nature of Roman manliness are the distinctive ways in which *virtus* was represented visually – the armed amazon and the mounted warrior – and the ideological significance of the latter in regard to republican values. In addition, it will be shown how, in order to insure the stability of the state, the Republic developed a singular system of institutional constraints on aggressive displays of manliness, and that the cult to divine Virtus played a central role in challenges to those constraints that were posed in the late Republic by ambitious Roman leaders.

The scope of this study is limited, with certain exceptions, to the republican period. (Because of the notoriously poor documentation for much of this period, some of the arguments that are later advanced

²⁵ So D. M. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making* (New Haven, 1990), M. Hertzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood* (Princeton, 1985), and for multiple masculinities, and the idea of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities, see R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1995) pp. 76–86; discussed in Chapter V. Despite the obvious importance that family and reproduction held for the ancient Romans, and that the word *vir* was used in reference to these, they were excluded from the ideal concept of manliness as represented by *virtus*. It is, therefore, unnecessary, and perhaps counterproductive, to analyze all the various meanings and nuances of the word *vir*, in order to understand the Roman ideal of manliness. To understand that, we must concentrate on the meanings and nuances of the word *virtus*, and on its place in Roman society and culture. On meanings of *vir*, see the works previously mentioned n. 6. For an illuminating treatment with a different emphasis, see the essays in A. Giardina, ed. *L'uomo romano* (Bari, 1989).