The Gendering of Virtue: Cultural Influence on the Semantic Development of *Aretē* and *Virtus*

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Abstract

The centrality of *aretē* and *virtus* in the value systems of the Greeks and Romans has been examined by many scholars, yet the lack of a comprehensive study directly comparing the semantic development of each term within their individual historical and cultural contexts represents a major gap in our understanding of these familiar yet elusive words. The present study represents a first step towards filling this gap by examining each word in a selection of authors to tease out nuances in meaning particular to their contexts. Chapter 1 analyzes the use of *aretē* in sources ranging from the eighth to the fourth centuries B.C.E., focusing on passages from Homer, Pindar, Plato, and Aristotle. Chapter 2 applies a similar analysis to *virtus* in authors from the third century B.C.E. through the first century C.E., concentrating on Plautus, Cicero's philosophical corpus, Valerius Maximus, and several early imperial epicists. These close readings demonstrate how three important dichotomies – male vs. female, young vs. old, and free vs. slave – are frequently employed to to clarify the meaning of achieving "excellence" or "manliness" for the default norm of an adult, male citizen. This reveals the role of the Other which has currently been underappreciated by scholars. This study also suggests a similar trend in the semantic development of each word, with an initial meaning focused heavily though by no means exclusively on excellence in martial contexts, a gradual expansion towards broader moral and ethical connotations (whence the modern proclivity to translate both words as "virtue"), and the eventual restriction of acquisition to an elite group of individuals. Differences are accounted for with reference to specific cultural and historical factors, such as the reduction in accessibility of *virtus* occurring more quickly due to co-option by the imperial family.

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Introduction

The centrality of *aretē* in the cultural, historical and educational outlook of the Greeks, as well as that of its parallel term *virtus* for the Romans has long been recognized. Studies have taken a variety of approaches, including analysis of semantic range within particular works, authors, and genres. A few attempts have been made to trace these words' chronological development, such as Miles McDonnell's examination of *virtus* from the earliest available evidence via inscriptions through the end of the Roman republic. Although *aretē* features as an important precedent for discussions of *virtus*, the scope of McDonnell's work results the Greek being largely relegated to a consideration of its impact on Roman thought rather than as an area worthy of investigation in its own right. Even fewer attempts have systematically and cohesively integrated analyses of both words in tandem. One such study by Anne Horner examined the force of each word in a variety of authors from Homer through the 2nd century C.E. to speculate on how major cultural and historical developments influenced the range of meanings over time. However, the piecemeal nature of Horner's investigation, her propensity for generalizations and overstatements, and the antiquity of her study (written over forty years ago) signal a great opportunity for further work both to incorporate additional material as well as to bring recent developments in scholarship to bear.

Chapter 1 shall focus on *aretē*, beginning after a brief overview with the earliest evidence available to us in the form of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The prodigious influence exerted by these epics on later authors supports the claim that *aretē* was the "moving force behind Greek education and the formation of ethical standards" for all succeeding ages of Greek history.[1] The next author in our examination will be Pindar, whose epinician odes represent continuity of

[1] Horner, p. 6

several important threads found in Homer, including the importance of physical strength and stress on *aretē* as an aristocratic ideal. However, we shall see several important expansions in meaning beyond what was found in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, including a wider range of referents and a greater emphasis on the multifaceted nature of excellence as shown through its variety of requirements. Plato and Aristotle represent the final stage of this chapter, where *aretē* will be shown to have expanded significantly in semantic range. At the same time, these two philosophers are more exacting compared to the Sophists in who could achieve *aretē*, accomplishing this in part by the use of the Other to define who precisely could attain this ideal state.

Chapter 2 picks up on several important themes identified in the survey of *aretē* by a similar analysis of *virtus*. Plautus provides the earliest reference point, where *virtus* is often displayed in martial contexts but even at this early stage seems to indicate moral coloring. By next considering Cicero's philosophical corpus, in particular the *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes*, we can detect a keen awareness of these previous developments as well as attention to shaping the range and availability of *virtus* directed primarily at the assumed audience of male, Roman citizens. Cicero's influence will then be tracked through early imperial authors, including Valerius Maximus, Vergil, Statius, and Valerius Flaccus, to consider how cultural and political shifts resulted in a similar reduction in the pool of those who could lay claim to *virtus*.

The trends identified in Chapters 1 and 2 will be briefly compared, where we consider how the culture and history during the time frames considered may have led to the particular developments observed. Given the immense scope of the gap in knowledge being addressed, future directions will be given to indicate potential routes forward.

Chapter 1 – *Aretē*

As a key moral and ethical concept, *aretē* plays a central role in Greek philosophical discourse, though its importance in other genres such as epic has also been recognized. Despite this importance, discussion is often hindered by the widely-lamented difficulty in translating the term.[2] Scholars generally admit that the typical translation of "virtue" is misleading at best and can even in some cases "irreparably distort the sense of the original."[3] This attitude reflects an awareness of the critical importance of considering the word within its societal context. The analysis of each author considered in this chapter therefore should first be grounded in a consideration of this context.

Further exacerbating the difficulty of translation is the fact that *aretē* has a long and complex history, varying in meaning significantly based on period and genre. As is the case with "many other analogous Greek words, the semantic development of the word *aretē* proceeded from the particular to the general; *aretē* in the sense of 'virtue' is extremely rare in Homer."[4] The expansion of the word has been described as "to some extent an innovation of the philosophers," who qualified it by the adjective *anthrōpinē*, 'human', and thus "surprised people by suggesting that they did not know what this was, but that it was something which must be searched for."[5] These philosophers, however, often explore the concept with reference not just to the "human" but specifically to the paradigmatic Greek male. As we shall see below, various Others are used

[2] On the difficulty of translating *aretē*, see Bluck (p. 202), Hawhee (p. 205) Willcock (p. 18), and Nehamas (p. 222), among others. Three common approaches taken are 1) translating on an *ad hoc* basis, using whichever of its many meanings seems best given the context, 2) consistently applying one English word such as "virtuosity" with the caveat that the semantic range of the Greek word is necessarily different, or 3) leaving the word untranslated. While each approach has its own advantages, the present study will follow the third option in order to minimize the risk of forcing a particular interpretation on a passage before discussion has taken place.
[3] Finkelberg (2002), p. 36
[4] Finkelberg (1998), p. 19. Although Finkelberg elsewhere discusses Indo-European linguistics, she provides no further rational for this claim here, nor any examples of such "analagous" Greek words.
[5] Guthrie, p. 9

to help define what it means to possess *aretē*, stressing the importance of a consideration of the cultural and historical context of each text.

In its most basic sense, *aretē* refers to "goodness" or "excellence of any kind" (LSJ *s.v.* *aretē* 1a). This idea can be seen in Plato's *Republic* as argued by Socrates and subsequently agreed upon by Thrasymachus. Socrates asks, "therefore, does there not also seem to you to be an *aretē* for each thing for which also some function (*ergon*) has been appointed?" (οὐκοῦν καὶ ἀρετὴ δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι ἑκάστῳ ᾧπερ καὶ ἔργον τι προστέτακται; 353b). He proceeds to discuss the *aretai* of eyes and ears as seeing and hearing well, respectively. The idea that the *aretē* of something can only be understood in reference to its purpose is also captured in the *ergon* argument of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*Eth. Nic.* 1097b-1098a), discussed below.

Based on this understanding, Guthrie argues that it would be normal for a Greek hearing about *aretē* to wonder "of what or whom?", for "excellence" or "efficiency" would be understood in relation to a specific task or in relation to the entity performing that task.[6] On the other hand, the word is often used by itself with no apparent need for qualification. Guthrie claims that when it is used in this way, "it would be understood to stand for the kind of excellence most prized by a particular community."[7] In a similar vein, Bluck argues that "when used without qualification [*aretē*] normally refers to the special excellence appropriate to a man – to the possession of those qualities which society values most highly."[8] The word is often dependent, whether explicitly or implicitly, on comparison *between* groups, since the excellence of a man implies that the task is more suited to being performed well specifically by a man rather

[6] Guthrie, p. 8
[7] Guthrie, p. 9
[8] Bluck, p. 201

than, for instance, by a woman, child, or slave.[9] There is a trend in defining and limiting *aretē* by various, often gendered uses of Others. These include discussions being put in the mouths of people belonging to different categories than that of the possessor of *aretē* in question, as well as the various ways a person of the default norm (free Greek male) depicts these other categories of people as foils.

We can thus observe two key features concerning the use of *aretē*. The first is dynamic in that the meaning gradually expanded over a period of several centuries from meaning "military prowess" and "valor" almost exclusively to encompassing a much broader range of possibilities, including the deeds themselves as well as the quieter "moral" virtues. On the other hand, another important feature is static in that a strategy of clarification via comparison to others (often with highly gendered language) remains a consistent thread across different periods. These two threads show a semantic expansion in line with Finkelberg's expectation, while simultaneously offering insight into how the Greeks conceptualized their values.

A close reading of Homer reveals predominant (but by no means exclusive) meanings of "military prowess" and "valor." Whether the word had other senses prior to this is up for debate, as Homer provides the earliest evidence for the word. [10] This exploration shall therefore begin with a consideration of *aretē* in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and will continue through the mid-4th century, evaluating Pindar and Plato before ending with an overview of Aristotle. Before discussing particular passages, a broad overview of usage in these four sources can provide some starting observations.

[9] The last of which, of course, could be biologically male, but in this case he would not be viewed by the Greeks as having the same capacity for *aretē* as a free man. Cf. discussion of *Od*. 17.322 below.
[10] Horner, p. 1

Statistical Overview

A consideration of the patterns of case and number usage in the four selected authors might give insight into how these sources are using the concept of *aretē*. Table 1 below indicates a remarkable diversity in the case usage across all four sources considered. There is a general trend of *aretē* appearing more frequently in the nominative in later writers. This perhaps reflects a tendency in those writers for the concept of *aretē* to be taking center stage in the structure of a sentence, rather than in Homer where the emphasis is on the agent. In this case, there are frequent occurrences of someone, for instance, displaying their *aretē* (accusative) or excelling in *aretē* (dative) for a particular task.

Table 1. Case distribution of *aretē* in Homer, Pindar, Plato, and Aristotle.

	Nom.	Acc.	Gen.	Dat.
Homer	14%	33%	22%	31%
Pindar	14%	32%	16%	38%
Plato	22%	36%	35%	7%
Aristotle	35%	34%	26%	5%

As with *virtus*, *aretē* appears frequently but certainly not exclusively in the singular – a discussion along similar lines will occur in Chapter 2. The main outlier in these data are with Pindar, who uses it at almost equal rates in the singular and plural (see Table 2). This may be more indicative of the genre of epinician odes, written in praise of deeds of valor. Because Pindar often praises not only the victory in question but also those previous ones, either by the same victor or his relatives, *aretai* meaning "brave deeds" or "achievements" is common (cf. LSJ *s.v. aretē* 1a).

Table 2. Number of *aretē* in Homer, Pindar, Plato, and Aristotle.

	Singular	Plural
Homer	92%	8%
Pindar	49%	51%
Plato	98%	2%
Aristotle	81%	19%

We shall now begin our close readings with a consideration of Homer, though one final statistical observation shall be given to frame our analysis – the importance of *aretē* for the characters of each story is underscored by the disproportionate rate of its inclusion in direct speech. On the whole, 44% of the *Iliad* and 56% of the *Odyssey* are spoken directly by various characters, while the remainder is allocated to a third-person narrator.[11] However, of the 36 occurrences of forms of *aretē* in both works, only 7 (or 19%) are spoken by the narrator.[12] This diminishing of external validation from an outside narrator and concomitant increase in display and contention over *aretē* by the characters themselves reflects the agonistic nature of Homeric excellence.[13]

Homer

A more restricted range of meanings for *aretē* can be found in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* compared with later sources. As noted earlier, *aretē* can mean goodness or excellence "of any kind," but in Homer in particular, it is used "esp[ecially] of *manly* qualities" (LSJ *s.v. aretē* 1a; emphasis original). Adkins notes that the *aretē* is often associated with the adjectives *agathos*, *esthlos*, and *chrēstos*, and that taken together, these constitute "the most powerful words of commendation used of a *man* in Homer."[14] Similarly, Heehaw argues that "*aretē* was associated

[11] Maciver, p. 270
[12] By text: four out of sixteen (25%) in the *Iliad* and three out of twenty (15%) in the *Odyssey*.
[13] For a discussion of agonism and *aretē* as it pertains to a variety of genres, see Hawhee (2002).
[14] Adkins, p. 31 (emphasis my own)

with the goodness, courage, and prowess of a warrior."[15] Given that the *Iliad* deals heavily with acts of war and their consequences, it is unsurprising that those who have "excellence" are generally described as being successful in combat, an activity largely restricted to male characters. Even when dealing with this restricted category, though, the moral connotations typically associated with later philosophical developments are not absent. In such cases, an apt translation for *aretē* might be "valor" or "courage" with reference to a quality beyond mere physical strength. While the predominant meanings of *aretē* in the *Iliad* are heavily influenced by the context of battle, the different narrative focus and style of the *Odyssey* reveal a shift in emphasis. We shall see that although references to excellence in combat still occur, other manifestations such as surpassing beauty also play an important role. These other manifestations reflect the strong emphasis on the visibility and external recognition of *aretē* in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. *Aretē* is generally understood in scholarship as having a "performative dimension," and that it is essentially an "external phenomenon, depending on outside reception and acknowledgment for its instantiation."[16] These observations are supported by the following readings.

Aretē is thus characterized in Homer by excellence displayed specifically in combat, though not without exception. I instead argue that the portrait is more complicated than is sometimes presented in previous scholarship since (to reuse Finkelberg's wording about semantic development) the "general" can already be often detected alongside the "specific."[17] While the range of meanings will continue to develop in later sources, a second important feature seen by its usage in Homer will remain constant regardless of period, namely the importance of

[15] Heehaw, p. 187
[16] Heehaw, p. 187
[17] For instance, it has been claimed that "*aretē* (when applied to a man) *has no reference to 'quiet' moral virtues*" (emphasis original) but referred only to skill and success in war (Bluck, p. 201). For Finkelberg's statement, see p. 3.

definition via comparison against others. Because of the agonistic nature of *aretē*, it is rarely presented as though in a vacuum; rather, one is generally seen as excellent in something only by virtue of one's superiority compared to others. This trend can be seen starting in Homer, where *aretē* possessed by both men and women is still typically defined by comparison against a masculine norm and will reoccur in our examination of Pindar, Plato, and Aristotle.

A typical usage of *aretē* can be seen in Book 11 of the *Iliad*, where the narrator describes a battle which throughout the day has remained undecided:

ἦμος δὲ δρυτόμος περ ἀνὴρ ὠπλίσσατο δεῖπνον οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃσιν, ἐπεί τ᾽ ἐκορέσσατο χεῖρας τάμνων δένδρεα μάκρα, ἄδος τέ μιν ἵκετο θυμόν, σίτου τε γλυκεροῖο περὶ φρένας ἵμερος αἱρεῖ, τῇμος σφῇ **ἀρετῇ** Δαναοὶ ῥήξαντο φάλαγγας, κεκλόμενοι ἑτάροισι κατὰ στίχας. (*Il*. 11.86-91)	But at the hour when a woodman makes ready his meal in the glades of a mountain, when his arms have grown tired with felling tall trees, and weariness comes on his heart, and desire of sweet food seizes his thoughts, then by their ***aretē*** the Danaans broke the battalions, calling to their comrades through the lines.

The description of the time of day provides contrast to emphasize the active and agonistic nature of *aretē*. We are told that this is the time a lone woodsman might prepare a solitary meal and hope for sweet (γλυκεροῖο) food. In Homer, this adjective is applied most often to sleep, but even without this resonance, a scene of restfulness following exertion is clearly portrayed. This leads into a scene where we have not one person but many, and there is not a break following the exertion but rather a renewed effort at fighting. This brief respite from a depiction of battle in effect sharpens the audience's awareness of the nature of combat as a struggle between many individuals where there is the opportunity to distinguish oneself in relation to the other. The lines both preceding and following this passage also stress the agonistic nature of battle, albeit in different ways. The lines prior emphasize the collective nature of the people who are fighting (πῖπτε δὲ λαός, *Il*. 11.85) while those following focus on individual bouts of superiority, beginning with Agamemnon's triumph over Bienor and Oïleus. These lines then act as the crux

between this transition, where a collective *aretē* is given as the instrument by which the Danaans establish themselves as superior to the Trojans in this engagement. The comparative nature of *aretē* is further underscored by the act of the Danaans calling to each other. This rallying cry acts as a token of recognition among the Danaans – not only have they broken the battle lines, but this act of vocalization ensures that their comrades have recognized this fact, and in exchange that they themselves recognize the *aretē* of the others. The standard features of dependence on acknowledgment and performative nature are evident here, where the context also makes it clear that *aretē* must refer to excellence specifically in battle.

These two important features – excellence specific to martial prowess and clarification of that excellence by outside sources – can be seen elsewhere in the *Iliad*. For instance, when Idomeneus meets his attendant Meriones away from the battle line, the former questions why the latter has departed, speculating either injury or a message needing to be delivered as the cause. Meriones replies that he is simply fetching another spear to replace his broken one, assuring Idomeneus that he has not forgotten his strength (*alkē*) which he identifies as being found in the battle line "when the strife of war arises" (ὁππότε νεῖκος ὀρώρηται πολέμοιο, *Il*. 11.271). Here, *alkē* seems to carry the meaning specifically of "strength displayed in action" (LSJ s.v. ἀλκή). To this, Idomeneus replies:

οἶδ᾽ ἀρετὴν οἷός ἐσσι· τί σε χρὴ ταῦτα λέγεσθαι;
εἰ γὰρ νῦν παρὰ νηυσὶ λεγοίμεθα πάντες ἄριστοι
ἐς λόχον, ἔνθα μάλιστ᾽ ἀρετὴ διαείδεται
ἀνδρῶν—ἔνθ᾽
ὅ τε δειλὸς ἀνὴρ ὅς τ᾽ ἄλκιμος ἐξεφαάνθη·
(*Il*. 13.275-8)

I know what manner of man you are in *aretē*; what need have you to tell the tale of it? For if now all the best of us were being chosen beside the ships for an ambush, in which the *aretē* of men is best discerned—there the coward comes to light and the man of valor.

As with the example from Book 11, the context of battle is at the fore, through phrases such as "beside the ships" and "for an ambush." When the reader encounters *aretē* shortly after,

therefore, the natural interpretation is for this to mean excellence specifically in fighting. Idomeneus' reply curiously uses *aretē* as though quoting Meriones, though the word the latter used was actually *alkē*. This perhaps indicates the close connection between excellence and strength specifically performed in action. This informs our understanding of *aretē* requiring an active role, rather than simply a passive state possessed by someone. Meriones' anxiety about his battle prowess not being recognized also stresses the dependency on acknowledgement raised earlier. Idomeneus provides such a validation by assuring Meriones that he *is* in fact aware of his *aretē*.[18] The recognitive aspect of *aretē* is further reflected in the choice of verb ἐξεφαάνθη ("brought to light"), which emphasizes the visible and therefore public nature of *aretē*. The second key feature – clarification via comparison – is also illustrated here, notably through the word διαείδεται, where the prefix stresses the act of distinguishing oneself from others. Idomeneus goes even further, specifying the *deilos* and *alkimos* as the two points of comparison. One can have *aretē* and thus be *alkimos* (an adjective related to *alkē*) only by having the *deilos* in mind to serve as a foil.

A more complex example can be found in the word's first occurrence in the *Iliad*. In Book 8, Hector addresses the Trojans and claims "tomorrow [Diomedes] will come to know his *aretē*, whether he can face the approach of my spear" (αὔριον ἣν ἀρετὴν διαείσεται, εἴ κ᾽ ἐμὸν ἔγχος μείνῃ ἐπερχόμενον, *Il*. 8.535-6). *Aretē* is directly linked with ability in combat here, and there is the implication that Diomede's *aretē* has not been secured yet but rather must be performed and thus obtained in battle. Hector's challenge also reveals the distinctly gendered

[18] Idomeneus uses "I know" (οἶδ᾽) to show this recognition. Because of the external recognition required for *aretē* as discussed here and elsewhere, one might argue for the relevance of the visual root of the word here ("I know" literally being "I have seen").

nature of *aretē* (LSJ cites this passage as an example of *aretē* meaning "manhood").[19] However, there is a distinction between this and the previous examples in that Hector is concerned here with the ability to "remain" (*meinēi*). This expresses the closely related idea of courage in the face of danger rather than simply a demonstration of physical might. The ideas of strength and courage are in fact interwoven in an exchange between Odysseus and Diomedes shortly after. When asked what has caused them to forget their *alkē*, Diomedes assures Odysseus: "I truly shall wait and endure" (ἤτοι ἐγὼ μενέω καὶ τλήσομαι, *Il*. 11.317). While Homer's *aretē* often deals with ability in combat, we can see that there are in fact important variations on this theme, from the straightforward, aggressive act of breaking battle lines to the more defensive and ethical courage demonstrated by enduring in combat.

In addition to providing insight into the range of meanings possible for *aretē* in Homer, this example also reveals how the *aretē* of a warrior is juxtaposed and thus clarified by comparison with others. Immediately before this, Hector gives orders via heralds to various groups – the boys and old men are to gather on the battlements, and the women are to build fires in their halls (*Il*. 8.517-522). It is made clear from the context of the speech that the different groups have different functions, casting *aretē* in this passage as being distinctly adult/masculine.

Excellence in combat also occurs in the *Odyssey*, albeit less frequently. For instance, Antinoos and Eurymachos are called "the best by far in *aretē*" (ἀρετῇ δ᾽ ἔσαν ἔξοχ᾽ ἄριστοι, *Od*. 4.629) when the narrator describes the suitors throwing the discus and javelin.[20] Though not a direct depiction of battle, these skills are indicative of the kind of skill and strength needed to

[19] LSJ *s.v. diaeidō* A. I take "manhood" as referring to performing the actions expected of a Greek man, though the English word carries many other possible connotations.
[20] The suitors' names may carry additional significance, as the *anti-* of the former's name indicates his role as fighting against Odysseus, while "-machos is usually found in heroic names alluding to war and battle," common in the *Iliad* but limited to Telemachos and Eurymachos in the *Odyssey*. For further discussion, see Kanavou, pp. 132-3.

fight. This same phrase establishing the two lead suitors' superiority in *aretē* is repeated in Book 22. The context here is decidedly more martial, as Antinoos and Eurymachos are now called the best of those who "were still living and fighting for their lives" (ἔτ᾽ ἔζωον περί τε ψυχέων ἐμάχοντο, *Od*. 22.245). The previously identified pattern of comparison is clearly established in these two examples, given that Antinoos and Eurymachos' status is given directly in relation to the rest of the suitors.

Odysseus is unsurprisingly the most frequent possessor of *aretē* in the Odyssey. His "manifold *aretē*" (e.g. as attributed to him by Penelope at *Od*. 18.205) combines the traditional elements of physical strength and courage with the more specifically Odyssean traits of craftiness and wit. For instance, before facing Scylla and Charybdis, he rallies his crew in the following way:

οὐ μὲν δὴ τόδε μεῖζον ἔπειϭ κακόν, ἢ ὅτε Κύκλωψ εἴλει ἐνὶ σπῆι γλαφυρῷ κρατερῆφι βίηφιν· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔνθεν ἐμῇ **ἀρετῇ**, βουλῇ τε νόῳ τε, ἐκφύγομεν, καί που τῶνδε μνήσεσθαι ὀίω. (*Od*. 12.209-212)	Surely this evil that besets us now is no greater than when the Cyclops penned us in his hollow cave by brutal strength; yet even from there we made our escape through my **aretē** and counsel and wit; these dangers, too, I think, we shall someday remember.

Odysseus' *aretē* is set in opposition to the *biē* of the cyclops Polyphemus, thus establishing them as valid objects of comparison. However, the two other datives of instrument (*boulēi* and *noōi*) demonstrate that Odysseus' did not need direct physical prowess to achieve his own brand of excellence. As cyclopes are often viewed as barbaric, Polyphemus thus stands in as an Other which Odysseus uses to clarify his own strengths.

As in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* relies on gendered divisions to help clarify the range of meaning available to *aretē*. This can be seen, for example, during a discussion of Penelope where the first occurrence of the word in the epic occurs. The suitor Eurymachos is giving his haughty reply to Telemachos when he ends his speech with the following assertion – "We on our part

waiting here day after day continue our rivalry for that *aretē* of hers, and do not go after other women, whom each one might fitly wed" (ἡμεῖς δ᾽ αὖ ποτιδέγμενοι ἤματα πάντα εἵνεκα τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐριδαίνομεν, οὐδὲ μετ᾽ ἄλλας ἐρχόμεθ᾽, ἃς ἐπιεικὲς ὀπυιέμεν ἐστὶν ἑκάστῳ, *Od*. 2.205-7). I have used Murray's translation here as a point that he translates *aretē* as "that excellence of hers" even though the Greek contains no explicit descriptor of the *aretē*. Indeed, there is much scholarly contention about whose excellence is at stake here, with some proposing that the suitors are keen to prove their *own* excellence by acquiring as desirable a wife as Penelope.[21] It is also important to note that Eurymachos in his speech has just rejected the significance of both Telemachos and Halitherses, who can be seen as representing states which are too young and too old to achieve the *aretē* of the men the suitors fancy themselves to be. By projecting the struggle for *aretē* onto Penelope and implicitly excluding Telemachos and Halitherses, Eurymachos both reinforces the agonistic nature of the term but also reflects the tendency for clarification by use of Others as foils. On the other hand, if the *aretē* mentioned *does* refer to Penelope, validation is still created through reference to others, as Eurymachos makes it clear that they are forgoing others (*allas*) in order to pursue Penelope.

Nevertheless, *aretē* can in fact be possessed unambiguously by women. A clear example of Penelope's *aretē* can be found much later in the epic when she, speaking to Eurymachos in Book 18 and a disguised Odysseus in Book 19, describes how her excellence (ἐμὴν ἀρετὴν) in both form and stature (εἶδός τε δέμας) were lost the moment Odysseus left for Troy (*Od*. 18.251 = *Od*. 19.124). While *aretē* here clearly cannot refer to excellence in battle, it is still connected indirectly to the concept, given Penelope's claim that "with them [i.e. the Argives] went my

[21] Helleman, p. 244. She claims that this the "traditional view" holds that this line refers to Penelope's *aretē*. However, she cites Odysseus' tale in *Od*. 14.212 as evidence for how a man could prove his *aretē* by claiming a desirable wife.

husband Odysseus" (μετὰ τοῖσι δ᾽ ἐμὸς πόσις ἦεν Ὀδυσσεύς, 19.126), revealing her status as intimately connected with Odysseus' departure for war. Penelope's *aretē* here is also dependent on external evaluation and recognition, given the highly public visual nature of *eidos* and *demas*, reinforcing another connection with the typical *aretē* of a warrior. *Eidos* also stresses the visual nature of *aretē,* given that the most basic meaning is "that which is seen" (LSJ *s.v. eidos* I). Nonetheless, this example complicates the image of *aretē* as primarily combat-focused sometimes presented in earlier scholarship.[22]

While gender is the predominant point of clarification for defining *aretē*, other categories are also employed for comparison. We have seen both in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that considerations of age may influence one's access to typical masculine *aretē*. Similarly, slaves can be employed as a foil for the norm, assumed to be a male, adult Greek citizen. When speaking to Eumaeus in Book 17, Odysseus makes the following observation:

δμῶες δ᾽, εὖτ᾽ ἂν μηκέτ᾽ ἐπικρατέωσιν ἄνακτες, οὐκέτ᾽ ἔπειτ᾽ ἐθέλουσιν ἐναίσιμα ἐργάζεσθαι· ἥμισυ γάρ τ᾽ **ἀρετῆς** ἀποαίνυται εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς ἀνέρος, εὖτ᾽ ἄν μιν κατὰ δούλιον ἦμαρ ἕλῃσιν. (*Od*. 17.320-4)	Slaves, when their masters cease to direct them, no longer wish to do their work properly, for Zeus, whose voice is borne afar, takes away half his ***aretē*** from a man when the day of slavery comes upon him.

Not only is the *aretē* of a free man established as superior when compared to that of a slave, but this example also shows the external reinforcement of that fact. Here, it is a divine agent that imposes this judgment of worth on the human. As we shall see with Pindar, divine validation of mortal *aretē* will become a consistent theme.

[22] Cf. Finkelberg's argument that *aretē* is essentially a competitive value in Homer and that a non-combative meaning of "virtue" is "extremely rare" (pp. 19-20). She does not go so far as to claim that it is exclusively martial, but she comes close.

Pindar

We began our investigation of Homer with an observation concerning his rate of usage, there concerned with the prevalence of *aretē* in direct speech. A direct comparison with Pindar is not possible as his odes do not feature quotations by specific characters; however, a similar observation can be made concerning prevalence. 39 of his 44 odes (or 89%) contain at least one occurence of *aretē*.[23] The five which do not are amongst the shortest of his works, averaging only 24.4 lines.[24] Thus, *aretē* is most likely to occur in the odes where he has dedicated the most space to elaboration of themes, underscoring its crucial importance for the celebration of victors.

Given the close association between competition and achieving excellence, it is unsurprising that the concept of *aretē* is as fundamental in Pindar as it was in Homer. A closer investigation shall reveal several important ways in which the use of *aretē* in these two sources coincides, as well as some key features in Pindar that can be viewed as an intermediate stage in the development towards Plato and Aristotle.

Several Homeric facets of *aretē* seem to persist in Pindar's odes. In his overview of "Pindar's thought" (admittedly an ill-posed category), Willcock stresses that *areta* (the Doric form of *aretē*) is used by Pindar "both for the abilities that lead to success or achievement and for the achievements themselves."[25] Although he notes that *areta* is "not a moral term in archaic thought," nevertheless "moral implications are not absent," as has also been noted for Homer's use of the word.[26] The word is often concerned with physical strength and success in combat,

[23] There is disagreement about whether *Isth*. 3 and 4 should be considered a single ode. This figure assumes that they are, though if they are counted separately, the percentage still rounds to 89% (40 out of 45). The five which do not contain at least one occurrence of a form of *aretē* are *Ol*. 12, *Ol*. 14, *Pyth*. 7, *Pyth*. 12, and *Nem*. 2.
[24] These five are in the bottom seven when arranged by length in lines. The other two in the bottom seven are *Ol*. 4 and 11 at 28 and 21 lines, respectively.
[25] Willcock, p. 18
[26] Willcock, p. 19

albeit of a less hostile nature than we have seen in Homer. Even in Pindar, there occasionally still remain explicit connections to war (e.g. in *Isthm*. 4 as discussed below). The requirement of recognition by others, usually through observation of some visual manifestion of *aretē*, still remains paramount. Finally, as we shall see for all four authors considered in this chapter, clarification of meaning via comparison to others is frequently employed.

Areta referring to a Homeric hero can be found in a passage lamenting the vicissitudes of fortune (*tuchē*). Here Pindar applies the word to Ajax and directly references Homer:

ἴστε μάν Αἴαντος ἀλκὰν φοίνιον, τὰν ὀψίᾳ ἐν νυκτὶ ταμὼν περὶ ᾧ φασγάνῳ μομφὰν ἔχει παίδεσσιν Ἑλλάνων ὅσοι Τροίανδ᾽ ἔβαν. ἀλλ᾽ Ὅμηρός τοι τετίμακεν δι᾽ ἀνθρώπων, ὃς αὐτοῦ πᾶσαν ὀρθώσαις ἀρετὰν κατὰ ῥάβδον ἔφρασεν θεσπεσίων ἐπέων λοιποῖς ἀθύρειν. (*Isthm*. 4.37-9)	Surely you know of Ajax's bloodstained *alkē*, which he pierced late at night on his own sword, and thereby casts blame upon all the sons of the Hellenes who went to Troy. But Homer, to be sure, has made him honored among mankind, who set straight his entire *aretē* and declared it with his staff of divine verses for future men to enjoy.

As we saw with Homer, *alkē* here is treated as a close parallel to *aretē* and emphasizes the physical act. Our interpretation is complicated by the fact that Ajax here is not fighting against an enemy, as would be the usual way to attain *aretē* in Homer, but has rather turned the sword against himself. The implication of ὀρθώσαις may be used to explain this discrepancy – Homer is needed to "set straight" his *areta*, which could mean that Ajax's excellence in battle is *not* defined simply by his suicide. The force of φοίνιον too is unclear; as translated here, the idea of "staining" implies that the underlying feature is necessarily of a different nature, and perhaps would remind readers that Ajax has in fact displayed the more traditional *alkē*/*areta* in battle against enemies.

Connection to war can also be seen for non-mythological figures. Prior to the Ajax passage cited above, Pindar references the victor Melissus' family:

ἀνορέαις δ᾽ ἐσχάταισιν οἴκοθεν στάλαισιν ἅπτονθ᾽ Ἡρακλείαις· καὶ μηκέτι μακροτέραν σπεύδειν ἀρετάν. ἱπποτρόφοι τ᾽ ἐγένοντο, χαλκέῳ τ᾽ Ἄρει ἄδον. ἀλλ᾽ ἀμέρᾳ γὰρ ἐν μιᾷ τραχεῖα νιφὰς πολέμοιο τεσσάρων ἀνδρῶν ἐρήμωσεν μάκαιραν ἑστίαν·	By their utmost manly deeds, they have grasped from their home[27] the pillars of Heracles; let no one strive for yet more distant *areta*. They were breeders of horses and delighted bronze Ares. But a rough hailstorm of war deprived a blessed hearth of four men on one day.

(*Isthm*. 4.11-17b)

The curious phrase "hailstorm of war" (νιφὰς πολέμοιο) which deprived their hearth of four men on a single day refers to the Battle of Plataea in 479 BCE. Their specification as men (ἀνδρῶν) and the classification of their deeds as manly (ἀνορέαις) emphasizes the gendered nature of *areta*. The "hearth" standing in by synecdoche for the "home" suggests the inclusion of women as those affected by the battle, though the emphasis throughout is on the actions of men.

As with Homer, definition by reference to others is a common tactic in Pindar. In addition to assertions of manliness being required through frequent limitation by words such as ἀνδρῶν, femininity is elsewhere used as a foil for the *areta* of men. Various female divinities, both traditional (e.g. Hera at *Pyth*. 4.187) and personified qualities (e.g. Reverence, daughter of Forethought at *Ol*. 7.43) are depicted as the source of *aretai* for mortal men. In this regard, Pindar displays even more creative license than Homer, directly comparing the excellence of men to animals and plants (e.g. to dolphins at *Isthm*. 9.6 and to trees at *Nem.* 8.40-1). While the *aretē* of animals such as horses features prominently in the Iliad (such as in the funeral games in Book 23), these entities are still the possessors of the *aretē* in question, rather than acting as illuminators of another's excellence.

For all these similarities, there are also key differences to be noted. Helen North has argued that in sixth-century elegy and fifth-century lyric poetry, the old heroic ideal was replaced

27 A scholium interprets οἴκοθεν as meaning "through native *aretai*" (διὰ οἰκείων ἀρετῶν).

with a new code of excellence consisting of four components, namely *aretē*, *sōphrosynē*, and showing oneself as *agathos* and *sōphrōn*.[28] In this regard, Pindar seems to indicate the "earliest traces" of a Pythagorean division of *aretē* into four leading forms.[29] A trend towards identifying *aretē* with the quiet "moral" virtues has also been identified. For instance, Pindar muses on the nature of excellence among various age groups:

ἐν δὲ πείρᾳ τέλος διαφαίνεται, ὧν τις ἐξοχώτερος γένηται, ἐν παισὶ νέοισι παῖς, ἐν ἀνδράσιν ἀνήρ, τρίτον ἐν παλαιτέροισι, μέρος ἕκαστον οἷον ἔχομεν βρότεον ἔθνος· ἐλᾷ δὲ καὶ τέσσαρας ἀρετάς <ὁ> θαντὸς αἰών, φρονεῖν δ᾽ ἐνέπει τὸ παρκείμενον. (*Nem* 3.70-5)	But in the test the result shines clear, in what ways someone proves superior, as a child among young children, man among men, and thirdly among elders—such is each stage that our human race attains. Then too, our mortal life drives four *aretai*, and it tells to consider what is at hand.

The meaning of the "four *aretai*" in this passage has been the subject of great scholarly contention. The lines preceding the mention of *aretai* depicts individuals outdoing others of their own age group, emphasizing again that one can be excellent only by virtue of comparison with others. Discussion of the four stages of life (interpreting <ὁ> θαντὸς αἰών as the eldest age) has been suggested as a corrolary to *sophrosunē*, *andreia*, *dikaiosunē*, and *phronēsis*.[30] Other pre-Platonic parallels have been examined in relation to this passage, suggesting that Pindar may be indicative of an intermediate stage between heroic *aretē* as portrayed in Homer and the philosophical term employed by Plato and Aristotle.

Another noteworthy difference is that Pindar dedicates more attention to the requirements for attaining *aretē*, rather than simply on its manifestations in heroic struggles as depicted in Homer. As Willcock has shown, four things are consistently required for *areta*: hard work

28 North, p. 25
29 Briggs, p. 240. It should also be noted that of these four requirements, only the last is explicitly portrayed as required in Homer. This can be seen, for example, in the discussion concerning slaves in Book 17, where the power to bestow and remove *aretē* is attributed to Zeus.
30 For discussion of various interpretations, see Briggs, p. 239.

(πόνος), wealth and the willingness to expend it (πλοῦτος and δαπάνα), natural ability (φυά), and divine favor (θεός).[31] The first two requirements of hard work and wealth are often seen in conjunction, such as when Pindar advises that "if someone is devoted wholeheartedly to *areta* with both expenses and hard work, it is necessary to bear the ones having discovered it a manly boast without envious opinions" (εἰ δ᾽ ἀρετᾷ κατάκειται πᾶσαν ὀργάν, ἀμφότερον δαπάναις τε καὶ πόνοις, χρή νιν εὑρόντεσσιν ἀγάνορα κόμπον μὴ φθονεραῖσι φέρειν γνώμαις, *Isth*. 1.41-45). All four can occasionally be seen together, as when Pindar claims that "if a man, delighting in expenditure and hard work, accomplishes divinely-fashioned *aretai,* and in addition fortune plants lovely fame for him, at the limits of happiness he has already cast his anchor as one honored by the gods" (εἰ γάρ τις ἀνθρώπων δαπάνᾳ τε χαρείς καὶ πόνῳ πράσσει θεοδμάτους ἀρετάς σύν τέ οἱ δαίμων φυτεύει δόξαν ἐπήρατον, ἐσχατιαῖς ἤδη πρὸς ὄλβου βάλλετ᾽ ἄγκυραν θεότιμος ἐών, *Isthm*. 6.10-13), where the importance of natural ability (*phua*) is reflected in the verb *phuteuei*.

The previous examples highlight several important similarities and differences between *aretē* in Homer and in Pindar. It still is often (but not exclusively) connected to physical prowess, dependent on external recognition through visual elements, and predicated on comparison with others, typically highlighing normative masculine traits through foils of differing gender, age, and social status. The word, though, gradually expanded to refer not just to the condition of the person but to encompass more often the deeds of excellence themselves. We see too a shift towards a more philosophically-oriented outlook with a hint at division into discreet, moral

[31] Willcock, p. 15

"virtues." An increasing concern for defining exactly what *aretē* entails, rather than simply demonstrating via examples, will be one important characteristic of our next source.

Plato

The methodology for considering *aretē* in Plato will need to be modified based on practical considerations. While the smaller sample size of Homer and Pindar enabled an examination of every instance of the word (36 and 65, respectively), the much larger number of occurrences in Plato (649) and particularly in Aristotle (1035) precludes such an approach. Furthermore, there is a vast amount of scholarship available on virtue ethics in these two philosophers, though this generally focuses on how "virtue" is conceived within their moral philosophies rather than on the semantic range of the word *aretē* specifically and how that range has developed from earlier sources. A general overview will first lay the groundwork, focusing on the most important similarities and differences between Plato and Aristotle as they are relevant for the present study. This will enable an illustrative case study of Plato's *Meno* to determine both how Plato both follows in the footsteps of Homer and Pindar and how he diverges, followed by a brief consideration of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Aretē in Plato, as in Aristotle, carries the most fundamental meaning "excellence of any kind in relation to any function."[32] Unlike Pindar, though, both Plato and Aristotle believed that *aretē* comes about through habituation rather than simply by nature (*phua/phusis*). This habituation results both from education as well as through repeated performance of specific actions. For instance, when discussing the upbringing of children in the *Laws*, Plato claims: "I call "education" the *aretē* first accruing to children" (παιδείαν δὴ λέγω τὴν παραγιγνομένην

[32] Bluck, p. 201

πρῶτον παισὶν ἀρετήν, 653b). He then states that children's proper understanding of *aretē* results from being accustomed "by the proper habits" (ὑπὸ τῶν προσηκόντων ἐθῶν, 653b). Aristotle, on the other hand, distinguishes carefully between education and habituation. In his scheme, *aretai* can be divided into two broad categories of intellectual and moral, where the birth and growth of the former is seen as developing out of instruction (ἐκ διδασκαλίας) while that of the latter out of habit (ἐξ ἔθους).[33] The prevalence of divinely-granted *aretē* seen so frequently in Homer and Pindar seems absent, shifting the emphasis to human agents and how they both receive instruction from others and reinforce that instruction through personal habits.

There are several other key doctrines shared between Plato and Aristotle – they believed that philosophers should be concerned with the question "how should we live"; that an account of various *aretai* as "stable character traits developed through habituation" (as we have just considered) would be central to answering this question; and that human beings have the specific function of being happy (*eudaimonein*) which requires them to have *aretē*.[34] We shall examine the *ergon* argument in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in more depth, but for now we will briefly consider a similar argument in Plato that was mentioned in this chapter's introduction. At the end of Book 1 of the *Republic,* Socrates asks Thrasymachus: "does there seem to you to exist some function of a horse?" (δοκεῖ τί σοι εἶναι ἵππου ἔργον; 352d). To address Thrasymachus' confusion, Socrates explains:

[33] 1103a
[34] Berges, p. 9

S: τί δέ; μαχαίρᾳ ἂν ἀμπέλου κλῆμα ἀποτέμοις καὶ σμίλῃ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς; **T:** πῶς γὰρ οὔ; **S:** ἀλλ᾽ οὐδενί γ᾽ ἂν οἶμαι οὕτω καλῶς ὡς δρεπάνῳ τῷ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἐργασθέντι. **T:** ἀληθῆ. **S**: ἆρ᾽ οὖν οὐ τοῦτο τούτου ἔργον θήσομεν; **T:** θήσομεν μὲν οὖν. S: νῦν δὴ οἶμαι ἄμεινον ἂν μάθοις ὃ ἄρτι ἠρώτων, πυνθανόμενος εἰ οὐ τοῦτο ἑκάστου εἴη ἔργον ὃ ἂν ἢ μόνον τι ἢ κάλλιστα τῶν ἄλλων ἀπεργάζηται. (353a)

S: Well, then – you could use a dagger to trim vine branches and a knife and many other instruments. **T:** Of course. **S:** But nothing so well, I think, as a pruning-knife built for this purpose. **T:** True. **S:** Will we then not regard this as the function of this? **T**: We will, certainly. **S:** Now, indeed, I think you might better understand what I was asking just now when I was inquiring if the function of each thing is not this which either it alone or it most especially of all others carries out.

The idea of *aretē* is thus given as the quality which enables each thing to best fulfil its own particular *ergon*, as discussed earlier.[35] In Plato's reasoning, the function of anything is that which either only the thing in question is capable of performing (for instance, eyes are the only thing capable of the function of sight) or which it can perform better than anything else (as the *drepanon* here is best specifically for trimming vine branches. As we noted earlier with Homer and Pindar, highlighting the excellence of something by contrasting it with other comparable entities is a standard feature of defining *aretē*. In this case, the *aretē* of the *drepanon* for a particular function is thrown into relief specically because other potential options for cutting implements (*machaira, smilē,* and *alla*) are listed but subsequently rejected.

Besides demonstrating a point of similarity between Plato and Aristotle's arguments as well as the importance of comparison for defining *aretē*, this exchange has important implications for our understanding of Plato's moral thinking. Because Socrates and Thrasymachus have agreed that the *aretē* of the soul is justice (οὐκοῦν ἀρετήν γε συνεχωρήσαμεν ψυχῆς εἶναι δικαιοσύνην, 353e) and that the function of man is to live well (*eudaimonein/eu bioun*), they agree that "the just soul and the just man will live well, but the unjust will live poorly" (ἡ μὲν ἄρα δικαία ψυχὴ καὶ ὁ δίκαιος ἀνὴρ εὖ βιώσεται, κακῶς δὲ ὁ ἄδικος, 353e). We thus have another example of comparison with an Other, as a man with justice

[35] Cf. p. 4

is defined against a man without justice. We will return to the concept of justice and *aretē* in our examination of the *Meno*.

A final similarity between Plato and Aristotle relevant for our purposes is the so-called unity thesis, or the idea that if someone possesses one *aretē*, they necessarily possess them all.[36] Because of this assumption, both Plato and Aristotle would disagree, for example, that one could be courageous if one is not also just, wise, and temperate. This idea is expressed in Plato's *Protagoras* (349a) as well as more succinctly in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (1145a2). The unity thesis picks up on implicit questions present from Homer onward, discussed earlier in the prevalance of modification by words such as *pantoia*, and will be taken up again in its Latin incarnation, notably by Cicero.[37]

While Plato and Aristotle have many notable parallels, Plato's tendencies embodied in the persona of Socrates reveal a fundamentally different way of addressing the issue of defining *aretē*. Berges notes that "Plato does not pretend to define the virtues for us, but he does give us enough that we understand what they are almost certainly not."[38] Aristotle, on the other hand, more often provides positive arguments in giving catalogues and discussions of the individual *aretai*. In this regard, Plato seems to follow more closely on his predecessors in that his definition relies on juxtaposition with outside elements. Taken in this regard, Plato follows this approach more closely than Homer and Pindar; whereas the latter two discuss instances of, for example, excellence in battle alongside comparisons with those who are ineligible for such *aretē*,

[36] Berges, p. 9
[37] For an example of Cicero's take on the unity thesis, see p. 67.
[38] Berges, p. 2

Plato, while still providing some examples of various *aretai*, relies more frequently on negative arguments that deny an easy definition for *aretē*.

Up to this point, we have indicated two important divergences from earlier senses of *aretē*, those being an apparent shift of emphasis from *phusis* as determinant of one's capacity for *aretē* as well as the notable absence of the divine. In addition to this shift, the semantic development of *aretē* during the early fourth century also featured a notable expansion in meaning. This expansion can be seen in the contrast between Plato's interpretation and that more commonly held by the general public: he, along with "his" Socrates, "sought to attach the co-operative, 'quiet' virtues to the concept of *aretē* inseparably – to combine the two set of values," implying that up to this point martial prowess and the so-called "quiet" virtues like justice and temperance have been considered separately.[39] Determining how the general population might conceive of *aretē* prior to Plato can be aided by considering the viewpoints expressed by the interlocutors of his dialogues. A common feature of Plato's interlocutors is that their "basic opinions about goodness, justice, and virtue" are the result of them having "internalized majority views."[40] Thus, it is unsurprising that the character Meno holds the "**usual** view of *aretē* as practical efficiency in public and private life," rather than a view based on *aretē* combined inseparably with these "quiet" virtues.[41]

Meno

We now turn our attention to the *Meno* to see how these general observations hold. This work is a good candidate for analysis because of the relevance of the dialogue's topic as well as

[39] Bluck, p. 270
[40] Shaw, p. 123
[41] Bluck, p. 270; emphasis my own.

its relatively short length, thus allowing a closer consideration of the effect of the whole. The topic is established in the very first line, where without preamble, the character Meno asks if Socrates is able to tell him what *aretē* is. In particular, he is keen on knowing where it comes from, reflecting the concern identified earlier with tracing the source of human excellence. In both Homer and Pindar, this relied heavily on a god, though the previous overview of Plato and Aristotle has indicated that *theos* plays a much less important role here. In this jarring introduction, Meno instead asks whether *aretē* can be acquired by teaching (διδακτὸν), practice (άσκητόν), by nature (φύσει), or in some other way (άλλωι τινὶ τρόπω).[42] We see reflected in the second and third item in this list two primary ways beyond the divine that *aretē* might have been acquired in Homer and Pindar. The idea of teaching *aretē* likely addresses claims by the sophists who professed the ability to do precisely that.[43] Plato thus indicates in this brief opening an awareness of how sources of *aretē* have been considered in the past.

Another primary concern of the *Meno* is whether *aretē* consists of a plethora of separate "virtues" or whether there is a common factor to all of them. This develops further the idea seen in Homer and Pindar of *aretē*'s relative nature. We see this in the present dialogue by the pointed question Socrates asks Meno when the latter gives *dikaiosunē* as *aretē*: "Excellence, Meno, or *an* excellence?" (πότερον ἀρετή, ὦ Μένων, ἢ ἀρετή τις; 73e). As we saw earlier in Book 1 of the *Republic*, *dikaiosunē* would be better regarded as *aretē tis*, since this is the *aretē* particular to the *psychē* and not, say, the eyes. Meno's answer of justice as unqualified *aretē* perhaps reflects more "standard" ideas held by Plato's contemporaries and further indicates its overall importance in Plato's moral philosophy.

[42] 70a. It should also be noted that these first two adjecttives do not agree grammatically with *aretē* but instead are used substantively (e.g. "is *aretē* a teachable thing?")
[43] Cf. Bluck p. 360 and *Meno* 91b.

When pressed to define what *aretē* is, Meno splits it into distinct, separate entitites:

M: ἀλλ᾽ οὐ χαλεπόν, ὦ Σώκρατες, εἰπεῖν. πρῶτον μέν, εἰ βούλει ἀνδρὸς ἀρετήν, ῥᾴδιον, ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἀνδρὸς ἀρετή, ἱκανὸν εἶναι τὰ τῆς πόλεως πράττειν, καὶ πράττοντα τοὺς μὲν φίλους εὖ ποιεῖν, τοὺς δ᾽ ἐχθροὺς κακῶς, καὶ αὐτὸν εὐλαβεῖσθαι μηδὲν τοιοῦτον παθεῖν. εἰ δὲ βούλει γυναικὸς ἀρετήν, οὐ χαλεπὸν διελθεῖν, ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὴν τὴν οἰκίαν εὖ οἰκεῖν, σῴζουσάν τε τὰ ἔνδον καὶ κατήκοον οὖσαν τοῦ ἀνδρός. καὶ ἄλλη ἐστὶν παιδὸς ἀρετή, καὶ θηλείας καὶ ἄρρενος, καὶ πρεσβυτέρου ἀνδρός, εἰ μὲν βούλει, ἐλευθέρου, εἰ δὲ βούλει, δούλου. καὶ ἄλλαι πάμπολλαι ἀρεταί εἰσιν, ὥστε οὐκ ἀπορία εἰπεῖν ἀρετῆς πέρι ὅτι ἐστίν: καθ᾽ ἑκάστην γὰρ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τῶν ἡλικιῶν πρὸς ἕκαστον ἔργον ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἡ ἀρετή ἐστιν, ὡσαύτως δὲ οἶμαι, ὦ Σώκρατες, καὶ ἡ κακία. (72a)

M: But it's not difficult to say, Socrates. First of all, if you want the *aretē* of a man, it is easily stated that a man's *aretē* is this—that he be competent to manage the affairs of his city, and to manage them so as to benefit his friends and harm his enemies, and to take care to avoid suffering harm himself. Or take a woman's *aretē*: there is no difficulty in describing it as the duty of ordering the house well, looking after the property indoors, and obeying her husband. And the child has another *aretē*—one for the female, and one for the male; and there is another for elderly men—one, if you like, for freemen, and yet another for slaves. And there are very many other *aretai* besides, so that one cannot be at a loss to explain what *aretē* is; for it is according to each activity and age that every one of us, in whatever we do, has his *aretē*; and the same, I think, Socrates, will hold also of badness.

Meno's catalogue reflects standard views of *aretē* seen both previously in Homer and Pindar as well as in Aristotle (to be considered later). The three most prominent dichotomies – male vs. female, young vs. old, free vs. slave – are invoked to describe how the *aretē* of each person is defined in opposition to what it is not. Significantly, Meno begins by first (πρῶτον) discussing the *aretē* of a man (ἀνδρὸς ἀρετήν), highlighting its importance as the default standard against which subsequent *aretai* will be compared, explicitly or otherwise. This primacy will reappear in Aristotle's catalogue of the *aretai* in the *Nicomachean Ethics,* where he too begins first (πρῶτον) with a discussion centralized on men, given that he speaks about courage, or literally "manliness" (περὶ ἀνδρείας).

Meno's bold claim that he has no *aporia* concerning his views is, of course, comically deflated given his swift reduction to utter confusion soon after. This is achieved through Socrates' questions concerning the nature of *aretē*. For instance, he asks:

S: πότερον δὲ περὶ ἀρετῆς μόνον σοι οὕτω δοκεῖ, ὦ Μένων, ἄλλη μὲν ἀνδρὸς εἶναι, ἄλλη δὲ γυναικὸς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ἢ καὶ περὶ ὑγιείας καὶ περὶ μεγέθους καὶ περὶ ἰσχύος ὡσαύτως; ἄλλη μὲν ἀνδρὸς δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι ὑγίεια, ἄλλη δὲ γυναικός; (72d)

S: Is it only in the case of *aretē*, do you think, Meno, that one can say there is one kind belonging to a man, another to a woman, and so on with the rest, or is it just the same, too, in the case of health and size and strength? Do you consider that there is one health for a man, and another for a woman?

The primary dichotomy of male and female is again used as the means to illustrate a point about defining the range of *aretē*. Socrates uses the other two primary pairs (young vs. old, free vs. slave) in subsequent questions:

S: ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετὴ πάντων ἐστίν, πειρῶ εἰπεῖν καὶ ἀναμνησθῆναι τί αὐτό φησι Γοργίας εἶναι καὶ σὺ μετ᾽ ἐκείνου.

M: τί ἄλλο γ᾽ ἢ ἄρχειν οἷόν τ᾽ εἶναι τῶν ἀνθρώπων; εἴπερ ἕν γέ τι ζητεῖς κατὰ πάντων.

S: ἀλλὰ μὴν ζητῶ γε. ἀλλ᾽ ἆρα καὶ παιδὸς ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετή, ὦ Μένων, καὶ δούλου, ἄρχειν οἵω τε εἶναι τοῦ δεσπότου, καὶ δοκεῖ σοι ἔτι ἂν δοῦλος εἶναι ὁ ἄρχων; (73e)

S: Seeing then that it is the same *aretē* in all cases, try and tell me, if you can recollect, what Gorgias—and you in agreement with him—say it is.

M: Simply that it is the power of governing mankind — if you want some single description to cover all cases.

S: That is just what I am after. But is *aretē* the same in a child, Meno, and in a slave—an ability to govern each his master? And do you think he who governed would still be a slave?

Even in this state of swiftly-approaching *aporia*, it is clear that Meno's "standard" view relies on comparison with others – the power to govern mankind is allocated more specifically to the default norm of an adult male Greek citizen by juxtaposition with consideration of a slave, who cannot by Socrates' reasoning govern and still be a slave.

Regardless of the answer to the initially posed question, a consideration of Meno's viewpoints offers some tantalizing hints about how a standard view of *aretē* had developed up to the time of Plato's writings. An awareness of the importance of these prior ideas can be detected throughout, such as in the potential sources of *aretē* given in the introduction aligning with important elements in Homer, Pindar, and sophistic teachings. We also get a sense of this awareness by direct references to previous sources. For instance, Aristotle frequently refers to

Homer in his discussion of *andreia*, while Plato refers to Pindar on several occasions (in the *Meno*, for instance, at 76d4, which Bluck claims adds an air of "mock-profundity").[44] While a more complete analysis of *aretē* in Plato is beyond the scope of this project, it shall suffice for now to observe some features of the semantic range of *aretē* during the time of Plato, while several key features such as definition through comparison with others remains prevalent. We now consider whether these same observations will hold in Aristotle's works.

Aristotle

As with Plato, there is an apparent awareness in Aristotle of preceding contention over the range of *aretē*. He recognizes that there is general disagreement, claiming that "nothing is agreed as regards the exercise conducive to *aretē*, for, to start with, all men do not honor the same *aretē*, so that they naturally hold different opinions in regard to training in *aretē*" (ἔχει δὲ πολλὴν διαφορὰν καὶ τὸ τίνος ἕνεκεν πράττει τις ἢ μανθάνει: τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτοῦ χάριν ἢ φίλων ἢ δι᾽ ἀρετὴν οὐκ ἀνελεύθερον, ὁ δὲ ταὐτὸ τοῦτο πράττων δι᾽ ἄλλους πολλάκις θητικὸν καὶ δουλικὸν δόξειεν ἂν πράττειν, 1337b).

Gender remains an important consideration for Aristotle as well. He believes that "women are naturally inferior to men" and therefore "have different virtues from them."[45] However, this position displays the characteristic comparative element, as it is "much more likely that what [Aristotle] thinks women lack is authority over *other people*, for females have less spirit or assertiveness than males"[46]

[44] Bluck, p. 251
[45] Reeve, p. 262
[46] Reeve, p. 262

We shall briefly consider the *Nicomachean Ethics* to see how the previous threads (both Platonic and earlier) continue to wind through Aristotle's writing. He wrote this work "from a sense of duty" since "for the general good, he must leave for a while the delights of the laboratory or the study and show how reason can be applied to practical questions." As we have already discussed, Aristotle divides *aretē* into two, intellectual and moral. He then "devotes the greater part of the treatise to a detailed discussion of the latter."[47]

A crucial element to *aretē* for Aristotle can be seen in the famous *ergon* argument of Book 1. Here, he asserts that the Supreme Good (*to ariston*) is happiness (*eudaimonia*) and that we might be able to support this assertion by determining what the function of man is (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 1097b). He then begins a process of comparison to help determine what this function is. He considers humans in juxtaposition with plants and animals, deciding that humans must have a separate function based on their capacity for rational thought. He concludes that "the human good is the exercise of the soul according to *aretē*, but if the *aretai* are more numerous, according to the best and most perfect one (τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ᾽ ἀρετήν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην, 1097b).

Before proceeding with a discussion of the individual *aretai*, Aristotle sums up his preceding arguments:

Κοινῇ μὲν οὖν περὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν εἴρηται ἡμῖν τό τε γένος τύπῳ, [ὅτι μεσότης καὶ ἕξις], ὑφ᾽ ὧν τε γίνονται, ὅτι τούτων καὶ πρακτικοὶ κατ᾽ αὐτάς, καὶ οὕτως ὡς ἂν ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος προστάξῃ, καὶ ὅτι ἐφ᾽ ἡμῖν καὶ ἑκούσιοι. (1114b)	We have then now discussed in outline the virtues in general, having indicated their genus [namely, that it is a mean, and a disposition][48], and having shown that they render us apt to do the same actions as those by which they are produced, and to do them in the way in which right reason may enjoin; and that they depend on ourselves and are voluntary.

[47] Guthrie, p. 153
[48] These words are taken by Rackham and others as an interpolation.

He then crucially begins with *andreia* (literally "manliness") as the first, signaling the importance of the male/female dichotomy in defining what it means to possess *aretē*:

Ἀναλαβόντες δὲ περὶ ἑκάστης εἴπωμεν τίνες εἰσὶ καὶ περὶ ποῖα καὶ πῶς· ἅμα δ᾽ ἔσται δῆλον καὶ πόσαι εἰσίν. καὶ πρῶτον περὶ ἀνδρείας. ὅτι μὲν οὖν μεσότης ἐστὶ περὶ φόβους καὶ θάρρη, ἤδη φανερὸν γεγένηται. (1115a)	But to resume, let us now discuss the *aretai* severally, defining the nature of each, the class of objects to which it is related, and the way in which it is related to them. In so doing we shall also make it clear how many *aretai* there are. Let us first take *andreia*. We have already seen that *andreia* is the observance of the mean in respect of fear and confidence.

Aristotle moves on to discuss how the noblest form of courage is expressed in the face of death in war, "for it is in the greatest and most noble danger" (ἐν μεγίστῳ γὰρ καὶ καλλίστῳ κινδύνῳ, 1115a). Military prowess is thus intimately linked to *andreia*, which is itself given primacy in enumeration of various *aretai*. In addition to revisiting the importance of the number of *aretai*, Aristotle also raises again the question concerning the unity thesis. The implicit questions raised in Homer by discussing "manifold *aretē*" are now being made concrete and addressed.

Gender is again a critical factor for distinguishing who can achieve *aretē*. This is implied throughout by the consistent use of masculine adjectives in generalizing about different classes of people. Aristotle also suggests a view of *andreia* being established with reference to Others in both gender and age, as he claims that "if someone fears outrage concerning his children or wife, he is not a coward" (οὐδὲ δὴ εἴ τις ὕβριν περὶ παῖδας καὶ γυναῖκα φοβεῖται, ἢ φθόνον ἤ τι τῶν τοιούτων, δειλός ἐστιν, 1115a). The assumed norm of adult, male Greek citizen is evaluated in how he deals with individuals outside that norm, here part of his own family. This also implicitly restricts who can achieve a state of "manliness" since, for instance, a wife cannot fear for hubris against her own wife.

The discussion of *andreia* thus includes two of the three previously discussed dichotomies. The third, that of free vs. slave, is not explicitly used, though Aristotle employs a close parallel. After highlighting the general characteristics of *andreia*, he discusses several subclasses, one of which are "those being compelled by their commanders" (ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχόντων ἀναγκαζομένους) to go into battle. The commanders are later classified as *hoi kurioi* and compel their soldiers in a manner similar to Hector.[49] There is thus a clear power differential between the commanders and the soldiers, the latter of which do not have a choice in their actions. The soldiers being compelled to fight are in a sense analogous to slaves fulfilling their masters' bidding (indeed, Rackham even translates *hoi kurioi* as "their masters"). Moreover, Aristotle explicitly states that these men are worse (χείρους) in respect to their *andreia* due to the compulsion. This highlights how the third dichotomy can still be perceived as reinforcing definition by reference to the Other, since the *aretē* of the default norm is placed above that attributed to someone in a servile position.

Aristotle's placement of *andreia* as the first of the *aretai* discussed, as well as his inclusion of multiple quotations from Homer, reinforces the starting point of *aretē* as referring primarily to martial prowess and simultaneously suggests how much the semantic range had developed since Homer, given the subsequent account of other *aretai*. While broadening to include other types of "virtues," Plato and Aristotle simultaneously restricted access by their more stringent requirements. In order to determine the extent to which Plato and Aristotle were themselves drivers of semantic change, it would be necessary to consider the use of *aretē* in later authors, though this is beyond the scope of the present study. We now move on to a consideration of *virtus*, where we shall see the same three distinctions along lines of gender, age, and social status influencing how writers consider the acquisition of "manliness." We shall also consider evidence suggesting a similar

[49] Aristotle here quotes *Il.* 2.391, though the wording is slightly different than our version of Homer.

trajectory in the semantic development of *virtus* from specific to general, along with a broadening and subsequent reduction in the classes of people eligible to acquire it.

Chapter 2 – *Virtus*

The influence of Greek thought and education on their Roman counterparts cannot be understated. For instance, it has been claimed that the Romans "copied and modified most of what the Greeks had developed into ethical standards and values to suit the political and education needs and conditions of their own times."[50] One might surmise that conceptions of *aretē* would therefore have profound influences on that of *virtus*. Horner suggests that "direct parallels can be drawn between the concepts of *aretē* and *virtus*," yet others take the view that *virtus* is something "distinct and authentically native," thus downplaying the importance of the word's Greek parallel.[51] While there certainly are important parallels between the two terms, several noteworthy distinctions in how the Romans used *virtus* will be considered.

This analysis begins with a brief statistical overview to elucidate broad trends in usage across the authors considered. Close readings will then begin with Plautus, looking particularly at his comedies *Miles Gloriosus* and *Amphitryon*. The next stage of analysis will consist of a consideration of Cicero's philosophical corpus, concentrating on the *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes*. The final set of close readings in Valerius Maximus and several authors of epic are grounded in a consideration of the large cultural and political changes of the late first century B.C.E into the first century C.E. and show how *virtus*, while still retaining important elements of early usage, was by that time becoming gradually restricted to an elite set of individuals. Throughout these readings, special attention is paid to the use of the Other in defining what it means to acquire *virtus*. As was the case with *aretē*, this will be an important tactic used in both the semantic expansion as well as the reduction of parties eligible for possessing this important value.

[50] Horner, p. 115
[51] Id.

As was the case with earlier authors, a brief statistical overview can provide some general starting observations about the use of *virtus*. The distribution of forms of virtus in each of the cases can be seen in Table 3, with percentages in Table 4. Data for the early imperial epicists are given based on their most prominent works only, namely Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Statius' *Thebaid*, Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, and Silius Italicus' *Punica*.

Tables 3 and 4.[52] Distribution and percent of each grammatical case in 8 authors.

	Nom.	Acc.	Gen.	Dat.	Abl.	Total
Plautus	10	15	1	2	38	66
Cicero	307	265	75	317	530	1494
Valerius Flaccus	10	0	3	0	5	18
Vergil	19	6	5	0	8	38
Statius	45	1	6	1	5	58
Lucan	35	0	8	1	8	52
Silius Italicus	52	4	15	1	12	84
Valerius Maximus	25	27	45	17	22	136

	Nom.	Acc.	Gen.	Dat.	Abl.
Plautus	15%	23%	2%	3%	**58%**
Cicero	21%	18%	5%	21%	**35%**
Valerius Flaccus	**56%**	0%	17%	0%	28%
Vergil	**50%**	16%	13%	0%	21%
Statius	**78%**	2%	10%	2%	9%
Lucan	**67%**	0%	15%	2%	15%
Silius Italicus	**62%**	5%	18%	1%	14%
Valerius Maximus	18%	20%	**33%**	13%	16%

Though the implications in each author will be discussed as they occur, it is useful to note the shift towards more nominative forms in the epicists. One can speculate that this represents a shift towards *virtus* taking on a more active role corresponding to the increased rate of occurring as the grammatical subject. The decrease in accusative cases can be argued with a similar rational,

[52] Some rows do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

i.e. that later authors emphasize its active nature by reducing the frequency of its occurrence as the object of a sentence. Valerius Maximus' increased rate of genitives may signal an increasing emphasis on the ownership of virtus, which we shall see becomes increasingly contested in the first century C.E.

As was the case with *aretē*, we shall begin an analysis of *virtus* with the earliest author where substantial attestations of the word in question can be found. For Latin, these are the comedies of Plautus. Just as was considered for the "starting point" in Greek, the parallel investigation in Latin shall consider to what extent a "specific" meaning of martial prowess was present from an early date, and how much the "general" meaning had already begun to be felt.

Plautus

The comedies of Plautus provide some of our earliest evidence beyond inscriptions on how *virtus* was portrayed. Within the 66 occurrences of forms of *virtus* in the Plautine corpus, dichotomies of male vs. female, young vs. old, and free vs. slave are all employed to clarify what it means to possess *virtus*. McDonnell argues that many of these occurrences, which have been interpreted by Earl and Eisenhut (among others) as evoking broadly ethical concepts, are in fact referring to martial valor alone. He does concede that the word can display a variety of meanings beyond simply martial *virtus*, but his account of these is lacking.[53] Notably, he errs in relying on Cicero's definition of *virtus* for validating certain interpretations in Plautus, completely ignoring the fact that Cicero wrote much later than Plautus. One can therefore not be certain that the ideas captured in Cicero would have already existed in the late 3rd century B.C.E. A consideration of

[53] McDonnell, p. 31

some of these other cases will show that the picture is considerably more complex than simply equating "early Roman *virtus*" with predominantly martial *virtus.*

The two plays where forms of *virtus* appear most frequently are *Miles Gloriosus* (13 times) and *Amphitryon* (12 times). These will serve as case studies for further examination.

Miles Gloriosus

A play centered on a braggart soldier sets up the expectation that *virtus* will be predominantly martial-focused. Indeed, descriptions of physical prowess abound, though we shall see that these are often filtered through the lens of a slave or woman, thus employing the Other in authorizing a normative value. From the outset, the use of *virtus* suggests that it will be important for the soldier Pyrgopolinices and his conception of being a *vir*. Artotrogus, the *parasitus* to the braggart soldier, gives the following response when he is asked where he is:

Art: stat propter **virum** fortem atque fortunatum et forma regia. tam bellatorem Mars haud ausit dicere neque aequiperare suas **virtutes** ad tuas. (*Mil*. 9-12)	He is standing next to a **man** brave and wealthy and with royal beauty. Mars would not dare to say that he is so much a warrior, nor equate his own ***virtutes*** to yours.

A primary meaning referring to excellence in martial contexts is reinforced through reference to Mars, and the comparative element to an external reference is again activated. Similarly, Artotrogus later exclaims:

Art: ne hercle operae pretium quidem est mihi te narrare, tuas **virtutes** qui sciam. (*Mil*. 31-32)	By Hercules, it's not even worthwhile for me to tell stories about you, I who know your ***virtutes***.

It is not enough that Pyrgopolinices possesses *virtutes*; Plautus rather emphasizes that other people know about them, reinforcing a pattern of recognition seen earlier in Homer and Pindar. This is also filtered through the lens of the parasite, who, although not a slave, is of a lower standing compared to the soldier and thus reinforces his *virtus* by acting as a foil.

On the other hand, some instances (e.g. *Mil*. 649, where praise is given for *virtutes* such as being up for having sex, being a good guest at parties, and not spitting) seem to indicate something beyond just "martial prowess" or "brave deed(s)" in meaning. This suggests that the picture is a lot less black-and-white than McDonnell would have us believe. There are also many interesting cases of how *virtus* is defined or discussed by entities traditionally outside the boundaries of who could attain it. For instance, the dichotomy of young vs. old is captured in an interaction between the old man Periplectomenus and the young lover Pleusicles:

Per: quid id est quod cruciat? cedo. Pleu: me tibi istuc aetatis homini facinora puerilia obicere nec te decora nec tuis **virtutibus**. (*Mil*. 617-9)	Per: What is it which is torturing (you)? C'mon. Pleu: That I am casting before you, a man of your age, boyish deeds suitable neither for you nor your ***virtutes***.

Age is given as a key factor in determining which classes of virtus are suitable for Periplectomenus. Deed classified as *puerilia* are thus used as a foil to help clarify, if only implicitly, what kind of virtus would be suitable for an older man. These same divisions of gender, age, and social status are also prevalent in the *Amphitryon*, which we now turn to.

Amphitryon

Given a play centered on the struggle between a man (Amphitryon) and a god (Jupiter in disguise as Amphitryon) over a woman (Alcmena), it is unsurprising that *virtus* plays a prominent role in partitioning these roles. There are three occurrences of forms of *virtus* in the prologue alone, signaling its importance for the play to come. This prologue is unique in the Plautine corpus in that it is delivered by a god (Mercury) who is also a character in the play. The tendency for *virtus* to be a "quality possessed characteristically by men, not deities" further emphasizes the strangeness of hearing a god talk about "manliness."[54]

[54] McDonnell, p. 96

In the prologue, Mercury attempts to win over the good will of the audience. He asks: "for why am I to recount (as I have seen others in the tragedies commemorate – Neptune, **Virtus**, Victoria, Mars, Bellona – what good things they had done for you all) for what all good deeds my father, ruler of the gods, is an architect?" (nam quid ego memorem (ut alios in tragoediis vidi, Neptunum **Virtutem** Victoriam Martem Bellonam commemorare quae bona vobis fecissent) quis benefactis meus pater, deorum regnator, architectust omnibus, *Amph*. 41-5). The placement with many other war deities certainly indicates that Virtus here has martial overtones. Feeney describes how such 'personified' abstractions of power were honored by Romans from early on, both to appease positive entities such as Ops ('Produce') as well as avert harmful influence from negative ones such as Robigus ('Grain Rust'). However, he notes that many such personifications, including Virtus, entered Roman life and cult during the "wave of Hellenising religious innovation" that occurred from 300-188 BCE.[55] This resulted in a "powerfully flexible way of negotiating between Greek and Roman values and ideologies" for the governing class during this period.[56] Feeney cautions against the "tenacious primitivist tendency in the study of Roman religion" to attempt to "backdate into an early pre-Greek phase those personifications which appear most alluringly to embody archetypal Roman qualities" such as Fides and Virtus.

Two other occurrences of virtus occur in the prologue:

virtute dixit vos victores vivere, non ambitione nec perfidia: qui minus eadem histrioni sit lex quae summo **viro**? **virtute** ambire oportet, non favitoribus. (*Amph*. 75-8)	He (Jupiter) said that you all live as victors by ***virtus***, not by canvassing or treachery: why should the same law be less for an actor than the greatest **man**? He ought to canvass by his ***virtus***, not by claqueurs.

[55] Feeney, pp. 85-86
[56] Feeney, p. 86

Gender is again reinforced as a primary determinant of who is eligible for *virtus*, in this case as validated by a divinity, as was often the case in Homer and Pindar. Contrary to McDonnell's strained interpretation of *virtus* as martial here based on the presence of *victores*, Earl argues sensibly to the contrary. Earl claims that this *virtus* "does not mean courage simply, but stands rather for the whole aristocratic ideal with its emphasis on *gloria* won by the commission of great deeds in the service of the *respublica* according to certain standards of conduct," as "clearly illustrated" by the combination here with *vivere*.[57] Even at this early stage of Latin literature, then, it seems that *virtus* does often include meanings beyond simple martial prowess.

Perhaps the most extended discussion of *virtus* occurs in the *Amphitryon*, during Alcmena's encomium of *virtus*. Like Mercury, this gives us a view of *virtus* from someone who would be considered outside the realm of attaining it.

feram et perferam usque abitum eius animo forti atque offirmato, id modo si mercedis datur mi, ut meus uictor uir belli clueat. satis mi esse ducam. **virtus** praemium est optumum; **virtus** omnibus rebus anteit profecto: libertas, salus, vita, res et parentes, patria et prognati tutantur, seruantur: **virtus** omnia in sese habet, omnia assunt bona quem penest **virtus**. (*Amph*. 645-53)	I shall endure and bear all the way to the end his departure with a strong and steadfast heart, if only that (of) reward is granted to me, that my husband be renowned as a victor of war. I shall consider it enough for me. ***Virtus*** is the best reward; ***virtus*** truly surpasses all things: freedom, health, life, matters and parents, country and children are protected, are preserved: ***virtus*** has all things in itself, all goods are present in whose possession is ***virtus***.

Even though the context seems to indicate something broader for *virtus*, McDonnell again argues that this passage invokes *virtus* in the sense of martial courage.[58] This interpretation is difficult in light of *omnia…bona*, which on the surface certainly seems to extend beyond military contexts. More crucially for the present investigation, though, is the presentation of this view by Alcmena

[57] Earl, p. 238
[58] McDonnell, p. 32

herself. She cites virtus as the force needed to protect a man's children and (presumably) his wife. By speaking in a way that removes herself from the possibility of possessing it, as Aristotle did in describing *andreia* with reference to wife and children, Alcmena reinforces that *virtus* is generally conceptualized with a view towards the default norm of an adult male citizen.

A final point we shall consider in Plautus is the use of the phrase *deum virtute*. This peculiar phrase appears only in Plautus, where it occurs 7 times (*Aulularia* 166, *Captivi* 324, *Miles Gloriosus* 676 and 679, *Persa* 390, *Trinummus* 346 and 355). Ferguson described it as a "colossal oxymoron." Van Omme and Sarsila have argued for this being a native Latin idiom; Eisenhut and McDonnell argue against this.[59] Specifically, McDonnell suggests that it may have been a translation for *aretē tōn theōn* in New Comedy. Regardless of its origin, it perhaps suggests that the gods are seen as originators of *virtus*, echoing a similar sentiment seen in Homer and Pindar, where *theos* is often portrayed as the source of *aretē.*

One must take caution when interpreting comedy, as views may be presented for mockery or simply for the sake of their humor. As such, the phrase *deum virtute* very well may have ellicited laughter from a Roman audience simply on the ridiculousness of the juxtaposition. Nonetheless, we can attempt to tease out certain nuances of how virtus was employed during this time. We have seen that martial meanings are common but by no means exclusive. Indeed, ethical and moral overtones are already present at this time, complicating the image that McDonnell would otherwise have us believe. This baseline shall now serve as a launching point into our investigation of Cicero, where the semantic range of the word will be shown to have greatly developed. Nonetheless, the prevalent dichotomies discussed so far, as well as references to the divine, will continue to play important roles.

[59] For discussion of these views, see McDonnell, pp. 95-104.

Cicero

As we move forward in our analysis, it seems prudent to make a distinction in terminology for a primarily martial-focused meaning of virtus and one more ethically oriented. I shall henceforth follow Balmaceda's convention of referring to the former as *virilis-virtus* and the latter as *humana-virtus*. As such, the earliest extant uses of *virtus* we have considered typically occur (under this terminology) as *virilis-virtus*, that is, with the martial sense of "courage" or "battle prowess." However, this apparent stability was soon challenged as Rome became more and more exposed to Greek philosophical influence, particularly after the embassy of several leading Greek philosophers to Rome in 155 BCE. From this time, *virtus* began to undergo expansion in meaning through semantic calque, a linguistic mechanism which works "by expanding the semantic range of an indigenous word by analogy with a foreign word with wider references but some common meaning."[60] Gradually, the nearly exclusive use of *virtus* as a martial concept began to give way as *humana-virtus*, i.e. *virtus* with a primarily ethical meaning, became an important element of Roman thought.

Although this term became less semantically stable after early Latin, McDonnell has claimed that the "semantic development of *virtus* seems to have been completed by the time of Cicero."[61] However, this position assumes that the subsequent transformation from Republic to Empire had no significant effect on the evolution of this key concept. Balmaceda notes that it is certainly "less clear, however, whether or how *virtus*, a key political concept and one intimately related to traditional Roman values, changed" during this period.[62] To better evaluate McDonnell's claim about the completion of the development of *virtus*, we shall first explore

[60] McDonnell, p. 77
[61] McDonnell, p. 11
[62] Balmaceda, p. 2

exactly what this word entailed in Cicero's writings. Later in this chapter, we shall turn to several early imperial authors to determine if indeed the meaning of this word had become static.

The choice of Cicero for closer scrutiny was prompted by a desire to test the validity of McDonnell's claim concerning the completion of *virtus'* development. This choice was further motivated by the inherent suitability of Cicero's corpus, which provides us with well over twice as many instances of *virtus* compared to any other author.[63] Given the importance of Cicero in the education of elite Roman men beginning in the first century CE, we might expect that his influence would be keenly felt in the writings from these authors.[64] In particular, he engages most heavily with *virtus* in the *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes,* which contain a full 28% of occurrences of *virtus* in his corpus.[65] An understanding of his engagement with *virtus* in general as well as how such an engagement supports his philosophical project specifically will facilitate our analysis of his use of this term in these two key philosophical works.

Cicero's philosophical project involves, broadly speaking, a transmission of Greek ideas to a Roman audience. This goal is described in the opening to the second book of *De Divinatione,* where Cicero claims that, while trying to devise the best way to contribute to the state, "I could think of no better plan than if I should hand over the ways of the finest arts to my citizens" (*nulla maior [res] occurrebat quam si optimarum artium vias traderem meis civibus, De Div*. 2.1).[66] He continues with a chronological list of his major philosophical works, acknowledging that these same topics have been dealt with by Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and

[63] There are 1494 attestations in Cicero, 2.48 times as many as the next highest of 601 in Seneca.
[64] Keeline, p. 2
[65] 239 in *De Fin.*, 162 in *Tusc.*, with the next highest prevalence in an individual work being 66 in *De Orat*. The *Philippicae* (97) and *Epistulae ad Familiares* (87) taken as collections also rank high on frequency.
[66] All translations in this writing sample are my own. *Virtus* will be left untranslated in order to avoid the potential error of assigning one particular meaning from among the many English options (including *virtue*, *manliness*, *courage*, *martial prowess*, and *excellence*) when in fact a combination of these may have been felt by a Roman in any given context.

the entire Peripatetic school (*De Div.* 2.3). He concludes that if the assassination of Caesar had not intervened, "we would allow no area of philosophy to exist which does not lie open, elucidated in the Latin language" (*nullum philosophiae locum esse pateremur, qui non Latinis litteris illustratus pateret, De Div.* 2.4). He is frequently at pains to dispel what he believes is a widespread misconception that the material of Greek philosophy cannot be properly handled in Latin.[67] Moreover, he is writing for a considerably different audience than the original philosophers whose material he is attempting to convey, being separated by divisions of both time and culture.[68] Cicero's task therefore necessitates a certain degree of innovation, both at the level of translating as well as larger-scale changes intended to adapt the material suitably for his contemporary readers.

One of Cicero's primary innovations is the striking way he redefines the accessibility of *virtus* through tactics that expand the scope at sometimes but reduce it at others. This process occurs along two different dimensions – a cultural one played out largely in the translation of ideas from Greek to Latin, and a temporal one following the development of *virtus qua* martial prowess to a more complex idea now subsuming a broader range of ethical concepts. A foundation for understanding the cultural dimension was laid through a discussion of ἀρετή in Chapter 1, while a fuller cross-cultural comparison will be conducted in Chapter 3. Therefore, to bridge these, the focus of this chapter will be the second axis of development, i.e. a development over time which is culturally informed while remaining primarily internal to Latin itself.

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[67] Lucretius gave a famous statement of this supposed poverty (*egestatem*) of the Latin language, 1.136-9. Cicero argues against this sentiment: "I feel and have often argued that the Latin language is not only *not* poor, as people commonly think, but that it is even more richly supplied than the Greek language" (*sentio et saepe disserui, Latinam linguam non modo non inopem, ut vulgo putarent, sed locupletiorem etiam esse quam Graecam, De Fin*. 1.10). In this writing sample, any emphases in the form of italicized, underlined, or bolded text are my own.

[68] His philosophical project also involved philosophers closer to his own time, who would have been writing for a similar audience of contemporary Romans. Nonetheless, hundreds of years separate Cicero from the likes of Plato and Aristotle, and classical and Hellenistic Greeks would have conceptualized approaches to gender, race, and class differently than a 1st century BCE Roman. See e.g. Skinner (2013) for discussion of some of these differences.

A keen awareness of this shift in meaning over time is evident in several of Cicero's philosophical works, as I shall demonstrate in the cases of *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes,* both written during a period of heightened engagement with philosophy following the death of his daughter, Tullia.[69] Cicero's recognition of this development lends authority to his project as well as reveals an often underappreciated intentionality in his work. By signaling his awareness of both the original sense of *virtus* as well as its semantic shift, Cicero implicitly authorizes himself as a suitable agent for updating *virtus* for the contemporary Roman.

This update involves, as previously suggested, an expansion of eligible candidates for attaining *virtus* that will be further explored below. With proper ethical guidance, Romans now no longer needed to display excellence in a military context if they wished to possess virtue. Indeed, Cicero claims that "there is no one of any race who, having found a guide, is not able to arrive at *virtus*" (*nec est quisquam gentis ullius, qui ducem nactus ad virtutem pervenire non possit, De Leg.* 1.30). Despite this sweeping claim, the scope of *virtus* in the philosophical works is simultaneously limited by using gendered language as a tool for delineating in what contexts *virtus* could be pursued. This can manifest through two complementary approaches. First, reinforcement of the "eligible" group characterizes virtue as being attainable to those with specifically masculine identities. On the other hand, restriction of the out-group results in virtue being portrayed as unattainable for those with feminine or effeminate qualities. Reliance on loaded words such as *mollis* in *De Finibus* as well as a pervasive emphasis on *viri* in *Tusculanae Disputationes* reveals how the pursuit of *virtus*, while greatly expanded in some regards, has also been markedly constrained by Cicero. I shall suggest that, beyond being a mere rhetorical trope, a fundamental component of Cicero's overall strategy is the prevalence of definition through

[69] Cicero's willingness and capacity for innovation is evident from his repeated praise for Tullia's *virtus*, making him the "first Roman to attribute *virtus* to a woman without humorous intent." See Altman, p. 411.

negative examples involving gendered language. For instance, Cicero implies that people who are characterized by *mollitia* or who indulge in *voluptas* are inherently limited in their pursuit of *virtus*.[70] Such a reliance on negative exempla complements his strategy elsewhere of permitting *virtus* to those with idealized masculine qualities.

Before investigating this strategy in the *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes*, we shall consider a broad statistical overview of *virtus* in the Ciceronian corpus, with attention to prevalence of each grammatical case and discussion of usage in the singular compared with the plural. This can provide a useful baseline against which certain striking features of these case studies can be compared. A brief survey of evidence for Cicero's attention to the chronological development of *virtus* throughout his writings will enable a closer inspection of his deployment of this fact as a rhetorical strategy in these two philosophical works. Striking features from these texts, including personifications of *virtus*, incorporation of *virtus* in Cicero's translation of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, and the famous etymological link of *vir and virtus*, will provide specific examples of Cicero's strategy for his simultaneous expansion and limitation of the accessibility of *virtus*.[71] This will provide insight into exactly how Cicero approaches the shared territory of *virtus* both as a supreme ethical goal (being his standard translation of ἀρετή) and as a term traditionally martial-focused and inherently masculine (the *vir* element being always literally at the fore).[72] By resolving this, we will be able to see how he adapts usage found in earlier writers such as Plautus and subsequently how his legacy will affect later imperial authors grappling with Cicero's indelible stamp.

[70] For the importance of the *virtus*/*voluptas* dichotomy in philosophical discourse, see Gordon (2012).
[71] *De Fin.* 2.69, *Tusc*. 2.21, and *Tusc*. 2.43, respectively. The etymological link is given as *appellata est enim ex viro virtus.*
[72] Bilingual inscriptions show *virtus* as being the translation of both *andreia* (e.g. CIL I^2 743 = ILLRP 372) and *aretē* (e.g. CIL I^2 725 = ILS 31).

Statistical Overview

Given the immense size of the Ciceronian corpus, a selection of passages chosen haphazardly may or may not result in a selection which is representative of the whole. Passages which are unusual in some way certainly warrant closer analysis, but it would be difficult to establish how they are "unusual" if no "usual" baselines are first established. Therefore, subsequent analysis will rely on the following two-fold methodology. First, several metrics will be presented for both Cicero's corpus as a whole as well as the case studies chosen from the *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes.* We shall then consider the conscious recognition of the historical development of *virtus* across a range of Cicero's works in a variety of genres. These general observations will then be used as reference points for the close readings in the two works chosen as case studies.

I shall focus my analysis on the first two books of each work. In the case of *De Finibus*, this choice is motivated by the natural pairing of Books 1 and 2, as they present arguments for and against Epicureanism, respectively. This debate often employs language implicating the masculinity of those ascribing to Epicurean tenets, thereby providing a backdrop on which *virtus* can acquire special prominence. For the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, two structural elements suggest that the first two books also work together closely as a unit, albeit not as overtly as the correspondence of *De Finibus* 1 and 2.[73] First, the introductions to each of the five books indicates a close connection between *Tusc*. 1 and *Tusc*. 2. The first two books' conversations are prompted by the same speaker, whereas the topic for *Tusc*. 3 comes from another anonymous interlocutor.[74] Book 3 also summarizes the first two books' topics by name, while Books 4 and 5

[73] This structural correspondence has been noted by many scholars, e.g. Gildenhard (2007).
[74] Both are still identified as "A." However, this speaker indicates his participation from the previous day (*dici non potest quam sim hesterna disputatione tua delectatus vel potius adiutus*, *Tusc.* 2.10) and M. implies a continuity

do not make such a distinction.[75] Second, in a passage from *Tusc.* 2 discussed further below, the function of *virtus* is described as enabling "contempt of death and of pain," precisely the subjects of Books 1 and 2, respectively.[76] Thus, the different tactics which Cicero uses in each book will acquire new significance in light of the close connection established between them.

As I have previously mentioned, a full 28% of the 1494 attestations of *virtus* in the Ciceronian corpus occur in the *De Finibus* (239) and *Tusculanae Disputationes* (162) alone, with the next highest prevalence in an individual work being in *De Oratore* (66). As is clear from Table 5, the frequency of usage can vary considerably, even between books of the same work.

Table 5. Rate of forms of virtus in first two books of De Fin. and Tusc. compared to Ciceronian corpus

	Word Count	***# of virtus***	**Per 1k Words**
***De Fin.* 1**	7245	11	1.52
***De Fin.* 2**	19632	38	1.94
***Tusc.* 1**	12687	12	0.95
***Tusc.* 2**	6689	21	3.14
All Cicero	1,239,224	1494	1.16

Although the difference between the rate in *Tusc. 2* (3.14 occurrences per 1000 words) does not exceed the threshold for statistical significance compared to the overall proportion (1.16 occurrences per 1000 words), it is highly suggestive when compared to the below-average rate in *Tusc.* 1 (only 0.95 occurrences per 1000 words). This marked increase in his usage of *virtus* reflects Cicero's grounding of contempt of pain in the possession and proper use of *virtus* (particularly *fortitudo*). Given that the primary function of the virtue "which alone is superior to the others" is "the contempt of death and of pain" (*quae una ceteris excellebat, Tusc.* 2.43*;*

with A. (*agamus igitur ut coepimus*, 2.13). In Book 3, M. simply asks "someone of those who were present" (*eorum aliquem qui aderant*, 3.7) for a new topic.

[75] *duobus superioribus de morte et de dolore dictum est*, 3.6; *itaque expositis tridui disputationibus quartus dies hoc libro concluditur*, 4.7; *quintus hic dies, Brute, finem faciet Tusculanarum disputationum*, 5.1.

[76] *mortis dolorisque contemptio*, 2.43

mortis dolorisque contemptio, *Tusc.* 2.43; see later analysis of this passage), it is noteworthy that the book treating the first of these subjects (*Tusc.* 1) employs considerably less *virtus* than the one dealing with the second (*Tusc.* 2).

Tables 6, 7, and 8. Distribution of grammatical cases of *virtus* (total number and percentage in each) and p-values comparing sample to population proportions using 2-tailed tests; p<0.05 is considered "significant."

	Nom.	**Acc.**	**Dat.**	**Gen.**	**Abl.**
***De Fin*. 1**	2	3	0	2	4
***De Fin*. 2**	7	9	2	10	10
***Tusc*. 1**	1	1	0	5	5
***Tusc*. 2**	10	1	2	4	4
All Cicero	307	265	75	317	530

	Nom.	**Acc.**	**Dat.**	**Gen.**	**Abl.**
***De Fin*. 1**	18%	27%	0%	18%	36%
***De Fin*. 2**	18%	24%	5%	26%	26%
***Tusc*. 1**	8%	8%	0%	42%	42%
***Tusc*. 2**	48%	5%	10%	19%	19%
All Cicero	21%	18%	5%	21%	35%

	Nom.	**Acc.**	**Dat.**	**Gen.**	**Abl.**
***De Fin*. 1**	0.846	0.408	0.446	0.805	0.951
***De Fin*. 2**	0.745	0.337	0.945	0.442	0.238
***Tusc*. 1**	0.295	0.394	0.426	0.083	0.654
***Tusc*. 2**	**0.002***	0.12	0.345	0.808	0.116

Table 8 presents the p-values for the proportion of each grammatical case compared to the "population proportion" (here, the Ciceronian corpus found from the body of 1494 total uses). A p-value can be defined as "the probability under a specified statistical model that a statistical summary of the data (e.g., the sample mean difference between two compared groups) would be equal to or more extreme than its observed value."[77] Informally, this can be thought of as the percent chance that a given observation could have arisen due to the randomness inherent in sampling. For instance, suppose that the percentage of red-headed people in the United States

[77] Wasserstein (2016) p. 131

is 10%, and you observe in a town of 1000 people that a total of 120 people has red hair. 12% is clearly higher than 10%, but is this difference "statistically significant"? To test, we can use a null-hypothesis (a statement to be either *accepted* or *rejected*) that the town has the same percentage as the population proportion, i.e. 10%, with our alternate hypothesis being that this town actually has a *higher* percentage of red-headed people. An intermediate value known as a standard score or "z-value," which depends both on the difference between the hypothesized and the observed rates as well as the sample size (here, 1000), can be calculated. For this particular example, a z-value of 2.108 is obtained, corresponding to a p-value of 0.0175. If we set our significance level at $p = 0.05$, any value *smaller* than this (including 0.0175!) would be grounds for rejecting the null-hypothesis, implying that we are accepting the alternate hypothesis in its place. In this case, we could then claim that this town does indeed have significantly more red-headed people than the national average. It should be noted that, out of all the towns with 1000 people and assuming that the 10% national average was truly descriptive everywhere, we would still expect that 1.75% of the towns would have 120 or more red-headed people due purely to randomness alone. Thus, the p-value cannot be used to make a simple true/false statement about an observed difference in a particular sample. Rather, it provides a quantitative method for analyzing *how* significant such a difference is, with the recognition that even a town with 900 out of 1000 people having red hair cannot be definitively "proven" to have a higher proportion than the national proportion.

When we compare the distribution of usage across the five cases in all of Cicero, we observe roughly equal usage in the nominative, accusative, and genitive cases, with proportionally more ablatives and fewer datives. The exceptional case is the use of the nominative in *Tusc*. 2, where nearly half of all instances appear in this case compared to a fifth in

Cicero as a whole (p = 0.002). The significantly higher rate of nominatives reflects a focus on the active nature of *virtus* in its role as a method for developing an endurance for pain.

Table 9. Percentage of plural forms of *virtus* in *De Fin.* and *Tusc*.

	% Plural
***De Fin*. Entire**	33.3%
***De Fin*. 1**	45.5%
***De Fin*. 2**	37.8%
***Tusc*. Entire**	19.5%
***Tusc*. 1**	8.3%
***Tusc*. 2**	4.8%
All Cicero	17.1%

Table 9 demonstrates that, on the whole, only about 1 in 6 of Cicero's uses of the term *virtus* occurs in the plural. While the singular is often employed for describing both *virilis*- and *humana-virtus*, and even cases where it seems to fall somewhere in between, the plural tends to favor ethical contexts much more heavily. In fact, Balmaceda claims that "in the plural, *virtutes* almost always meant virtues or good qualities; one person cannot have "courages" or "braveries."[78] While this pattern does generally hold, Cicero often collapses the distinction between singular and plural when used in ethical contexts. He himself recognizes this fact: "I myself have often argued that he who has one virtue has them all" (*a meque ipso saepe disputatum sit, qui unam haberet, omnes habere virtutes, De Off.* 2.35).[79] This effectively removes the rift between *virilis*- and *humana-virtus*, as someone can no longer "just" possess *virtus* solely on the martial side without also crossing to the ethical one. As can be seen from Table 9, *Tusc*. 1 and even more so *Tusc*. 2 show a much smaller percentage of plural usages

[78] Balmaceda, p. 35

[79] Other instances of equating one virtue with all the virtues include *De Orat.* 1.83 (*unam quandam esse virtutem, et qui unam virtutem haberet, omnis habere easque esse inter se aequalis et paris*) and *De Orat.* 2.150 (*complectar uno verbo, quo saepe iam usi sumus, diligentia qua una virtute omnes virtutes reliquae continentur*).

compared to Cicero's overall average of 17.1%.[80] Given the preference for *virtutes* to occur in ethical contexts, this chapter shall also explore how this stylistic choice may reflect a strategy of focusing on the martial overtones of *virtus* as a method for reinforcing the suitability of the books' subjects (contempt of death and contempt of pain) to the group that Cicero sees as being best able to achieve this kind (i.e. *viri*).

As this statistical overview shows, both *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes* depart from Cicero's general usage of *virtus* in prevalence, distribution of cases, and rate of plural forms. The suggested implications for these departures shall be considered in the analyses below. Before turning to these, though, we must also consider another important aspect of Cicero's philosophical project – namely, how he uses a conscious recognition of the historical development of *virtus* to implicitly authorize his own formulation.

Recognition of Semantic Development

A self-consciousness about the proper use of terms is evident across many of Cicero's works.[81] For instance, he claims that we "abuse" (*abutimur*) the word *virtus* in applying it to a tree or horse (*De Leg*. 1.45). When defending himself against a potential charge of inconsistency in how he is employing *virtus* in *De Officiis*, he makes the following disclaimer:

Sed ne quis sit admiratus, cur, cum inter omnes philosophos constet a meque ipso saepe disputatum sit, qui unam haberet, omnes habere virtutes, nunc ita seiungam, quasi possit quisquam, qui non idem prudens sit, iustus esse, alia est illa, cum veritas ipsa limatur in disputatione, subtilitas, alia, cum ad opinionem communem omnis accommodatur oratio. (*De Off.* 2.35)	But lest someone wonder why I am now thus separating [the virtues], since it is established among all the philosophers and has often been argued by me myself that he who has one virtue has all the virtues – as though someone could be just who at the same time is not prudent – there is one exactness, when the truth itself is being investigated in a discussion, [but] another exactness when the entire speech is adapted to the common view.

[80] While large, this difference does not achieve statistical significance at the $p = 0.05$ level due to the relatively small sample sizes involved.

[81] E.g. egone non intellego, quid sit ἡδονή Graece, Latine 'voluptas'? (*De fin*. 2.12)

A particular *subtilitas* of a higher standard than that needed for "common" speech is required for a *disputatio* dealing with truth itself. A reader may therefore expect Cicero's usage in the philosophical works to be more precise and intentionally deployed than in, say, his speeches.

This assertion of increased precision reflects an implied claim to a thorough understanding of how the word should be used in Cicero's own time. However, several examples also suggest that he wished to demonstrate an awareness of how this word was regularly used in the past. When praising both the martial prowess and ethical capacity of a person, he regularly correlates them by placing the *virilis-virtus* first, e.g. "required are not only that military *virtus*, which is unique in Gnaeus Pompeius, but also the other many and great *virtutes* of the mind" (*non solum militaris illa virtus quae est in Cn. Pompeio singularis sed aliae quoque animi virtutes magnae et multae requiruntur, Pro Lege Manilia* 63.5).[82] He goes even further in *De Oratore* when discussing the lack of qualification and preparation of men pursuing office today compared to those of previous times: "but if some one person stands out from the many, he is proud of himself if he brings some one thing, either warlike *virtus* and some military practice, which things indeed have certainly become obsolete now" (*Sin aliquis excellit unus e multis, effert se si unum aliquid affert, aut bellicam virtutem et usum aliquem militarem, quae sane nunc quidem obsoleverunt, De. Orat.* 3.136). He concludes by stating what such a man does not possess: a "fellowship and association of the *virtutes* themselves" (*virtutum ipsarum societatem cognationemque, De. Orat.* 3.136). In particular, a *societas* implies both the plurality – a single virtue cannot have a "fellowship" by itself – and the harmonious cooperation of these virtues which Cicero feels most men (*plerique*) at that

[82] Underlined phrases throughout this writing sample are given my own emphasis. Another example of correlating the two forms in their proper chronological order is *Ad Fam.* 10.3.1.1: *nam et in re militari virtutem et in administranda provincia iustitiam et in omni genere prudentiam mihi tuam exposuit*.

time were lacking. On the other hand, although used figuratively here, a *cognatio* implies a quality which would be innate for certain people and therefore beyond the scope of others. In this passage, therefore, Cicero works to redefine the accessibility of *virtus* by firmly placing the martial meaning in the distant past. This is subsequently supplanted in importance by the newer *humanae-virtutes* which no doubt are meant to be ethical given the use of the plural. As shall be explored below, this recognition of the development over time is also expressed in both *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes*, having important implications for Cicero's overall strategy for redefining the accessibility of *virtus*.

***Tusculanae Disputationes* 1**

Now that we have examined several important features of Cicero's engagement with *virtus* in general, the *Tusculanae Disputationes* will be explored as the first case study for how these methods are enacted within a single work. We shall see that, similar to his strategy elsewhere, Cicero repeatedly focuses attention on the semantic shift of *virtus* over time as a way to implicitly authorize the innovations he wishes to make concerning its accessibility. Several notable departures from his standard usage will warrant further explanation. As noted previously, Cicero uses the plural of *virtus* far less often in the first two books compared with his overall average, while using nominatives at a far higher rate in Book 2 than his average. It will be argued that these departures are fitting with his strategy of presenting *virtus* as an active force which, like the Roman conceptualizations of "proper" masculinity, does not favor being made the passive object of other entities.[83] Furthermore, other gendered language such the strikingly

[83] The penetrative paradigm is generally accepted by scholars as describing the fundamental distinction of Roman sexuality, which is one not between hetero- and homosexuality but rather one between the active/penetrating (viewed as masculine) and the passive/penetrated (viewed as feminine) roles. For elaboration and potential critiques of this paradigm, see Williams (2010) pp. 258-62.

oxymoronic *ecfeminata virtus* will be explained in terms of his method of definition through exclusion of what he deems as improper candidates.

Cicero opens the *Tusculane Disputationes* with a favorite theme – the suitability and even superiority of writing philosophy in Latin compared with Greek. He argues for this superiority through a comparison of the merits of Romans and Greeks in various fields. These comparisons rely on the audience's familiarity with the distinction between *virilis-virtus* and *humana-virtus,* which Cicero (both here and in *Tusc*. 2) presents in accord with its chronological development. Both as seen previously and in further examples below, Cicero regularly discusses the earlier martial sense first when instances of both meanings are juxtaposed.

After he asserts the superiority of the Roman ancestors, Cicero introduces the concept of *virtus* to his work with a passage that employs it in both its *virilis* and *humana* forms:

Quid loquar de re militari? in qua cum virtute nostri multum valuerunt tum plus etiam disciplina. Iam illa, quae natura, non litteris adsecuti sunt, neque cum Graecia neque ulla cum gente sunt conferenda. Quae enim tanta gravitas, quae tanta constantia, magnitudo animi, probitas, fides, quae tam excellens in omni genere virtus in ullis fuit, ut sit cum maioribus nostris comparanda?

(*Tusc* 1.2)

What shall I say about military affairs? In this we have not only prevailed much by *virtus* but even more by discipline. Now those things which they have pursued by nature, not by learning, should not be compared with either Greece or any other people. For what great seriousness, what great firmness, greatness of soul, honesty, loyalty, what *virtus*, so surpassing in every type, has existed among any people, so that it ought to be compared with our ancestors?

The first occurrence of the word in the *Tusculanae Disputationes* is thus intimately linked with matters of warfare, closely aligning it with the sense observed most often in early Latin usage. Cicero implies that the virtue of the Romans has been present from the very beginning, practiced by *natura* rather than by any formal learning, and strengthened by the emphatic declaration that *disciplina* pushed their superiority to an even greater degree. He continues by listing off several ethical virtues followed by an assertion of the superiority of Romans' *virtus* "*in omni genere."*

This firmly moves the sense into the realm of *humana-virtus*, which can be observed and practiced in *every* type rather than in a singular manifestation as *virilis-virtus*.

Shortly after this, Cicero describes how the Romans embraced the orator, "not at first cultivated but ready for speaking, but later the cultivated one" (*nec eum primo eruditum, aptum tamen ad dicendum, post autem eruditum,* 1.5). He then names seven orators with a careful attention to their order by using temporal markers such as *anteibat, post, inde,* and *nostram ad aetatem*. This development brings readers up to the very present moment with the claim that "philosophy has been neglected all the way to this age" (*philosphia iacuit usque ad hanc aetatem,* 1.5). This is precisely the problem which Cicero implies he will remedy with this work. The opening to *Tusculanae Disputationes* as a whole therefore pays close attention to chronology and reflects Cicero's preoccupation with the interplay between Roman and Greek values over time. The fact that he has at the outset of his work carefully distinguished *virtus* as martial valor first followed by a host of ethical virtues suggests that he both recognizes this important historical distinction and also identifies the distinction as important for his overall strategy.

A close attention to history, both the general sequence as well as specific dates, continues to be developed throughout the introduction.[84] It is amid this heightened temporal focus that Cicero, on the authority of M. Porcius Cato's *Origines,* states that "guests at banquet used to be accustomed to singing to the piper about the *virtutes* of famous men" (*solitos esse in epulis canere convivas ad tibicinem de clarorum hominum virtutibus,* 1.3). Here, *virtutibus* seems to mean "courageous deeds" as appropriate for the epic *canere* and as such defies the trend of the

[84] e.g. 1.3 describes the poets as the oldest kind of the learned men (*antiquissimum e doctis genus*) and compares the time frames of several Greek poets in relation to the founding of Rome. Cicero also adds the specific date of 240 BCE for a play by Livius, the earliest Roman poet.

plural almost always being used for "ethical qualities." Men who are described as c*lari* in conjunction with their *virtus* are elsewhere classified as exemplary men from past ages.[85] Here, Cicero not only continues to develop the distinction between two classes of *virtus* but also indicates that the kind obtained during war does not have the same currency in his age.

Evidence of this attention to distinguishing between *virilis*- and *humana-virtus* can be found later in Book 1. For instance, Cicero highlights the antiquity of martial *virtus* by discussing two exemplary Greek men: "I am not able to say that Themistocles and Epaminondas lack the glory of warlike *virtus*" (*non possum dicere… carere gloria Themistoclem, Epaminondam bellicae virtutis, 1.110*). The adjective *bellicus* has already been seen in *De Orat.* 3.136 as a way to distinguish explicitly the valor of war from broader ethical virtues. Moreover, the two Greek men referenced lived many hundreds of years prior to Cicero's time and are used twice previously in the book as paradigmatic of old-fashioned *exempla*.[86] This demonstrates a pervasive attention throughout Book 1 of establishing the non-static nature of *virtus*.

Tusculanae Disputationes 2

Despite following a similar approach to the first book, the second book of the *Tusculanae Disputationes* develops a heightened awareness of the role of manliness in becoming virtuous.[87] As we observed in Table 5, the relative frequency of the word *virtus* in Book 2 is more than triple that of Book 1. Furthermore, forms of the word *vir* are prevalent throughout, occurring 31 times in Book 2. Furthermore, *virile* and *viriliter* appear once each. This total is more than that of *virtus* itself at 21 times, which suggests a fundamental connection between manliness and the topic

[85] e.g. *Phil.* 13.30.5
[86] Positions Themistocles' old-fashioned singing in relation to Epaminondas' as *aliquot ante annis*, *Tusc.* 1.4; references Epaminondas and Themistocles as being examples which are *et vetera et externa*, 1.33 .
[87] Such a connection may have been implied by a juxtaposition of *vir* and *virtus* near the end of Book 1, where Cicero praises Socrates and Theramenes as *viros virtutis* (*Tusc.* 1.110).

of Book 2 specifically, namely the contempt of pain. I shall argue here that Cicero portrays *virilis-virtus* as particularly well suited to fostering an endurance of pain, but that examples of women and boys with this capacity show that this is not a full embodiment of *virtus* for Cicero. He instead relies on an attention to the chronological development of *virtus* to show that, while people in the past could foster *virtus* by enduring pain, the accessibility has now been broadened. The result is that any man, even outside circumstances such as military service where endurance of pain is best cultivated, could now employ *ratio* as a route to virtue. I shall begin with a discussion of Cicero's etymological connection between *virtus* and *vir*, which acts as the turning point in the discussion between *virilis*- and *humana-virtus*. The way in which the argument is structured around this passage will reveal a close attention to the historical development of *virtus*. We will then examine negative examples in the form of boys, women, and effeminate men to argue that Cicero views his conceptualization of *virtus* as the preferable and more accessible method for his contemporaries.

The explicit connection between being a *vir* and obtaining *virtus* is positioned as the crucial link between the two halves of Book 2. As he passes from discussion of martial examples to the ones *de ratione*, Cicero asks whether this transition should be clarified first: "Should I briefly touch on the same things which I just spoke about, so that my discourse might more easily progress further?" (*an eadem breviter attingam, quae modo dixi, quo facilius oratio progredi possit longius?* 2.42*).*[88] The transition that he uses to bridge the two is the most direct articulation of how Cicero believes one can acquire *virtus*:

[88] This question is merely rhetorical, as M. does not wait for A. to reply but rather continues immediately "Among all people, therefore…" (*inter omnes igitur…*)

Atque vide ne, cum omnes rectae animi adfectiones virtutes appellentur, non sit hoc proprium nomen omnium, sed ab ea, quae una ceteris excellebat, omnes nominatae sint. Appellata est enim ex viro virtus; viri autem propria maxime est fortitudo, cuius munera duo sunt maxima mortis dolorisque contemptio. Utendum est igitur his, si virtutis compotes vel potius si viri volumus esse, quoniam a viris virtus nomen est mutuata. (*Tusc*. 2.43)

And yet see that, although all upright states of mind are called *virtutes*, this is not the appropriate name for all, but all have been named from that one which was superior to the others. For it has been called *virtus* from *vir*; but the particular (virtue) of a man is fortitude especially, whose two greatest functions are contempt of death and pain. We must therefore use these, if we want to be in possession of *virtus* or rather if we want to be men, since the name "*virtus*" has been borrowed from "*viri*."

As in *De Leg*. 1.45, Cicero wants his reader to recognize when a term is being misapplied. He argues that the word *virtus* is not properly applied to *all* upright states (*rectae adfectiones*) but rather to one alone, namely "fortitude," the one most closely associated in Cicero's discussion with being a man. The obligation of "proper men" is also emphasized in the passive periphrastic *utendem est*, where the emphasis on "using" *virtus* reflects the "over-arching notion that [*virtus*] was something that existed only in action."[89]

This point is elaborated even more strongly with Cicero's claim that a better (*potius*) statement of "being in possession of *virtus*" is simply "being men," the reason being that the word *virtus* was "borrowed" from *viri*. This borrowing implies that the lender (here, *viri*) possesses a quality which the borrower (here, *virtus*) desires but does not yet own. Cicero establishes a similar idea in *De Oratore*, when he discusses metaphors as being "a sort of borrowing, since you take what you do not have from somewhere else" (*translations quasi mutationes sunt, cum quod non habes aliunde sumas, De Orat*. 3.156) and suggests that this implies a poverty (*inopiam*) on the part of the metaphor's tenor. Thus, Cicero casts *viri* as

[89] Bell, p. 19. Cf. also the stress placed on the use of *virtus* in *De Rep*.: "But it is not enough to have *virtus* as though some sort of art unless you use it. Although certainly an art, when you do not use it, nevertheless the knowledge itself is able to be retained, *virtus* is reckoned entirely in its own use" (*Nec vero habere virtutem satis est quasi artem aliquam, nisi utare; etsi ars quidem, cum ea non utare, scientia tamen ipsa teneri potest, virtus in usu sui tota posita est, De Rep*. 1.2)

possessing some broader quality of which *virtus* is partaking and, just as a metaphor prompts a reader to imagine the vehicle as a more suitable referent than the tenor, so too does Cicero suggest that readers ought to imagine *viri* whenever encountering *virtus* due to its primacy in possessing the desired quality.

The programmatic importance of this passage for the *Tusculanae Disputationes* cannot be understated. The two greatest functions of *fortitudo*, the particular virtue of a man, are given as "contempt of death and pain" (*mortis dolorisque contemptio*). These are precisely the subjects of the first two books, which throws the etymological connection between the two words into the fore as emblematic of the entire work, at least up to this point. During the second book, Cicero demonstrates how *virtus* is fundamental for a *vir*, which is underscored by the high prevalence of forms of *vir* throughout. Thus, a major component of Cicero's strategy for shaping the boundaries of what it means to possess *virtus* is through positive examples, that is, by defining the group eligible to contend for it. We shall consider below how this strategy is complemented by the use of negative examples in the form of women, boys, and effeminate men. First, though, we shall consider the framing of this passage to explore how Cicero uses a focus on historical development as a means for demonstrating the superiority of the modern incarnation of *virtus*.

When discussing how men can learn to endure pain, Cicero begins with training and only then moves on to philosophy. The two lengthiest examples he gives of the former are "our soldiers" (*nostri milites*, 2.37) and gladiators (*gladiatores*, 2.41). Both of these groups are prime candidates for acquiring *virilis-virtus*, as highlighted by the repeated emphasis on weapons and competition against enemies throughout these sections. However, the case of gladiators as examples for how to pursue a manly rejection of pain is explicitly cast as incongruous with Cicero's times: "A gladiatorial show tends to be seen by some as cruel and inhumane, and I don't

know whether this is the case, as the gladiatorial show now takes place: but when the criminals used to fight with the sword, there could be no stronger training against pain and death" (*crudele gladiatorum spectaculum et inhumanum non nullis videri solet, et haud scio an ita sit, ut nunc fit: cum vero sontes ferro depugnabant… nulla poterat esse fortior contra dolorem et mortem disciplina*, 2.41). Cicero thus reflects the historical development of ideas of manliness through a two-fold approach. Not only does he regularly discuss the earlier martial sense first, but this martial sense is also often, as here, shown to be antiquated in some fundamental way.

This bifurcation of *virilis*- and *humana-virtus* is also reflected in the signposting of Cicero's arguments. While elaborating on soldiers' ability to display a manly resistance to pain, he remarks: "but I am speaking so far about habit of training – not yet about reason and wisdom" (*sed adhuc de consuetudine exercitationis loquor, nondum de ratione et sapientia*, 2.40). When he is ready to move from material pertinent for *virilis-virtus* to that for *humana-virtus*, he again signals this to the reader: "I have spoken about training and habit and preparation; come, if you please, let us now consider about reason (*de exercitatione et consuetudine et commentatione dixi; age sis, nunc de ratione videamus, 2.42*). These temporal signposts (*adhuc, nondum, nunc*) reflect the distinction between the two primary methods for developing an endurance for pain – one heavily imbued with martial imagery and therefore dated, the other philosophically developed and thus "contemporary."

As previously mentioned, the etymological link between *vir* and *virtus* serves as the bridge between Cicero's discussion of *virilis*- and *humana-virtus*. Thus, readers might expect to find some common ground between the two categories of *virtus* that have been clearly delineated at this point in the argument. I argue that "being a man" is the shared ground in Cicero's presentation of *virtus*. The positive examples of endurance of pain by soldiers and gladiators are

(for Cicero) necessarily male.[90] However, women, boys, and effeminate men are also used in examples of the older form of *virtus*. Thus, these are portrayed as possessing a sort of proto-*virtus* which is by nature incomplete due to it being accessible to otherwise ineligible groups. It is only after the introduction of *ratio* that a more complete form of *virtus* can be acquired. Examples of such ineligible groups are no longer used from this point onward, thus limiting *virtus* to those who are its etymological referent, namely *viri*.

When providing examples of those who can endure pain, Cicero gives a striking contrast of a man's capacity with that of old women:

Sed adhuc de consuetudine exercitationis loquor, nondum de ratione et sapientia. Aniculae saepe inediam biduum aut triduum ferunt: subduc cibum unum diem athletae, Iovem Olympium, eum ipsum, cui se exercebit, implorabit, ferre non posse se clamabit. Consuetudinis magna vis est. (*Tusc* 2.40)	But up to this point, I have been speaking about habit from training, not yet about reason and wisdom. Old women often bear hunger for two or three days: take away the athlete's food for one day, he will implore Olympian Jove, the one himself for whom he is training himself, he will shout that he cannot bear it. Great is the force of habit.

Crucially, this evocative example is given immediately after Cicero claims that he has only dealt with the matter from a consideration of training, not yet *de ratione et sapientia*. The example suggests that the endurance of pain in a manner consistent with *virilis-virtus* is a necessary but not sufficient condition for attaining *virtus* in Cicero's age.[91] An extra ingredient in the form of reasoned evaluation is needed for a potential candidate to fully acquire true *virtus*.

An insufficient age also challenges potential claims to *virtus*. Spartan boys are given as an example of an outstanding capacity to endure pain, providing an implicit contrast with Roman men.[92] This example is capped with a rhetorical flourish: "What then? Are boys able to do this, but

[90] The presence of female gladiators in Rome is "definite" but the extent of that presence is unknown. See McCullough (2008).
[91] If it were, one could argue that Cicero would see endurance of hunger by old women as a sufficient condition for saying that they possess *virtus*, which is unlikely given the likely contemptuous use of the diminutive *aniculae*.
[92] This contrast is made explicit later, at Tusc. 2.37: *milita vero – nostram dico, non Spartiatarum*…

men won't be? And is custom capable, but reason will not be?" (*quid ergo? hoc pueri possunt, viri non poterunt? et mos valet, ratio non valebit? Tusc*. 2.34) The contrast between *pueri* and *viri* is paralleled in that between *mos* and *ratio*, considerations of which constitute two halves of Cicero's description of endurance of pain. The chronological sequence of these constituents is paralleled in the grammar, with each present tense verb describing a manifestation of the earlier, martial sense of *virtus*, changing to the future tense when discussing the route needed to acquire the later, primarily ethical sense. This example neatly illustrates several of the dichotomies – Roman vs. foreign, masculinity vs. a lack of masculinity, contemporary vs. antiquated – that Cicero uses to help shape precisely what *virtus* entails.

A third kind of negative example in the form of effeminacy is used to further delineate the boundaries of *virtus*. When arguing that the recognition of pain as unpleasant is acceptable when it is paired with the knowledge that this pain is bearable, Cicero uses the example of Hercules in his adaptation of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*:

Perge, aude, nate, illacrima patris pestibus, Miserere! Gentes nostras flebunt miserias. Heu! Virginalem me ore ploratum edere, Quem vidit nemo ulli ingemescentem malo! Ecfeminata virtus adflicta occidit. Accede, nate, adsiste…. (*Tusc*. 2.21)	Come, son, dare, weep for the destructions of your father, pity! The nations will weep for our sufferings. Alas! To tell of me, maidenly, having lamented by a mouth which no one saw groaning from any evil! My thoroughly feminized *virtus* falls, struck down. Approach, son, stand by...
ἴθ᾽, ὦ τέκνον, τόλμησον· οἰκτιρόν τέ με πολλοῖσιν οἰκτρόν, ὅστις ὥστε παρθένος βέβρυχα κλαίων, καὶ τόδ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἂν εἷς ποτε τόνδ᾽ ἄνδρα φαίη πρόσθ᾽ ἰδεῖν δεδρακότα, ἀλλ᾽ ἀστένακτος αἰὲν εἰχόμην κακοῖς. νῦν δ᾽ ἐκ τοιούτου θῆλυς ηὕρημαι τάλας. καὶ νῦν προσελθὼν στῆθι πλησίον… (Soph. *Trach*. 1070-1076)	Come, child, dare; and pity me pitiable from many things, I who have roared, weeping just as a maiden, and no one ever could say that he saw that this man has done this before, but I was always being held by evils without a groan. But now I have been found out as a wretched woman from such a thing. Now approach and stand nearby…

Cicero has kept very close to the Greek version in some places yet has differed more markedly in others. Some are word-for-word translations (*perge, aude, nate* vs. ἴθ᾽, ὦ τέκνον, τόλμησον) or

match the original meaning very closely (*accede, nate, adsiste* vs. καὶ νῦν προσελθὼν στῆθι πλησίον). One notable exception from Cicero's adaptation has no direct parallel in the Greek: "My thoroughly effeminized *virtus* falls, struck down" (cf. "But now I have been found out as a wretched woman from such a thing."). The Greek highlights the passivity (ηὕρημαι) and feminine status (θῆλυς… τάλας) of Hercules. However, only Cicero's version puts this in explicit contrast to his (previous) masculinity with the striking juxtaposition of *ecfeminata virtus.* Cicero's adaptation emphasizes his innovative strategy for bringing Greek material to a Roman audience, while supporting the strategy pervasive throughout Book 2 of linking *virtus* and *vir* and emphatically distinguishing it from those who are not traditionally masculine.

We have now seen how a conscious recognition of the development in the meaning of *virtus* over time has helped frame Cicero's presentation of this key word. Through this strategy, he demonstrates his qualifications for expounding on the nature of virtue while simultaneously presenting *virtus* as more accessible in his time due to the development of the *humana* aspect. At the same time, gendered language is used to sharpen the boundaries of this term by defining both who is eligible to pursue it and who is not. As we shall see in our examination of *De Finibus*, the contrast between masculine and effeminate will continue to play a prominent role.

***De Finibus* 1**

We now turn to the first two books of the *De Finibus*, which work as a pair by presenting arguments for and against Epicureanism. The arguments in favor are given through the character Torquatus, who continues to reflect Cicero's penchant for discussing the two classes of *virtus* in a manner congruous with their historical development: "but enough has been said in this place about the illustrious and glorious deeds of renowned men" (*sed de clarorum hominum factis illustribus et*

gloriosis satis hoc loco dictum est, De Fin. 1.37). As previously indicated, men characterized as *clari* are often distinguished as exemplary figures of by-gone eras, and indeed Torquatus has just discussed many exploits in wars and battles, including those of his Torquati ancestors.[93] He continues: "but now I shall explicate what pleasure itself is, and of what sort, so that every mistake by the ignorant people may be removed and so that it may be understand how serious, moderate, and serious is that school which is considered sensual, luxurious, and soft" (*nunc autem explicabo, voluptas ipsa quae qualisque sit, ut tollatur error omnis imperitorum intellegaturque ea, quae voluptaria, delicata, mollis habeatur disciplina, quam gravis, quam continens, quam severa sit, De Fin.* 1.37). *Nunc autem* signals his transition from a discussion centered on *virilis-virtus* to one revolving around *humana-virtus,* continuing the trend observed in the *Tusculanae Disputationes.*

The paired tricola, which act as antitheses of each other, emphasize Torquatus' recognition of the importance of masculinity this discussion. The adjectives he uses to describe the supposed misconceptions of an outsider concerning Epicureanism are heavily gendered, carrying loaded meanings in elegiac poetry. For instance, Greene argues that "one of the chief topoi in elegiac poetry" is the fact that such gendered language establishes "a feminine persona for the male lover" through, for instance, the lover's "characterization of both himself and his verse as *mollis*."[94] The word *mollis* and its derivatives occur frequently in Catullus, a contemporary of Cicero's, for whom the term denotes a male who "has failed in his attempt to achieve the status of a 'real' man."[95] Cicero himself develops this link elsewhere, including in the *Tusculanae Disputationes* where he urges his audience to "place the meaning of living well in every virtue; for nowadays, certainly, we are made effeminate by the softest thoughts" (*vim bene vivendi… in omni virtute ponamus; nam*

[93] Rackham makes this clear by translating *claris et fortibus viris* as "brave and famous men of old," though there is no word in the Latin explicitly referencing their antiquity.
[94] Greene (2005)
[95] Skinner (2010)

nunc quidem cogitationibus mollissimis effeminamur, Tusc. 2.95). For Cicero's conception of *virtus*, being biologically male is not a sufficient condition to be an eligible aspirant. Any proven allegation which impugns one's masculinity also debars one from acquiring *virtus*, thus reflecting Cicero's use of negative examples to further delineate the boundaries of this word.

As noted in Table 6, the word *virtus* appears only twice in the nominative in Book 1. Both of these occur in present contrary-to-fact conditionals, one of which is spoken not by Torquatus but rather by "Cicero."[96] This is another example of definition through a negative example, where Cicero illustrates the nature of virtus by showing who *cannot* acquire it. In Cicero's eyes, Epicureans' pursuit of pleasure puts them at odds with his view of masculinity and therefore an Epicurean cannot possess a *virtus* which is active in nature. This is in sharp contrast to the second book of the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, which shows a rate of nominatives which is significantly higher than Cicero's general usage. In fact, the only time *virtus* is in the accusative case in this book is also a conditional, which contains an explicit parenthetical denial of the possibility of the protasis ("do you not know, therefore, if you lose something from your Corinthian [vases], that you are able to have the rest of your goods secure, but if you lose one *virtus* (even though *virtus* is not able to be lost), but if you will have confessed that you do not have one, that you will have none?" *ecquid nescis igitur, si quid de Corinthiis tuis amiseris, posse habere te reliquam supellectilem salvam, virtutem autem si unam amiseris (etsi amitti non potest virtus), sed si unam confessus eris te non habere, nullam esse te habiturum*, 2.32). This represents the reverse situation of Book 1 of the *De Finibus* in that *Tusc*. 2 denies the possibility

[96] Of course, we should not necessarily equate the character in the *De Finibus* with the historical Cicero. The two contrary-to-fact conditionals are *nam si concederetur, etiamsi ad corpus nihil referatur, ista sua sponte et per se esse iucunda, per se esset et virtus et cognitio rerum, quod minime ille [viz. Epicurus] vult, expetenda, De Fin.* 1.25; *Istae enim vestrae eximiae pulchraeque virtutes nisi voluptatem efficerent, quis eas aut laudabiles aut expetendas arbitraretur? De Fin.* 1.42

for the absence of agency of "manly" *virtus*, as emphasized through the persistent link between *vir* and *virtus* in this book. We also note that this recapitulates the unity of virtue thesis as seen previously in Plato and Aristotle.

***De Finibus* 2**

Passages from *De Finibus* 1 show how gendered language can help define the boundaries of who can and cannot aspire to *virtus*. In addition, the case distribution of *virtus* as shown in Table 6 implies that, for an Epicurean, virtue cannot be characterized as active and therefore also cannot be masculine. We shall see in Book 2 that Cicero continues to employ gendered language in "Cicero's" response to Torquatus' argument. However, his strategy differs from Book 1 in that the contrast for *voluptas*, cast as feminine in a negative light, is *virtus* also cast as feminine but in a positive light instead. I argue that by matching the gender of his references, Cicero is able to more pointedly stress the negative feminine associations of *voluptas*.

When Cicero attacks Torquatus' inconsistency in defining a single highest good, he asks "Why is it necessary to bring in pleasure into a meeting of the Virtues, as though a prostitute into a gathering of matrons?" (*quid enim necesse est, tamquam meretricem in matronarum coetum, sic voluptatem in virtutum concilium adducere*, 2.12). This begins a pattern in Book 2 of personifying *virtutes* as female entities. This is natural given the word's grammatical gender, but such a personification goes beyond that. Rather than contrasting pleasure with an example of idealized masculinity, a more pointed foil can be established by using matrons as the antithesis of *voluptas* cast as a prostitute (*meretrix*).

Cicero again personifies *virtus* when he introduces the example of Regulus, claiming that "Virtus herself will speak on my behalf" (*dicet pro me ipsa virtus*, 2.65) and that "Virtus shouts that [Regulus] was more blessed" (*clamat virtus beatiorem fuisse*, 2.65). He here refers to

Regulus' voluntary return to Carthage, who has been "compelled by no force" (*nulla vi coactus*, 2.65). The fact that Virtus directly participates in the conversation and praises Regulus for not being passively compelled emphasizes the importance of activity in Cicero's conceptualization of virtue. This is in contrast to the implied passivity of Torquatus' championed virtue, Voluptas.

The passage immediately following this personification gives two further examples of virtuous behavior in the stories of Lucretia and Verginia. Cicero stresses the impact of their deaths on the male figures in their lives (husband and father for Lucretia; father for Verginia). Thus, even when virtue is discussed in the context of a woman, Cicero is careful to emphasize the importance of the outcomes for men. Virtus personified with feminine aspects, therefore, can still have relevance for Cicero's (male) audience.

This discussion leads into an even more striking personification of *virtus*, now in the plural:

pudebit te, inquam, illius tabulae quam Cleanthes sane commode verbis depingere solebat. Iubebat eos qui audiebant secum ipsos cogitare pictam in tabula voluptatem pulcherrimo vestitu et ornatu regali in solio sedentem; praesto esse virtutes ut ancillulas, quae nihil aliud agerent, nullum suum officium ducerent nisi ut voluptati ministrarent, et eam tantum ad aurem admonerent (si modo id pictura intellegi posset) ut caveret ne quid faceret imprudens quod offenderet animos hominum, aut quidquam e quo oriretur aliquis dolor. 'Nos quidem virtutes sic natae sumus ut tibi serviremus; aliud negoti nihil habemus.'

(Cic. *De Fin.* 2.69)

You will be ashamed, I say, of that painting which Cleanthes, suitably indeed, was accustomed to paint with words. He used to order those themselves who were listening with him to think of Pleasure painted on a tablet, sitting on a throne with most beautiful apparel and royal ornament; that the Virtues were at hand as little slave girls, who would do nothing else, lead no business of their own unless in order to wait upon Pleasure and only to warn her [saying] to the ear (if only it could be understood by the art of painting) to watch out lest she do something imprudent which would offend the spirits of men, or something from which some pain might arise. "We Virtues indeed have been born thus in order to serve you; we have no other business."

This exaggerated portrayal of the supposed Epicurean view of pleasure diminishes the status of the virtues in several key ways. Cicero has Cleanthes liken them not only to servant girls, solidifying their status as female entities, but he does so even more pointedly with the

diminutive form *ancillulae*. Of the 27 attestations of this form, many occur in comedy (9 in Plautus, 5 in Terence) suggesting the comical and absurd nature of this comparison in Cicero's eyes. Cicero himself uses this word one other time, also in a personification expressing scorn ("You [Crassus] have therefore joined that knowledge of law to Eloquence, as though a little servant girl and maid," *idcirco istam iuris scientiam eloquentiae, tanquam ancillulam pedisequamque, adiunxisti, De Orat.* 1.236). Given Cicero's stark reliance elsewhere on marking *voluptas* and *virtus* as antithetical, such a stark inversion of his natural hierarchy would come across as shocking to his audience, further underscoring the important gendered implications present in this passage.

A picture of Cicero's strategy in this book begins to emerge. In order to emphasize the unsuitability of Epicureanism for "real" men, he casts their chief good of pleasure in an unflattering, feminine light. Rather than contrasting this with a foil that is both morally upright and masculine, thereby differing in multiple dimensions, he emphasizes the failure of Epicureanism to characterize *virtus* with a focused attack along one dimension, namely moral rectitude. Thus, even when the grounds of contention are equalized with respect to the gender of their avatars, *voluptas* still definitively loses out to *virtus*.

This investigation opened with McDonnell's claim that "semantic development of *virtus* seems to have been completed by the time of Cicero."[97] Earlier in this chapter, we have explored what this word meant *before* the time of Cicero – we can now make some general observations about what exactly it entailed *during* the time of Cicero. A statistical overview provided some general starting points, including a motivation for the choice of *De Finibus* and *Tusculanae Disputationes* as case studies. The distribution of *virtus* in the Ciceronian corpus as a whole

[97] McDonnell, p. 11

enabled us to see where special attention was being paid to this concept. Furthermore, the distribution across the grammatical cases highlighted departures from his standards, such as the significantly higher use in the nominative in *Tusc*. 2. I have suggested that such a pattern reflects Cicero's view of the importance of activity for a proper *vir* applying his *virtus*. The rates of singular versus plural allowed us to detect further departures from the norm, such as the far lower rate of plural instances in the first two books of the *Tusculanae Disputationes*. As the plural generally but not exclusively is reserved for instances of *humana-virtus*, attention to this distinction can help clarify which mode of *virtus* is being discussed.

Beyond these observations, two main strategies emerged for Cicero's presentation of *virtus*. First, a keen focus on the historical development of *virtus* was seen throughout Cicero's works. This manifested in a variety of ways, such as regularly placing the earlier, martial sense first in discussions where both meanings are juxtaposed. He also uses tactics which both emphasize the antiquity (or sometimes even obsolescence) of *virilis-virtus* as well as highlight the value of *humana-virtus* in his contemporary society. I also suggested that such a persistent recognition of this historical development is used to authorize Cicero's expansion of the accessibility of *virtus*. As *virtus* has expanded to encompass both martial and ethical qualities by Cicero's time, he demonstrates that feats of battle prowess are no longer the only route to acquiring virtue. A newer path has been opened by which any man who can wield *ratio* properly can aspire to *virtus*.

The second main strategy in Cicero's delineation of *virtus* involved gendered language through both positive and negative examples. Positive examples define who *can* properly achieve virtue. The most notable elaboration of this is the *vir-virtus* passage of *Tusc*. 2.43 where Cicero presented "being men" as a better articulation of "possessing virtue." Negative examples

further define this territory by suggesting who *cannot* achieve proper virtue. This includes women, boys, and effeminate men. Thus, while the accessibility of *virtus* has been broadened due to an expansion in ways to acquire it, Cicero simultaneously limits it through gendered language to not simply "men," but specifically those men who possess ideal, masculine traits.

By the time of Cicero, *humana-virtus* had become a key concept in philosophical discourse. On a larger scale, though, this expansion had important implications for how Romans conceived of their own masculinity. But had this term reached its full semantic development as McDonnell claims? We shall now turn to several early imperial authors to develop an understanding of how this term was used in a post-Ciceronian era. By combining this exploration with our previous analyses, we can begin to construct a broader picture of how this crucial word evolved.

Valerius Maximus

In the preface to his work *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, Valerius Maximus indicates his motive for writing by stating that he is gathering examples for his readers so that their own work in doing so might be absent (*labor absit*). Going beyond the motive, Valerius also states what exactly those examples are going to be:

Caesar, invoco, cuius caelesti providentia virtutes, de quibus dicturus sum, benignissime foventur, vitia severissime vindicantur:	I invoke [you], Caesar, by whose celestial providence the *virtutes* about which I am going to speak are most benevolently nurtured, and vices most severely punished.

Franz Römer described this claim as "die Schwerpunktsetzung für das Hauptstück der Memorabilien." The work is far from evenly divided between these two organizing principles, though, with the majority of books (3-8) focusing on virtues and only a single book (9) on vices.[98]

[98] Römer, p. 101

For a focus which is established at the outset of the work and carried through two-thirds of the work, the nuances of *virtus* as intended by Valerius have yet to be satisfactorily explored. I will argue that the image of *virtus* as presented in *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* is highly nostalgic yet ultimately pessimistic with regard to the new imperial government. I will focus on close readings from Books 3 and 9, with discussion on the role of Books 7 and 8 as a bridge between these.

When used in the plural, as Valerius does in his preface, the sense is often a collection of various ethical qualities. There is a strong preference for using singular forms, with only 15.2% of forms occurring in the plural. There is not a single book in the *Facta et Dicta* where the use of plural forms occurs, statistically speaking, either more or less than this rate. When he indicates in the preface that he will be speaking about *virtutes,* then, we must consider the possibility that these evoked for ancient readers a range of concepts coexisting simultaneously.

McDonnell argues that in Rome, serving the Republic was "the only way many Romans [sic] males could lay claim to being a man."[99] So what happens when the Republic is no more? Is attaining *virtus* still a realistic goal for Romans outside the imperial family? Valerius Maximus is keen on addressing this question, as made evident by his clear and consistent focus on relating examples of successes and failures of virtue throughout the text. Forms of the word *virtus* are used a total of 132 times in *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. Considering how Valerius has structured his work, readers should not expect this to be evenly distributed throughout the work. Figure 1 shows the high irregularity in usage of *virtus* over the span of the work. A steady increase in mentions of *virtus* reaches a sharp peak in Book 3, which is where Valerius launches into his six-book discussion on the topic. Notably, a nearly linear decrease[100] in the rate is observed starting from

[99] McDonnell, p. 11.
[100] [Rate] = -0.373 * [Book Number] + 4.05, with $R^2 = 0.996$. (An R^2 value of 1 implies a perfectly linear fit.)

Book 5 through the end, such that a hypothetical Book 10 would be predicted to use the word *virtus* only once every 3100 words.

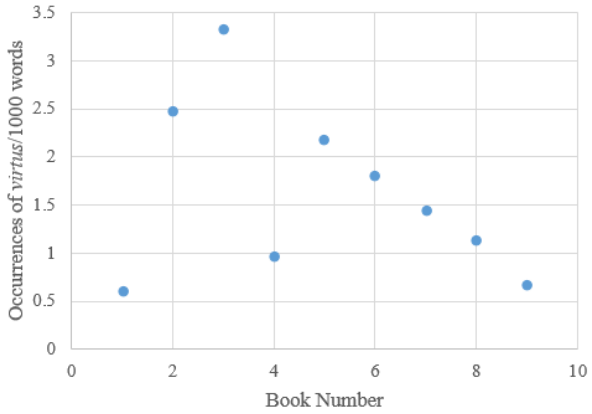

Figure 1. Rate of occurrence of *virtus* and its forms per 1000 words.

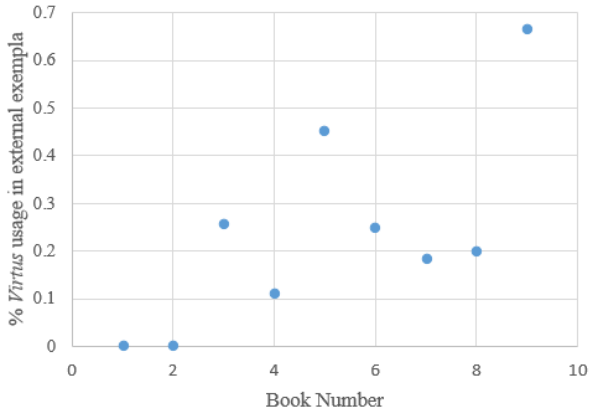

Figure 2. Percentage of uses of *virtus* and its forms in external exempla.

Furthermore, Figure 2 shows a trend towards increasing externalization of *virtus*, albeit with a much weaker correlation. This raises questions for Valerius' audience – what implications does this have for domestic *virtus*? Can it still be found at home, or is it moving irrevocably abroad? Must we learn from foreign examples because domestic ones are lacking in *virtus*?

Finally, a shift in the application of *virtus* is signaled through a change in prevalence of certain grammatical cases. By far the most common forms are the genitive *virtutis/virtutum*, at 35% (for comparison, nominative is the second highest at 21%). This might reflect a propensity towards either showing ownership or more generally a qualification of some other entity in each example. Notably, despite being the most prevalent form, no forms of the genitive occur in Book 9, which consists almost entirely of examples in the nominative (with one accusative). Valerius therefore seems to shift from emphasizing *virtus*' relation to other elements (both in the story as well as grammatically) to considering *virtus* in its own right. The comparisons above show a sharp contrast in how Valerius presents the concept of virtue throughout the nine books based on usage

alone.[101] A closer reading of the context for the uses in Books 3 as well as 7 through 9 paints a view which mirrors the semantic development of *virtus* over time, from military valor (viewed nostalgically) to a broader and more ethically-laden set of values (with mixed reaction from Valerius).

Book 3 opens with a straightforward declaration of topic, where Valerius asserts that "I shall touch upon certain elements and cradles of *virtus*" (*attingam quasi cunabula quaedam et elementa virtutis*). The word for "cradles" also carries the implication of "the earliest home (of an individual, race, etc.)" (*OLD* 2). This allows us to read the "cradles of *virtus*" both as an anticipation for learning how virtues arise in each individual person (from their respective, literal cradles) as well as a potential explanation for the origin of the more developed semantic range of *virtus.* After all, Valerius is embarking on a six-book-long treatment of the topic of virtues, so beginning with imagery of childhood carries the inherent implication that the meaning can and will evolve over the course of its "life."

Throughout Book 3, *virtus* and its forms appear a total of 31 times, with 19 of those appearing in 3.2 (*de fortitudine*) alone. The overwhelming majority of these are related in a martial context.[102] A close link is often established between *virtus* and battle. For instance, when discussing leaders who engaged in one-on-one combat with an enemy, Valerius describes how "they used the same kind of both *virtus* and fight" (*eodem et virtutis et pugnae genere usi sunt,* 3.2.6). In discussing the occupation of Rome by the Galls in 390, he states that "virtue does not

[101] The observation that virtue is featured less frequently in a book on vices seems obvious and perhaps trivial. However, the steady decrease occurred up through the end (Book 8) of the "virtue section," and I would argue that when *virtus* does occur in Book 9, its significance warrants even closer examination simply because it is "out of place."

[102] A good counterexample can be found in 3.4.1, where Valerius says that Socrates is the best teacher of life "if virtue itself is estimated in and of itself" (*si virtus per se ipsa aestimetur*). This connects it closely with the moral implications of ἀρετή.

know how to be captured" (*capi ergo virtus nescit*, 3.2.7). From the beginning of his discussion of the topic, Valerius makes clear that one of the primary ways a Roman can go about acquiring virtue is through military excellence.

Valerius also archaicizes the material simply by the choice of topics included in this book. Virtues specifically endorsed by the Tiberius can be viewed as ones particularly relevant in Valerius' own time, while those not directly supported by imperial propaganda might seem, if not archaic, at least not a main focus of the collective consciousness. The particular values promulgated by the emperor and his family can be determined through textual evidence as well as sources such as coins. In Tiberian Rome, these sources show a discussion of virtues which "appears to cluster around the following terms: *concordia, salus, **clementia**, **iustitia**, **pietas**, **virtus**, providentia*, and, perhaps most famously for Tiberius, *moderatio*."[103] It is noteworthy that not a single one of these features as a topic in Book 3, yet Book 4 opens with the cardinal virtue of Tiberius. Thus, Valerius appears to be consciously structuring his examples in order to begin his discussion with the oldest, most "Roman" kind of virtue in a self-contained book before moving on to the manifestations of virtue which are more relevant under Tiberius. This does not imply that the virtues discussed in Book 3 are simply unattainable in Valerius' own time. Rather, it highlights a focus on the original, martial meaning of *virtus* as a main criterion for the inclusion of topics in this book.

The word *virtus* is never used in a negative context in Book 3. However, this trend begins to collapse towards the end of the *Facta et Dicta*, with signs of a reversal in tone present in Books 7 and 8. Early examples in Book 7 portray virtue as something which is not actively sought out

[103] Murray, pp. 30-31. Bolded are the so-called "canonical virtues" of Augustus as represented on the Golden Shield presented to him c. 27 BCE, though the canonical status of these is questionable. See Wallace-Hadrill, A. "The Emperor and His Virtues." Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte, Bd. 30, H. 3. 1981. pp. 298-323.

but rather forced to appear during times of trial. Valerius describes how powerful empires are "stirred up to pursuing virtue by an agitation of affairs" (*agitatione rerum ad uirtutem capessendam excitari*, 7.2.1). Hitting closer to home for his audience, Valerius relates how "the now sleeping virtue of the Roman people was stirred up by [Hannibal's] crossing into Italy" (*transitu in Italiam dormientem iam populi Romani uirtutem excitatam*, 7.2.3). Thus, virtue still is attainable, but Valerius increasingly presents it as something which is not sought by one's own agency, perhaps diminishing its value.

The majority of examples in Book 7 still occur in a martial context,[104] but they are often qualified by outside factors. For instance, the defenders on the Capitoline during the siege in 390 displayed *virtus*, but it was of a kind which "Jupiter took pity on" (*miseratus est… Juppiter*, 7.4.3) due to the defenders' desperate move of throwing bread at the invaders, thus tricking them into thinking the Romans had an excess of food. Thus, agency in breaking the siege does not lie exclusively with the humans in the example but rather is shared with divine forces. Later, Valerius describes Rome's "tricked virtue" (*circumventae virtutis*, 7.4.ext.2) at Cannae, which is alleviated solely because the Carthaginians were only able to deceive the Romans, rather than conquer them. This sort of qualification reduces the weight of *virtus* in these examples.

A noticeable change in tone when discussing virtue occurs throughout Book 8, particularly towards the end. In the last four examples where it occurs, Valerius portrays *virtus* as a nostalgic, yet distinctly indistinct set of values. His preface to 8.15 (*Quae cuique magnifica contigerunt*) notes that the "contemplation of the rewards and deeds of virtue is equally pleasant" (*aeque praemiorum virtutis atque operum contemplatio iucunda est, 8.15.praef*). Similarly, he praises

[104] The two which clearly are not martial are 7.2.ext.1 (Socrates claiming it is better to drink in virtue than pursue its shadow) and 7.3.2 (Brutus covering his greatest virtues by deceit to avoid being killed). Both of these have a decidedly dark tone, presenting *virtus/virtutes* as something which can be dangerous or deceptive.

Cato for being "rich in all numbers of virtues" (*omnibus numeris virtutis divitem,* 8.15.2). Both of these present the concept of virtue as something which is enjoyable to praise in other people and in other times, but it makes no implication that the opportunity for *virtus* is still available. On the contrary, Valerius dwells upon the contemplation of virtue as an act worthy in and of itself, rather than the virtuous deeds being the focus of emulation. The lack of specificity further distances the concept from readers, who must be able to recognize the source of the virtue in order to be able to emulate it.

The final two occurrences in Book 8 are presented as a pair in the context of a dinner conversation. When asked who could replace Scipio as the great general of the republic if he were to die, Scipio turned to Marius and said, "perhaps this man" (*vel hunc,* 8.15.7). Valerius then notes that this "most excellent virtue" (i.e. Scipio's) either recognized or in fact brought about the lighting of Marius' "greatest rising virtue" (*perfectissima virtus / maximam orientem virtutem,* 8.15.7). Ostensibly this example has only a positive sense for the interpretation of *virtus*. However, the superlative degree of each man's virtue (*perfectissima*, *maximam*) strongly localizes the concept as being beyond the realm of Valerius' audience. This is a conversation that could only be occurring between two of "the best." Valerius (and his audience) should well know that their virtue can never attain this level, with the best alternative being to simply reminisce about it.

The evolution of Valerius' portrayal of *virtus* reaches its pinnacle in Book 9, where nearly every occurrence of the word is darkened by its context. Near the outset of the book, Valerius laments the detrimental effects of vices "by which virtue is worn away" (*quibus virtus atteritur*, 9.1.ext.1). Usage in foreign material focuses on the perverse nature of the "virtue," such as the example of Hannibal "whose virtue consisted in the most part of savagery" (*cuius maiore ex parte uirtus saeuitia constabat,* 9.2.ext.2). Alexander is a subject of disapproval since his "virtue and

happiness exulted in three most visible steps of insolence" (*uirtus ac felicitas tribus insolentiae euidentissimis gradibus exultauit*, 9.5.ext.1). Valerius explains that "it was not as a shame for him to pretend not to be a son, citizen, and man" (*nec fuit ei pudori filium, ciuem, hominem dissimulare*, 9.5.ext.1). Finally, the Athenians displayed "rashness to the point of insanity" (*ad uaesaniam usque temeraria*, 9.8.ext.2) when dealing with generals who could not retrieve fallen bodies in the water due to the weather. The Athenian state ultimately punished the successful generals "when it ought to have honored virtue" (*cum honorare uirtutem deberet,* 9.8.ext.2). When discussing the catalog of vices in Book 9, Valerius is still capable of employing the term *virtus*, but in a way which departs significantly from his use earlier in the work. As presented here, virtue now appears as either a twisted version of itself or simply as a hoped-for yet unrealized alternative to negative actions.

Only two instances of *virtus* occur in the domestic examples of Book 9. The first is applied to Livius Salinator, who rushed out to meet Hasdrubal in battle before properly sizing up his forces. When asked for an explanation,

'ut quam celerrime' inquit 'aut gloriam ex hostibus uictis aut ex ciuibus prostratis gaudium capiam'. ira tunc et virtus sermonem eius inter se diuiserunt, illa iniustae damnationis memor, haec triumphi gloriae intenta. sed nescio an eiusdem fuerit hoc dicere et sic uincere.

He said, "So that I might take as quickly as possible either glory from the slain enemies or joy from the strewn citizens." Anger and *virtus* then divided his speech between themselves, the one mindful of unjust condemnation, the other intent on the glory of triumph.

This example clearly places virtue in a martial context. However, this is no longer the pure, admirable form of *virtus* which Valerius has outlined with numerous examples in Book 3. It is now placed on equal footing with anger, and the example implies to readers that the virtuous sentiment does not fully make up for the rashness of his speech. The possibility of attaining *virtus* is not absent, but it is nevertheless spoiled by insolent speech.

The final instance of *virtus* in Book 9 (and therefore the final of the entire work) occurs in the example of Gaius Cassius and the centurion Titinius. When Titinius is delayed in reporting back to Cassius about the status of Brutus' forces, Cassius assumes the worse and kills himself. Here, Valerius comments that "the virtue of Titinius ought not to be consigned to oblivion by silence" (*Titini uero non obliteranda silentio uirtus*, 9.9.2). He describes how Titinius finds the body of his leader and addresses it tearfully, proclaiming "lest the matter itself go unpunished, accept me as a companion of your fate" (*ne id ipsum inpunitum sit, accipe me fati tui comitem*, 9.9.2). Murray notes that the "celebration of Titinius' *virtus* reiterates [Valerius'] central project throughout his work, despite its position within a so-called vice chapter."[105] This statement, though, does not recognize the decidedly pessimistic view that Valerius leaves for his readers. Here, readers receive a glimpse of the kind of *virtus* familiar from the earlier portions of the book – martial in nature with no hint of perversion. However, the honor is diminished in that Titinius is exhibiting his virtue on behalf of Cassius, who appears consistently in the *Facta et Dicta* as a person "without redeeming characteristics."[106] Furthermore, Titinius immediately kills himself and falls on the body of his leader, a swift demise with only Valerius' promise of remembrance as consolation.

Identification of a unifying principle in the organization of the books and their material has been attempted without a satisfactory answer.[107] Examples within each section are often presented in rough chronological order, but without any semblance of strict adherence to that principle. The examination of Books 3 and 7 through 9 above perhaps allows these books to also be subjected to a rough chronological organization based on the semantic development of *virtus*. The examples in

[105] Murray, p. 231
[106] Wardle, p. 179
[107] Römer, pp. 99-107

Book 3 deal almost exclusively with battle prowess and are always viewed favorably, lending an aura of nostalgia to the original Roman sense of the word. Furthermore, they do not contain any of the wide array of virtues depicted on coins circulated under Augustus or Tiberius, isolating them from Valerius' present time. The development of ethical connotations through Hellenizing influences represented a shift in how a Roman citizen might go about attaining *virtus*. As "fewer and fewer Italian men performed military service," it would be increasingly difficult for Valerius' contemporaries acquire virtue through the traditionally Roman mode.[108] With the transition into a new imperial system, the nature of the Roman citizenship, and therefore of *virtus*, was "fundamentally changed."[109]

Valerius' development of *virtus* ends with the instruction not to forget the virtue of Titinius. This virtue represents the kind available to the citizens of Tiberian Rome: nostalgic and reminiscent of the martial sense despite being largely inaccessible, evinced by an obligation to one's superiors regardless of their qualifications, and ultimately doomed to an unhappy end if pushed too far. Thus, while Valerius certainly has not forgotten about what *virtus* has meant and can potentially still mean, his structuring of the work with regards to presentation of *virtus* puts a decidedly pessimistic spin on an otherwise praiseworthy subject.

***Virtus* in Epic**

As a genre typically dominated by traditionally masculine themes such as politics and war, Roman epic displays a keen awareness from epicists of the ways in which their characters navigate the oft-contested boundaries of masculinity. This struggle is reflected in the language used to delineate these boundaries, notably through the concept of *virtus*. Writers of epic in the

[108] McDonnell, p. 388
[109] McDonnell, p. 389

early Empire, while at times seeming to recognize the complex semantic development of this term, generally employ it in the anachronistic sense of "martial prowess" exclusively. Their use of *virtus* in terms of both meaning and grammatical features such as case and number distribution differs markedly from usage typical in fields such as oratory and philosophy. One striking commonality with these other genres, though, is the use of negative exempla to further delineate the boundaries of masculinity. This can occur, for example, through cases of women who either cannot attain *virtus* on their own, or whose actions reinforce another (male) character's claim to *virtus*. In this way, figures such as Dido and Medea, whose active natures threaten at times to overshadow men made passive in their stead, become important agents for negotiations between femininity and masculinity. Early imperial epicists thus rely on both distinctly anachronistic overtones of *virtus* as well as striking uses of this word by key female figures in the stories as complementary tools for exploring how the contested space of masculinity is both defended and challenged in the world of epic.

In order to better understand how epicists use *virtus* to frame the struggle over claims to masculinity, an overview of how this term is used in general can provide a valuable baseline. This analysis will limit itself to five epics of the early empire, namely Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Statius' *Thebaid*, Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, and Silius Italicus' *Punica*. As a reminder, the distribution across cases can be seen in Table 3, with the corresponding percent of total uses in Table 4.

As we can see from these data, the epic authors use *virtus* in the nominative far more than Cicero does. In fact, considering these five epic authors as an aggregate yields an average rate of nominative use of 64% (128 out of 196). A comparison of this proportion with that of Cicero's

yields a p-value of 2.9e-35.[110] This vanishingly small value demonstrates that this difference is highly significant, considering with a threshold of $p < 0.05$. The high prevalence of nominatives could suggest a conception of *virtus* which is highly active and therefore coded "masculine."[111] Many of these examples show *virtus* influencing (usually) men to act in a certain way. The active nature of *virtus* in epic is thus reflected in its grammatical usage.

Another valuable category to consider is how often *virtus* is used in the singular vs. plural. These data are presented in Table 10:

Table 10. Percentage of total occurrences of *virtus* in the plural in five early imperial epics.

	% Plural
Valerius Flaccus	0%
Vergil	3%
Statius	2%
Lucan	0%
Silius Italicus	0%
Cicero	17%

The trend of plural *virtutes* implying virtues trend is supported by usage in these five epics, where *virtus* almost exclusively occurs with the meaning of "martial prowess." This is reflected by the fact that the word appears in the plural only twice – once in Vergil (*Aen*. 1.566) and once in Statius (*Theb*. 3.103). As we shall see later, the use in Vergil, despite being in the plural, must still mean something akin to "brave deeds" rather than "ethical virtues." The case in Statius more clearly has this latter sense, but the context removes this sense from the narrative frame:

[110] 2.9e-35 corresponds to a decimal followed by 34 zeros, i.e. 0.00000000000000000000000000000000029.
[111] The penetrative paradigm is generally accepted by scholars as describing the fundamental distinction of Roman sexuality, which is one not between hetero- and homosexuality but rather one between the active/penetrating (viewed as masculine) and the passive/penetrated (viewed as feminine) roles. For elaboration and potential critiques of this paradigm, see Williams (2010) pp. 258-62.

Tu tamen egregius fati mentisque nec umquam (sic dignum est) passure situm, qui comminus ausus vadere contemptum reges, quaque ampla veniret libertas, sancire viam: quo carmine dignam, quo satis ore tuis famam **virtutibus** addam, augur amate deis? (Theb. 3.99-104)	You, however, outstanding of fate and mind nor ever going to suffer neglect (thus it is worthy), who dared to go hand to hand to despise kings and to make sacred a path by which full freedom might come: by which song, with which speech am I to add worthy enough fame to your *virtutes*, augur loved by the gods?

Here, Statius apostrophizes Maeon, the sole person spared from the Theban band sent by the tyrant Etecoles to ambush the ambassador Tydeus. Rather than submit to the tyrant's punishment for his failure, Maeon commits suicide (3.83-91). Statius' praise is reminiscent of idealization of suicide found in Stoicism, creating distance between his message and narrative. This distance is further emphasized by two aspects. First, by speaking in the first-person, Statius inserts himself as a "character" into the story, disrupting if only slightly the flow of the story. Furthermore, the reference to his song (*carmine*) in the present tense (deliberative *addam*) further separates the frame of this digression from that of the story, which is steeped in a value system favoring martial prowess. In this way, the seeming "intrusion" of *virtutibus*, which must refer to ethical virtues, does not counteract the otherwise persistent focus on the *virilis*-*virtus* so prevalent elsewhere.

This overview provides insight into how early imperial epicists engaged with *virtus*. First, the word occurs with much higher frequency in the nominative, with a correspondingly lower rate in the accusative. This could reflect the close connection between activity and conceptions of masculinity, with a concomitant disfavor of having "manliness" be the recipient of another entity's action. A nearly exclusive use in the singular further cements the primary meaning of

"martial prowess" while simultaneously avoiding the use of "ethical virtue," a sense that could be anachronistic in the context of these epic's narratives.[112]

We now turn to two case studies to see how the use of *virtus* shapes the boundaries of masculinity. Both Dido in the *Aeneid* and Medea in the *Argonautica* combine stereotypically masculine and feminine traits, thus complicating their engagement with the male hero.

Aeneid

The ways in which Dido blurs the boundaries between masculine and feminine roles has received much scholarly attention. Lovatt, for instance, has explored how Dido's speech navigates these complex boundaries. On a broader level, she further notes that Dido's "position of monarch is in tension with her femininity."[113] This observation is reflected in Vergil's well-known statement: "The leader of the task was a woman" (*dux femina facti,* Aen. 1.364). The stark juxtaposition of *femina* with the masculine noun *dux* (the idea of "leader" itself having implicit masculine associations) draws attention to her status as a figure with distinctly feminine and masculine traits.

Given her unique intersectional identity, it is no surprise that Dido's interactions with Aeneas rely on the concept of *virtus* to convey tensions concerning their gender roles. Beyond this, the word is used throughout the poem to draw attention to how the masculine hero attempts to validate his actions with female agents as reference points. Notably, etymological word play occurs three times, all in contexts which show contention between the masculine and non-masculine.[114] These will be considered below in the order in which they occur in the poem, the

[112] Excluding *Bellum Civile*, which describes events that occur long after the expansion of *virtus* to include ethical values.
[113] Lovatt, p. 1
[114] The etymological link between *vir* and *virtus* was popular, e.g. *virtus ut viritus a virilitate* (Varro *DLL* 5.73). Such wordplay is also present in the other three early imperial epics analyzed in the general overview (***viros*** *vocat*

first articulation being given by Dido, the second in reference to Dido's infatuation, and the third spoken by Andromache.

The first occurrence of the word *virtus* in the poem emphasizes the gendered nature of the term, playing off the etymology from *vir*.[115] In it, Dido responds to Aeneas' men, who have asked for assistance from the Carthaginian queen:

Tum breviter Dido vultum demissa profatur:
"solvite corde metum, Teucri, secludite curas.
res dura et regni novitas me talia cogunt
moliri et late finis custode tueri.
quis genus Aeneadum, quis Troiae nesciat urbem
virtutesque virosque aut tanti incendia belli?
non obtusa adeo gestamus pectora Poeni,
nec tam aversus equos Tyria Sol iungit ab urbe.
seu vos Hesperiam magnam Saturniaque arva
sive Erycis finis regemque optatis Acesten,
auxilio tutos dimittam opibusque iuvabo.
vultis et his mecum pariter considere regnis?
urbem quam statuo vestra est; subducite navis;
Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur.
atque utinam rex ipse Noto compulsus eodem
adforet Aeneas! equidem per litora certos
dimittam et Libyae lustrare extrema iubebo,
si quibus eiectus silvis aut urbibus errat."

(*Aen*. 1.561-78)

Then, having let down her expression, Dido speaks briefly: "Release your heart from fear, Trojans, shut out concerns. A harsh matter and the newness of reign compel me to do such things and to guard my borders widely with a guard. Who could not know the race of Aeneas' followers, who could not know the city of Troy and **the *virtutes* and the men** and the fires of so great a war? We Punic ones do not bear our hearts so dulled, nor so turned away from the city does the Sun yoke his horses. Whether you desire great Hesperia and the Saturnian fields or the borders of Eryx and Acestes as king, I shall send you all away safe with aid and I shall aid with wealth. Do you even want to settle in these kingdoms with me as equals? The city which I am establishing is yours; draw in the ships. Trojan and Tyrian will be treated by me with no distinction. And would that Aeneas were here, the king himself, driven by the same south wind! Indeed, I shall send faithful men along the shores and I shall order them to traverse the farthest parts of Libya, if he wanders cast out from any woods or cities."

As we noted previously, this is one of only two instances of the plural of *virtus* in the five epic poems under consideration. However, the context makes it clear that even here, the word is still used in the earlier, more Roman sense of martial prowess. Dido references the fighting at Troy and specifically mentions "the fires of so great a war" (*tanti incendia belli*), leaving little doubt

ad sua praemia ***Virtus***, *Theb*. 6.294-5*; arma,* ***viri****, rapite arma,* ***viri****, dux instat uterque. ambobus velox* ***virtus***, *Pun*. 4.98-100; *minimumque in morte virorum Mors virtutis habet*, *Bellum Civile* 4.557-8). For constraints of space, a closer analysis of these is beyond the scope of this paper.

[115] This was a popular etymology, e.g. *virtus ut viritus a virilitate* (Varro *DLL* 5.73), *appellata est enim ex viro virtus* (Cic. *Tusc*. 2.43)

that this does not refer to ethical values. The plural *virtutes* is, in a sense, also necessitated by the plural *viros*, which implies that for every Trojan there is an accompanying *virtus*. Her question, though, raises an interesting tension. The rhetorical effect of asking who could *not* know about the exploits of the Trojan war and the men who participated in them suggests that their masculine status is never at stake. Furthermore, the *figura etymologica* underscores the importance of possessing *virtus* for a *vir*. However, Dido's portrayal here, as elsewhere, complicates this scheme. She is characterized as stereotypically feminine through her demure gaze (*vultum demissa*) and passivity due to outside forces which compel (*cogunt*) her to take certain actions. However, she issues an abundance of orders (*solvite, secludite, subducite*) and is the subject of many active verbs, many of which are in the future tense. These emphasize her activity and thus impart a degree of masculinity to her. In the context of the narrative as well, Dido threatens to derail Aeneas' quest to settle in Italy by reducing him to an inactive state in Carthage. The *virtutes* and *viros* are therefore brought up in such a way as to call into question whether Aeneas and his men will indeed be able to achieve and maintain a claim to masculinity.

A similar etymological word play occurs at the start of Book 4, as Aeneas finishes telling his story:

At regina gravi iamdudum saucia cura vulnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni. multa **viri virtus** animo multusque recursat gentis honos; harent infixi pectore vultus verbaque, nec placidam membris dat cura quietem. (*Aen*. 4.1-6)	But the queen, wounded for a long time with grave concern, nourishes the wound in her veins and is snatched by blind fire. Much does **the *virtus* of the man** recur in her mind, much the honor of his race. His expressions and words cling stuck in her heart, nor does concern give peaceful rest to her limbs.

As before, readers of the epic are never able to forget the gendered associations of *virtus*, given the striking juxtaposition of this word with *viri*. In this case, the *virtus* of the man is still in contention, as no acts of battle prowess are presently being enacted. Rather, the valor exists as a

product of Dido's imagination, who has simply listened to Aeneas recount stories of his deeds. An evaluation of these deeds is thus displaced from the doer to an external, feminine agent.

Dido is not the only feminine agent to call into question the ability to acquire manliness. When Aeneas meets Andromache in Book 3, one of her first questions for Aeneas concerns his son, Ascanius:

sed tibi qui cursum venti, quae fata dedere? aut quisnam ignarum nostris deus appulit oris? quid puer Ascanius? superatne et vescitur aura, quem tibi iam Troia . . .? ecqua tamen puero est amissae cura parentis? ecquid in **antiquam virtutem** animosque **virilis** et pater Aeneas et avunculus excitat Hector?' (*Aen*. 3.337-43)	But which winds, which fates gave you a course? Or what god has driven you unknowing on our shores? What about the boy Ascanius? Does he survive and feed on the air, whom for you now Troy…? Yet does the boy have any concern for his lost parent? Does both his father Aeneas and his uncle Hector stir him at all to **ancient *virtus*** and **manly** courage?

Qualifying *virtus* with "ancient" (*antiquam*) may be a subtle nod to the fact that this term encompasses much more semantic territory in Vergil's day, in addition to emphasizing the contrast between the older, efficacious Trojan *virtus* with their present inability to defend their homeland. It also emphasizes that Andromache is concerned with the original and heavily combat-focused meaning of the word. The word is further gendered by equating it with "manly courage" (*animosque virilis*). Andromache draws this gendered distinction to the fore further by prefacing the question about *virtus* with one asking about Ascanius' concern for his lost mother, Creusa. Beyond the relevance of her death for the plot, one could suggest that Creusa here serves as an example of a woman who did not possess *virilis-virtus* and died in the sack of Troy as a result. A female raising the issue of a male's potential failure to achieve a masculine status thus sets up the pursuit of *virtus* in contrast with its negative.

Andromache contrasts masculinity with another foil – puerility. Ascanius' status as a boy (*puer*) is twice repeated, and she stresses the more masculine status of the two agents (*pater*,

avunculus) who might be able to spur Ascanius to a state of virility. In this way, she further contributes to the portrayal of masculinity as something which must be competed for at the expense of the non-masculine.

The passages analyzed above indicate that *virus* in the Aeneid is depicted as a value which is always up for contention. The employment of etymological wordplay further emphasizes the importance of *virtus* for a *vir*. However, attempts to secure a masculine identity are repeatedly externalized and played out through female intermediaries. The boundaries of what it means to be a *vir* are thus shaped through the lens of the opinions, words, and actions of key female figures in the story.

Argonautica

As in the *Aeneid*, the first occurrence of the word *virtus* appears in conjunction with the word *vir*: "the great reputation and ***virtus* of the man**, not pleasing for the tyrant, press upon him" (*ingens instat fama **viri virtusque** haut laeta tyranno*, *Argo*. 1.29-30). Even more so than Vergil, Statius signals with the extremely early occurrence of this pair the importance of gender for his conception of *virtus*.

Scholarship on Valerius Flaccus has explored many interesting facets of gender in the *Argonautica*. Stover, for instance, has considered the tension between the "traditional" boundaries of epic and elegy, in particular how these are blurred in Books 5 and 6 where Medea features prominently. Stock's consideration of Medea's suitability as an exemplary (Roman) daughter in view of her relationship with her father highlights the uncertain territory on which interactions between masculine and feminine are played out. In this way, previous scholarship has considered from a variety of angles the larger issue of how Medea, a character with a

complex literary background whose identity is simultaneously connected implicitly with the actions of male figures in her life, can be used as a lens to examine tensions of gender.

As with Dido in the Aeneid, Medea is crucial figure in the story whose striking confusion of gender boundaries has important implications both for herself and for the characters with whom she interacts. *Dux* again features prominently, for instance in Jason's first impression of Medea as the "leader and mistress of the band" (*ducem dominamque catervae, Argo*. 5.377). The juxtaposition of *ducem* and *dominam* is reminiscent of that between *dux* and *femina* in the Aeneid, preparing the reader for a Medea who simultaneously combines feminine traits in line with societal expectations with more active and therefore masculine behavior.

Medea's first utterance of the word occurs in a short speech to Juno, who is disguised as Medea's sister Chalciope: "Who, I pray, is this man, whom I have been watching for a long time raging on the entire field, and whom you yourself see? For I think that you also have been astonished by such *virtus*" (*quis, precor, hic, toto iamdudum fervere campo quem tueor quemque ipsa vides? nam te quoque tali attonitam virtute reor*, VFl. 6.588-90). As with Dido, Medea implies that Jason's *virtus* is self-evident and thus fully secured. Her interactions with him over the course of Books 5 to 8, however, show that this is far from the case. Her repeated usurpation of the active role from Jason, who is often reduced to the passive role of neither doing nor saying anything, endangers his quest for establishing his masculine identity.

A more lengthy speech by Medea to Jason in Book 7 relies heavily on *virtus* as a strategic goad to try to extricate Medea from her compulsion to aid the hero:

haeret et attollens vix tandem lumina fatur:
“quid, precor, in nostras venisti, Thessale, terras?
unde mei spes ulla tibi? tantosque petisti
cur non ipse tua fretus **virtute** labores?
nempe, ego si patriis timuissem excedere tectis,
occideras, nempe hanc animam pars saeva manebat
funeris. en ubi Iuno, ubi nunc Tritonia virgo,
sola tibi quoniam tantis in casibus adsum
externae regina domus? miraris et ipse,
credo, nec agnoscunt haec nunc Aeetida silvae.
sed fatis sum victa tuis; cape munera supplex
nunc mea; teque iterum Pelias si perdere quaeret
inque alios casus, alias si mittet ad urbes,
heu formae ne crede tuae.” Titania iamque
gramina Perseasque sinu depromere vires
coeperat; his iterum compellat Iasona dictis:
“si tamen aut superis aliquam spem ponis in istis
aut tua praesenti **virtus** educere leto
si te forte potest, etiam nunc deprecor, hospes,
me sine et insontem misero dimitte parenti.”
(VFl. 7.436-55)

She hesitates and scarcely lifting her eyes, at length she speaks: "Why, I pray, have you come into our lands, Thessalian, from where is there any hope for you of me? Why have you yourself not sought so great labors having relied on your *virtus*? Certainly, if I had feared to go out from my ancestral home, you had perished, certainly a savage portion of your death was awaiting this spirit. Lo, where is Juno, where now is the Tritonian maiden, since I alone, the queen of a foreign home, am present for you in so great misfortunes? You yourself also wonder, I believe, nor do these woods now recognize the daughter of Aeetes. But I have been conquered by your fates; take now my gifts as a suppliant; and if Pelias seeks to destroy you again, if he sends you into other dangers, to other cities, ah! do not trust in your beauty." Now she had begun to draw forth the Titanian herbs and Persean strength from her fold; with this words she again addresses Jason: "However, if you place any hope in those gods or if your *virtus* is able by chance to lead you out of your present danger, even now I pray, guest, leave me be and send me back guiltless to my miserable parent."

As with Dido, Medea is simultaneously portrayed with both masculine and feminine traits. She exhibits a similarly demure outlook, with *attollens vix tandem lumina* recalling Dido’s description as *vultum demissa*. She is further cast in the active role, with a brief interruption of her speech putting her magical prowess on display. At the same time, she is cast as passive, such as being “conquered” (*victa*) by Jason’s fate. The struggle between these two opposing characterizations establishes a battleground on which the struggle for *virtus* can acquire additional significance.

The pointed accusation that Jason has up to this point *not* relied on his *virtus* results in a shift of agency to Medea, who has been Jason’s crutch in place of his manliness. She also suggests in a conditional (ll. 454-5) that Jason’s *virtus* could hypothetically lead him out of his present danger. However, his immediate acceptance of Medea’s aid after her speech

demonstrates that he does not view this as a possibility. Jason's masculinity is thus severely challenged here, strengthened by the fact that the challenger is a female who has usurped his claim to *virtus*.

Contention over *virtus* is further suggested by other male characters, with Medea as the intermediary. Her fiancé Styrus makes an indignant speech in Book 8:

"transferet ergo meas in quae volet oppida dotes
Colchis? et Haemonius nobis succedet adulter?
nec mihi tot magnos inter regesque procosque
profuerit prona haud dubii sententia patris?
an **virtus** praelata **viri** est et fortior ille
quem sequitur? iungam igniferos sine carmine tauros,
saevaque Echionii ferro sata persequar hydri.
hoc adeo interea specta de litore pugnas
amborum, victoris eris; iam digna videbis
proelia, iamque illud carum caput ire cruenta
sub freta, semiviri nec murra corpus Achivi,
sed pice, sed flammis, sed olentes sulphure
crines…"
(VFl. 8.337-48)

"Will the Colchian then transfer my dowry into what towns she wills? And will a Haemonian adulterer take our place? And will the favorable opinion of an undoubtful parent not benefit me among so many great kings and suitors? Is the *virtus* of the man preferred and is that one whom she follows the braver man? I would yoke fire-bearing bulls without an enchantment, I would pursue the fierce offspring of the Echionian serpent with a sword. Meanwhile, watch from this shore the fights of both, you will be the victor's; now you will see worthy fights, now you will see going beneath the bloody straits that dear head and the body of the Achaean half-man and the hair smelling not of myrrh but of pitch and flames and sulfur…"

The struggle over masculinity is extremely apparent in this passage, as Styrus raises the lament that the *virtus* of another man might have been held superior to his own. He further impugns Jason's masculinity through a variety of tactics, including the implicit charge of weakness through Jason's reliance on Medea's aid and the explicit accusation through the loaded word *semivir*. He offers to resolve this issue through battle, thus aligning his view of masculinity closely with that of *virilis-virtus*. However, this contention gains additional significance in that it is not enacted simply between two men but through Medea as an intermediary. The value of her judgment is evident through Styrus' distress at being considered inferior by her, and possession of Medea is specifically mentioned as the reward for the victor who displays the superior martial prowess. This speech thus reinforces the observation that epic *virtus* regularly requires the

intervention of a female intermediary in order to give a more precise definition of the boundaries between the masculine and non-masculine.

Styrus is not the only male whose sense of value is filtered through a female agent. Shortly after Styrus' speech, Jason's own men question the value placed on Medea with that placed on themselves: "Why does he expose them entrapped on behalf of a foreign maiden, or why does he compel them to suffer those dangers? Let him consider the more numerous spirits and greater fates of so many companions, who follow him through the straits not because of madness or unspeakable love but because of his *virtus* alone." (*quid se externa pro virgine clausos obiciat, quidve illa pati discrimina cogat? respiceret pluresque animas maioraque fata tot comitum, qui non furiis nec amore nefando per freta, sed sola sese* ***virtute*** *sequantur*, 8.387-91). The two motives for following Jason are cast along gendered lines. They imply that Medea is following Jason out of madness and love, whereas their choice has been made due solely to Jason's manliness. Their indignation at the present circumstances suggests they view their motivation as the only reasonable one, thus rejecting Medea's more feminine pursuit. This demonstrates how, even when Medea is not directly participating in the action, she nonetheless continues to shape how the other characters in the epic navigate the boundaries between feminine and masculine identities.

This discussion of *virtus* in epic was prefaced by a statistical overview, the implications of which we now return to. It was observed that epic in particular employs *virtus* in a heavily active sense, almost exclusively with the *virilis-virtus* meaning. This observation was supported through an overview of five early imperial epics, with data concerning the case and number usage suggesting a heightened awareness of the importance of masculinity for this implicitly gendered word. A repeated focus on the etymological connection between *vir* and *virtus* in these

works further underscores what is at stake when *virtus* is discussed. The specific case studies of Dido and Medea demonstrates how contentious the pursuit for masculinity is for Aeneas and Jason, respectively. In particular, these key female figures blur the boundaries between the masculine and feminine, thus challenging the male characters in their own pursuit of masculine identities.

Conclusion

Through close readings of several case studies to explore how the terms *aretē* and *virtus* are applied, this study has demonstrated that the dichotomies of male vs. female, young vs. old, and free vs. slave are all frequently employed to help clarify meaning with regard to the default norm of a male, adult citizen. Considered in this light, the role of the Other and how it is employed in an attempt to understand the Self is given its proper due, since this role has been underappreciated in scholarship on *aretē* and *virtus* up to this point. This study also suggested that the semantic development of each term follows a similar pattern, beginning with a primary meaning focused heavily though by no means exclusively on excellence in martial combat and gradually expanding to include broader moral and ethical connotations. This broadening was accompanied in both languages by the eventual restriction of acquisition to an elite group of individuals. Though the general trajectories show many parallels, the particular circumstances related to the development of both terms result in subtle variations peculiar to each.

Given the immense scope of the topic, it is inevitable that many stones remain unturned. Examining more case studies could serve one of two primary purposes: expanding our understanding of each word's use within the time frames considered, or determing what other semantic developments may have occurred later on by choosing additional authors outside these windows.[116] For the first route, Seneca (595 occurrences of forms of *virtus*) and Lysias (57 occurrences of forms of *aretē*) could be contenders for detailed analysis, potentially providing new insights due to a broadening of genres considered. For the second, Chrysippus (399 occurences of forms of *aretē*) presents an intriguing option, though the fragmentary nature of his work would pose unique challenges in the incorporation with the present analyses.

[116] Determining early developments would be difficult due to the lack of evidence.

Another fruitful avenue for exploration is a more detailed account of cultural and historical factors on each word's development. These have been suggested throughout the study, but a more thoroughly integrated discussion could further suggest reasons for divergences in the semantic development of each term by grounding them further in their appropriate contexts. A final suggestion is a consideration of personifications, specifically in how Aretē and Virtus are presented when cast as a distinctly feminine entity. The only instance in which this occurs is extant Greek is in Prodicus in Xenophon, where Hercules famously encounters Aretē and Kakia at the crossroads. This scene has inspired many imitations, such as in Silius Italicus' *Punica* (15.18ff.), where *Virtus* and *Voluptas* appear at a similar crossroads. Here, Virtus is called "in face and gait closer to a man" (*ore incessuque viro propior*), suggesting that gendered dichotomies remain important for determining the nature of "manliness." A more detailed account of the use of gender in defining *aretē* and *virtus* through these personifications would thus provide fascinating case studies for considering the questions raised by the present study. These few suggestions hint at the immense amount of work still to be done as we move towards developing a deeper understanding of these two elusive words central to Greek and Roman value systems.

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