Politics is a spectrum of the possibilities of power. It defines relations among humans and the purposes they pursue. At one end of the spectrum is sheer exploitative domination, where the only question is, as Lenin said, 'Who [is able to dominate] whom?' There was no single birth of the idea of domination; all too many societies in human history have been marked by it. At the other end of the spectrum of politics is a much rarer ideal: that of a regime of free and equal citizens with the power to decide and act. There is no monopoly on this practice either; it has evolved in many places and in many forms. Yet one set of ideas, from one particular era and one part of the world, has been enormously influential in delineating a vision of that ideal that continues to resonate powerfully in our own times. The ancient Greeks and Romans gave birth to a vocabulary still at work in the analyses and aspirations of many of those concerned with politics across the globe today.

One important dimension of Greek and Roman political ideas includes the claims and practices of self-government, exemplified especially in Athenian democracy and the Roman republic. What makes their ideas so rich a resource for thinking politically is that those forms of self-rule were

accompanied by philosophical and literary and rhetorical challenges to them. Some orators and writers debunked political ideals of self-rule, of justice and equality, as illusory or exploitative; others argued that self-rule was better achieved in ethics than in politics, or in some form of fellowship distinct from the existing political community. In other words, Greek and Roman political philosophy embodies both those practices of self-government and the reactions to them. This makes it a resource not only for those who want to celebrate politics today, but also for those who are critical of it.

This book treats historical practices and philosophical reflections together, on the grounds that what makes Greek and Roman ideas such good resources for thinking is the remarkably wide spectrum of possibilities of power that they covered. It is hard to find a modern critique of Greek and Roman politics (on slavery, on gender, on elitism, on imperialism) that some particular Greek or Roman did not make first. For every incarnation of a political regime, there were critics scrutinizing its claims. Alongside the distinctive ideas of democracy and republic, Greeks and Romans also explored the limits of those political ideals of citizenship; investigated the claims of oligarchies, kingships and even tyrannies; and questioned whether any claim to embody justice in civic relations could be valid. Rather than confine the value of the Greeks and Romans to just one position on the spectrum of politics – as either proudly committed to popular self-rule or philosophical critics of it, for example – we can learn most by exploring the whole range of ideas that they generated.

To respond to the ranks of critics and to the plight of the outsiders, to think for ourselves about the value and limits of politics, we need to understand the development of these influential classical ideas. Why turn back to classical ideas and models rather than simply think about what these terms have come to mean today? Greek and Roman versions of these ideas are radical in the original sense of the term. They serve as the roots (the etymological meaning of 'radical') of a multitude of modern ideas, roots that have sprouted in many different ways in the intervening centuries, in the West but also beyond it. Indeed, these ideas have been recovered, revised and contested in all parts of the world where the classical thinkers have been read or classical practices prevailed. They have been debated from Marseille to Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan (where a student of Aristotle inscribed celebrated Greek maxims on a funerary monument), from Tunis to Tarsus, in Byzantium and among its Ottoman conquerors; and also in the parts of the world where Greek and Roman ideas were brought by conquest and colonization, taken up by rulers and ruled alike, across other parts of Africa and Asia as well as Latin America.

Roots bear little visible resemblance to the plants that spring from them. Sometimes the Greeks and Romans are held to be too different from modern peoples to be of much use for current understandings. Perhaps they are of little use because they are too good for us: in this light they are sometimes celebrated as public-spirited citizens in comparison with our modern self-interested counterparts. Or perhaps it is because we are too smart or too lucky for them to be relevant any more: in this alternative perspective, liberal

and representative democracy in the context of capitalism
is seen as a game-changing innovation that makes ancient
models of only limited use.

Both points are intertwined in Enlightenment philoso-
pher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's critique of ancient politics as
irrelevant to modern circumstances, a critique that manages
to be at once nostalgic in tone and uncompromising in impli-
cation. Rousseau in 1764 issued a warning to the citizens of
Geneva (of whom he was one by birth) that they should not
be tempted by flattering comparisons of themselves as citi-
zens of a 'republic' with the peoples of classical times:

> Ancient Peoples are no longer a model for modern ones;
> they are too alien to them in every respect ... [Addressing
> Genevans as 'you'] You are neither Romans, nor Spartans;
> you are not even Athenians. Leave aside these great
> names that do not suit you. You are Merchants, Artisans,
> Bourgeois, always occupied with their [*sic*] private
> interests, with their work, with their trafficking, with their
> gain; people for whom even liberty is only a means for
> acquiring without obstacle and for possessing in safety.[1]

The fundamental political implication of this contrast,
Rousseau concludes, is that 'Not being idle as the ancient
Peoples were, you cannot ceaselessly occupy yourselves
with the Government as they did.'[2] In other words, Rousseau
implies that without the slaves and the wartime spoils that
allowed Greek and Roman citizens to be idle, their distinctive
brand of political involvement is impossible, and so there is
little or nothing to be learned from it. But, in fact, against his
insinuation, the allocation of effort and leisure is a political

allocation that both classical and modern societies have made, one that is not wholly determined by economic forces. Slavery was one (brutal and important) form of exploitative wealth-appropriation, but it was not the pivotal or dominant form of wealth accumulation in Greek or Roman societies outside certain specialized sectors; conversely, plenty of similar societies had slaves without devoting themselves to politics. Meanwhile, modern societies have accumulated sources of wealth, energy and capacity (through the division of labour, non-animal energy sources and new media, among others) that could be used to allow more people to devote time to politics, if they (we) so chose.

Certainly there are striking differences between ancient and modern societies in terms of economics, technology, religion and bureaucracy. The Greeks and Romans had productive economies based on agriculture, mining and artisanal production as well as trade and wartime plunder, but no exponential economic or technological growth, nor any idea of a capitalist market relatively emancipated from other aspects of the social order. They had communal religious rites honouring a range of deities, rather than monotheistic religions that could be divorced from public control. And they had no notion of a state as an abstract separate entity, distinct from the particular personnel who govern it and also from the people who compose it.

These differences are real, but the very differences can reveal certain important points about politics more clearly. Without an extensively bureaucratized and specialized state apparatus, the Greeks and Romans conceived of politics as fundamentally about relations among those in the political

community, and about relations with those who were inside or outside its boundaries without full membership. Indeed, this is why it is sometimes even said that they had no special idea of 'politics' at all as something distinct from general community concerns: politics was not separate and specialized, but a pervasive and abiding concern for the matters belonging to the community in common.[3] This means that classical ideas can provide a lens for focusing on the broad constitution and purposes of a community – something that is too often obscured in modernity by so many specialized aspects of the political apparatus. This is not to say that all Greeks and Romans idealized those relations among citizens (or that their societies were composed of citizens only: the politics of exclusion and inclusion were also a form of politics). On the contrary, some saw civic ties and pursuits as inherently exploitative or as less fulfilling than other ways of spending one's life. Those criticisms are as instructive as the ideas and ideals that they challenge.

This book will explore both the similarities and differences between ancient and modern politics. The point is not to come up with a net tally – are they more different or more similar? Rather, it is to reveal a range of ancient and modern preoccupations, so that common ground can be traced and light shed on those areas where they differ – and to do so in a way that is most productive for thinking about politics in whatever circumstances one finds oneself. Ancient ideas may prove radical both in the etymological sense of serving as roots, and also in the sense of offering profound challenge. For example, the internet and social media magnify the realization that politics today is dominated by rhetoric, just as it

was in Athens; we are forever searching for new mechanisms to produce the social knowledge that the Athenians enjoyed. The opinionated blogosphere makes the questions of Plato and Aristotle – whether social knowledge is enough, and how politics can take account of scientific expertise – pressing once again. And, meanwhile, rising levels of economic inequality and social immobility raise a challenge faced continually in antiquity, with fresh force: how, and in what circumstances, if at all, can the rich and the poor be enabled to act as political equals?

To explore classical ideas with an eye to their modern resonances, I have chosen eight ideas that are vital for thinking politically today and that have Greek and Roman roots (even though not always exact Greek or Latin translations). A more thoroughgoing antiquarian concerned only to represent Greek and Roman ideas in their historical contexts, with no thought of the present, would probably choose some startlingly different candidates: Polytheism, say, or Patronage. Equally, a modern philosopher guided only by contemporary politics would undoubtedly choose differently too: Rights, say, or Legitimacy. My guiding principle has been to choose ideas that can be used to illuminate key aspects of ancient thought while also informing contemporary reflections. They provide an overview of essential aspects of political thought and practice in ancient Greece and Rome over 700 years, from the late 6th century BCE to the late 2nd century CE, with a special focus on the 'classical eras' from roughly the 5th to the 1st centuries BCE (remember that BCE centuries are numbered downward to the birth of Christ, which marks the beginning of the Christian era, as in Figure 1). Each chapter is

A TIMELINE OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS

6th Century BCE = 500s BCE	Solon	
5th Century BCE = 400s BCE	Socrates	HEYDAY OF GREEK DEMOCRACY
5th–4th Century BCE	Plato	
4th Century BCE = 300s BCE	Aristotle	
4th–3rd Century BCE	Zeno, Epicurus	
2nd Century BCE = 100s BCE	Polybius	HEYDAY OF ROMAN REPUBLIC
1st Century BCE = 99–1 BCE	Cicero	
1st Century CE = 1–99 CE	Seneca, Epictetus	
1st–2nd Century CE	Plutarch	HEYDAY OF IMPERIAL ROME
2nd Century CE = 100s CE	Marcus Aurelius	

centred around an idea, while each idea in turn is presented as emblematic of a particular time, place or author, notwithstanding the fact that each was also explored in many others.

Across such a vast chronological range, a short book must necessarily be far from comprehensive, even in its coverage of the chosen eight ideas. For example, it leaves out the Jewish and Christian thinkers who remade crucial aspects of political thought in Greece and Rome. It focuses primarily on 5th- and 4th-century Greece and on the latter half of the history of the Roman republic, with only a brief and partial survey of aspects of the early imperial period of Roman history. And even within the classical eras of Greek democracy and the Roman republic, it is highly selective, aimed at informing readers who are interested in better understanding the politics of Greek and Roman antiquity both in themselves and also as a way of understanding the contemporary world. To explain how those two projects might be connected, I consider now five dimensions of politics, along the axes of which power is related to possibility, illustrating them primarily by reference to the Greek societies in which our story begins.

What is Politics? Five Questions

Every idea of politics must answer five questions about how power can be mobilized to shape certain possible outcomes: Who? Where? Why? How? When? While the Greeks lacked a special notion of 'politics' as something clearly different from, say, economics or military affairs, they certainly recognized and responded to what have been called the

'circumstances of politics'. They developed ideas that for us count as political ideas, addressing what they themselves called *ta politika*: the things or matters of concern to a certain – we would say political – community. To flesh out the range of ideas that they developed, let us consider how those varying ideas addressed each of the five questions in turn.

Who were those who concerned themselves with *ta politika*? Answer: the citizens (*politai*, plural of *polites*),* understood as sharing in a common condition and concern that made them equals, even though some were rich, others poor. That equality was Janus-faced. Some lucky few were included as citizens by means of excluding all others (foreigners and slaves) from their common privileges. Most harshly excluded were those whom Greek societies enslaved. Citizens could count themselves as equals even under a tyrant, at least in the sense that even a tyrant would treat citizens and slaves differently. For the Romans, the common concern would be called *res publica*, literally the people's thing or affair, from which derives the English word 'republic'. A Roman citizen was someone who was free, as opposed to a slave, who was protected in his private affairs and who enjoyed important powers related to the welfare of the common thing, the common concerns. The place of women as (passive) citizens in the classical regimes – with certain privileges and duties, but no voice in key political forums,

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* To sound out Greek and Latin words as you read them, pronounce every syllable (so a 'citizen' is *ho po-li-tes*, as opposed to the plural of the English pronunciation of the word 'polite'). More information about Greek and Latin spelling and pronunciation is given in the glossary.

albeit sometimes dramatic political agency in a broader sense – will be considered in the chapters that follow.

Where did concern for *ta politika* take place? In Greece, primarily, though not always, in a *polis*. A *polis* was a particular kind of territory and settlement, combining an urban core, often walled, with a region of agricultural hinterland. About 1,000 separate *polis* communities have been counted in archaic and classical Greece. In size of territory, they ranged from less than 12 square kilometres in size to several thousand – with Sparta as an outlier at about 8,000 square kilometres (and with a relatively small population). In size of population, a *polis* might include anything from a few thousand upward – with Athens as the outlier at about 250,000 inhabitants, of whom about 60,000 were male citizens at its zenith in the time of the 5th-century statesman and general Pericles (in a relatively large territory of about 2,500 square kilometres).[4]

While land was important to a *polis*'s identity, both practically and symbolically, it was ultimately secondary to the identity of its inhabitants. A *polis* was defined most fundamentally in terms of its people. The Greeks never spoke of 'Athens' or 'Sparta' as political actors in the way that we speak of 'France' or even 'Paris'; they spoke always of 'the Athenians' or 'the Spartans'. And, in desperate moments, the survival of the *polis* meant the survival of the people holding *ta politika* in common, even at the cost of sacrificing some of their land. (Famously, at one stage in their 5th-century wars with Sparta, the Athenians followed the advice of the general and orator Pericles and abandoned their countryside to the pillagers, crowding together in the urban core of the *polis* under the

protection of the Long Walls, where they continued to care for *ta politika* together.) *Polis* is often translated as 'city-state', because it was in the urban civic centre that politics was concentrated. Indeed, it can even be translated as 'citizen-state', since it was the people, more than the place, who made the *polis*.[5] As we will see throughout the course of the book, this idea of politics as taking place within city walls would later become subject to philosophical critiques that opened up potentially wider and more inclusive ideas of how and where ethical and political communities might arise.

Rome, for its part, also began as an urban centre with a rural hinterland. But it soon grew beyond all recognition into a very different kind of place, a huge geographical expanse incorporating pre-existing political communities by conquest or treaty. After recurrent bouts of conflict, the Romans gradually and sometimes grudgingly extended the condition of citizenship to the inhabitants of their expanded domains: first, to almost all those who were not slaves living in what is now Italy south of the Po River; and, eventually, in 212 CE, to all the free men living in any Roman territory. In the earlier expansion, citizenship was sometimes extended to new groups *sine suffragio* (without the vote).

In another way, too, Roman citizenship was dramatically expansive and inclusive, because slaves who were freed by means of recognized civic procedures thereby became citizens (unlike in Greece).[6] Still, relatively few of these new citizens created by manumission (i.e., by being freed) or incorporation could come to Rome in practice to attend the assemblies where officials were elected and laws passed. So a gulf opened up between the condition of citizenship and the

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actual practice of politics – a gulf that is likewise alarmingly wide in many parts of the world today.

Why did Greek citizens so prize the *polis* and the possibility of caring together for *ta politika*? They valued being respected as equals (as well as the possibility of being esteemed differentially as individuals), and they valued collective flourishing. The *polis* was a space in which the collective well-being could be defined, pursued and shared. Each *polis* community was vulnerable to invasion and so was constantly jockeying for advantage and sometimes even permanent domination over its neighbours. The political community could marshal its men (along with non-citizen residents and mercenaries, and sometimes slaves) to fight others, Greeks and non-Greeks alike: offensively, with the prospect of winning booty and tribute; and defensively, to protect their people and resources against domination – which could mean despoliation, enslavement or death.

Though a good number of adventurous spirits chose to hazard their personal fortunes as merchants or travellers, living abroad to teach, trade or advise, the personal safety and welfare of most Greeks depended crucially on the fate of their *polis*. In Rome, the standing of a Roman citizen in the republic meant protection from outrage of one's person, in the form of arbitrary flogging, illegal imprisonment and the like. Many citizens also had the duty of serving in the military if conscripted – with the prospect of gain and glory, but also the danger of defeat and the horrors that might bring.

It is perhaps in their answer to *how* that the Greeks innovated most dramatically: by developing mechanisms of decision-making and accountability that allowed *ta politika*

to be considered and determined collectively. These included practices of formal voting in assemblies and courts, sometimes using written ballots; the use of lottery and election to choose officials on a rotating annual basis; and scrutinizing the accounts of those officials to hold them accountable for their actions. Some democracies, most conspicuously Athens, innovated further in using large popular juries to decide almost all legal cases and eschewing professional judges, taking such power out of the hands of archaic aristocratic bodies. These mechanisms were both protective and productive, seeking to protect the *polis* and its institutions against damage or corruption, and to marshal its collective powers in pursuit of prosperity.

In Rome, the election of officials and the making of laws became a peculiar form of art, with elaborate group voting procedures and a key role for certain elected officials in proposing laws to those assembled for the purpose of approving them. The Athenian poor defended their interests themselves, especially in the law-courts that they controlled by force of numbers; the Roman commoners forced the establishment of special elected officials ('tribunes') to protect them. These practices also give us a clue as to *when* Greek and Roman politics happened: for if politics is the domain of power and possibility, it must happen in time as well as in space. That is, while political institutions are bounded by space, the pursuit of actions and decisions within them is done in time. To practise politics is to decide and to act, or to authorize action: using forms of power to make certain possibilities real. The Greeks and Romans controlled the timing of political actions in diverse and complex ways: the Athenians

timed the speeches in jury trials by means of a water-clock, for example; while the Romans consulted augurs, priests who were charged with determining when crucial political or military actions should be taken in accordance with divine favour.[7] Within institutions, opportunities to act were carefully prescribed and allocated; outside them, an ambitious man might perceive and seize the opportunity to rewrite the rules and take power as a tyrant or as one of a group of oligarchs. Inside and outside established institutions, in classical antiquity and today, politics is in large part an art of timing.

Eight Political Ideas

Eight ideas will constitute the core of this book, and will help us envision what politics might be. All arise at the levels identified earlier: the level of philosophical reflection and the level of political practice. Two ideas address what power might possibly achieve: Justice (especially a concern in the histories of the classical regimes) and Virtue (especially a concern for the philosophers, who incorporated their own special ideas of justice into it). Six address how to organize and tame the relations of power among people, and the extent to which varying kinds of control should be brought to bear upon these relations: Constitution, Democracy, Citizenship, Cosmopolitanism, Republic and Sovereignty.

All these ideas took special and distinctive forms in Greece or Rome, or both, though similar families of ideas may be found in other societies. While all were developed by a wide range of thinkers, my presentation focuses on

each one primarily in the context of one or a few thinkers at a certain time period, chosen because they contributed rich material to the development of that idea. This approach will help to guide readers who are less familiar with Greece and Rome on what will be a broadly chronological journey, while at the same time highlighting the thematic power of the ideas.

Of course, a case could be made for other ideas over those I have chosen. A list of the most important political ideas of the Greeks and Romans from some absolute standpoint would surely include Equality, Liberty and Law (these three thread throughout most of the chapters here, in fact), and we will also have occasion to think about ideas like Friendship and Sociability. My claim is not that these eight are exclusively or pre-eminently important. It is rather that they offer the best way I have found of telling a story in these pages that illuminates classical ideas while also resonating with contemporary readers.

The eight ideas begin in Chapter 1 with Justice as the fundamental – and contested – basis of common citizenship for all. For if the rich can exploit and even enslave the poor, if the poor are always afraid of the violence or fraud that might be perpetrated upon them by the rich, the extreme of domination reigns, with little hope that power might be used for any other possibility. To establish justice requires a *politeia*, often translated in English as 'constitution', meaning in Greek a condition of citizenship that involves the broad ordering of the way of life of a society. The Greeks were acutely aware of the merits and demerits of rival constitutions in this sense, as we will see in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 looks at the specific Athenian idea, and constitution, of Democracy. Here the comparison between ancient and modern is most direct. While the people played far more extensive and diverse roles in ancient democracy than they do in modern forms of government, central ideas, including accountability, control and judgement, are common to both, though institutionally manifest in different ways. Appreciating the special qualities of Athenian democracy – a task that will involve dispelling a number of myths about it – allows us to think hard about how well modern democracies achieve, or could achieve, the ideas that they value most. It proves that a political system can exist in which the richest citizens cannot use their wealth to dominate the poor or to accumulate a lasting and far-reaching power base in politics. While the rich had certain opportunities and responsibilities in Athens and could make the most of those, they were always subject to the judgements of the wider political community and so restricted, for the most part, to the pursuit of the interests of that wider community, as the dominant group within it saw them.

The Greek menu of constitutions was arguably far wider than that served up in polite international society today. But, to a lineage of philosophers living in Athens across three generations, that menu did not go far enough, for it did not include any genuinely valuable regimes. In different ways, these philosophers all argued that existing regimes were marred by greed and lust for power, producing endemic conflicts without actually making their inhabitants truly better off. As we will see in Chapter 4, the lineage began with Socrates, who questioned his fellow Athenians incessantly

about the nature of justice, knowledge and virtue; it continued with Plato, his pupil, born to a privileged family but in thrall to the ugly plebeian Socrates, and the source of our most scintillating writings about him; and then, turning to Chapter 5, it was passed on to Aristotle, who came from a family serving the Macedonian court in northern Greece to join the Academy that Plato had established in Athens, later setting up a rival school of his own. Each of these philosophers envisaged another form of politics, even an ideal *politeia* (this is the title of what we call in English Plato's *Republic*), which would be based on a deeper idea of justice and achieve a more genuine human good. For Plato and Aristotle, Virtue and Citizenship would ideally coincide in a good *politeia*.

For some of Socrates' followers in subsequent generations, however, the vision of an ideal *politeia* was radicalized to constitute a permanent ethical fellowship that might never take any conventional political form. This was the birth of the idea of Cosmopolitanism (Chapter 6), referring to the entire universe (*Kosmos*) as a realm of citizens (*politai*), an idea that we will find turned to a dizzyingly wide range of ethical and political purposes. Alongside the debate about Cosmopolitanism in the post-classical Hellenistic period of Greek politics following the death of Alexander the Great in the late 4th century BCE was a related discussion about the naturalness of politics and of human fellowship. Was politics truly natural, a feature of human nature, as Aristotle especially would define it? Or might it be a makeshift tool, a useful social contract that does not answer to our highest capabilities of forming relationships?

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The tensions between politics as rooted in natural sociability and politics as rooted in utility, and between a polity limited in space to one's actual fellow citizens and one in which one's fellow citizens were one's true peers in virtue wherever they might reside, were played out again and again in the schools that either followed Socrates or rejected his example in the post-classical era. As we shall see, one school of Hellenistic philosophers, the Stoics, argued for natural sociability and saw politics as a healthy outgrowth of that, though perfected in the republic of fellow sages; a rival school, the Epicureans, argued for politics as a matter of utility rooted not in nature but in contract, contrasting it with a higher human ideal of friendship. In such ways, the philosophers of the late 4th to 1st centuries BCE mapped out basic terms of political debate that set the stage for Roman politics. For the Romans came to dominate Greece politically, only to reappropriate Greek philosophical distinctions, which they then put to work in governing the expanding republic and empire – a story we will trace forward into the 2nd century CE.

Chapter 7 tells the story of the constitution of the Roman republic, seen through the lenses of an analyst of its rise and a participant in its decline. 'Republic' is a transliteration of the Latin term *res publica* at the core of the constitution that the Romans developed. Polybius, a hostage Greek historian who analysed the Roman constitution, viewed that constitution as a balance among three elements – consuls, Senate, and people – each representing one of the simplest three forms of constitution known to the Greeks (kingship, oligarchy and democracy). This idea of powers of government

that are in varying ways divided and balanced (and, for some, mixed) would evolve into the republican ideal of 'checks and balances' adopted by the American founders and their followers. Animating this recurrent tension was the struggle to attain equal liberty, involving respect for even the commonest and poorest citizen in his person, property and powers. Respect for the poor, however, went alongside special privileges for a meritocratic elite, one largely overlapping with inherited or earned wealth. Whereas the Athenians used democratic powers to constrain their elites, the Romans allowed theirs a more significant and independent set of political powers. The Romans balanced the role of the political elite (overlapping with the economic elite) against the role of ordinary Romans, whereas the Athenian democrats had enabled the poor to control and adjudicate, in crucial ways, the claims of the elite.

Writing in the 2nd century BCE, Polybius, an historian of Rome's rise who wrote his account in Greek, witnessed republican Rome at its height – but he prophesied that it could not last. Public devotion to duty, to the Roman understanding of the virtues that must be exercised if the 'common thing' (the *res publica*) is to be protected, would eventually and inevitably lapse. That undermining was witnessed a century later by the philosopher and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero, who had clambered up the ladder of power and honour by sheer exertion of public speaking, but at the same time studied and debated zealously with philosophers of many schools in Rome and also in Athens. Like Plato and Aristotle before him, Cicero found that his reflections on politics took him in the direction of imagining a better

republic, with a better set of laws, which he set down in his writings just as the integrity of the actual republic was slipping away in a series of bloody struggles for power – in the course of which he himself would be one of those murdered. That vision put a particular understanding of what liberty required at its centre, an understanding giving pride of place to the roles of private property, law, and virtue in supporting the republican constitution.

Cicero died in one of the last convulsions of the republic before the appointment of a 'first citizen' – a *princeps* – who was, in 27 BCE, elevated to the new status of 'Augustus Caesar'. By the time of the Stoic philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca, in the next century, the 'first citizen' had become what we would today recognize as a full-blown emperor – though the title *dominus* (master or lord) would be officially accorded to the emperor only in 284 CE. With the mutation of republican practices in a new era of imperial leadership (Chapter 8: Sovereignty) came a change in political imagination.

Seneca, like Cicero, was a statesman, author and man of affairs who was made to suffer a violent death. Instead of writing of an ideal republic, he dreamed of an ideal prince. Within Rome, he embellished the original Greek idea of the monarchical constitution, envisioning how the virtues of mercy and liberality could be fostered in the *princeps*. So we see that Greek and Roman ideals of politics were not limited to democratic or republican models alone. Through the 'mirror for princes', Seneca and other writers of the imperial age initiated centuries of debate about the values and virtues of monarchical rule.

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Those who trek to Rome to study the ruins of antiquity will find that the Senate House now standing was not built by the Roman republic. It is a building constructed for that purpose and on that site by a later emperor. The distant past of classical antiquity is like many of the mosaics that have been bequeathed to our museums: broken and reset, or refashioned with elements of the original pattern still clearly visible. When officials today count votes or make speeches, when voters elect 'senators' or 'presidents', when the United Nations debates how to establish the rule of law in a war-torn society, we see at work both ancient models and more recent rethinking, old ideas and new ways of putting them into practice. By engaging with the political ideas of the Greeks and Romans, we can equip and empower ourselves to develop our own ideas anew.