

Kachuck on Leonhardt

Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* gives us a space-eye view of the cosmos, thus revealing Scipio and Cicero's Rome, putative *caput mundi*, to be nothing more than a *punctum*, a point in the world's vast expanse. But there are points and there are points, and we might say that, in the logic of Cicero's *Republic*, Rome is what we might call the "vanishing point" of the whole cosmic assembly, fixing emblazoned zones and the fiery poles. Which is to say, the *Dream* relativizes everything, and then leaves the center tacitly intact.

A wonderful and early page from Professor Jurgen Leonhardt's book on *Latin: Story of a World Language*, draws a page directly from Cicero's book: "All of the writings that have come down to us from ancient Rome," he writes, "including all inscriptions, constitute at most 0.01 percent of the total output. Of this miniscule percentage, Christian texts from late antiquity represent approximately 80. What is genereally known as *the* literature of the Romans, as it is taught in school, the works of authors like Plautus, Cicero, and Tacitus, forms little more than an infinitesimal point in the universe that is Latin, albeit one that shines brightly." His book, by giving us a view of Latin *sub specie aeternitatis*, calls us to explore the vast expanses of Latinity that lay beyond the resplendent *punctum* of pagan Rome. But even this relativizing cannot resist giving this one point more light than all the others, and cannot resist, in a larger sense, drawing on the point with the help of the famous Ciceronian *topos* itself. For certain purposes of historical interpretation, of course, this poses no problem, and in fact is quite to the point: for most of the history of recorded Latin, Cicero's Latin *did* shine more brightly than all the others, and, in a larger sense, *all* post-ancient Latins leaned heavily on the Latin of antiquity. But no doubt there are crucial *literary* debates that will have to happen as we wonder whether relativizing the place of ancient Latin in our own appreciation of Latin will require us to remove it as the necessary *vanishing* point of Latinity as well.

This is a literary question, but it is, as we know, also a disciplinary question, and no doubt even if a few literary critics thought such a dethroning of ancient Latin possible, American departments of Classics and the French *Agrégation de Lettres Classiques* would resist any such change. And it is here where Professor Leonhardt's

present paper helps us widen our view to institutional contexts, using a logic similar to that of Cicero's *Dream*: it is not enough to look at the stars of scholarship, in fact, to understand these "heroes" of learning we need to look at the kinds of resistance built into the systems of learning from which they emerge. I have a few questions about this material, most of which take the form of *Sacra Scriptura sui interpretes*, i.e. of explaining Professor Leonhardt by way of Professor Leonhardt.

In his book, Professor Leonhardt calls 1760-1849 the "end of the Latin millenium in Europe, which had been inaugurated by Charlemagne between 800 and 814." (JL, 245) This end, he shows, comes most abruptly in Germany, where we see the sharpest switch from Latin to the national language (250), and where we see, as well, he writes, a "peculiar schizophrenia that characterized classical studies...at least during the second half of the 19th centry," which was that Latin continued to be very important even as the Romans were denigrated to the advantage of Greek civilization and culture." (272) Today's lecture notices are one indication of this, showing that only in Berlin did increased Hellenocentrism appear triumphant in the numbers game of course listings (even if Berlin was, as well, the last to publish such lists in Latin!). Which is to say, even as research in things Greek is in many ways ascendent, pedagogically, at least according to this one numbers game, *Romanitas* keeps the throne. Which is all the more reason for us to bemoan, with Constanze Güthenke, that, although the history of German Hellenism has been well-documented, there have been surprisingly few synoptic studies of German *Romanism*, or, to put it differently, German *Latinity*. What would such a study reveal, and would we expect the contrast between pedagogy and scholarship to be more pronounced in the field of Latin than, say, in that of Greek? Does Latin as the preeminent language of pedagogy stand in as the conservative anchor for its more adventurous opposite number? What are the dynamics of this relationship in the internal constitutions of these two fields, and of the choices that various people make to go into one vs. the other?

As Professor Leonhardt's book notes, we cannot begin to truly answer such questions simply by looking at statistics, whether of publications or lecture notices. Instead, we must engage in philology, i.e. the interpretation of denser linguistic