

Week 13

Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* is the conclusion to his dialogue, *De re publica*. It was an influential text throughout the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment because the dream reports the basic philosophical world view of the Roman empire.

In 129 BC, on the eve of his death, Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (Scipio Aemilianus) tells of the apparition of his adoptive grandfather, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (Scipio Africanus), 20 years before. The time of the dream (149 BC) is the eve of the third Punic War. Scipio Africanus was the hero of the second Punic War (over 50 years before) and the conqueror of Hannibal. From the vantage point of the Milky Way where he resides in the afterlife, Scipio Africanus shows his grandson the universe as it really is. They perceive how small the earth is, the order of the planets, and the heavenly music of their orbits. He teaches his grandson about the nature of the divine, including the immortality of the human soul, and the world-soul of which it is part. They meet Aemilianus' father, Aemilius Paulus, who warns of the futility of pursuing fame among men, since the conquest even of all Europe is nothing more than fleeting dominion over a tiny speck of the universe.

The Characters

The interlocutors of *De re publica* were so famous for their literary and philosophical interests that they were once thought to constitute a real salon, the 'Scipionic Circle'. In reality Cicero chose them for their decisive roles in Roman history, which made them suitable *exempla* of his philosophical and political purposes.

The interlocutors mentioned in the *Somnium Scipionis* are Scipio Aemilianus (its narrator), M'. Manlius, and C. Laelius. The others (mentioned in other books of *De re publica*, but not in the *Somnium*) are L. Furius Philus, Sp. Mummius, Q. Aelius Tubero, C. Fannius, Q. Mucius Scaevola the Augur (interlocutor of *De oratore*), and P. Rutilius Rufus, from whom Cicero alleges to have learned of their dialogue when he was in exile in Smyrna (*De re publica* 1.13). (This claim is a device imitated from the elaborate fictional settings of Plato's *Dialogues*.) Scipio Africanus, Aemilius Paulus, and Masinissa appear only in the *Somnium Scipionis*, and are not interlocutors in *De re publica*.

Scipio Africanus (234-183 BC, consul 205, 194, censor 199), the grandfather, was most famous for his conquest over Hannibal. His career was marked by extraordinary commands in violation of all conventions of age and experience. He was a flamboyant admirer of Greek culture and manners who would sit for long periods in the Temple of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, communing with the god, asking divine sanction for his actions.

During a Spanish campaign he won the admiration of the Numidian king, Masinissa, especially by his kindly treatment of the king's nephew. He returned to Rome and was elected to the consulship in 205, though he was only 30 and had not held the praetorship. The senate awarded Sicily as his province, and fearing his plan to invade Africa, denied him an army. But volunteers flooded from all over Italy to join him, and in 204 with proconsular authority he crossed over to invade Carthage. Upon landing, he was aided by Masinissa. Hannibal had to be recalled from Italy (just as Scipio had hoped), and was ultimately defeated at Zama in 202. Scipio celebrated a magnificent triumph, was granted the cognomen "Africanus", and was offered a dictatorship for life, which he declined. His overwhelming popularity caused him difficulties later, however, when his many enemies tried him for bribery. But this too ended fittingly: it being the anniversary of Zama, he reminded the senate of his service to the state and led them all to the Capitol to pay homage to Jupiter. Afterward he left Rome, never to return, and died in voluntary exile in Liternum.

Aemilius Paulus, the natural father of Scipio Aemilianus, is the speaker in §15-16 (consul 182, 168, censor 164, *d.* 160). Paulus, like Scipio Africanus, was a great lover of Greek culture. He was a patron of the Greek Historian Polybius. Paulus conquered the Lusitani in Spain in 191, then swept the sea of pirates in 181. He is best known for his victory over King Perseus at Pydna in the third Macedonian war in 168, for which he celebrated the greatest triumph Rome had ever seen. As a result of this victory, contact between Greece and Rome multiplied exponentially and Greek slaves poured into Italy. The booty was so great that the property tax used to support the military was discontinued. He allowed the sons of his first marriage to be adopted into other families, probably soon after he divorced Scipio's mother Papiria (179 BC) and had sons by a second wife (Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius Paulus* 5). His elder son was adopted into the line of Q. Fabius Maximus Cunctator, hero of the second Punic war. Scipio Aemilianus, the second son, was adopted into the family of Paulus' sister, the daughter-in-law of Africanus. The adoption of children with living parents by close relatives was quite common in Rome, especially when a line was in danger of dying out; and the adoptive father, son of Scipio Africanus, was childless. Scipio Aemilianus remained close to both birth-parents, not least because his new family so closely scrutinized his worth to become head of their (Africanus') family line (Polybius 31.23.12).

Scipio Aemilianus (185-129 BC, consul 147, 134, censor 142), like his adoptive grandfather, was known as the greatest man of his generation, a lover of literature (he was intimate friends with Polybius, Terence, and Lucilius) and all things Greek, an inspiring orator and politician, if a self-promoting one, a rash soldier, and a general who commanded by inspiration. He fought under his father Paulus at Pydna in 168, and in 151 accepted his

first post as Military Tribune in Spain, where he distinguished himself, reminding the enemy of his grandfather. He went to Masinissa in Numidia in 150 to procure elephants for a Spanish campaign, returned again in 149 to aid the Roman army against the Carthaginians, and won the confidence of all. The dramatic date of the dream is set at the time of this return visit to the court of Masinissa. Scipio returned to Rome, and while running for aedile was elected consul at 37 although five years too young and, like his grandfather, lacking the required experience as praetor. Under his command, Carthage fell and he celebrated a triumph, at which his inherited *cognomen* “Africanus” was awarded for his own merits. He was again called to active duty to rescue languishing efforts in Spain and reduced Numantia in 133, for which he received a second triumph and the *cognomen* “Numantinus”. He then resumed his position as head of the optimates and led the effort to thwart Gracchan reforms. When informed of the death of Tiberius Gracchus in 133, he said that he got what he deserved, even though he was Tiberius’ brother in law. His stand against the Gracchi took its toll. Once the hero of the people, he was now despised; his wife Sempronia (Tiberius’ sister) grew to hate him; they were childless, and it was too dangerous politically for him to divorce or adopt heirs. He intended to bring a bill to undermine the reforms, but died – without a mark on him – the day before he was scheduled to do so. Among those suspected were his wife Sempronia and mother in law Cornelia (Tiberius’ mother), Gaius Gracchus (Tiberius’ brother), and two tribunes who advanced the Gracchan legislative agenda, Fulvius and Carbo, the last of whom is named by Cicero (*Epistulae ad familiares* 9.21.3; *Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem* 2.3.3).

Masinissa (238-148 BC), Scipio Aemilianus’ host, was King of Numidia, the territory west of Carthage. Before he inherited his father’s throne, he served as a cavalry commander to Hasdrubal in Spain, sharing in his defeat at the hands of Scipio Africanus in 206. After the loss, he wished to defect to Scipio, but agreed to return to Africa as his spy. When Scipio landed in Africa in 204, Masinissa became his tactical advisor and cavalry commander. He was instrumental in defeating the combined forces of Syphax and Hasdrubal, and in reducing all Numidian opposition to Roman authority, and he personally commanded the right wing in the battle of Zama. For this, the Roman senate, at the request of Africanus, made him king over all Numidia. Throughout the second century BC, he continued in this capacity, sending food and cavalry to aid Roman expeditions, and with their complicity enlarging his territory at the expense of Carthage. He established a faction in Carthaginian politics, the expulsion of which was one cause of the third Punic war (149-146). He was not eager to have the Romans destroy Carthage and refused to aid them at first, but died before Scipio Aemilianus could bring pressure to bear. At his death, Scipio arranged his affairs and acted as executor of his will.

Two other figures are mentioned in passing in the dream. Manius Manilius (ca. 200-120 BC), the consul to whom Scipio Aemilianus was attached in 149, was one of the great jurists of his day. As consul he led the attack on Carthage in the third Punic war and burned the Carthaginian fleet for the whole city to see, but he did not bring the war to a conclusion fast enough to suit Rome.

Gaius Laelius Sapiens (185- ? BC: Tribune of the plebs 151, praetor 145, consul 140) was the son of Gaius Laelius (Africanus’s right arm in the second Punic War), a life-long friend and shrewd political advisor of Scipio Aemilianus, and the interlocutor of Cicero’s *De amicitia*. He was a learned augur, and studied Stoicism with Diogenes of Babylon and Panaetius; like Scipio Aemilianus, he was an intimate of Polybius, Terence, and Lucilius. He once proposed Gracchan-style land reforms but withdrew them when he saw the upheaval they caused. His life was a model for its devotion to philosophy and civilized refinement. He wrote the funeral oration for Scipio Aemilianus.

The year of the dream, 149, marks Scipio’s first entry into the Carthaginian conflict for which he would win political renown. Masinissa now ancient (89) and soon to die, was a beloved friend and ally of Scipio’s grandfather. Their meeting is celebrated with unusual pomp at Masinissa’s royal palace, which should be understood as an exotic African setting ornamented by high western manners. It is a place, which, though foreign, is intimately connected with Rome. As such it suits well the dream that teaches the doctrine (a hard one for Romans) that rewards for great deeds in this life are fleeting and even to be spurned, but the virtue behind them merits everlasting reward in the heavens. Cicero employs numerous archaisms from Ennius, Plautus, and Terence to create the impression of how Scipio and Masinissa might have spoken a century earlier.

The Author and his Vision

Cicero wrote *De re publica* between 54 and 51 after he had been forced from politics by Caesar and Pompey. One of his purposes in the work was to guide Pompey toward a vision of statesmanship and away from the unconstitutional arrangement of the first triumvirate. For this reason, perhaps, he says that the state was in his hands at the time of its writing (*Div.* 2.3). Cicero envisioned himself as Laelius to Pompey’s Scipio (*ad fam.* 5.7.3), in complete disregard of his own political irrelevance at the time.

There were many works “On the Republic” in antiquity, but Cicero had Plato’s *Republic* especially in mind. The genre sets as its goal the depiction of the ideal state and the place of the individual in it. The topics of human happiness and the needs of the soul are treated by both Plato and Cicero. Cicero’s “Dream of Scipio” at the end of the dialogue echoes Plato’s

“Myth of Er”, the story of a man who lay dead on the battlefield for ten days, saw the judgment of the next world, and awoke to report his vision, which is an allegory of human responsibility designed to correct false views of the afterlife portrayed in works like Homer’s *Odyssey*. Cicero’s “Dream of Scipio” also takes as its aim a portrayal of human responsibility by a figure from beyond the grave. The spirit of Scipio Africanus explains that in the heavens virtuous service to the state receives its just reward. Cicero, having devoted his life to making senatorial government work, does not share Plato’s ideal of a philosopher-king.

The setting of the dialogue suggests that Cicero also had in mind Plato’s *Phaedo*. Plato’s dialogue takes place in the prison cell of Socrates as he waits to drink hemlock and treats the immortality of the soul. The narration of Scipio’s dream also takes place on the eve of his death, and in the place of his death, his own home. But the circumstances of 129, in the midst of the Gracchan land crisis, show Cicero’s hero not as philosopher, but as statesman (cf. *De re publica* 1.1-13). The reforms of the Gracchi were to take public land beyond that amount leased legally and reassign small parcels of it to the landless. This caused a tumult chiefly because large farming and ranching operations backed by powerful financiers had come to depend upon public land, but also because the Gracchi could be expected to gain political advantage from the creation of so many new grateful farmers. Tiberius Gracchus, knowing that the senate disapproved of his proposals, turned to the popular assemblies and pushed established legislative conventions to their limits so recklessly that he was killed in a bloody riot in 133. The Pontifex Maximus, P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica Serapio, a cousin of both Scipio Aemilianus and Tiberius, personally led the attack. Scipio Aemilianus defended the action and led senatorial opposition to the Gracchi upon his return from Numantia. In his unpopular defense of the prerogatives of the senate at all costs, Cicero saw a heroism quite unlike that of Socrates in the *Phaedo*. Scipio Africanus tells his grandson that he has an obligation to take this unpopular stand (Cap. 12) – virtue demands it – and for it, he will merit immortality. Socrates did not identify virtue with the political art; Cicero emphatically did (*De re publica* 1.33).

Cosmology and Philosophy

The most important influences on the “Dream of Scipio”, however, are probably Stoic doctrine and Plato’s *Timaeus*, which Cicero translated into Latin (perhaps begun while writing *De re publica*). Many of the Pythagorean-sounding doctrines of the dream probably derive from the *Timaeus*: the intimate association of number, music and the immortality of the soul – all fundamental aspects of the Pythagorean cult (cf. Cicero *De re publica* 1.16). Plato’s character Timaeus is said to be a learned philosopher

(*Timaeus* 20a) and astronomer (27a) from Locris, a city in the south of Italy not far from Pythagoras’ Croton. Among the elements of the *Timaeus* shared with the *Somnium* are: that the seven planets are arranged in seven proportionally spaced spheres (36d, 38-9), embraced by an outer sphere containing the world-soul (36d); that the earth is the center of the universe (38d); that the world-soul is the reason that pervades the universe (30b, 36e); that the human soul takes its divine origins from the world-soul and is thus immortal (41c-e); that those who follow reason and subdue the passions in a life of virtue achieve immortality (42b); that music creates a harmonious motion in the soul, thus restoring the divine life (47d); and that time is truly measured not by the orbit of a single planet, but by that of the stars, the so-called great year (39d). Pythagoras is also said to have held that the earth is spherical, that there are inhabitants on the other side of the earth (Diogenes Laertius 8.26), and that the motions of the planets orbiting at precise intervals produce music (Aristotle *Metaphysics* 986a).

The Stoics adopted most aspects of the *Timaeus*’ Pythagorean-inspired cosmology. But one may see in the *Somnium* certain distinctly Stoic elements as well. Among these are: the doctrine of eternal recurrence, that history repeats itself after a great year (a revolution of the entire universe, 10-15,000 years); that the immortal essence of both the soul and the stars from which it originates is a fiery aether, into which the entire universe is devolved at the end of history; the specific association of the outermost sphere, or the reason that permeates the universe, with “the greatest god”; that the arts can be an expression of virtue and merit heaven; and that the wise man will take part in political life.

The *Somnium* is also part of a tradition of cosmological literature, including philosophers like Parmenides and Empedocles, and Hellenistic poetry such as Aratus’ *Phaenomena* and Eratosthenes’ *Hermes*, a pivotal work in the development of the “Harmony of the Spheres” (cf. Burkert 352-53). Scipio’s only direct literary allusion is to Ennius’ *Annales* (Cap. 10.22-23) for its motif of reincarnation. But Cicero’s debt to Ennius may be greater: it has been suggested that a speech by Homer at the beginning of his *Annales* treated “natural philosophy,” moving from cosmology to a discussion of the soul (O. Skutsch, *Studia Enniana* 105-109).

Cicero portrays the cosmos and the order of heaven in the style as well as in the content of the *Somnium Scipionis*. The center of the *Somnium* describes the heavenly bodies harmoniously arranged in “concentric” spheres. This becomes the dominant image through “ring structure” which pervades every sentence.

After Cicero, cosmological themes became particularly important in Augustan poetry. The belief that through virtue man may become like the gods had to be reconciled with the depiction of Caesar as ruler over the entire universe. The compromise often found in the works of Vergil, Horace

and Ovid is that the *princeps* is not a god; he is destined to become one because he is a virtuous ruler; the rest of mankind who can no longer pursue earthly power and fame are still free to achieve virtue, and thus divinity, by ruling over themselves. One might argue that the *Somnium* prepares the way for the Augustan vision of a new world founded on virtue, e.g., in Horace's *Odes*. The *Somnium* and the *Annales* are also the probable inspirations for Vergil's *Aeneid* Book VI, in which Anchises teaches Aeneas the nature of the universe and the human soul and the part he must play in history (679-886).

The *Somnium* was uniquely influential on later European thought. In the fifth century A.D., the neoplatonist Macrobius used it as an opportunity to comment upon topics in astronomy, geometry, geography, music, numerology, and philosophy. His *Commentary* was widely read and served as a sort of encyclopedia throughout the middle ages. It was, as Stahl puts it, "one of the basic source books of the scholastic movement and of medieval science. Next to Chalcidius' *Commentary* [on the *Timaeus*], it was the most important source of Platonism in the Latin West in the Middle Ages" (10). It is due mainly to Macrobius that the *Somnium* is preserved intact. Only one-third of the rest of *De re publica* survives.

quo = *ut* in a purpose clause
tutandam < *tutor, tutari*, “watch over and protect.”
 habeto: “consider, believe”; 2S future imperative
 conservaverint etc.: subjunct. in rel. cl. of characteristic.
certum...locum subject of *esse...definitum*, ring composition
 fruuntur: “enjoy” + ablative, subjunct. in ubi purpose cl.
 illi principi deo...acceptius: “more acceptable to”. Jupiter is patron of
 civilization; *civitates* are tributes to his justice.
 quod...fiat: rel. c. of characteristic
 quam “than” compares *concilia* and *coetus* to *nihil*
 profecti: “having come from,” < *proficiscor, proficisci*.
 hīc: *adv.* “at this point”
 a meīs: substantival “from my family”
 viveretne: *-ne* in indirect questions = “whether.”
 Paulus pater: Aemilius Paulus, Scipio’s biological father (see *Family Tree*).
 This scene inspires *Aen.* 6 w/ Aeneas & Anchises
 e corporum vinculis...vestra...vita mors est: from the Orphic belief that the
 body (*sōma*) is a tomb (*sēma*) of the soul (Plato, *Gorgias* 493a, *Cratylus*
 400c; cf. *Phaedo* 66e-68a).
 Quem: connecting relative; see on 9.4 (*quem*).
 vim: “abundance, flood” (*OLD vis* 8b).
 pater sanctissime atque optume: vocative.
 quin: “Why don’t I...”
 Non est ita: Socrates, unlike the Stoics, had prohibited suicide (*Phaedo* 61d-
 62c); we are *en tini phrouâ*, “on guard” (have a duty to live) or “under
 guard,” (prisoners waiting to be released from the body). Socrates says
 it was among the “secret mystery-doctrines” taught by Philolaus the
 Pythagorean.
 Nisi...cum: “except when.”
templum a space marked out in the sky by an augur for the taking of
 auspices.
 qui tuerentur: *qui* = *ut* in a relative clause of purpose.
 quae terra dicitur: RP regularly agrees with a predicate noun (*terra*) rather
 than its antecedent (*globum*).
 illis sempiternis ignibus: The stars are repositories of the designing fire from
 which the human soul is made.
 sidera et stellas: Both can mean “star” or “planet”.
 divinis animatae mentibus: The stars are begotten from the *aether*, the fiery
 outermost atmosphere of the universe, which is most similar to the pure
 fire of divine mind (Cicero, *ND* 2.39-40).
 circos suos orbesque: hendiadys “the courses of their orbits”.

13 “Sed quo sis, Africane, alacrior ad tutandam rem
 publicam, sic habeto: omnibus qui patriam
 conservaverint, adiuverint, auxerint, certum esse in
 caelo definitum locum, ubi beati aevo sempiterno
 fruuntur. Nihil est enim illi principi deo qui omnem
 mundum regit, quod quidem in terrīs fiat, acceptius
 quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati, quae
 civitates appellantur; harum rectores et conservatores
 hinc profecti huc revertuntur.” 5

14 Hic ego, etsi eram perterritus non tam mortis
 metu quam insidiarum ā meīs, quaesivi tamen viveretne
 ipse et Paulus pater et alii quos nos extinctos esse
 arbitraremur. “Immo vero,” inquit, “hi vivunt qui e
 corporum vinculis tamquam e carcere evolaverunt,
 vestra vero quae dicitur vita mors est. Quin tu aspicias ad
 te venientem Paulum patrem?” Quem ut vidi, equidem
 vim lacrimarum profudi, ille autem me complexus
 atque osculans flere prohibebat. 15

15 Atque ego ut primum fletu represso loqui posse
 coepi, “Quaeso,” inquam, “pater sanctissime atque
 optume, quoniam haec est vita, ut Africanum audio
 dicere, quid moror in terrīs? quin huc ad vos venire
 propero?” 20

“Non est ita,” inquit ille. “Nisi enim cum deus is,
 cuius hoc templum est omne quod conspicias, istīs te
 corporis custodiīs liberaverit, huc tibi aditus patere non
 potest. Homines enim sunt hāc lege generati, qui
 tuerentur illum globum quem in hōc templo medium
 vides, quae terra dicitur, iisque animus datus est ex illīs
 sempiternīs ignibus quae sidera et stellas vocatis, quae
 globosae et rotundae, divinis animatae mentibus, circos
 suos orbesque conficiunt celeritate mirabili. Quare et
 tibi, Publi, et piīs omnibus retinendus animus est in 30

ille: understand *animus*.
 nec...migrandum est: "nor must (you and all pious people) depart"; impersonal passive periphrastic.
 munus: "duty," the measure of virtue
 avus: grandfather -- Scipio Africanus
 cum magna in parentibus...tum in patria maxima: "important towards parents... and most important toward one's country"
 coetum: The Stoic wise man envisions himself as living in two worlds simultaneously (L&S 67K-L). He is born to an earthly world, where one may suffer and fail, but in the heavenly "community" ("communion") of gods and men, as long as one acts virtuously, one succeeds and lives the divine life (67K-S).
 is: Understand *locus*.
 Graīs < *Graius-a-um*, "Greek".
 orbem lacteum: the "Milky Way." described like Homer's Isles of the Blessed or Vergil's Elysian Fields as the heaven for heroes
 Ex quo: "and from this (vantage point)," connecting relative
 esse: "exist"; inf. in indirect statement after *suspicati sumus*.
 ex quibus erat ea minima: "the smallest of which was"; the moon.
 citima: "nearest" < *citer*, *citerior*, *citimus*.
 Stellarum...terrae: The genitives precede the nouns they modify, *globi* and *magnitudinem* respectively.
 visa est: "seemed." See on 15.4 (*videamini*).
 me imperii nostri...paeniteret: "I was ashamed of our empire." impersonal + acc. person affected, gen. cause of the feeling.
 humi: locative "upon the ground."
 quae in templa: "into what sacred spaces"
 Novem: "nine"; indeclinable, modifies *orbibus*. The "spheres" to which Scipio refers are not the planets themselves, but their orbital spheres. From innermost to outermost: earth, moon, Mercury, Venus, sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the heavens, *caelum*. Uranus, Neptune and Pluto were unknown. This was not Plato's order. Macrobius calls the arrangement with earth in the center (the innermost sphere) and the sun in the middle orbit, the "Chaldaean" order preferred by Archimedes
 tibi: ethical dative; translate "see, ..."
 summus ipse deus: God is the outermost sphere, *caelestis*, *extumus* (*sc. globus*). The Stoic Cleanthes identified god with the universe itself, with the reason (*mens et animus*) that rules the universe, and with the outermost *aether* that envelops it.

custodiā corporis, nec iniussu eius, a quo ille est vobis
 datus, ex hominum vitā migrandum est, ne munus
 humanum adsignatum a deo defugisse videamini. 35
16 Sed sic, Scipio, ut avus hic tuus, ut ego qui te genui,
 iustitiam cole et pietatem, quae cum magna in
 parentibus et propinquis, tum in patriā maxima est; ea
 vita via est in caelum et in hunc coetum eorum qui iam 40
 vixerunt et corpore laxati illum incolunt locum quem
 vides" (erat autem is splendidissimo candore inter
 flammās circus elucens) "quem vos, ut a Graīs
 accepistis, orbem lacteum nuncupatis."
 Ex quo omnia mihi contemplanti praeclara cetera et 45
 mirabilia videbantur. Erant autem eae stellae quas
 numquam ex hōc loco vidimus, et eae magnitudines
 omnium quas esse numquam suspicati sumus, ex quibus
 erat ea minima quae ultima a caelo, citima <a> terrīs,
 luce lucebat alienā. Stellarum autem globi terrae 50
 magnitudinem facile vincebant. Iam vero ipsa terra ita
 mihi parva visa est, ut me imperii nostri, quo quasi
 punctum eius attingimus, paeniteret.¹
17 Quam cum magis intuerer, "Quaeso," inquit
 Africanus, "quousque humi defixa tua mens erit? 55
 Nonne aspicias quae in templa vāneris? Novem tibi
 orbibus vel potius globis conexas sunt omnia, quorum
 unus est caelestis, extumus, qui reliquos omnes
 complectitur, summus ipse deus arcens et continens

¹ quo quasi punctum eius attingimus: "through which we come into contact with only a tiny portion of it [*sc. the earth*]" (Zetzel). By *punctum*, Cicero also alludes to the Greek *kentron*, a fixed point around which one scribes a circle (*Tusculan Disputations* 1.40). I.e., the Roman empire is the center of the earth, which is the planet at the center of the universe. This is ironically the lowest and least divine position. Aemilianus' eyes keep returning to it (20.13-15), perhaps because it is "the middle of the temple" they contemplate (15.24-26).

ceteros: understand *globos*.
 qui volvuntur: passive with a middle (active) sense, “which revolve.”
 septem: understand *cursus stellarum*, “paths of the planets.”
 contrario...atque: *contrario...atque* “otherwise than” “opposite of.” With words implying a comparison, *atque* acts like *quam*
 generi < *genus, generis, n.*; dative w/ adjs. *prosperus et salutaris*.
 ille fulgor qui dicitur Iovis: “that shining object (*fulgor*) which is called Jupiter’s” (*OLD fulgor* 4)
 horribilis terris: understand *fulgor*. The planet is probably “loathesome to earth” because Mars is the god of war.
 ut comites: “as companions.” From the earth, Venus and Mercury appear near to one another and the sun.
 in infimoque: *-que* is enclitic to *infimo* rather than *in* because “in Ciceronian Latin *-que* is seldom placed after an unemphasized monosyllabic preposition...” (*OLD -que*¹). *infimo* “lowest” (properly “innermost”) is a superlative < *inferus-a-um*.
 accensa convertitur: Translate as if *accenditur et convertitur*.
 caducum: “destined to die”; literally “subject to falling.”
 munere deorum hominum generi: *munere* “gift”; arranged chiasmatically, and “encircled” by *animos...datos. hominum* is placed next to *deorum* to reflect the divinity of the soul
 media et nona: earth is the ninth and innermost concentric sphere
 neque = *et non* in the “both...and” construction.
 feruntur...nutu suo: “fall by their own gravity” (*OLD nutus* 4). The ancients conceived of “gravity” simply as “a tendency to fall.” The heaviest elements of the universe (earth and water) fell to compose *Terra* or *Tellus* (L&S 46C); *aether*, the purest form of fire, rose up to form the *caelum* (L&S 47B).
 Quid hīc: “What in the world?” an expression of bewilderment.
 tam dulcis sonus: myths about celestial music are found throughout classical lit., but for planets to produce a tonic scale by different speeds of orbits is a neo-pythagorean twist on the concept
 ille: understand *sonus*.
 pro rata parte: “according to a fixed proportion.”
 ratione: “by measure, calculation” = “precisely,” but retaining the sense of the Greek, *logō* = “by reason.”
 acuta cum gravibus: “high with low,” “treble with bass.” The same language is used to suggest the *concordia ordinum* (*De re publica* 2.69), thus implying divine sanction for the kind of political order Cicero envisioned.

ceteros, in quo sunt infixi illi qui volvuntur stellarum 60
 cursūs sempiterni; huic subiecti sunt septem qui
 versantur retro contrario motu atque caelum. Ex quibus
 summum globum possidet illa quam in terrīs Saturniam
 nominant. Deinde est hominum generi prosperus et
 salutaris ille fulgor qui dicitur Iovis; tum rutilus 65
 horribilisque terrīs quem Martium dicitis; deinde subter
 mediam fere regionem Sol obtinet, dux et princeps et
 moderator luminum reliquorum, mens mundi et
 temperatio,² tantā magnitudine ut cuncta suā luce lustret
 et compleat. Hunc ut comites consequuntur Veneris 70
 alter, alter Mercurii cursūs, in infimoque orbe Luna
 radiīs Solis accensa convertitur. Infra autem eam nihil
 est nisi mortale et caducum praeter animos munere
 deorum hominum generi datos, supra Lunam sunt
 aeterna omnia. Nam ea quae est media et nona, Tellus, 75
 neque movetur et infima est, et in eam feruntur omnia
 nutu suo pondera.”

18 Quae cum intuerer stupens, ut me recepi, “Quid hīc?” inquam. “Quis est qui complet aures meas tantus et tam dulcis sonus?” 80

“Hic est,” inquit, “ille, qui intervallis disiunctus imparibus,³ sed tamen pro ratā parte ratione distinctīs, impulsu et motu ipsorum orbium efficitur, et acuta cum gravibus temperans varios aequabiliter concentus

² moderator...temperatio: The sun is the “regulator” and “ordering principle” of the world, among other reasons, because it occupies “the middle path.”

³ distinctis: connected to *imparibus* by *sed*; modifies *intervallis*. Pythagoras discovered the mathematical nature of musical harmony built upon “ratios.” These “musical intervals” are “unequal, but nevertheless separated precisely according to a fixed proportion”.

natura fert ut: "nature is such that..." = "it is natural that..."
 extrema: "the extremes," meaning both the celestial bodies with the longest orbits (which must travel most quickly) and those with the shortest orbits (which travel most slowly).
 conversio: "revolution."
 nona: the ninth "sphere"; because *immobilis*, earth makes no sound and is not part of the harmony of the spheres.
 eadem vis est duorum: "the tone of two is the same." *vis* is probably a translation of the Greek *dunamis*, which can describe a musical "octave"
 septem distinctos intervallis sonos: *septem* modifies *intervallis* in "interlocking word-order" (*synchysis*), mimicing the sense of "intervals". But because "two notes have the same *vis*," it can also be construed with *sonos* to form a ring. In a musical octave, there are eight notes separated by seven intervals that make only seven different sounds.
 omnium fere nodus: The number seven is the "key to nearly everything". "Node" is an astronomical term denoting the point where the ecliptic crosses the equator at the spring and fall equinoxes. The number seven is like an "astronomical crossroad" because so many aspects of celestial order depend upon it.
 quod: conn. rel. the neuter is used to refer to the previous idea, e.g., "the production of heavenly music".
 docti homines: Zetzl rightly suggests Orpheus and Amphion. Orpheus teaches men civilization by his song, and Amphion built the city of Thebes by song.
 nervis: "on the lyre".

efficit; nec enim silentio tanti motūs incitari possunt, et 85
 natura fert ut extrema ex altera parte graviter, ex alterā
 autem acutē sonent. Quam ob causam summus ille caeli
 stellifer cursus, cuius conversio est concitator, acuto et
 excitato movetur sono, gravissimo autem hic lunaris
 atque infimus; nam terra nona immobilis manens unā 90
 sede semper haeret, complexa medium mundi locum.
 Illi autem octo cursūs, in quibus eadem vis est duorum,
 septem efficiunt distinctos intervallis sonos, qui
 numerus rerum omnium fere nodus est; quod docti
 homines nervīs imitati atque cantibus, aperuerunt sibi 95
 reditum in hunc locum, sicut alii qui praestantibus
 ingeniīs in vitā humanā divina studia coluerunt.