

Finding Cicero's "Job": A Job and Work Analysis of *De Legibus* and *De Republica*

This paper explores the methodological possibilities of applying concepts from Job and Work Analysis, a theoretical model developed by organizational psychologists, to inquire whether it is possible to identify the phenomenon of the "job" in Cicero's philosophical writings on statesmanship. Recent scholarship has attempted to destigmatize labor in the ancient world by resisting elite conceptions of *labor*, privileging evidence from the working classes themselves, and utilizing frameworks from the New Institutional Economics to analyze that evidence (North 1986; Tran 2017; cf. Finley 1973). Nonetheless, the precise Roman or Greek definition for "labor," "profession," or "work" is unclear, even if those terms are utilized in modern scholarship (Verboven 2017). Conversations generally revolve around wage labor and professional organizations, reifying ancient categories of appropriate "work" in an effort at elucidating the mean professions.

My study attempts to move past these traditional conceptions of labor and work by applying frameworks from modern Job and Work Analysis (cf. Brannick et al. 2007). Brannick et al. define the job as an abstract bundle of "work content performed by a group of people with similar work," while they divide work into a number of different units, such as "elements," "activities," "tasks," and "duties" (Brannick et al. 2007, 6). A key benefit of this schema is that it develops strategies to consider the ancient "job" in the abstract sense, apart from the person occupying the position. As I will show, applying this framework to ancient literature concerning "work" allows for a systematic comparison between social positions, such as that of the politician, poet, architect, or even butcher. For example, utilizing the schema of Job and Work Analysis raises significant contrasts in Cicero's musings on the defined roles and activities of

political positions in the *De Legibus* and *De Republica*. An examination of the extent to which Cicero's characterizations of these positions constitute a "job description" in the modern, post-industrial sense sheds new light on these differences.

First, I examine *De Legibus* 3.6-11, in which Cicero undertakes a detailed legal description of the responsibilities of the various magistracies. I argue that by advocating for his ideal *Res Publica*, Cicero renders political positions as self-standing abstractions in order to standardize and describe the tasks and duties of the various "jobs" of state. Cicero's discourse not only gives durable form to the magistracies, but it also suggests that Cicero himself conceived of public positions, such as the censorship, as abstract "jobs" with associated "duties" that were separate from the identities of their holders and capable of being defined on their own (*De Legibus* 3.8; cf. Astin 1985). The significance of Cicero's deployment of abstract description is drawn out by comparison to *De Republica*, in which Cicero emphasizes the superiority of *praxis* as opposed to the musings of philosophy (*De Republica* 1.2). I argue that in *De Republica*, Cicero, although ultimately privileging the primacy of law and the authority of magistracies, nevertheless goes to great lengths to place more importance in individual practice and work (cf. Zarecki 2015); he both references the "labors" of defending the state (1.4), and employs the Ship of State metaphor (1.8) to indicate the significant role of action demanded by his duty. This tension between theory and practice in Cicero's writings is not a failure of his philosophical system, but rather a characteristic of how Cicero, at least, conceived of the "job" itself.

Finally, Cicero's grappling with the "job" of statesman was characteristic of the Late Republic and Principate. As I will show briefly, other writers in this period, including Vitruvius and Vergil, engage in this same debate in their respective fields of expertise. All share an interest in attempting to describe their "job" in abstract terms, while leaving space for individual practice

outside of that framework. Employing Job Analysis allows scholars to identify these dynamics in Roman explorations of their labor and to take them seriously as more than simple metaphors with little explanatory power.

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