

Son: What a great man he was, Jupiter's blessing upon Rome, a true hero of the Republic!

Father: A hero of the Republic? Son do you not see, Augustus created the Republic's demise.

Son: What strange musings have you produced now? It is common knowledge that Augustus was the saviour of the Republic.

Father: Yes but if you observe the facts, look deeper you will see that his actions were very unrepublican.

- ① Son: How so? Augustus himself states in *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus*, "In my nineteenth year, at my own initiative and at my own expense, I raised an army with which I championed the liberty of the Republic".

- ② Father: You failed to mention the fact that Augustus returned as the victor of Actium with an army of 50 legions. With such a force at his disposal, Rome would have no choice but to submit. Not long after this he was already being granted the consulship on numerous following years. Augustus was most certainly seeking power.

Son: If Augustus was out for power than why in *Res Gestae*, does he also state "In my 6th and 7th consulship I transferred the republic from my power to the dominion of the Senate and people of Rome" (1). What alternate motives could he possibly have had that would cause his voluntarily step down from his position as *Princeps Senatus*?

- ③ Father: Augustus' supposed 'resignation' was just a clever scheme to fool naive romans such as yourself. These foolish Romans were also the ones that foolishly protested against his resignation. Don't you see it was all a ploy to get more power without seeming as though he wanted it. This new power takes its form as the First settlement where Augustus is given Proconsular imperium over Gaul, Spain, Syria and Egypt for a period of ten years, not to mention that all these provinces held the majority of the Roman legions. If you cared to note the fact that he held vastly greater administrative power after he made that 'gamble' then before it, you would see that it was his intention all along.

- ② Son: If Augustus was indeed looking for power, he would not gamble all that he had accomplished on such a small hope of power. The public and the senate could easily have accepted his abdication, how was he to know that the people would call on him.

- ① Father: Augustus used propaganda to ensure a vast base of support leading up to his renunciation in 27BC. In 29BC he held a triple triumph as well as presenting each citizen with 400 sesterces. In 28 B.C. he had restored and constructed 82 temples in honour of the gods. Augustus' *divi filius* was on every coin, he even promoted himself in the *Aeneid* where Virgil states in book 6 that Augustus was to "restore a better age of gold". An example of Augustus' propaganda stands right before us aswell as everywhere else in Rome, notice how in this statue, Augustus' face looks youthful. People seem to raise him as an immortal! The people loved him, and thus was confident they would offer him even more power to keep him as our leader. Cassius Dio himself states that Augustus wanted his return to seem "voluntarily by the people, so he would not have compelled them", and that he only resigned "having prepared the most reliable senators". The rearrangement of the senate list in 28BC was probably not a simple tweak but more likely him choosing the most loyal senators. But even with all this propaganda on his side he still does not allow any noble person to hold a Triumph, he even stopped Marcus Licinius Crassus the Younger from holding a triumph and stopped him being awarded the *Spolia Opima* in order to downplay the great generals success so that there could be no competition for his rule over Rome.

- ③ Son: We needed Augustus, his presence prevented a power vacuum, his leadership therefore prevented civil war. Had Augustus not been there, it would have been like the time Caesar was assassinated with people like Marc Antony trying occupy the new and available positions of power.

Father: Civil war? Augustus had already partook in the Civil Wars; The battle of Phillipi and The Battle against Sextus Pompeius, that doesn't sound very Republican does it, he even states in Res Gestae that "I often waged war both foreign and civil". Civil War leads to the deaths of Republicans, how can that be seen as republican.  
Not to mention the fact that he raised his army without imperium, directly violating the Cursus Honorum.

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Son: Don't you see he did it for the good of the republic, I will repeat the line from the Res Gestae- "I raised an army with which I championed the liberty of the republic". Not only that. The senate legalised Augustus' raising of the army (44BC) when they passed the Senatus Consultum Ultimum(43BC). Cassius Dio tells us that Augustus did not take any power that was without precedence. Compare Augustus to Marius, who held the consulship for an unprecedented seven times, or Sulla, who marched on Rome in 88BC and signed hundreds of Romans to death in his prescriptions. Compared to these men Augustus appears much more Republican. Even Pompey had Proconsular Imperium Maius during his time in the east. Also, take Augustus' Father Julius Caesar for instance, he became dictator for life, marched on Rome and held the senate in his hands. Augustus effectively cooperates with the senate. Besides that, the battles he fought were righteous ones, against traitorous anti-republicans. Sextus was a pirate, an enemy of the Republic and Mark Antony was a traitorous Egyptian lover who would give Rome to Egypt if he had his way.

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Father: Yes precedences were set, but to what extent? It is true Pompey once had Proconsular imperium Maius but this was only in the East and it ended when he crossed the pomerium where Augustus' continued. Augustus held the vast expanses of Gaul, Spain, Illyria, Galatia, Cilicia, Syria and for five and an additional ten years. This is most certainly unrepublican.

Son: you are wrong Father, Augustus was acting to please both the people and the senate. By completing his proconsular duties he was both fulfilling the peoples wishes of him by administering in the Roman Government, and pleasing the senate by managing foreign affairs in Gaul, Spain, Illyria etc. Additionally, his absence also allowed other nobles to then stand for consul.