I wrote my first “book,” a hand-illustrated history of Sparta, for a school assignment when I was ten. With the confident solipsism of youth, I ignored the help I had received from my teacher and my parents and dedicated the book “to myself, because I wrote it.” Thankfully, experience brings a degree of humility. Over the years I have learned that writing and publishing a book would be impossible without the contributions of scores of people, from friends and family to colleagues, archivists, agents, editors, reviewers, designers, and publicists. I have thus acquired more debts in writing this book than my ten-year-old self could have ever imagined.

The book was begun in New Haven, where I was a fellow at the Yale Center for the Study of Representative Institutions, and has followed my academic wanderings to the University of Warwick and my present home at the University of Alabama. This book would not have been possible without the institutional support offered by these universities or the rich intellectual environments created and fostered by my colleagues at Yale, Warwick, and Alabama. Special thanks to Keith Wrightson, Steven Smith, Dan Branch, Peter Marshall, Mark Knights, Mark Philip, and Josh Rothman for making each institution an intellectual home.

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consumption. His steady hand, deep knowledge, and probing questions have shaped and reshaped this book from its inception. In many ways, this book was forged in Bill’s Socratic crucible.

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