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CICERO

In Defence of the Republic

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Marcus Tullius Cicero , Siobhan Mcelduff (Translator)

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Cicero (106-43BC) was the most brilliant orator in Classical history. Even one of the men who authorized his assassination, the Emperor Octavian, admitted to his grandson that Cicero was: 'an eloquent man, my boy, eloquent and a lover of his country'. This new selection of speeches illustrates Cicero's fierce loyalty to the Roman Republic, giving an overview of his oratory from early victories in the law courts to the height of his political career in the Senate. We see him sway the opinions of the mob and the most powerful men in Rome, in favour of Pompey the Great and against the conspirator Catiline, while The Philippics, considered his finest achievements, contain the thrilling invective delivered against his rival, Mark Antony, which eventually led to Cicero's death.

In Defence of the Republic Details

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From Reader Review In Defence of the Republic for online ebook

Mymonah says

loved the drama in here. bit hard to get through but context really helps and thats just the fun of Roman texts =>

the inner workings of the senate and the feuds and the way people just looked at each other so interestingly seen through the eyes of one mna. he doesnt show everything of course but he does give us an amazing example and intro to so much more.

Alex says

This is a philosophical dialogue in the tradition of Plato. It starts out basically as a concise retelling of Plato and Aristotle's political theories, but with a bit of Roman gloss, the latter element becoming much more stronger as the chapters go on.

There's also a lot of holes in the writing, but it could've been so much worse. Overall it doesn't affect the the chapters too much. They remain coherent, just with large segments that end up being reconstructed summaries.

Cicero, who himself was a prolific writer on philosophy and politics praises the idea of not just a philosopher king, but philosopher leadership in general, and advocates that intellectuals get involved in politics rather than shun it. Cicero's own end however perhaps proves the point of why intellectuals are reluctant to get directly involved in politics.

There's advocacy here of a mixed constitution with the history of Rome as a case study. Cicero takes a very scientific view of history. Reports apparently reached the senate of two suns appearing in the sky, but its insisted that such a strange phenomenon must have a rational explanation, much like eclipses which can terrify those who are not familiar with them. He notes that the deification of Romulus, which Cicero himself does not appear to believe in, was a testament to Romulus' good character, as even though the latter lived centuries before Cicero, it was still a literate time, when people were less likely to believe in such myths without some extraordinary motive.

He also has a very platonic view of human nature. Reason ought to remain on top, ruling over the passions like a king over his subjects. Reason is divine and philosophy, the highest pursuit, *"What command, what office, what kingdom can be preferred to that condition of mind, which looking down upon all things human, and esteeming them to be the objects of an inferior wisdom, turns ever to the contemplation of those things that are divine and eternal: persuaded that they only deserve to be called men, who are refined by the sciences of humanity?"*

Reason and the ability to recognize the divine are according to Cicero what separate man from the animals. In fact there is a very picturesque episode at the end in which one of the characters of the dialogue, Scipio Aemilianus, has a dream in which his grandfather, Scipio Africanus shows him the universe modeled as the ancients understood it, a spherical earth surrounded by the stars and the planets. The earth is

so small, Rome is even smaller. Fame will only ever reach a certain portion of the globe and is easily forgotten. Once again Cicero's own life proves the point as I'm sure the average college educated adult now will tell you plenty about one of the most significant men in history of the Roman Republic. If fame is vanity then, one ought to focus on the soul, the mind, the good, the divine that lasts forever.

With that in mind the weakest chapters are those on natural justice. There's no such thing, argues the character Philus. The legal customs of humanity vary too much; the only natural law is self interest, which can even justify such pursuits as imperialism. What good does a nation dedicated to just war gain if it leads to their conquest by a less morally scrupulous nation.

All of this doesn't fit into the rest of the book at all, and it was obviously given for rhetorical reasons, to be refuted later, but the refutation leaves a lot to be desired, basically amounting to virtue being its own reward. In particular I disagree with the idea in that section that the death of a state is unnatural, unlike that of the individual. Earlier it's implied that Rome's location inland was beneficial because it impeded the uncontrolled growth of commercialism such as what happened to Corinth and Carthage, both incredibly wealthy cities in the ancient world, but also known for immorality, and Cicero implies that the unrestricted pursuit of wealth corrupted them. The decay of nations would've been an interesting point to pursue especially as this book was written during the last years of the Roman Republic when they were about to succumb to the autocracy that Plato warned about and Cicero even quoted.

Perhaps due to all the gaps, it does end up being a very short book, much shorter than Aristotle's Politics or Plato's Republic, but I would definitely read those before reading this one for the best experience.

Ethan Erkfitz says

Gotta recommend this for any fan of history or rhetoric. While the mannerisms are clearly outdated and difficult to understand, the book makes an excellent job of explaining them in the footnote section. For anyone who likes the rise and fall of the Roman Republic, this book is a must read and a very interesting perspective of the power and sway of the pen in Roman times.

Minerva says

**** 2.5 stars ****

Derek says

This is my first collection of Cicero's work, and I wasn't super impressed. He's clearly a very distinguished Orator. I see no doubt of that. However this collection was fairly drudge with little meat to nibble on. The title is awfully misleading. "In defense of the republic" is some fragmented Senatorial cases Cicero defended. Sometimes it was to regain his property, other times it was Cicero talking about his badass consulship. He was a coward who could talk some major shit! But when his game was high, like in the First and Second Catilinarians, as consul, Cicero ruled the day of the Roman republic. The way he writes, you'd suspect he single handedly, from arm chair to paid spies, protected the Roman republic from collapse. Not to mention he'll have no issue calling you a piece of shit whore fucker to everyone who might know your name.

What meat I take away from this work is you shouldn't be afraid to be an intellectual badass and call people out on their bullshit. And it helps to call them a whore fucker and drunkard for good measure.

Beyza says

"O halde yukar?ya bak?p da bu konutu ve ebedi yurdunu seyretmek istersen, kendini avam?n sözlerine vermeyecek, ba?ar?lar?n için insani ödül beklentisi içinde olmayacaks?n; bizzat erdem kendi cezbedici ödülleriyle seni gerçek onura çekmelidir, ba?kalar? gördü?ü gibi konu?acaktır, b?rak konu?sunlar. Onlar?n her konu?mas? gördü?ün dar bölgelerle s?n?rl?d?r, herhangi biri hakk?nda söyledikleri daimi olmayacak, insanlar?n ölümüyle gömülüp gelecek nesillerin unutmas?yla yok olacaktır." (s. 235)

Francisco Mtz says

El libro, de conservarse completo, sería un clásico tratado de filosofía política escrito por un célebre romano, Cicerón. Desafortunadamente faltan tantas páginas que la lectura se corta y es difícil para el lector entenderla. A pesar de ello, se agradece enormemente al traductor, Julio Pimentel, la disposición de una introducción que brinda un panorama completo de lo que pudo ser la obra auxiliándose de otros textos ciceronianos, así como de libros antiguos que contienen remisiones y citas de la República. No omito mencionar que a esta labor se agregan las numerosas notas que aclaran el sentido de diversos pasajes del libro y nombres citados. Si deben leerlo, esta edición de Pimentel se las aconsejo sobremanera.

Campbell says

No, I can't finish this. I don't read Latin so I can only assume that it is the translation which is turgid; Cicero's reputation is too great for these words to have been the basis. Also the footnotes are interminably interrupting and break up the flow unbearably.

Aaron Crofut says

A Roman version of Aristotle's politics. Cicero takes a very negative view of Democracy, which tends to fall in love with whichever person promises the mob the most of other people's property, a situation tailor made for tyrants. Good government must allow everyone to have a say in a society that will protect their rights, rather than offer those rights up to be sacrificed to pander to the poor. This book is clearly a source that inspired the Enlightenment thinkers.

Scipio's Dream is a must read. It has a flavor of the Myth of Er but goes much deeper, creating elements that would be taken by Virgil and Dante.

"In this statement, my Scipio, I build on your own admirable definition, that there can be no community, properly so called, unless it be regulated by a combination of rights. And by this definition it appears that a multitude of men may be just as tyrannical as a single despot and indeed this is the most odious of all

tyrannies, since no monster can be more barbarous than the mob, which assumes the name and mask of the people"

I read this version at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=co....>

CarolineMcL says

history

Alp Turgut says

Cicero'nun ayn? Platon'un diyaloglar? tarz?nda kaleme ald??? "**De Re Publica / On the Commonwealth / Devlet Üzerine**", yine Platon'un "**Devlet**" ve Aristoteles'in "**Politika**" eserlerinin izinden giderek en iyi devlet türünün hangisi oldu?unu tart??an özellikle ilk kitab?yla öne ç?kan bir eser. Okumadan önce Platon'u, Aristoteles'i ve Stoa felsefesini anlamak ?art; aksi takdirde kitab? okumak pek kolay olmayabilir. Öte yandan, ?thaki Yay?nlar? taraf?ndan okuyucuya sunulan kitab?n pek ba?ar?l? bir cilt oldu?unu söyleyemeyece?im. Her ne kadar tarih dersi verilen önsözü ve felsefi anlamda fazlas?yla de?erli olan ilk bölümü muhte?em de olsa kalan bölümlerinin kay?p olmas? sebebiyle kitap bir yerden sonra etkisini fazlas?yla kaybediyor. Yazar?n bir ?ey ifade etmeyen yar?m kalm?? fragmanlar?n? okuyucuya sunmak ne kadar gerekli tart???l?r. En az?ndan benim için pek de keyifli olmad???n? belirtmem gerek.

08.09.2015

?stanbul, Türkiye

Alp Turgut

<http://www.filmdoktoru.com/kitap-labo...>

Minerva says

** 2 stars **

Birch says

Super cools

Andrada says

Before saying anything about the book itself, I have to say I was severely disappointed by the way this collection was put together. I was annoyed when I realized that it contained several speeches that were

already included in other Penguin collections of Cicero's speeches I've read before. Although granted, it's my fault as well for not looking carefully enough at the book when I bought. I also didn't particularly enjoy the fact they decided to include fragments of certain speeches instead of leaving them whole. I don't care if Cicero went on and on about things the editor thought irrelevant, it really made me feel cheated of a complete experience.

That being said, it included some of Cicero's finest speeches. I particularly enjoyed the speech in defence of Archias the Poet which occasioned some beautiful remarks on Cicero's part about the value of writing and books as well as his eloquent and brutal stand against Mark Anthony in the Philippics. Of all the ancient writers, Cicero comes off as the most relatable and human. He was flawed and vain and bet on the losing horse in a world where a rapid succession of civil wars made it quite clear the Republic was no longer a satisfactory system of government and change was looming. But despite everything, Cicero stood up for the old values and putting aside his hesitance and fear, eventually took the moral stand he will always be remembered for. He may have not always lived up to his own expectations while living, but he resolutely became the man he wanted himself to be in death.

Erick says

Having read a number of Cicero's philosophical works, I thought I should get more acquainted with his rhetorical works. The title of this compilation certainly drew me to it. I was impressed with Cicero's Republic and thought this collection of orations would give me a more complete picture of this aspect of his thought. It certainly does that. I'm not sure all of the orations here are literally defenses of the Roman republic as such, but Cicero's republicanism can always be discerned as a primary motivation behind everything included here.

It is pretty clear that Cicero was influenced by Isocrates. I detected similar patterns of language. It also could be due to Cicero's dependence on Demosthenes, and Isocrates influence on him; but whatever the case, Isocrates was either a direct or indirect influence. Many of these orations were spoken by Cicero in a literal public forum. He did apparently alter and reedit these orations before publication, so it isn't certain how much was actually spoken and how much was only written, but at least certain portions of these were a part of a political discourse and, occasionally, a legal defense of someone. For me, the most impressive works were those that dealt with Catiline and Mark Antony. These show Cicero at his most courageous and at his most poignantly vituperative. Both these men were considered by Cicero to be serious threats to the Roman republic and he didn't mince words when he denounced them. In both cases, Cicero put his life in danger. Indeed, when he denounced the latter in a number of orations called the Philippics, Mark Antony had him murdered.

One of the things that struck me the most was how volatile the Roman republic was. Almost anything could cause assassinations and riots. We aren't quite there in our own republic, but, I must say, we are seeing a tendency towards lawlessness and extreme factionalism that is building at an alarming rate. This is more the case on one side of the political spectrum which continues to harbor Communistic anarchist thugs that need almost no excuse to riot and attack people they don't agree with. This was certainly something that happened in the Roman republic as well. Civil discourse is pretty much impossible when dealing with an ignorant mob. Cicero had nothing but contempt for mob tactics. He saw it as a constant danger to a republic. He knew, as well as I do, that there will be huge swaths of the population of any society that can be manipulated into following just about anything, or anyone, when they are blinded by emotion and programmed by

propaganda. He was keen to denounce those who were threats to the republic. He attempted to expose these people before they gained too much power. In the case of Catiline, he was successful; in the case of Mark Antony, he wasn't; but it wasn't from a lack of trying in either case. Cicero had incredibly high ideals; he didn't always live up to those high ideals, but one must admit that he made an effort to do so, and given the time he was living in, he was certainly exemplary by comparison.

I should note that I felt the translation was fair, but I was put off by the tendency of the translator to resort to modern English idiom when Cicero is being facetious and engaging in hyperbole. Nothing seems more stark than reading modern English expression within a text based in Latin that is over two thousand years old. I would have preferred less concern for a modernized translation and more concern for an unsuitable rendering. Thankfully, the translator didn't indulge this tendency too often, but I found myself slightly frustrated by clearly inappropriate modern English colloquialisms (e.g. at one point she translated a kind of Gallic sandal with the English word "flip-flops" - I am not joking). If one can ignore the preceding, I think one will enjoy the translation more. Of course, it could be that I am just finicky.
