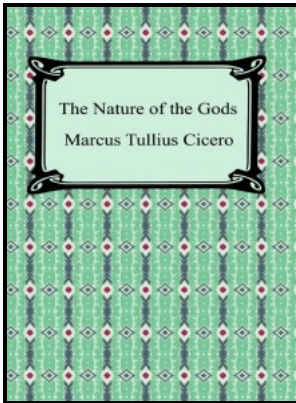


On moral obligation - a new translation of Ciceros De Officiis

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De Officiis : definition of De Officiis and synonyms of De Officiis (English)

The former system includes the selfish and the utilitarian theory of morals, — the selfish making the pursuit of our own happiness our duty, and adaptation to that end the sole standard of right; the utilitarian identifying virtue with benevolence, accounting the greatest good of the greatest number the supreme aim, and beneficent utility the ultimate standard of duty. The first principle is that which is found in the connection subsisting between all the members of the human race; and that bond of connection is reason and speech, which by the processes of teaching and learning, of communicating, discussing, and reasoning associate men together and unite them in a sort of natural fraternity.

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Not without reason, therefore, are stronger emotions aroused in those who engage in public life than in those who live in retirement, and greater is their ambition for success; the more, therefore, do they need to enjoy greatness of spirit and freedom from annoying cares.

De Officiis: Cicero on Political Obligations

The other error is that some people devote too much industry and too deep study to matters that are obscure and difficult and useless as well.

On Moral Duties (De Officiis)

If, therefore these schools should claim to be consistent, they could not say anything about duty; and no fixed, invariable, natural rules of duty can be posited except by those who say that moral goodness is worth seeking solely or chiefly for its own sake. He tells him that the teachings on moral duties have the widest practical application and are worth seeking for their own sake. Ordo autem et constantia et moderatio et ea, quae sunt his similia, versantur in eo genere ad quod est adhibenda actio quaedam, non solum mentis agitatio.

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On Obligations *De officiis* was written by Cicero in late 44 BC after the assassination of Julius Caesar to provide principles of behaviour for aspiring politicians. On this principle the lands of Arpinum are said to belong to the Arpinates, the Tusculan lands to the Tusculans; and similar is the assignment of private property. *Quibus ille respondit Lacedaemonios classe illa amissa aliam parare posse, se fugere sine suo dedecore non posse.*

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And yet the body must be trained and so disciplined that it can obey the dictates of judgment and reason in attending to business and in enduring toil. From this all morality and propriety are derived, and upon it depends the rational method of ascertaining our duty. Statesmen too, no less than philosophers — perhaps even more so — should carry with them that greatness of spirit and indifference to outward circumstances to which I so often refer, together with calm of soul and freedom from care, if they are to be free from worries {73} and lead a dignified and self-consistent life.

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