

STEFANO MASO, *Cicero's Philosophy*, Trends in Classics 3, Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2022, pp. xiii+178, \$28.99, ISBN 978-3-11-065839-2.

This slim volume is part of the series “Key Perspectives on Classical Research”, whose aim is to explore the themes that have shaped previous scholarship on an author, genre, or topic in Classical Studies. Cicero’s philosophical works are certainly ripe for this treatment, given how much their scholarly fortunes have changed in the past half century or so. In recent years, there has been a dramatic reassessment of the nineteenth and early twentieth century view that viewed Cicero the philosopher as a mindless copyist of Hellenistic Greek philosophy, a second-rate author whose *philosophica* were only valuable as a source to be mined for their original Greek ideas. Contemporary scholarship has tended to take a more charitable approach to Cicero’s philosophy, laying stress on Cicero’s skill in synthesizing so many different Greek works and in making them palatable for a Roman audience.

Much like Cicero’s philosophical works themselves, this book is also primarily a synthesis, collecting and summarizing scholarship on this topic that dates from the past half century or so. Maso focuses exclusively on studies that have contributed to a more positive view of Cicero the philosopher, an attitude that he shares.

The book consists of five chapters and an epilogue that cover a range of topics related to Cicero’s philosophy. The first two chapters provide a biographical overview of Cicero’s interest in philosophy: his philosophical training is the topic of chapter one, while chapter two considers his return to philosophy after Caesar’s accession to the dictatorship in the 40s. The remaining three chapters take up various topics that have been the focus of modern scholarship on Cicero’s philosophy. Chapter three provides an overview of contemporary research, proceeding through the philosophical works text by text. It is followed in chapter four by an overview of different scholarly approaches towards assessing the originality of Cicero’s philosophical works. The final chapter discusses several technical Greek terms that Cicero translated into Latin.

Maso’s aim with this volume is admirable, and the advanced undergraduate and early-stage graduate student who wishes to grasp the basics of Cicero’s philosophy will find useful information within it. Unfortunately, several aspects of the volume hamper its usefulness. While the first two chapters largely cohere with one another, the remaining three do not, and the book ultimately does not offer a comprehensive account of modern scholarship on Cicero’s philosophical works. Furthermore, as a non-native English speaker, Maso was not well served by his press, which did not provide much assistance in the way of copy-editing. This is certainly not Maso’s fault, but it has the effect of making the book more challenging to read. Nonetheless, the book does offer a decent overview of the *status quaestionis* when it comes to Cicero’s philosophy, and I certainly would have been grateful to have such a book to peruse when I was in graduate school

and first began the complicated task of making sense of Cicero's vast philosophical corpus.

Chapter One, "Cicero's Philosophical Apprenticeship," offers a biographical account that begins with Cicero's earliest studies in philosophy and ends with the Platonizing dialogues he wrote in the 50s BCE (among these three dialogues, it is Cicero's ideal of combining philosophical education with training as an orator as it is depicted in *De Oratore* that receives the most attention). Maso primarily bases this biography on Cicero's own autobiographical *obiter dicta* (especially as found in his letters and the autobiography embedded in the *Brutus*), although he also draws on Plutarch's biography and the scholarly biographies that have been produced on Cicero from the mid-twentieth century on. The chapter concludes by describing Cicero's increased awareness in the 50s of the importance of morally acceptable and productive *otium*, which would provide a foundation for the ambitious project of philosophical translation and synthesis that he undertook in the following decade.

Chapter Two, "Cicero's Philosophical Employment", describes that project. This useful chapter opens with a brief biographical account of Cicero's motivations in the 40s for returning to philosophy. This is followed by a chronology of his philosophical works, including those that predate this period. The remainder of this lengthy chapter is then devoted to summaries of the many works that Cicero produced in the 40s. Brief descriptions of significant recent scholarship are provided for some of these works. However, this practice is uneven; no bibliography is provided for *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, *De Natura Deorum*, *De Senectute*, *De Divinatione*, *De Fato*, *De Amicitia*, *Topica*, and *De Officiis*. If Maso had consistently applied the principle of summarizing each work and supplying relevant bibliography, this chapter would be required reading for anyone approaching the philosophical works for the first time. While it is useful enough as it stands, the reader is left to search out on their own recent scholarly approaches to several of the most important components of Cicero's philosophical project.

Chapter Three, "Contemporary Research on Cicero as a Philosopher", provides an overview of the modern scholarship on Cicero's philosophy that Maso considers fundamental for a beginner in the topic. He confines himself to scholarship that accepts that Cicero was a proper philosopher, at least in the meaning that he argues the word acquired in the first century BCE: not a theorist but rather "a man heavily engaged in the decisive issues of his own age, who has developed the need to find, in the theoretical and critical-philosophical knowledge, the necessary tools so as to overcome the difficulties connected with the events of political contingency" (49). He begins the chapter with an annotated bibliography that covers six categories: (1) research that gives the broader perspective of the Roman cultural context in which Cicero wrote; (2) research on the Academic school; (3) the seminal 1995 volume *Cicero the Philosopher*, edited by J.G.F. Powell (J.G.F. Powell, ed., *Cicero the Philosopher*, Oxford 1995); (4) two comprehensive volumes, Bringmann (K.

Bringmann, *Untersuchungen zum späten Cicero*, Göttingen 1971) and Görler (W. Görler, *Untersuchungen zur Ciceros Philosophie*, Heidelberg 1974); (5) a variety of studies dedicated to specific aspects of Cicero's philosophy; and (6) Gawlick and Görler's account of Cicero in the fourth volume of *Die Philosophie der Antike* (G. Gawlick, W. Görler, "Cicero", in M. Erler, H. Flashar, eds., *Die Philosophie der Antike IV: Die hellenistische Philosophie*, Basel 1994, 1054-68). The rest of the chapter focuses on three central themes in Cicero's philosophy: Cicero's views on epistemology as an Academic, the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy, and his ethical thought. In each of these sections, Maso focuses in depth on how recent scholarship has changed scholarly opinion on these topics. Though it is necessarily selective, the bibliography does cover most of the major work on Cicero's philosophy that has been done in the past half century and will certainly help orient the philosophical novice.

Chapter Four, "Problems in Cicero's Philosophy," provides an overview of approaches on the question most consistently raised regarding Cicero's philosophical works: namely, how original they are and whether they can be taken as reliable sources for the views of the Hellenistic philosophers whose treatises they draw on. The scholarship covered in this book differs most radically from earlier studies on precisely this point. The golden age of *Quellenforschung* treated Cicero's philosophical works as little more than fragments of Hellenistic philosophers that the talented scholar could reassemble into the original Greek treatise. More recent scholarship has emphasized not just the considerable effort Cicero put into adapting Hellenistic philosophy for a Roman audience, but also the sense of entitlement with which he, as a Roman, plundered the intellectual property of Greek philosophers. Maso illustrates this approach by surveying contemporary work on *De Officiis*, *De Amicitia*, *De Natura Deorum*, *De Divinatione*, and *De Fato*. He then turns to consider how accurately Cicero portrayed the views of the skeptical Academy, Stoa, Garden, and eclectic "Old Academy" of Antiochus in his philosophical works. The chapter ends with a brief excursus on the extent to which *De Re Publica* and *De Legibus* should be numbered among Cicero's philosophical works.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, entitled "Cicero's Philosophical Vocabulary", discusses Cicero's translation of eight technical Greek terms: ἀδιάφορα (translated with *indifferentia*), βούλησις (*voluntas*), εἰμαρμένη (*fatum*), καθήκον (*officium*), κατάληψις/καταληπτική φαντασία (*comprehensio/visum comprehendibile*), οἰκείωσις (*conciliatio*), πιθανόν (*probabile*), and πρόληψις (translated variously with *anticipatio*, *praenotio*, and *praesensio*). Maso argues that Cicero's translations of these terms, the majority of which are related to concepts central to Stoicism, were particularly careful. Notably, all of them also developed a rich afterlife in subsequent Roman philosophy as well as in the European philosophical tradition.

The book concludes with a brief epilogue in which Maso argues that the final chapter, with its focus on Cicero's philosophical vocabulary, reinforces the major themes of the volume: namely, that Cicero was a prudent and accurate translator

of Greek philosophy, but that his aim shifted “from that of a simple mediator of Greek tradition and culture to...a philosopher intending to pursue an educational, moral and civic project” (149).

This is an uneven book: its aims are admirable, but its execution often leaves something to be desired. Scholars who specialize in Cicero’s philosophy will not find much new insight in it, nor indeed was that its purpose. For the beginner, however, it could provide a useful starting point. And ultimately, it is a refreshing sign of how much scholarly approaches to Cicero’s philosophy have changed that Maso has been able to devote an entire book to a survey of scholarship that takes Cicero’s role as a philosopher seriously.

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PHILIPP BRÜLLMANN, JÖRN MÜLLER, *Cicero: De officiis*, Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2023, ix+248 pp., ISBN 978-3-11-076019-4.

In der von Otfried Höffe herausgegebenen Reihe „Klassiker auslegen“ ist als 78. Band ein Sammelband zu Ciceros Lehrbrief *De officiis* erschienen. Der Sammelband umfasst insgesamt 13 Einzelbeiträge unterschiedlicher ausgewiesener Cicero-Experten in deutscher und englischer Sprache. Die Beiträge sind systematisch angeordnet: Den Beginn macht eine Einleitung der Herausgeber Brüllmann und Müller; anschließend folgt ein Beitrag von Marco Bleistein zu Ciceros Proömien; im Weiteren orientiert sich die Reihenfolge der Einzelbeiträge an der Abfolge der drei Bücher von *De officiis*. Zwar behandeln die einzelnen Kapitel je nach Forschungsschwerpunkt der Autoren durchaus unterschiedliche Themen, allerdings ist die inhaltliche Einheit des Sammelbandes weitgehend gewahrt, so dass der Band durchaus als eine Art Handbuch zu Ciceros Schrift genutzt werden kann.

Zudem weisen alle Beiträge eine Art roten Faden auf, indem sie drei wichtige Forschungsaspekte betonen: a) Sie heben im Unterschied zur früheren Forschung Ciceros Eigenständigkeit hervor; b) sie ordnen Ciceros Schrift trotz allen stoischen Zügen in einen prinzipiellen skeptisch-platonischen Rahmen ein; c) sie verweisen auf die Verbindung von Rhetorik, Philosophie und politischem Nutzen als Kernintention des Lehrbriefs. Gleichwohl unterscheiden sich die Beiträge durchaus in der Frage, inwieweit Ciceros Philosophie eher auf einer griechisch-stoischen Tradition fußt oder eine eigene Adaption der griechischen Philosophie in einen spezifisch römischen Kontext vornimmt (*contextualism*). Insofern bildet der Sammelband durchaus unterschiedliche Sichtweisen der aktuellen Cicero-Forschung ab.