David Fott, ed., trans., and comm.


David Fott’s translation of *On the Republic* (hereafter *Rep.*) and *On the Laws* (*Leg.*) is the first entry in the Agora Editions series from Cornell University Press devoted to a Roman philosopher, and the first English translation to make use of J.G.F. Powell’s Oxford edition, the most recent critical edition of both *Rep.* and *Leg.* Fott envisions his translation as a companion to Powell’s text (p. 18), and, given the number of differences between Powell’s OCT and Ziegler’s Teubner, Fott’s translation is both a timely and worthwhile endeavour.

Fott believes Cicero to be philosopher of distinction (p. 1), worthy of being read in his own right and not simply as a compiler of Greek sources (p. 15). He thus eschews burdensome source-criticism – this is, after all, not a monograph – in favour of letting Cicero’s words speak for themselves. ‘Let Cicero be Cicero’ is Fott’s mantra (p. 1), and he attempts to be ‘as literal as is consistent with readable English’ (18). In this he is, on the whole, successful, and the translation has both a modern feel and fidelity to the text. I shall note only a few specific passages of the translation, however, as I wish to focus on other aspects of this work that enhance its value for both scholars and students.

Fott’s introductory material is sufficient for the author’s aims; however, there is only a cursory engagement with the scholarship on *Rep.* and *Leg.*, so readers interested in a more robust overview of recent arguments will need to look elsewhere. A succinct primer on the content of the two works and the philosophical foundations – both theoretical and generic – upon which Cicero built his dialogues is followed by notes on word choice, a selective chronology which, perhaps surprisingly omits all of Cicero’s speeches except for his first (*Pro Quinctio*), and a brief outline of the contents of *Rep.* and *Leg.* The concise bibliography at the end of the work provides a useful primer for further research on these texts, and, fortuitously, does not limit itself to English scholarship.

There is no explicit mention of the intended audience, but this translation seems to be geared at non-specialist audiences with little or no Latin and assuredly no Greek; university students in a civilization course or literature course in translation would benefit the most from this edition. Consistent with his goal as a translator, Fott uses a simplified vocabulary to translate Latin terms found frequently in the text. A short explanation of his choices for the translation of *res, lex, optimus, officium, civitas, and virtus* is found in the introduction. For these words Fott has generally chosen a single English equivalent.
The choice to adopt only one equivalent for a particular Latin word – for example, rendering *res* as ‘thing’ – is consistent with Fott’s purpose of minimizing the opinion of the translator, but it does occasionally lead to clumsy English, as Fott admits (p. 18). For example, in *Rep.* 3.45, Scipio’s statement *quid cum decemviri Romae sine provocacione fuerunt tertio illo anno, cum vindicias amississet ipsa libertas? Populi nulla rest erat; immo vero id populus egit ut rem suam recuperaret* becomes “What about when the decemvirs at Rome were in their third year, immune to appeal, when freedom itself had lost its legal bulwarks? There was no ‘thing’ of the people’. On the contrary, the people acted in order to recover its ‘thing’.” When the translation varies significantly from the Latin, Fott often inserts a note with the literal translation, as at *Leg.* 2.55. Fott translates Cicero’s *eas in eos dies conferre ius, ut ne ipsius never publicae feriae sint* as ‘it is right to assign those days in the calendar so that they will coincide with neither private nor public holidays’, with a more literal translation (‘it is right to assign those days in these days so that they are holidays neither of himself or public’) provided in the notes.

The rather abundant footnotes are explanatory rather than expository, but are nonetheless useful, especially for tracing intratextual themes, Cicero’s references to his Greek predecessors, the sources of the many fragments of *Rep.*, and the identification of names. The rudimentary nature of many of the notes supports the idea that this translation is for those with no ancient language experience; for example, the explanations of how references to Cicero’s works are cited (p. 2n1, p. 12n4), and the warning that one should not confuse the adjective *līber* with the noun *liber* (p. 44n67), would be obvious to those able to read Cicero in the original. Not all of the notes are so basic, however, and there is much of value in them. The notes for *Leg.*, Book 1 in particular, are quite beneficial. Perhaps because of the intended audience Fott does not go into much detail about Academic philosophy or Cicero’s models, though he does an excellent job of providing references when Greek authors are quoted by the dialogues’ interlocutors. The careful attention paid to denoting Greek influence and the full citation of passages which Cicero either borrowed or referenced are a highlight of this translation and make it especially suitable for comparing Greco-Roman political philosophy.

While this translation is designed to accompany Powell’s edition, it also makes clear throughout where the variations between Powell’s text and Ziegler’s Teubner edition occur as well as the few places where the author deviates from Powell’s text (e.g. the acceptance of Ziegler’s punctuation in *Rep.* 2.35 and the rejection of Powell’s emendation in *Leg.* 1.16). The collation and notation of the differences between the two main critical editions is most useful, and contributes positively to Fott’s aim of allowing the reader ‘to come to grips