

**THE TUSCULAN  
DISPUTATIONS OF CICERO. A  
NEW EDITION, REVISED AND  
CORRECTED, BY W. H. MAIN**

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The Tusculan Disputations of Cicero. A New Edition, Revised and Corrected, by W. H. Main by  
Marcus Tullius Cicero & W. H. Main

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"O vita! Philosophia dux! o virtutis indagatrix, expultrixque  
vitiatorum! quid non modo nos, sed omnino vita hominum, sine te,  
esse potuisset?" Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. §. 2.

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THE  
TUSCULAN DISPUTATIONS  
OF  
MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO.

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BOOK I.

ON THE CONTEMPT OF DEATH.

I. As I am, at length, entirely, or to a great degree, freed from the fatigue of defending clients, and the duties of a senator, I have recourse again, BRUTUS, principally by your advice, to those studies which never have been out of my mind, although neglected at times, and which after a long interval I have resumed: and since the reason and precepts of all arts which relate to living well, depend on the study of wisdom, which is called philosophy, I have thought of illustrating this in the Latin tongue; not because philosophy could not be understood in the Greek language, or by Greek masters; but it was always my opinion, that we have been more happy at inventing than the



Greeks, or that we have improved on whatever we have received from them, which they have thought worthy their care and pains: for, with regard to manners and economy, family and domestic affairs, we certainly now manage them with more elegance, and better than they did; and our ancestors have, beyond all dispute, formed the republic on better laws and customs. What shall I say of our military affairs; in which, as our ancestors excelled them much in valour, so more in discipline? As to those things which are attained not by study, but nature, neither Greece, nor any nation, is comparable with them; for with whom was ever that gravity, that steadiness, that greatness of soul, probity, faith—such distinguished virtue of every kind, as to equal them with ours? Greece excelled us in learning, and all kinds of literature, and it was easy to do so where there was no competition; for amongst the Greeks the poets were the most ancient species of learned men. Of these Homer and Hesiod were before the foundation of Rome; Archilochus, in the reign of Romulus. We received poetry much later; Livy gives us a fable near five hundred and ten years after the building of Rome, in the consulate of C. Claudius, the son of Cæcus, and M. Tuditanus, a year before the birth of Ennius, who was older than Plautus and Nævius.

II. It was, therefore, late before poets were

either known or received amongst us; though we find in Cato de Originibus that the guests used to sing at their entertainments, the praises of famous men, to the sound of the flute; but a speech of Cato's shows the custom to have been in no great esteem, as he censures Marcus Nobilior, for carrying poets with him into his province: for that consul, as we know, carried Ennius with him into Ætolia. Therefore the less esteem poets were in, the less were those studies pursued: not but if, had there been amongst us any of great abilities that way, they would not have been at all inferior to the Greeks. Do we imagine that, had it been commendable in Fabius, a man of the first quality, to paint, we should have been without many Polycleti and Parrhasii? Honour nourishes art, and glory is the spur with all to studies; those studies are always neglected, which are a kind of disgrace to any. The Greeks held vocal and instrumental music as the greatest erudition, and therefore it is recorded of Epaminondas, who, in my opinion, was the first man amongst the Greeks, that he played excellently on the flute; and Themistocles some years before was deemed ignorant because he refused at an entertainment to play on the lyre. For this reason musicians flourished in Greece; music was a general study; and whoever was unacquainted with it, was not considered as fully instructed in

learning: Geometry was in high esteem with them, therefore none were more honourable than mathematicians; but we have confined this art to bare counting and measuring.

III. But on the contrary, we soon entertained the orator; no ways eloquent at first, but capable enough for an harangue, he soon became eloquent; for it is reported that, Galba, Africanus, and Lælius, were men of learning; that even Cato was studious, who was an age before them: then succeeded the Lepidi, Carbo, and Gracchi, and so many great orators after them, even to our times, that we were very little, if at all, inferior to the Greeks. Philosophy has been at a low ebb even to this present time, and had no assistance from our own language, which I have undertaken to raise and illustrate; so that, as I have been of service to my countrymen, when employed in public affairs, I may, if possible, be so to them in my retirement. In this I must take the more pains, because many books are said to be written inaccurately, by excellent men, but not erudite scholars: for indeed it may be that a man may think well, and yet not be able to express his thoughts elegantly; but for any one to publish thoughts which he can neither methodize, nor illustrate nor entertain his reader, is an unpardonable abuse of letters and retirement: they, therefore, read their books to one another, which were never taken