**Cato under the Principate: Stoic Saint or Radical Republican?**

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1. Seneca *Epistulae Morales* 14.3: nihilominus, quantum possumus, evitemus incommoda quoque, non tantum pericula, et in tutum nos reducamus excogitantes subinde, quibus possint timenda depelli.

Let us avoid, however, as much as we can, troubles as well as danger, and draw ourselves back to safety, pondering frequently in what ways objects of fear may be driven off.

2: Sen. *Ep. Mor*. 14.12–14: [12] “Quid ergo?” inquis, “Videtur tibi M. Cato modeste philosophari, qui bellum civile sententia reprimit ? Qui furentium principum armis medius intervenit ? Qui aliis Pompeium offendentibus aliis Caesarem simul lacessit duos?” [13] Potest aliquis disputare an illo tempore capessenda fuerit sapienti res publica. “Quid tibi vis, Marce Cato? Iam non agitur de libertate; olim pessumdata est. Quaeritur, utrum Caesar an Pompeius possideat rem publicam; quid tibi cum ista contentione? Nullae partes tuae sunt; dominus eligitur. Quid tua, uter vincat? Potest melior vincere, non potest non peior esse, qui vicerit.” **Ultimas partes attigi Catonis.** **Sed ne priores quidem anni fuerunt qui sapientem in illam rapinam rei publicae admitterent; quid aliud quam vociferatus est Cato et misit irritas voces, cum modo per populi levatus manus et obrutus sputis exportandus extra forum traheretur, modo e senatu in carcerem duceretur?** [14] Sed postea videbimus, an sapienti opera rei publicae danda sit; interim ad hos te Stoicos voco, qui a re publica exclusi secesserunt ad colendam vitam et humano generi iura condenda sine ulla potentioris offensa. Non conturbabit sapiens publicos mores nec populum in se vitae novitate convertet.

[12] “Very well, then,” you retort, “do you regard the philosophy of Marcus Cato as moderate? Cato’s voice strove to check a civil war. Cato parted the swords of maddened chieftains. When some fell foul of Pompey and others fell foul of Caesar, Cato defied both parties at once!” [13] Nevertheless, one may well question whether, in those days, a wise man ought to have taken any part in public affairs, and ask: “What do you mean, Marcus Cato? It is not now a question of freedom; long since has freedom gone to rack and ruin. The question is, whether it is Caesar or Pompey who controls the State. Why, Cato, should you take sides in that dispute? It is no business of yours; a tyrant is being selected. What does it concern who conquers? The better man may win; but the winner is bound to be the worse man.” **I have referred to Cato’s final role. But even in previous years the wise man was not permitted to intervene in such plundering of the state; for what could Cato do but raise his voice and utter unavailing words? At one time he was “hustled” by the mob and spat upon and forcibly removed from the forum and marked for exile; at another, he was taken straight to prison from the senate–chamber.** [14] However, we shall consider later whether the wise man ought to give his attention to politics; meanwhile, I beg you to consider those Stoics who, shut out from public life, have withdrawn into privacy for the purpose of improving men’s existence and framing laws for the human race without incurring the displeasure of those in power. (Trans. Gummere, 1917)

3.Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 71.11–12: “Victus est tamen.” Et hoc numera inter repulsas Catonis: tam magno animo feret aliquid sibi ad victoriam quam ad praeturam obstitisse. Quo die repulsus est lusit, qua nocte periturus fuit legit; eodem loco habuit praetura et vita excidere; omnia quae acciderent ferenda esse persuaserat sibi. Quidni ille mutationem rei publicae forti et aequo pateretur animo? quid enim mutationis periculo exceptum?

[11] “He was conquered in spite of all!” Well, you may include this among Cato’s “failures”; Cato will bear with an equally stout heart anything that thwarts him of his victory, as he bore that which thwarted him of his praetorship. the day whereon he failed of election, he spent in play; the night wherein he intended to die, he spent in reading. He regarded in the same light both the loss of his praetorship and the loss of his life; he had convinced himself that he ought to endure anything which might happen. [12] Why should he not suffer, bravely and calmly, a change in the government? For what is free from the risk of change? (Trans. Gummere, 1917)

4. Lucan *Bellum Civile* 1.128: *victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*

The victorious side pleased the gods, but the defeated side pleased Cato.

5. Luc. *BC* 319–323:

 . . . quin publica signa ducemque

 Pompeium sequimur? nec, si Fortuna favebit,

 hunc quoque totius sibi ius promittere mundi

 non bene compertum est: ideo **me milite vincat**

 ne sibi se vicisse putet.’ . . .

 . . . Should we not follow the public standards

 and Pompey as our commander? If fortune favors

 him, he too will expect the rule of the entire world for himself,

 it is well known. Thus, **with me as a soldier may he conquer**,

 so that he may not think that he conquers for himself.

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