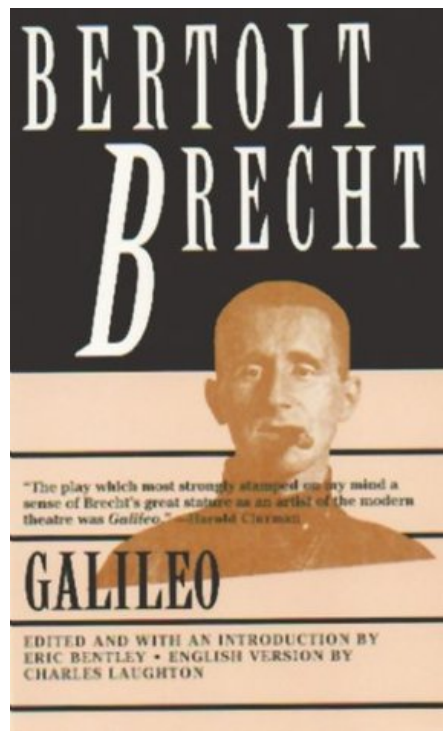




Galileo

Bertolt Brecht , Eric Bentley , Charles Laughton (Translator)

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Galileo

Bertolt Brecht , Eric Bentley , Charles Laughton (Translator)

Galileo Bertolt Brecht , Eric Bentley , Charles Laughton (Translator)

Considered by many to be one of Brecht's masterpieces, *Galileo* explores the question of a scientist's social and ethical responsibility, as the brilliant Galileo must choose between his life and his life's work when confronted with the demands of the Inquisition. Through the dramatic characterization of the famous physicist, Brecht examines the issues of scientific morality and the difficult relationship between the intellectual and authority. This version of the play is the famous one that was brought to completion by Brecht himself, working with Charles Laughton, who played Galileo in the first two American productions (Hollywood and New York, 1947). Since then the play has become a classic in the world repertoire. "The play which most strongly stamped on my mind a sense of Brecht's great stature as an artist of the modern theatre was Galileo." - Harold Clurman; "Thoughtful and profoundly sensitive." - Newsweek.

Galileo Details

Date : Published January 11th 1994 by Grove Press (first published 1943)

ISBN : 9780802130594

Author : Bertolt Brecht , Eric Bentley , Charles Laughton (Translator)

Format : Paperback 155 pages

Genre : Drama, Plays, Science, Biography, European Literature, German Literature

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From Reader Review Galileo for online ebook

Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

Unglücklich das Land, das Helden nötig hat: "Das Leben des Galilei" by Bertold Brecht

"Galilei: Ja, wo ist sie jetzt? Wie kann der Jupiter angeheftet sein, wenn andere Sterne um ihn kreisen? Da ist keine Stütze im Himmel, da ist kein Halt im Weltall! Da ist eine andere Sonne!

Sagredo: Beruhige dich. Du denkst zu schnell.

Galilei: Was, schnell! Mensch, reg dich auf! Was du siehst, hat noch keiner gesehen. Sie hatten recht!

Sagredo: Wer? Die Kopernikaner?

Galilei: Und der andere! Die ganze Welt war gegen sie, und sie hatten recht. Das ist was für Andrea! Er läuft außer sich zur Tür und ruft hinaus: Frau Sarti! Frau Sarti!

Sagredo: Galilei, du sollst dich beruhigen!

Galilei: Sagredo, du sollst dich aufregen! Frau Sarti!

Sagredo dreht das Fernrohr weg: Willst du aufhören, wie ein Narr herumzubrüllen?

Galilei: Willst du aufhören, wie ein Stockfisch dazustehen, wenn die Wahrheit entdeckt ist?

Sagredo: Ich stehe nicht wie ein Stockfisch, sondern ich zittere, es könnte die Wahrheit sein."

In "Das Leben des Galilei" by Bertold Brecht

I watched this play in 2006 in Lisbon at Teatro Aberto starring Rui Mendes as Galileo. There was a repartee between Galileo and Arturo Ui that I'll never forget.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Leben des Galilei = Life of Galileo = Galileo, Bertolt Brecht

Life of Galileo (German: Leben des Galilei), also known as Galileo, is a play by the twentieth-century German dramatist Bertolt Brecht with incidental music by Hanns Eisler. The play was written in 1938 and received its first theatrical production (in German) at the Zurich Schauspielhaus, opening on 9 September 1943.

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Gauss74 says

Del Seicento e del Novecento.

Quando incontro un libro come questo sono sempre in difficoltà a commentarlo, perchè mi colpisce talmente al cuore che le cose da dire sembrano a volte troppe, a volte troppo poche.

E allora parto dai fatti. La storia è quella che tutti sappiamo, delle difficoltà, delle violenze psicologiche (per fortuna solo quelle: a Giordano Bruno è andata peggio) e della umiliazione dell'abiura che Galileo ha dovuto affrontare in nome della nuova scienza, che proprio nell'età moderna si preparava a cambiare il mondo ma soprattutto gli uomini.

Quello che c'è di veramente grande in questo libro è che questa volta ad affrontare il secolare tema del rapporto tra scienza e religione è un grande del teatro contemporaneo come Bertolt Brecht. Accostamento strano, teatro e scienza? Forse no. Se pensiamo che l'opera fu concepita e scritta da un dichiarato comunista agli albori dell'era atomica, nel periodo tra la tragedia di Hiroshima e Nagasaki ed il rifiuto degli USA ad interrompere gli esperimenti sulla bomba H (quando lo fate voi va bene, vero?), si capisce come questo ritorno a Galileo almeno in senso artistico facesse parte di un necessario ripensamento del ruolo della scienza nella società.

E peraltro Bertolt Brecht sapeva perfettamente quel che diceva. Nel secolo diciottesimo parlare di religione significava parlare di potere, significava minare alle fondamenta quell'edificio culturale che San Tommaso aveva prodigiosamente costruito e su cui poggiava tutta la società del tempo: nasce molto più da questo la feroce violenza conservatrice della chiesa che non da un ingenuo attaccamento alle tesi geocentriche ipse dixit. Oltre che di scienza e religione, occorre parlare anche di scienza e potere. Il significato profondo della

missione del Galileo brechtiano è proprio quello di mettere le scoperte scientifiche al servizio della rivoluzione, di utilizzare la scienza come strumento per il rovesciamento di un sistema oppressivo e superato per sostituirlo con un sistema nuovo, a misura d'uomo e caratterizzato da maggiore giustizia e libertà.

L'opera è meravigliosa, in grande di dipingere con grande accuratezza il mondo del Seicento, con le sue paure (la peste, le guerre di religione) e la sua umanità. Nonostante il tutto sia caratterizzato da un feroce idealismo (e come avrebbe potuto essere altrimenti, in un libro scritto da un comunista negli anni cinquanta?), sia la figura di Galileo che quella dei suoi oppositori ecclesiastici sono rese con profonda umanità e senza nessun tipo di manicheismo. Il Galileo Brechtiano non ha niente dell'eroe romantico anzi è un uomo come gli altri: praticone fino alla grettezza, desideroso di godersi la vita ed i suoi piaceri, egoista nel chiudersi nella sua torre d'avorio, persino pavido di fronte alla chiesa cattolica che mostra i muscoli. Ma è proprio questa sua capacità di portare avanti la sua missione con le sue debolezze che rende questo scienziato veramente grande.

Per contro, gli ecclesiastici che via via incontra nella sua personale via crucis non sono certo quell'archetipo di violenza ed ottuso conservatorismo che ci si potrebbe aspettare, anzi spesso si tratta di scienziati ecclesiastici che sono perfettamente in grado di capire e di stimare il valore della nuova scienza. Semplicemente le priorità sono altre, come esposto da due bellissime, quasi michelangiolesche figure brechtiane. Da un lato il cardinale Cristoforo Clavio (il referente scientifico della chiesa) accetta i dubbi e le difficoltà che Galileo pone al sistema tolemaico ma li considera del tutto marginali rispetto all'edificio teologico della chiesa ("ora tocca ai teologi rimettere in ordine il cosmo") e non omette certo di far presente a Galileo le debolezze strutturali del suo metodo (obiezioni che la storia confermerà come perfettamente vere); dall'altra il Cardinale Vecchissimo (indimenticabile il suo monologo!) mette al primo posto lo spirito dell'uomo rispetto alla sua ragione, e non può in nessun modo accettare che in nome di una migliore conoscenza l'umanità cada preda di un universo vuoto e senza significato come quello presupposto dal sistema eliocentrico: è lo stesso attacco non privo di fondamenti che la chiesa del Novecento lancerà al nichilismo di Marx e di Nietzsche, colpevoli di aver liberato l'umanità da ogni sorta di obbedienza per condannarla a dilaniarsi nel tentativo di riempire un mondo senza significato.

Se "Vita di Galileo" fosse stato un saggio, sarebbe stato criticabile. Perché questo dualismo, questo marxismo latente di Galileo nel mettere la scienza al servizio della rivoluzione, nell'usare la scienza come arma per uccidere Dio e vuotare il cielo, davvero non poteva appartenere ad un uomo del Seicento. Non mi risulta che Galileo abbia mai dubitato dell'esistenza di Dio, ammesso e non concesso che un'idea del genere fosse stata concepibile per un pensatore del diciassettesimo secolo. In quegli stessi anni Cartesio si dichiarava convinto di aver dimostrato l'esistenza di Dio e l'immortalità dell'anima utilizzando i metodi della geometria analitica; Blaise Pascal stava fondando la meccanica dei fluidi ed il calcolo delle probabilità mentre pregava da monaco giansenista, persino Baruch Spinoza non poteva fare a meno di additare l'ateismo come una suprema follia: l'innovazione scientifica non consentiva automaticamente a coloro che la portavano avanti di concepire il pensiero di un attacco al cielo, tantomeno il pensiero di una rivoluzione socialista.

Ma questo Galileo "marxista" è comunque prezioso per noi che leggiamo "Vita di Galileo" oggi. E' della scienza di oggi che stiamo parlando in realtà, di una scienza che se non supportata da un'idea chiara della sua natura e del suo scopo è in grado, dal 1945 in poi, di distruggere l'umanità stessa. E se è pur vero che col senno di poi le idee di Brecht ci appaiono discutibili, sia l'idea di scienza al servizio della rivoluzione (la bomba atomica a Stalin, semplificando) sia il feroce nichilismo comunista di cui paghiamo tuttora le conseguenze, resta vero che utilizzare l'espressione artistica a livelli così alti per invitare tutti noi a portare avanti una riflessione sul rapporto tra scienza ed umanità è comunque decisamente importante.

Kyriakos Sorokkou says

Επιτ?λους, π?νω απ? μια βδομ?δα μετ? αποφ?σισα να γρ?ψω κριτικ?.

Αυτ?ς ?ταν ο 2ος Μπρεχτ που δι?βασα.

Ο πρ?τος ?ταν η Μ?να Κουρ?γιο, το 2011.

Δεν μ' ?ρεσε καθ?λου.

Ο Γαλιλα?ος π?λι, μ' ?ρεσε.

Δεν μπορ? να πω ?τι τρελ?θηκα, αλλ? μ' ?ρεσε.

Ειδικ? ο τρ?πος που στ?λνει το μ?νυμα στους επιστ?μονες για σ?νεση στο π?ς χειρ?ζονται τις γν?σεις τους, πχ. ατομικ? φυσικ?.

Και στην εκκλησ?α, δε?χνοντας π?σο οπισθοδρομικ? ε?ναι, ?ταν, και θα ε?ναι στους αι?νες των αι?νων αμ?ν.

(βλακε?α κριτικ?)

Τ?ρα ?κανα συνειρμ? με Κρ?τη: κριτικ? --> κρητικο? --> Κρ?τη.

Π?γα τον Οκτ?βρη. ?φαγα ωρα?ο σουβλ?κι. ?χι, δυστυχ?ς δεν ?φαγα ντ?κο.

Π?σω στον Γαλιλα?ο.

Ε?ναι επικ? θ?ατρο. Η μια σκην? π?σω απ' την ?λλη, χωρ?ς σταματημ?, 12+ σκην?ς.

Δεν ?χει πρ?ξεις, και δεν διαδραματ?ζεται σ' ?να μ?να αλλ? σε χρ?νια πολλ? (ευχαριστ?)

Υπ?ρχει κι αυτ? που λ?με αποστασιοπο?ηση των χαραχτ?ρων απ' τα συμβ?ντα, και η λιτ?τητα στα σκηνικ?.

Στον Γαλιλα?ο μ' ?ρεσε στην Μ?να Κουρ?γιο ?χι.

(αυτ? μας το 'πες)

?χι, πριν μιλο?σα γενικ?, τ?λος π?ντων το επικ? θ?ατρο δεν ε?ναι και τ' αγαπημ?νο μου.

Μ' αρ?σει ο ρεαλισμ?ς (?ταν ?λοι τους παιδι? μου) και το θ?ατρο του παραλ?γου (Περιμ?νοντας τον Γκοντ?).

(κ?τι ?λλο;)

?χι αυτ? μ?νο.

Φα?νεται ?τι βαρι?μαι να γρ?ψω κανονικ? κριτικ?.

(ναι)

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Agir(????) says

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Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

Unglücklich das Land, das Helden nötig hat: "Leben des Galilei" by Bertold Brecht

"Galilei: Ja, wo ist sie jetzt? Wie kann der Jupiter angeheftet sein, wenn andere Sterne um ihn kreisen? Da ist keine Stütze im Himmel, da ist kein Halt im Weltall! Da ist eine andere Sonne!

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I watched this play in 2006 in Lisbon at Teatro Aberto starring Rui Mendes as Galileo. There was a repartee between Galileo and Arturo Ui that I'll never forget.

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[illegible]

Anna says

ῥγο: Περιγρ?φεται η μ?χη του Γαλιλα?ου με την Καθολικ? Εκκλησ?α ?ταν, μετ? την εφε?ρεση του τηλεσκοπ?ου, το ?στρεψε στον ουραν? και παρατ?ρησε ?τι η Γη γυρ?ζει γ?ρω απ? τον ?λιο, ?ρα δεν

ε?ναι το κ?ντρο του Σ?μπαντος, παρ? ?νας τυχα?ος πλαν?της που π?νω του ζο?με εμε?ς, ?ρα οι ?νθρωποι δεν ε?ναι τα αγαπημ?να τ?κνα του Θεο?, ?ρα η Αγ?α Γραφ? ?χει προβλ?ματα. Το σημαντικ?τερο πρ?βλημα απ? ?λα αυτ? ε?ναι ?τι αφο? βρ?καμε ?δη ?να τρωτ? σημε?ο που η Αγ?α Γραφ? π?σχει, π?ς ε?μαστε σ?γουροι ?τι δεν π?σχει και σε ?λλα σημε?α; Επομ?νως, π?ς θα πείστε? ο αμ?ρφωτος κ?σμος που "προσδοκ? αν?σταση νεκρ?ν" και μια καλ?τερη μετ? θ?νατον ζω? ?τι οι παπ?δες ?χουν τη σωστ? απ?ντηση στα προβλ?ματα του καθημερινο? του μ?χθου, ?ταν ?δη βγ?καν λ?θος μια φορ?; Δεν τον?ζεται το επιστημονικ? περιεχ?μενο, παρ? η κοινωνικ? επ?δραση που αυτ? (εν δυν?μει) προκ?λεσε. Εξυψ?νεται το πε?σμα του επιστ?μονα που ο?τε μια επιδημ?α πανο?κλας δεν ε?ναι αρκετ? να τον απομακρ?νει απ? το γράφε?ο του!

Οι γ?μοι Ουρανο? και Γης ?χουν "παπ;" το Γαλιλα?ο και παιδ? το Νε?τωνα και ξεκ?νησαν με τους "Διαλ?γους για δυο ν?ες επιστ?μες"

Ιστορικ? αλ?θεια: Εντ?ξει, δεν ?ταν τ?σο ?ρώας ο Γαλιλα?ος ?σο παρουσι?ζεται και κ?ποια κομμ?τια της ζω?ς του (πρ?σωπα και καταστ?σεις) δεν φα?νεται να ?ταν ?τσι ακριβ?ς. Μικρ? σημασ?α β?βαια ?χει στην τελικ?, εγ? θα τον ?λεγα "μεγ?λη μο?ρη", καθ?ς κατ?φερε μ?σα σχεδ?ν στην αυλ? της Εκκλ?σας να τα λ?ει ?λα αυτ? και σ?γουρα αποτ?λεσε μεγ?λη ?μπνευση για κατοπινο?ς επιστ?μονες (--> Νε?τωνα, ?λλη μο?ρη κι αυτ?ς!!!). Με το Γαλιλα?ο και τη μη καταδ?κη του σε θ?νατο ουσιαστικ? τελει?νει ο Μεσα?ωνας και αρχ?ζει η Αναγ?ννηση.

Δεν περιλαμβάνονται: Τα αντικε?μενα που ?ριχνε απ? τον Π?ργο της Π?ζας (θα μπορο?σε γιατ? απ? εκε? καταγ?ταν, αλλ? δεν ?ταν τουριστικ? ατραξι?ν να βγα?νει κ?θε μ?ρα να πετ?ει πρ?γματα απ? τον Π?ργο) και η μυθικ? φρ?ση "Κι ?μω? κινε?ται", που αν τυχ?ν και ?ντως την ε?χε πει δεν θα ε?χε γλιτ?σει την πυρρ?. Τ?σο επιπ?λαιος δεν ?ταν!!!

?κδοση: Το βιβλ?ο αυτ? αποτελε? το πρ?γραμμα της παρ?στασης που αν?βασε με το ΔΗΠΕΘΕ Π?τρας ο Κ?στας Καζ?κος. Η μετ?φραση μου ?ρεσε, τα τραγο?δια της παρ?στασης μου φ?νηκαν ?τι ε?χαν στ?χους "to the point", εν? υπ?ρχει πρ?λογος του Καζ?κου και στο τ?λος βιογραφικ? του Μπρεχτ (και φυσικ? τα ον?ματα των συντελεστ?ν της παρ?στασης). Η ?κδοση ε?ναι πολ? προσεγμ?νη και περιποιημ?νη, εν? η τιμ? ?ταν μ?λις 5 €!

Nikos Tsentemaidis says

Εξαιρετικ?ς, ?πως σε ?λα του τα ?ργα ο Brecht.

Οι σχετικ? καινο?ριες εκδ?σεις "Κ?πα Εκδοτικ?", με θεματολογ?α το θ?ατρο, εκδ?δουν τα πιο ποιοτικ? βιβλ?α αυτ? τη στιγμ? στην Ελλ?δα. Ποιοτικ?, ?σον αφορ?, την εκτ?πωση και το αισθητικ? αποτ?λεσμα. Πραγματικ? κ?σμημα για την βιβλιοθ?κη.

Mira Jundi says

As I finished reading this masterpiece of Brecht, I sat thinking about how to go through everything in this play in one review, it's impossible!

This play is absolutely one of the best literary works I've read and will ever read. I couldn't find anything more appropriate to say about it than Brecht's own words from the play itself.

"For where belief has prevailed for a thousand years, doubt now prevails."

"He who does not know the truth is merely an idiot. But he who knows it and calls it a lie, is a criminal."

"The aim of science is not to open a door to infinite wisdom, but to set a limit to infinite error."

"Unhappy the land that is in need of heroes."

Hossein says

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Jonfaith says

Young man, I do not eat my cheese absentmindedly.

Despite my perforated memory, I can still cling to triumph, most of which are the achievements of others but alas I can still appreciate. I thought about Brecht at the end of his life this morning while enjoying this masterful narrative. Did he regard himself as recanted? Did his petty tyranny of the women in his life strike him as abominable? Galileo as depicted by Brecht is too pragmatic to be disarmed by such pondering. He is at ease groveling for appointments as he understands the alternative. Aside from the necessity of obsequiousness he recognizes the need of discretion and the effects of The Age of Reason not only on the established order but on human existential orientation. He anticipates Weber's disenchantment but finds solace in wine, bread and conversation.

What of my own missteps and absences? As a reader I blunder about with wistful grasps at concepts and reverie. Muddled by self deprecation, labor and lager—somehow I persevere. I needed this play today.

howl of minerva says

4. Mai 1939

Sehr geehrter Herr Brecht:

Sie haben mir mit Ihrem »Galilei« eine große Freude gemacht. Nicht nur scheinen Sie mir die Persönlichkeit Galileis tief erfasst zu haben, sondern auch die Bedeutung seiner Erscheinung in der Entwicklung der Geistesgeschichte und damit in der Geschichte überhaupt. Auch gibt Ihre Darstellung einen tiefen Einblick in die Problemstellung, wie sie Galilei vorlagen und in die Einstellung der vorgalileischen Wissenschaft zur Erfahrung. Sie haben es verstanden, einen dramatischen Rahmen zu schaffen, der ungemein fesselnd ist und uns auch durch die starken Beziehungen zu den politischen Problemen der Gegenwart besonders interessieren muss. Hoffentlich werden es auch die verbildeten Zeitgenossen zu schätzen wissen, was Sie da Vortreffliches hingestellt haben.

Freundlich grüßt Sie, Ihr

Albert Einstein

Roughly:

Dear Mr. Brecht,

You have given me enormous pleasure with your "Galileo". Not only do you seem to me to have profoundly grasped the personality of Galileo, but also the significance of his appearance in the development of the history of ideas, and thus in history as such.

Your play also provides deep insight into the formulation of the problem, as it appeared to Galileo, and of the attitude of pre-Galilean science to experience. You have succeeded in creating a dramatic structure which is extraordinarily captivating and which - given the great relevance to present political issues - will be of especially great interest. Hopefully our misguided contemporaries will appreciate what you have so outstandingly presented.

Kind regards, yours,

Albert Einstein

Riku Sayuj says

The play explores the pivotal moment in human history, at least in western history, when man confronts for

the first time the proof that his conceptions of truth were entirely wrong.

Galileo comes alive as a larger than life genius from the pages, full of witticisms and blustering energy. Even his betrayal of his own science tends to be easily forgiven by the audience because he is such a genial revolutionary.

More than the drama of science standing up to the bully called religion, I liked the instances of Marxism creeping into the play. In the discussions about Latin and how writing science in English will spell doom to the nobility, we get a sense that the real danger that Galileo represented was not just contradictory new knowledge but that the knowledge was suddenly out in the public realm. Galileo had to die because he was not just an academician, he was a new kind of preacher - a preacher of logic.

These instances are woven into the grander drama with small scenes of Galileo ranting about professors having to teach all seven days and having not "time for research and about "knowledge as commodity", these are the scenes that to me made this a play of our times.

The true gist of the play comes out in the penultimate scene. I would like to put some of it here so that even if someone does not have the patience to read the play, they can still get the spirit of its core argument. This occurs immediately after Andrei discovers that Galileo has been working on a scientific treatise even during his imprisonment:

GALILEO: I had to do something with my time.

ANDREA: This will found a new science of physics.

GALILEO: Stuff it under your coat.

ANDREA: And we thought you had become a renegade! My voice was raised loudest against you!

GALILEO: And quite right, too. I taught you science and I denied the truth.

ANDREA: This changes everything, everything.

GALILEO: Yes?

ANDREA: You concealed the truth. From the enemy. Even in the field of ethics you were a thousand years ahead of us.

GALILEO: Explain that, Andrea.

ANDREA: In common with the man in the street, we said: he will die, but he will never recant. You came back: I have recanted, but I shall live. Your hands are tainted, we said. You say: better tainted than empty.

GALILEO: Better tainted than empty. Sounds realistic. Sounds like me. New science, new ethics.

ANDREA: I of all people ought to have known. I was eleven years old when you sold another man's telescope to the Venetian Senate. And I saw you make immortal use of that instrument. Your friends shook their heads when you bowed before a child in Florence, but science caught the public fancy. You always laughed at our heroes. "People that suffer bore me," you said. "Misfortune comes from insufficient foresight." And: Taking obstacles into account, the shortest line between two points may be a crooked one."

GALILEO: I recollect.

ANDREA: Then, in 1633, when it suited you to retract a popular point in your teachings, I should have known that you were only withdrawing from a hopeless political squabble in order to be able to carry on with your real business of science.

GALILEO: Which consists in ...

vague notions I have of Brecht's idea of the theatre, the Epic theatre, did not seem to be staged in this performance. There was no *Verfremdung*. On the contrary, the theatre hall had been transformed and the stage was in the middle and had a circular platform that rotated, and we the audience were sitting around it. Various lights and shadows and images were projected onto its floor-screen. A presentation entirely fitting to the cosmological concerns of the play, but which seemed to incorporate the audience by bringing it in, an effect reinforced by having the characters also walk outside the stage proper.

Another modification was that Bertolt Brecht himself appeared on the scene. I mean an actor playing Brecht, of course. He arrives at the beginning to supervise a Spanish troupe that is going to perform his play. The simultaneous dialogue in German and Spanish created a somewhat comical scene, which again had the opposite effect from *Verfremdung*. Or may be that is what Brecht wanted, since his objective was that the audience would never forget that they were assisting to a representation and not witnessing reality itself.

The character playing Brecht then decided to play Galileo himself.

The production maintained the musical ingredient, originally by **Hanns Eisler**, but I cannot vouch whether that was the version I heard. We had a singer with a wide voice range of voices, since he could move from a high baritone to a counter-tenor pitch. The incidental music was very effective and helped to set the different moods as the play unfolded.

As the stage, apart from the images screened on the floor was rather sparse, another remarkable invention to suggest an Italian setting was when various actors suddenly froze and posed as various well known figures around the circled stage. Most of them were by Michael Angelo, his *David*, *Moses*, *Pietà*, but there was also the *Roman Boy with the Thorn*.

After attending the performance, I read the play and it is then that I recognized more of the Epic theatre aims of Brecht. Instead of acts, he has fifteen frames and there are few stage indications. The play lets itself be comfortably read, like an epic.

And of course, one could make a parallel between the story of Galileo during the last years of his life, when he was confronted by the (Catholic) authorities, to the one that Brecht had to endure during his exiled years in the US, when he was associated with Communism. Brecht left the country; Galileo suffered house arrest.

Performance at the Valle-Inclán theatre, in Madrid.

Manny says

In the comment thread to the review of Dennett's *Breaking the Spell* which I posted a couple of days ago,

much of the discussion has turned on the concept of martyrdom. Dennett argues that religion is a self-reproducing pattern of behavior (a "meme"), and that a martyr is someone who has been taken over by a meme to the point where he is willing to sacrifice his life for his beliefs. Maybe irrational for the martyr, but perfectly rational from the meme's point of view: the history of religion shows that martyrdom is an effective way for religions to spread.

Dennett draws a sharp distinction between science, which he says is rational and fact-based, and religion, which isn't. It seemed to me at the time that this wasn't so clear; even if a given scientific theory may be rational and fact-based, the scientific world-view itself is as arbitrary as a religious one. I happen to approve of rational, fact-based belief systems, but any attempt I make to justify them will presuppose rationality and facts, so my arguments don't add anything. It's as good, or bad, as a religious person justifying their own world-view by telling me it's the Word of God. But there are some objective differences between science and religion, just viewed as behavioral patterns, and one of these is martyrdom. There are very few people in history whom one could reasonably call martyrs to rationality. Socrates looks like a clear example; but who else is there? Of course, we immediately thought of Galileo. The fact of the matter, though, is that Galileo wasn't martyred. He was threatened by the Inquisition, and he backed down.

Why? This is perhaps the central issue in Brecht's play. Brecht does not presents Galileo as a particularly admirable human being. He fraudulently passes off the telescope as his own invention in order to improve his financial position, he ruins his daughter's life by his thoughtless behavior towards her fiancé, and, finally, he exhibits simple cowardice when confronted by the enraged Pope Urban VIII. Even as a scientist, he is by no means above reproach: in the *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, his most important work, the central plank of his argument to demonstrate the movement of the Earth rests on an explanation of the tides which is simply wrong. Feyerabend, in *Against Method*, takes pleasure in making him look like a bungler and near-charlatan, and annoyed many scientists by witnessing against him when the Vatican reopened the case in the late 20th century.

But despite all this, Galileo has become one of the most respected people in the history of science, and his influence on its subsequent development is incalculable. In Brecht's version of the story, Galileo doesn't know why he behaves the way he does. His student, learning of the important work on dynamics that he has completed during the last years of his life, wants him to say that he carried out a clever strategic retreat, but Galileo is having none of it. There was no plan; he was just afraid of being tortured. He sounds bitter and sincere.

I would be interested to see Dennett's take: from his perspective, the moral of the story is perhaps that memes for rational thought do not spread in the same way as memes for religious conviction. I'm still not sure why that would be, but thinking about this play may help me understand it better. Thank you, Herr Brecht.

Siti says

Dramma in quindici scene, compendia la vita di Galilei nel suo essere scienziato consegnandolo perfettamente aderente alla realtà storica, in modo quasi oggettivo, creando però un personaggio ben caratterizzato e al tempo stesso difficile da inquadrare nelle categorie del bene e del male.

La lettura del testo, scorrevole e apparentemente semplice, ha il merito di rievocare la nota vicenda umana dello scienziato senza sovraccaricarlo di inutili ideologismi, senza fare di lui un eroe, aprendo al contempo infiniti dilemmi. L'uomo Galilei è semplicemente un uomo che entra in scena lavandosi a torso nudo, che fa

colazione, che ride e scherza con il figlioletto della sua domestica, che da anni insegna il sistema tolemaico ma è sempre in bolletta. È un uomo che burla il potere con un cannocchiale o che lo raggira assecondandone la boria mentre è perfettamente consapevole della frattura che le sue scoperte andranno a generare. Eppure la dicotomia fede e dubbio che alimenta la scienza pare non toccarlo, laddove la scienza smentisce i dogmi, lui non gioisce ma appura la supremazia della ragione senza per questo farsi trionfo di alcuna vittoria, anche quando il Collegio romano, istituto pontificio di ricerche scientifiche, conferma le sue scoperte. L'uomo, se non usa la ragione, in fin dei conti, è incapace di leggere il cielo quanto la Bibbia; e allora perché quello stesso Galileo che dopo essere stato intimato a non minare la fiducia della Chiesa in seguito all'inserimento della teoria copernicana nell'Indice dei libri proibiti, capace di tali parole: "No, no, no. La verità riesce ad imporsi solo nella misura in cui noi la imponiamo; la vittoria della ragione non può essere che la vittoria di coloro che ragionano", abiura? E così troviamo infine il personaggio chiedersi quale sarà il giudizio dei posteri mentre sentenzia sull'evidenza che la pratica della scienza non possa andare disgiunta dal coraggio e che l'uomo di scienza dev'essere capace di reagire all'intimidazione del potente. È fuor di dubbio anche per il vecchietto ormai costretto al domicilio coatto, che però, abilmente, continua a tramare facendo passare la verità oltreconfine, sotto un mantello...

Il testo è impreziosito dalle note Sulla "Vita di Galileo" che permettono di inquadrare l'opera rispetto alle sue tre stesure e alla biografia del drammaturgo e poeta tedesco, rendendo questo gioiello letterario un testo di riflessione etica sul ruolo della scienza nella società, donandoci allo stesso tempo un irrisolto personaggio di straordinaria efficacia, capace di trascendere il tempo.

Cristina - Athenae Noctua says

Un testo di forte valenza culturale, storica ed etica, che pone l'attenzione sui doveri degli intellettuali nella lotta per l'affermazione della verità e, con essa, della libertà. Il sapere è per Galileo/Brecht ciò che dovrebbe essere per tutti noi: non un cumulo preconstituito di nozioni da usare per controllare il prossimo o per glorificare e autocelebrare se stessi in quanto possessori della verità, ma come uno strumento di progresso che aiuti gli uomini a comprendere gli uomini e a sostenerne i diritti.

<http://athenaenoctua2013.blogspot.it/...>

Lisa says

"Unhappy the land where heroes are needed."

History and literature studies have a natural connecting point in the human need for heroic action and (self-)sacrifice. Reading novelists, historians and poets who experienced the first and second world war first-hand, I slowly came to the conclusion that heroism itself is a flaw in human culture which rarely brings any benefits, but often creates suffering on a big scale, as heroes can be made instruments for dogma and set up as "martyrs" for a cause. And "causes", unfortunately, more often than not include violence and death.

How to live for freedom, truth and plurality of opinions if the majority of your community doesn't embrace your liberal curiosity, but believes in one single truth which needs to be protected at any cost?

That is the question Galileo has to ask himself, and the question Brecht raised by choosing the topic during the darkest years of German oppression.

Galileo is not a hero.

He is not a religious martyr.

He is not a perfect human being.

He is independent, intelligent, inquisitive and inwardly free. He is interested in truth, but not in sacrifice to protect his truth from the institutionalised stupidity of his era, symbolised by the Inquisition and its pathetic struggle to keep the Bible an artificial authority in a world that increasingly builds on scientific facts and knowledge.

Why does he recant? The question is not entirely answered, and there might not even be a straight forward answer to it. Brecht's Galileo claims that he is afraid of physical pain. And there is nothing shameful in that. Why suffer because of a doctrine which you know to be wrong? Whether Galileo is tortured or not, the world keeps moving. Eppure si muove, as he probably didn't really say.

Being a scientist does not mean being a fanatic. You do not have to die to prove you are right. The experiments you conduct can be carried out again, with the same results - if your theory is correct. That is the main difference between ideology and science: the latter does not need heroes, because it can prove its point with reasonable, non-violent arguments and facts.

Why is Galileo so unhappy then?

Apart from being a scientist, he is also a human being living in an oppressive society, and with knowledge, you also acquire responsibility. As a teacher, you turn into a role model - not only for your subject, but for a recommendable behaviour within your community. And this is where he feels he has failed in the end. He should have made a point, stood up for his values and his discoveries, to set the stage for a future without oppressive ignorance in power. He didn't do that, and therefore he is unhappy.

I still believe martyrdom is wrong.

You won't win against dogma by using their means and their rhetoric, thus turning into the evil you want to fight. The only way to change the world is by educating the next generation NOT to believe in the ol' lie "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori", NOT to believe in having to "win" arguments against others, NOT to believe that there is only one solution to the great questions of humanity, NOT to believe that some people have the right to impose their worldview on others, NOT to believe that some people have more rights than others, NOT to believe that some people are entitled to privileges based on faith, looks, gender or other superficial distinctions.

Education, in short.

Galileo taught that torture is wrong by choosing not to suffer it. What he gained was more time to think and study and live. Inner emigration and civil disobedience are better means to fight oppression than violence, which always has a terror aspect.

I could go on and on about this play, which left me shaken and confused all three times I read it (in high school, with my students, and on my own). Like Brecht's Galileo, I seem to change my mind on the "right" behaviour all the time, favouring different solutions depending on the changing political climate.

Maybe we sometimes have to be heroes. But it should not be a career.
