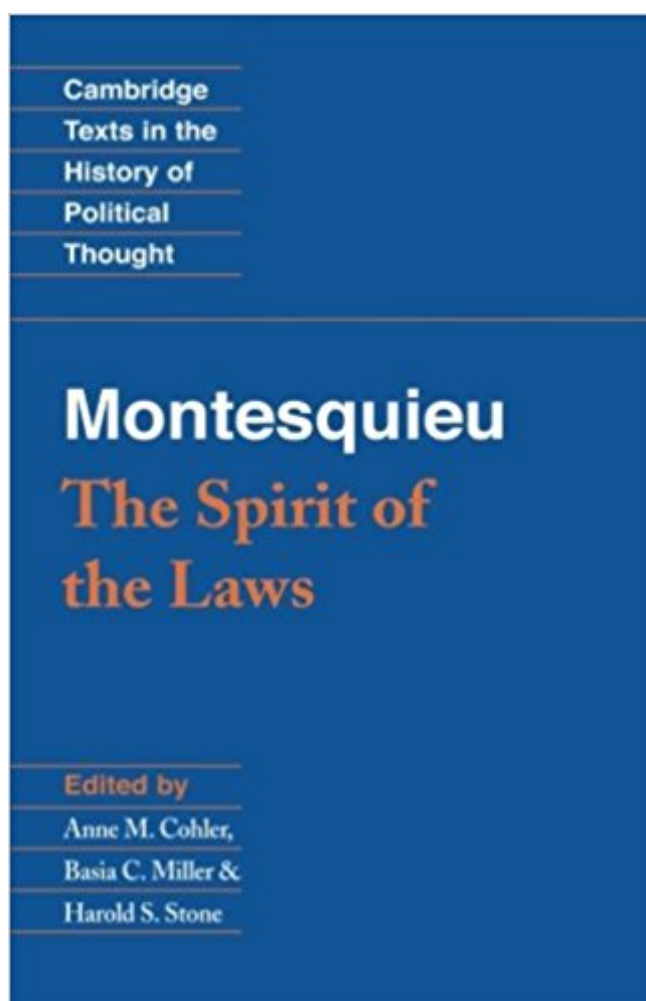


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Montesquieu: The Spirit Of The Laws (Cambridge Texts In The History Of Political Thought)



Synopsis

The Spirit of the Laws is without question one of the central texts in the history of eighteenth-century thought, yet there has been no complete scholarly English language edition since 1750. This lucid translation renders Montesquieu's problematic text newly accessible to a fresh generation of students, helping them to understand why Montesquieu was such an important figure in the early enlightenment and why The Spirit of the Laws was such an influence on those who framed the American Constitution. Fully annotated, this edition focuses on Montesquieu's use of sources and his text as a whole, rather than on those opening passages toward which critical energies have traditionally been devoted.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are mainly two reasons why Montesquieu's book is important. One is for his ideas, which still have relevance for current political issues, such as separation of church and state. The second is that it represents an important historical milestone in political thought. The real bonus is that, in the translation, his work reads in a way that is both intellectually engaging, by which I mean he gets you thinking about the issues, and also engaging (if entertaining is not quite the right word) as a series of philosophical perspectives delivered in a direct way generally free of jargon. The most interesting part of his book for me was at the outset, in his comparison of despotism, republics and democracy. The really important aspect of his book is that so many of the threshold political issues

that he discusses are still live issues. How much should the state intervene? What constitutes good laws? What parts of life in a political society are the business of the state?

an understanding of Montesquieu is critical for today's emerging democracies, in that he was one of the first to recognize the importance of securing the liberty of the governed with the aid of reason, such as by constitutional design and by the rule of law. The problem is that there is a caveat to his theory: democracy may not be the best form of government for every country.

This was a hard book for me to finish, but it gave me a much greater appreciation for the ideas concerning government—what would be good for freedom and what would decrease freedom—that must have been swirling around in the heads of the U.S. founding fathers as they contemplated what should be in the Constitution. When I say hard I'm not implying that it wasn't worth it. There were times when I just had to push myself to keep going, but then I would come across comments giving a deeper perspective of human nature and efforts to compensate for it.

Our founding fathers studied Montesquieu's writings of pure democracy and rejected that form of government for our constitution. This book should be read by every student in high school, so they might have a comparison to U.S. Constitution vs other forms of ancient governments. Our founders were nothing less than brilliant to invent a democratic republic; whereby allowing the citizens to rule, but not as a mob. Ron Steele Moab Utah

An excellent book though there may be parts the reader may not understand if they don't have a little knowledge of world history. Reading it was fascinating and I found myself highlighting parts and making notes in the margins where I could see the Framers of our constitution got some of their ideas. A must for all entering politics -

Montesquieu is best known as a source for the separation of powers doctrine in the American Constitution. But there is much more in this book, including a strong argument for federalism as a system that combines security from foreign invasion with the benefits of small government. Running throughout is the concern with republican virtue as the purpose of the state and a deep discussion of the role of reason in moderate governance. He defends an Aristotelian conception of limited reason that questions yet allocates significant roles to both religion and local customs.

This is very interesting about Montesquieu. Every member of congress should read it and take it to heart. It appears that the majority of our founding fathers did read it and take it very seriously. It is something that all Americans who are interested in our government should consider reading. It is amazingly quite easy to read though, I would suggest having a good dictionary handy while reading it. Some of our members of congress I just do not believe would understand, even if someone was reading the dictionary for them. That is a sad commentary about the facts we all must face, however.

Long and somewhat tedious in this day and age. However, considering when these thoughts and insights were set down by Montesquieu, it is amazing. I skim this book, yet much of what I read is captivating. He wrote very clearly, explained his ideas thoroughly. Easy to understand why it is a classic.

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