VARRO'S _ANTIQUITATES RERUM DIUINARUM_
AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
IN THE LATE ROMAN REPUBLIC

by H. D. JOCELYN, M.A., Ph.D., F.B.A.
HULME PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

INTRODUCTION

The works of literature which have survived to our own day from the time of the Roman Republic are few. The libraries of the Empire, private and public, had many more. It was a particularly malign deity who permitted the loss of the sixteen books of M. Terentius Varro's _Antiquitates rerum diuinarum_, a systematic account of the priests who managed the religious aspects of Roman communal life, the places, the times, the forms, and the objects of cult. Some have supposed that Pope Gregory I had these books burnt in order to conceal how much of the subject matter of Augustine's _De ciuitate Dei_ was stolen from them. A good story, not inconsistent with what we know of the character of Gregory, but there is no reason for thinking it true and several

---

1 An expanded version of a lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library on Wednesday, 20 January 1982. Some of the arguments were presented at seminar meetings in the School of History, Philosophy and Politics of Macquarie University, 14 September 1979, and the School of History of the University of Leeds, 24 January 1980. I am grateful to Nicholas Horsfall for a helpful correspondence about the dating of Varro's work.


3 G. Naudé, in _Naudeana et Patimiana_ (Paris, 1701), pp. 37-8, attributes the story to Machiavelli and Cardano. The _Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio_ (Florence, 1531), 2.5, p. 69, talks of the Christians generally and of "con quanta ostinazione e' perseguirono tutte le memorie antiche, ardendo l'opere de' Poeti e deli' Istorici".

4 For Gregory's hostility to pagan culture see _Dial. 2 proleg. 1, Epist. 11.54_; for his burning of the Palatine and Capitoline libraries John of Salisbury, _Polyerat. 2.26, 8.19_. The Renaissance humanists found in Gregory a convenient Aunt Sally. Most of those who now write about him play down his anti-intellectualism; cf. C. H. Beeson, "The Collectaneum of Hadoard", _CPh 40_ (1945), 201-22 (208-10); H. de Lubac, _Exégèse médiévale_, II. 1 (Paris, 1961), pp. 53-77; P. Riché, _Education et culture dans l'Occident barbare_ (Paris, 1962), pp. 194-200;
reasons for thinking it false. Others have supposed that the monks of the period which modern historians have labelled not unjustly the "Dark Ages" could not tolerate the presence in their libraries of such a detailed account of pagan religious practice. Perhaps so, but works equally offensive to Christian piety, like Lucretius' _De rerum natura_ and Cicero's _De natura deorum_, survived, while many other Varronian works on non-religious themes also perished. Sheer lack of interest was a more potent...
factor in the disappearance of particular items of pagan literature than positive hostility. The size of the *Antiquitatem rerum divinarum* and its lack of the conventional rhetorical beauties of style also told against it. When interest in the social and political life of the Roman Republic revived in fourteenth-century Italy no copies of any part of the work could be found.

For at least four hundred years after its initial publication the *Antiquitatem rerum divinarum* continued to be read or at least consulted. Its author preserved the reputation he had won during his own lifetime of being the most learned man ever produced by Rome and the priest-statesman to whom it had been dedicated, C. Iulius Caesar, was thought of as the precursor, if not the very first, of the imperial monarchs. Caesar’s claim to descent from the Trojan hero Aeneas suffered no challenge. He was worshipped as a god in a temple which dominated the ancient forum and the Senate held its regular meetings in a building which bore his family name. Varro’s work provided information for students of Roman religious institutions, even for Greek-speaking

---

12 See Lactant. *Inst.* 1.6.7; Aug. *Ciu.* 7.35.
13 Most historians and biographers made Augustus the first actual monarch after Tarquinius Superbus (e.g. Dio 52.1, Aurelius Victor), but for Suetonius the dictator was the first of the *Caesares*. Caesar stayed an imperial title long after the disappearance of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the verb ἀποκαταφέρων, “behave like an emperor”, enjoyed some currency (M. Ant. 6.30). From 12 B.C. down to A.D. 382 the emperor was *pontifex maximus* as of right.
14 See below, nn. 44-47.
ones. Perhaps also for poets. Philosophers critical of the superstitions of the unphilosophical and sentimentalists in love with ancient pieties all found what they wanted in it. The theological interpretations of certain divine names offered in the concluding books acquired an authority which consorted uneasily with Varro’s reputation for scepticism in religious matters. Commentators upon the epic poem which formed the core of literary instruction in all schools, namely Virgil’s Aeneid, perceived features of the historical Roman cult in Virgil’s picture of heroic religious practices and used Varro’s account of the historical cult to illustrate their perceptions. Rhetoricians found nothing in the style of the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum to interest them but students of Latin morphology and lexicology quoted it with respect.

17 See Dionys. Hal. Ant. 2.21.2, 4.62.6; Plut. Mor. 267 b; Clem. Alex. Protr. 4.46.4, I. p. 35 Stählin; Johannes Lydus, Mens. 4.2, 53; Suda II p. 193. 15-17 Adler, s.v. ἐγκατασκήναι.

18 The possibility that Ovid used it in composing his elegiac Fasti has long been recognised; see L. Merkel, P. Ouidii Nasonis Pastorum libri (Berlin, 1841), pp. cvi-cxxlvii; C. Hülsen, Varronianæ doctrinae quaæam in Ouidii Fastis vestigia extant (Diss. Berlin, 1880). On Virgil see J. H. Waszink, HThR more 56 (1963), 7-11 (= Opuscula Selecta [Leyden, 1979], pp. 255-9); on Tibullus, B. Cardauns, Hermes 89 (1961), 357-66; on Propertius M. Türk, De Propertii carminum quae pertinent ad antiquitatem Romanam auctoribus (Diss. Halle Sax., 1885).


20 See Gell. 2.28.2-3, 10.15.32; 16.16, 17; Macrob. Sat. 1.8.1, 9.16, 12.27. For the frequent reading of Varro’s work in the second century see Gell. 19.14.2; for his auctoritas among fifth-century pagans Aug. Ciu. 4.1.

21 Dionysius called the whole work a θεολογικὴ πραγμάτεια (Ant. 4.62.6). According to Servius, Varro excelled in theologa (Aen. 10.175). For the use of the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum as a source of “theological” doctrine see Porph. and Pseud.-Acro, Hor. Epist. 1.10.49; schol. Ver. Virg. Aen. 5.241, 10.78; Serv. Aen. 6.703; Georg. 1.21, 315; Serv. Dan. Aen. 2.141, 3.113, 8.275, 564, 10.76, 12.139, Buc. 7.21.

22 See Serv. Aen. 11.787. The note on Georg. 3.456 uses similar language about Sallust. Varro is credited with rationalistic explanations of poetic myths at Aen. 1.52, 5.378, 5.824.

23 See Serv. Dan. Aen. 2.225, 4.219, 8.363. For the relationship of these notes and others on the ius pontificium (e.g. Serv. Georg. 1.270) to Macrob. Sat. 3.1-2 see H. D. Jocelyn, GIF 33 (1981), 107-16.

24 See Gell. 1.18, 3.16.5-10, 15.30.6-7, 18.12.8-9; Non. pp. 50.11, 115.1, 156.7, 194.17, 197.5, 197.12, 197.14, 220.23, 222.25, 318.28, 334.29, 473.9, 480.1, 510.2; Donat. Ter. Ad. 576; Charis. pp. 127.21, 134.6, 186.18; Macrob. Sat. 6.4.8; Serv. Aen. 3.445; Serv. Dan. Georg. 4.265; Prisc. Gramm. Lat. II 520.22.
The prestige which the Antiquitates rerum diuinatarum enjoyed among educated pagans would itself have been sufficient to force Christian apologists to take account of the work. Varro's report of certain ancient aspects of Roman belief and practice seemed, moreover, to offer actual ammunition for the Church's cause. So, too, did the scepticism with which he treated the claims implicit in most Roman practice; some of the theories which he put forward concerning the origin or nature of Roman deities; his hostility to some aspects of the public religious festivals; and his opposition to the worship at Rome of the deities of Egypt, deities which were destined after his time to receive official recognition and which always gave especial offence to Christians. To judge by material shared by the Octavius of Minucius Felix with other extant apologetic works, Varro's statements and opinions quite early furnished a model of upper-class paganism for the literature of Latin Christianity.  

Towards the end of the second century Tertullian read at least some of the Antiquitates rerum diuinatarum before composing the second of his Ad nationes, an assault upon the alleged beliefs of the persecutors of the African Church. At the beginning of the fifth century Augustine read the Antiquitates, along with a considerable number of other works of the classical epoch, in preparation for his massive twenty-two book reply to those who blamed the material disasters suffered by the now Christian Empire on the abandonment of the old gods, the De civitate Dei.


26 Cf. E. Schwarz, 'De M. Terentii Varronis apud sanctos patres uestigiis capita duo', NJbb Suppl. 16 (1888), 405-499 (409-26); Agahd, op. cit., pp. 71-83.

27 Fundamental are C.H.J. Francken, Fragmenta M. Ter. Varronis quae inueniuntur in libris S. Augustini de civitate Dei (Diss. Leyden, 1836); Schwarz, op. cit., 437-68; Agahd, op. cit., pp. 7-34.
The great bulk of what we know of the contents of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* is comprised of the quotations and references in the second book of Tertullian's *Ad nationes* and in the fourth, sixth and seventh books of Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei*. Since serious historical study of the pagan work began, just before the middle of the nineteenth century, the question of Varro's purpose has been uppermost in the minds of students. Unfortunately, to my way of thinking. There are more fruitful questions to be asked. Nevertheless it is a question that has to be dealt with.

Students hitherto have been excessively influenced by the context in which most of the surviving fragments appear. It looks at first sight as if Varro's work was mainly concerned with the objects of pagan worship, the beliefs held about them and their true nature. Three quarters of the work dealt in fact with other matters. There has also been a proneness to think of Varro as a kind of pagan Tertullian or Augustine, as a man like those who in the second century resisted the growth of Christianity in the cities of the Empire and who in the fifth wanted the worship of the old gods restored. The latter, however, genuinely believed in the power of Jupiter and his many fellow deities to harm or benefit human beings. Their belief was as strong as the belief of the Christians in the power of a single deity. Varro was not so naive. It has been further assumed that Julius Caesar had, when Varro wrote, the same control over what gods the state as a whole worshipped and over how they were worshipped as the emperors of later centuries had and could thus have been expected to respond positively to a literary appeal for a specific line of policy. In fact neither as *pontifex maximus* nor as *dictator* did Caesar have the kind of power in religious matters which would have permitted him to act like a Constantine, a Julian or a Theodosius. Nor did Varro have the kind of status among persons of like attitudes that Tertullian and Augustine enjoyed. The question of what his purpose was in writing the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* must be isolated from the quite peculiar questions faced by the historian of later antiquity.

I can find no discursive account of the historical setting of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* before L. H. Krahner's 1834 Halle dissertation, *Commentationis De M. Terenti Varronis Antiquitatum rerum humanarum et diuinarum libris xli specimen*. In this work

---

28 The collection of fragments made by A. Popma, *M. Terentii Varronis
Krahner argued that scepticism about the existence of divine powers and the efficacy of prayer and ritual had spread among some inhabitants of first century B.C. Rome, that others had been converted to foreign forms of cult, that as a consequence many traditional practices had fallen into desuetude, and that Varro wrote the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* not in any purely antiquarian spirit but in order to persuade his fellow citizens to revive and maintain the ancient practices he described. Varro, according to Krahner, believed that a genuine divine power lay behind the officially worshipped deities and that the continued welfare of the Roman state depended on the proper maintenance of its inherited cults. Cicero’s address to Varro at Ac. 1.9 praising the utility of both sections of the *Antiquitates*, that dealing with *res humanae* and that dealing with *res diuinae*,

nam nos in nostra urbe peregrinantis errantisque tamquam hospites tui libri quasi domum deduxerunt, ut possemus aliquando qui et ubi essenes agnoscere. tu aetatem patriae tu descriptiones temporum, tu sacrorum iura tu sacerdotum, tu domesticam tu bellicam disciplinam, tu sedum regionum locorum tu omnium diuinarum humanarumque rerum nomina genera officia causas aperuisti

lent colour to Krahner’s view. So, too, did two indirect quotations of the section on *res diuinae* by Augustine, *Ciu.* 4.31

quid ipse Varro, quem dolemus in rebus diuinis ludos scaenicos, quamuis non iudicio proprio, posuisse, cum ad deos colendos multis locis ulut religiosus hortetur, nonne ita coniitetur non se illa iudicio suo sequi, quae ciuitatem Romanam instituisse commemorat, ut, si eam ciuitatem nouam constitueret, ex naturae potius foruma deos nomineae eorum se fuisse dedicaturum non dubitet confiteri? sed iam quoniam in utere populo esset, acceptam ab antiquis nominum et cognominum historiam tenere, ut tradita est, debere se dicit, et *ad eum finem illa scribere ac perscrutari, ut potius eos magis colere quam despicere uulgus uelit*

and 6.2

*iste igitur uir tam insignis excellentisque peritia* ... *iste inquam uir tantus ingenio tantusque doctrina, si rerum uelut djuinarum, de quibus scriptis, oppugnator esset atque destructor easque non ad religionem, sed ad*

*operum quae extant noua editio* (Leyden, 1601), pp. 183-206, was reprinted in 1619 (at Dordrecht) and 1788 (at Zweibrücken).

superstitionem diceret pertinere, nescio utrum tam multa in eis ridenda contemnenda detestanda conscriberet. cum uero deos eosdem ita coluerit colendosque censuerit, ut in eo ipso opere litterarum suarum dicit se timere ne pereant, non incursu hostili sed ciuium neglegentia, de qua illos uelut ruina liberari a se dicit et in memoria bonorum per eius modi libros recondi atque seruari utiliore cura quam Metellus de incendio sacra Vestalia et Aeneas de Troiano excidio Penates liberasse praedicatur; et tamen ea legenda saeculis prodit, quae a sapientibus et insipientibus merito abicienda et uteritati religionis inimicissima judicentur.

C.H.J. Francken took the same general view of the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum and assigned the two Augustinian quotations to the first book, a book known to have dealt with the design of the entire work. R. Agahd added to the first book both the very long indirect quotation made by Augustine at Civ. 4.22

quid est ergo quod pro ingenti beneficio Varro iactat praestare se ciuibus suis, quia non solum commemorat deos, quos coli oporteat a Romanis, uerum etiam dicit quid ad quemque pertineat? quoniam nihil prodest, inquit, hominis alicuius medici nomen formamque nosse, et quod sit medicus ignorare: ita dicit nihil prodesse scire deum esse Aesculapium, si nescias eum ualeudini opitulari atque ita ignores cur ei debes supplec- are. hoc etiam alia similitudine adfirmat dicens, non modo bene uiuere, sed uiuere omnino neminem posse, si ignorant quidam sit faber, quis pistor, quis tector, a quo quid utensile petere possit, quem adiutorem adsumere, quem ducem, quem doctorem; eo modo nulli dubium esse asserens ita esse utilem cognitionem deorum, si sciatur quam quisque deus uim et facultatem ac potestatem cuiusque rei habeat. 'ex eo enim poterimus,' inquit, 'scire quem cuiusque causa deum aduocare atque inuocare debeamus, ne faciamus, ut mimi solent, et optemus a Libero aquam, a Lymphis uinum'

and the sarcastic account of Numa’s purposes at 3.11

hinc fortassit et Numa Pompilius pace abundans, sed quo donante nesciens nec requirens, cum cogitaret otiosus, quibusnam dii tuendum Romanam salutem regnumque committeret, nec uerum illum atque omnipotentem summum Deum curare opinaretur ista terrena, atque recolert Troianos deos, quos Aeneas aduexerat, neque Troianum neque Lauiniense ab ipso Aenea conditum regnum diu conservasse potuisse: alios prouidendos existimauit, quos illis prioribus, qui siue cum Romulo

iam Romam transierant, siue quandoque Alba euersa fuerant transituri, uel tamquam fugitiius custodes adhiberet uel tamquam invalidis adiutores.\textsuperscript{32}

With the latter he associated Tertullian, \textit{Apol.} 25.2

quoniam tamen Romani nominis proprie intercedit auctoritas, non omitto congressionem, quam prouocat illa praesumptio dicentium, Romanos pro merito religionis diligentissimae in tantum sublimitatis elatos et impositos, ut orbem occuparint, et adeo deos esse, ut praeter ceteros floreant, qui illis officium praeter ceteros faciant

and Minucius Felix, \textit{Oct.} 25.1

arguing that behind all three passages lay a common source which cited Varro as attributing the growth of the Roman empire to the religious institutions established by Numa.

Francken dated the publication of the \textit{Antiquitates rerum diuinarum} to after Caesar’s victory over Pompey and the Republican forces at Pharsalus.\textsuperscript{33} During the brief period between this victory and March 44 Caesar completed a temple for Venus\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{34} See Appian, \textit{B.C.} 2.102, 3.28, Dio 43.22.2; Fast. Pinc. Sept. 26 (Degrassi, \textit{Inscr. It.} 13.2, pp. 48-9, 514).
and planned to build one for Mars.\textsuperscript{35} Perhaps also one for Clementia.\textsuperscript{36} He augmented the priestly colleges and had himself, contrary to tradition, made an \textit{augur} as well as a \textit{Pontifex}.\textsuperscript{37} He corrected the calendar.\textsuperscript{38} The honours which the Senate conferred set his person nearer the gods than the person of any past Roman ruler had been.\textsuperscript{39} Not surprisingly, modern historians have speculated that after he gained complete control of the state he set about a general reform of its religious life. Opinions differ about the nature of this reform, but all see some sort of direct link between Caesar's purposes and the ideas animating the \textit{Antiquitates rerum divinarum}.\textsuperscript{40} G. Wissowa argued that the prominence we know Varro gave Aeneas and an account of the \textit{Penates} assignable to book XV on the basis of Arnobius 3.40, Macrobius, \textit{Sat.} 3.4.8, Servius Dan. \textit{Aen.} 2.296 and Augustine, \textit{Ciu.} 4.10, 7.28,\textsuperscript{41} were a calculated compliment to a tradition of Caesar's family.\textsuperscript{42} A Varronian statement cited by Augustine at \textit{Ciu.} 3.4 and assigned by Agahd to book I

\begin{quote}
\textit{utile esse ciuitatibus dicit, ut se uiri fortes, etiamsi falsum sit, diis genitos esse credant, ut eo modo animus humanus uelut diuiniae stirpis fiduciam gerens res magnas adgrediendas praesumat audacius, agat uehementius et ob hoc impleat ipsa securitate felicius.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{35} See Sueton. \textit{Iul.} 44.1.
\textsuperscript{36} See Plut. \textit{Caes.} 57.4; Appian, \textit{B.C.} 2.106; Dio 44.6.4.
\textsuperscript{37} See Dio 42.51.4. For a \textit{lex Iulia de sacerdotibus} see Cic. \textit{ad Brut.} 1.5.3.
\textsuperscript{38} See Plut. \textit{Caes.} 59; Dio 43.26.
\textsuperscript{39} See Cic. \textit{Phil.} 2.110; Flor. 2.13.91; Appian, \textit{B.C.} 2.106; Dio 43.21.2, 44-5; 44.4-7.
\textsuperscript{41} Agahd (op. cit., pp. 187-8) and Cardauns (fr. 205) accept Wissowa's construction.
\textsuperscript{43} See op. cit., p. 154.
R. Reitzenstein took to refer to Caesar's claim to descent through Aeneas from the goddess Venus, a claim uttered perhaps as early as 78, at the very beginning of his public career,\textsuperscript{44} certainly in 68 at the funeral of his aunt,\textsuperscript{45} in 48 before the battle of Pharsalus,\textsuperscript{46} and through the years which followed this battle.\textsuperscript{47} For Reitzenstein and a number of recent writers\textsuperscript{48} the statement makes it certain that the \textit{Antiquitates rerum divinarum} inspired, or was inspired by, a Caesarian religious programme in the period after the defeat of Pompey.

**CAESAR AND THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE LATE REPUBLIC**

Some of the individual assumptions upon which the general account of Varro's purposes now commonly accepted is based are somewhat insecure, particularly the assumption that Caesar devoted careful thought to what could be called a religious programme.

It is true that by the middle years of the first century many members of the Roman propertied classes had come to reject the notions on which the traditional cult depended for mass support,\textsuperscript{49} that there were immigrant groups in the city practising

\textsuperscript{44} See Weinstock, \textit{Div. Jul.} pp. 18 n. 3, 23-6, on Cic. ap. Sueton. \textit{Iul.} 49.3, Vell. Pat. 2.41.1, Dio 43.43.3.


\textsuperscript{46} See Appian, \textit{B.C.} 2.68, 76, Dio 41.34.2. Cf. the sneer uttered by Caelius ap. Cic. \textit{Fam.} 8.15.2.

\textsuperscript{47} See Appian, \textit{B.C.} 2.104 for the watchword at Munda. At Thapsus the watchword had been \textit{Felicitas}, the name of a closely related deity (Anon., \textit{Bell. Afr.} 83.1). For the dedication of the temple of Venus on 26 September 46 see above, n. 34. For Caesar's seal (\textit{Αφροδιτίη Ἑυστατίως}) see Dio 43.43.3. A denarius issued in 47-6 (\textit{RRC} 458) depicted Venus. For Caesar's interest in the temple of Aphrodite at Aphrodisias see the inscriptions published by J.M. Reynolds, \textit{Aphrodisias and Rome} (London, 1982), 8.38-41 (discussed pp. 78-9), 12.13-18 (discussed p. 103).

\textsuperscript{48} See Reitzenstein, op. cit., p. 99; Della Corte, op. cit., p. 137 (= ed. 2, p. 126); Latte, op. cit., p. 293; Horsfall, op. cit., 122.

cults of very different character and seeking converts,\textsuperscript{50} that there were many derelict buildings in holy places,\textsuperscript{51} that because of neglect of the calendar many festivals were being celebrated at obviously inappropriate times,\textsuperscript{52} that prodigies were not recorded with the assiduity they once were,\textsuperscript{53} that acts seemingly disrespectful of tradition were being committed,\textsuperscript{54} and that scholarly persons were wont to discover in ancient records forms of cult no longer practised and to complain about contemporary heedlessness.\textsuperscript{55} But nothing on the scale of the religious convulsion which was to occur in the fourth century or of the reaction which threatened Augustine and his friends in the fifth can be detected in these years. The three principal priestly colleges were carefully maintained at full strengths\textsuperscript{56} and consulted on questions which lay within their competence.\textsuperscript{57} The temples in the administrative


\textsuperscript{51} The situation implied at Hor. \textit{Carm.} 3.6.1-4, Aug. imp. Mon. Anc. 20.6, Sueton. Aug. 30.2, Dio 53.2.4 must have developed over a long period.

\textsuperscript{52} See Cic. \textit{Leg.} 2.29, Sueton. \textit{Iul.} 40.1.

\textsuperscript{53} See Liv. 43.13.1.

\textsuperscript{54} Between 87 and 11 B.C. no \textit{flamen dialis} held office (Tac. \textit{Ann.} 3.58). Between 69 and 28 no \textit{lustrum} was performed (Aug. imp. \textit{Mon. Anc.} 8.1). At the beginning of 60 the \textit{sacra Juventatis} were not performed (Cic. \textit{Att.} 1.18.3). In 59 Caesar held legislative assemblies despite the ritual veto of his consular colleague (Cic. \textit{Dom.} 39-40; Har. resp. 48, Dio. 38.6); so, too, did the tribune P. Vatinius (schol. Bob. Cic. p. 146.13-15 Stangl; for his public scorn of augural \textit{responsa} see Cic. \textit{Vatin.} 14). In 57 A. Gabinius and L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus defied a tribunician \textit{obnuntiatio dirarum} (Cic. \textit{Sest.} 71) and in 55 M. Licinius Crassus Diues acted similarly (Cic. \textit{Att.} 4.13.2; \textit{Diu.} 1.29; Dionys. Hal. \textit{Ant.} 2.6.4; Plut. \textit{Crass.} 16.6-8; Dio 39.39.5-6).


\textsuperscript{56} The prestige of belonging was great (see Cic. \textit{Att.} 2.5.2, 2.9.2, \textit{Fam.} 2.7.3; Caelius ap. Cic. \textit{Fam.} 8.4.1, 8.14.1).

\textsuperscript{57} For the Senate consulting the \textit{pontifices} see Cic. \textit{Att.} 1.13.3 (year 62), Dom. 69, Har. resp. 11 (year 57); for a magistrate questioning \textit{augures} before a \textit{contio} see Cic. Dom. 40 (year 59); for the \textit{quindecimuiri} reporting Sibylline oracles see Dio 39.15.1-2 (year 56; cf. Cic. \textit{Fam.} 1.1.1-2, 1.4.2, \textit{Pis.} 48), 60.4-61.4 (year 54), Plin. \textit{Nat.} 17.243 (c. year 50).
centre were kept in repair and new ones built. Expensive images continued to be dedicated in them and large cash gifts made to their divine owners. Entry to and departure from magistracies were still accompanied by ancient ritual. The lavish spectacles provided at the great public festivals did not conceal the cultic aspects of these festivals. Acts of impiety were prosecuted and outrageously un-Roman forms of cult suppressed. The holiness of the places whence popular assemblies were addressed and of those where the Senate met was not forgotten. Statesmen found it difficult to disregard conventions of political behaviour which appeared to have a religious backing. They branded their enemies with accusations of irreligion and could count on universal applause for the doctrine that the welfare of the Roman state depended on the favour of the gods. Although moneyers had acquired great freedom in choosing types, religious motifs


59 For Lucullus' dedication of a statue of Hercules see Plin. Nat. 34.93; for Cicero's of a statue of Minerva (in year 58) see Cic. Dom. 144, Leg. 2.42, Fam. 12.25.1, Plut. Cic. 31.6, Dio 38.17.5.

60 See Diodor. 4.21.4 (on L. Licinius Lucullus, cos. 74), Plut. Crass. 2.3 (on M. Licinius Crassus Diues, cos. 70, 55).

61 For the taking of auspices before popular assemblies see Cic. Catil. 4.2 (in year 63), Att. 2.12.1 (in year 59), Varr. Rust. 3.2.1-3 (in year 54); for the sacrifice to Iuppiter O.M. by magistrates entering office see Varr. ap. Tertull. Nat. 1.10.17 (in year 58); for the swearing of oaths by magistrates leaving office see Cic. Fam. 5.2.7, Pis. 6, Att. 6.1.22, Plut. Cic. 23.2.3 (in year 63).


63 For the prosecution of P. Clodius Pulcher in 61 see Cic. Att. 1.13.3, 1.16.3-5, Plut. Caes. 10.6, Cic. 28.4, Dio 37.46.1.

64 For action against the worshippers of Egyptian deities in 58 see Tertull. Apol. 6.8, Nat. 1.10.17-18, below, pp. 173-5; in 53 Dio 40.47.3; in 50 Val. Max. ep. 1.3.4; in 48 Dio 42.26.2.


66 For a tribune's obnuntiatio preventing an electoral assembly in 57 see Cic. Att. 4.3.4; for an augur's obnuntiatio in 56 see Plut. Pomp. 52.2, Cat. min. 42.4.

67 Cf. Cic. Verr. 2.4.1-7, Dom. 104-9, Vatin. 14, Phil. 2.78-84.

68 Cf. Cic. Har. resp. 18-19 (addressing Senate). This is to be carefully distinguished from what Cicero puts into the mouth of the sceptical Cotta at Nat. deor. 3.5.
stayed remarkably popular. The old kinds of prodigies retained their terror. There is furthermore no reason to suppose that the kind of scepticism which we know to have affected a very small number of individual senators affected all six hundred, to say nothing about the rest of the citizen body. Ap. Claudius Pulcher, cos. 54, was perhaps a more typical figure than a Cicero. Even in private life aristocratic families were careful not to set aside religious custom. The civil turmoil of the late fifties disturbed the regularities of cult but no more than it did those of industry and commerce. To talk, as many do, of a religious crisis is absurdly exaggerated.

We have no direct statement from Caesar himself about his own inner conception of the nature of the universe or about the kind of religious belief and practice he thought appropriate to the state he came to dominate. Consequently modern assessments differ widely. Nothing however in the record of Caesar's external behaviour suggests any very unusual degree either of religiosity or of cynicism. He acted in public like other men of his class. It was in extreme youth that he became a pontifex. But youthful priests from families with priestly traditions were not uncommon. The principal motive of his successful bid to become pontifex maximus in 63 was clearly political ambition. His frequent claims to descent from the goddess Venus in particular and to special favour with the divine powers generally were no different from those made by a considerable number of first-century senators.


70 For prodigies in 56 see Dio 39.15.1, 20.1-2; in 54 Dio 39.61.1-2; in 52 Dio 40.47.2. A lustration of the city was performed in 53 (Iul. Obs. 63).


72 Cf. A. Momigliano, JRS 30 (1940), 75-80 (76 = Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici [Rome, 1960], 407-416 [409]).

73 For a dies religiosus delaying a marriage see Cic. Q.fr. 2.4.2 (year 56).

74 See below, n. 361.

75 See Vell. Pat. 2.43.1, L. R. Taylor, CPh 36 (1941), 117-20.

76 See Plut. Caes. 7.1-4.

77 See above, nn. 44-47.

78 Cf. Plut. Caes. 38.5.

79 On claims to divine descent see T. P. Wiseman, G & R 21 (1974), 153-64. For the notion that military success required divine assistance see Cic. Manil. 45, 47-8 (talking of Pompey), Prou. 35 (talking of Caesar).
and in no way at odds with traditional Roman feelings about the human and the divine. His family had already in the second century, if not long before, linked itself with Venus. Enemies represented various things which he did in the course of his career as neglect or defiance of sacral tradition. He was certainly quick to exploit situations with a religious ingredient to his own advantage. The terroristic potential of certain ancient rituals he understood and used to great effect. But again it is easy to find parallels for his behaviour in the Roman past. If anything distinguished Caesar from other first-century B.C. senators it was merely his skill at seizing opportunities offered by the religious climate in which they lived. He always carried out commonly recognised duties with scrupulous care. This was not a man likely to be interested in radical change to the character of the religious behaviour of the Roman state either in a reactionary or in a seemingly progressive direction.

Those who have detected behind the events of Caesar's dictatorship a conscious plan to establish a monarchy with religious trappings make great play with the monotheistic account given by Varro of the objects of Roman worship in the opening and concluding books of the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum. Now

---

80 E.g. with the feeling that men should not be honoured with temples, sacrifices and the like (cf. Cic. Q. fr. 1.1.26, Att. 5.21.7, Phil. 2.110).
81 See Sex. Iulius Caesar's denarius of 129 (RRC 258) and L. Iulius Caesar's of 103 (RRC 320).
82 For his defiance of Bibulus' veto see above, n. 54; for his decree concerning the calendar Plut. Caes. 59.6; for his burial of Julia in the Campus Martius Plut. Caes. 23.7, Dio 39.64; for his failure to follow custom in filling the priesthodonts Dio 41.36.3; for his destruction of temples and statues in the course of building operations Dio 43.49.3; for his defiance of the warnings of haruspices Cic. Div. 1.119, 2.52, Sueton. Jul. 59, 77, 81.4; for his acceptance of religiously improper honours Cic. Att. 12.45.2.
83 For his reactions to events thought ominous see Sueton. Aug. 94.11, Dio 41.39.2.
84 Cf. the charge he had brought against C. Rabirius in 63 (Cic. Rab. perd. passim, Dio 37.27.23) and his mode of executing two mutinous soldiers in 46 (Dio 43.24.4).
85 See Hirtius, Gall. 8.52.1, Plut. Caes. 43.3, Pomp. 68.3 for lustrations of his army. When he founded colonies he established the usual priesthodonts and public acts of worship (see CIL II 5439). The behaviour reported at Plin. Nat. 28.21 may have been designed to calm his companions as much as himself.
87 For statements monotheistic in cast see Tertull. Nat. 2.2.19-20, 5.2-7, Aug. Ciu. 4.10-12, 31; 7.5-6, 13, 17, 23. Popma recognised only a little of this material.
Caesar may have been a conscious monotheist. He may have deliberately set out to create a monarchical system of government. There is no reason, however, to think that monotheism seemed to him or to anyone else capable of making such a system of government more acceptable at Rome. The theology of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* would have looked to most contemporary readers like the teaching of Varro’s friend, Antiochus of Ascalon, the Academic philosopher who came to Rome from Athens in 88, a refugee from the regime of Athenion. The average observer did not find it easy to distinguish Antiochus’ doctrine from what was taught by contemporary Peripatetics and Stoics in states of varying political constitutions. Antiochus had many pupils and associates among Roman aristocrats whose loyalty to the ancient Republican system of government never wavered. The notion that there was only one divine power behind the phenomena had long been attributed to Pythagoras.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century students of the fragments of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* have differed widely on whether to assign a particular item to book I or to book XVI. To catalogue the differences would be scarcely worth while.

---


89 Cf. Cic. *Nat. deor.* 1.16.


a philosopher held in public honour at Rome since the time of the 
Samnite wars⁹³ and believed by some to have taught king Numa 
himself.⁹⁴ The Annales of Ennius, the chief poem of the Roman 
literary syllabus until late in the first century, fused the naive 
polytheism of Homer's Iliad with Pythagorean sophistication.⁹⁵ 
Not only epic poems⁹⁶ but tragedies designed for the public 
stage⁹⁷ exploited the same kind of philosophical theology. No 
Roman senator of the first century, however, and certainly not 
Varro himself, would have thought it desirable to persuade the 
lower orders to give up their polytheism.⁹⁸ And, indeed, it was a 
long time before any emperor thought it so desirable. In any case, 
no one saw any intellectual difficulty in reconciling the mono-
theism of the philosophers with the polytheism of the state. Varro 
even thought that the sole god of the recently conquered Jews 
could be identified with both the Roman Iuppiter and the cosmic 
Ψυχαί.⁹⁹ Theology and politics simply did not converge at any 
point. To associate the theory about the chief moving principle of 
the natural order expounded in the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum 
either with the nature of the power won by Caesar in 48 or with 
any scheme for a religious legitimisation of that power would be a 
rank anachronism.

THE DATE OF THE ANTIQUITATES RERUM DIUINARUM

Not even the dating of the publication of the Antiquitates rerum 
diuinarum to the period after Caesar’s defeat of the forces of 
Pompey (i.e. a period when Caesar might seriously be supposed to 
have given thought to some programme of religious reform) is 
secure. A work of this character could hardly have been written 
outside a large library of Latin books. Varro had left Italy 
sometime in the late fifties to take up a post on behalf of Pompey 
in Spain¹⁰⁰ and was not permitted by the victorious Caesar to

⁹⁵ See ANRW I2 (1972), 991-2, 1010-11.
⁹⁷ Cf. Pacuvius, Trag. 89-92.
⁹⁸ See Aug. Ciu. 6.5-6.
return until the autumn of 47 at the earliest. By the summer of 45 he had been engaged for some time on the planning and writing of the twenty-five-book *De lingua Latina*. He composed works of erudition with great rapidity but, even if we separate the time of composition of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinrarum* from that of the very closely related *Antiquitates rerum humanarum*, it is hard to credit that sixteen books full of such obscure detail took only a few months to complete. If it be countered that Varro had to do no more than work up the results of researches made before his departure for Spain, then the plausibility of the link between the design of the work and the alleged religious programme of Caesar's dictatorship diminishes correspondingly.

The four arguments adduced in support of a post-48 date of publication will not stand up to examination. On the other hand, a number of topics treated by Varro point in the direction of a date elsewhere in the fifties, when Caesar was engaged only at a distance with Roman affairs, and one arguably excludes the post-48 date.

Two passages in dialogues composed by Cicero after his return to Italy in November 48, the *Brutus* with a dramatic date of early

---

101 Cic. Fam. 9.1 suggests that Varro was still abroad as late as the winter of 47/6. During the previous winter Caesar had ordered Antony to restore Varro's Casinum property (Cic. Phil. 2.103-4). Scholars have been too quick to conclude that Varro was permitted to return to Italy immediately. The order to collect and arrange Greek and Latin books for the *populus Romanus* (Sueton. Iul. 44.2, Isid. Orig. 6.5.1) may, since little was effected, be dated close to the time of Caesar's assassination.

102 The *De lingua Latina* cited the *Antiquitates* as a work already in the public domain (6.13, 18). This had been completed by the year 43, when Varro was at work on the four books *De gente populi Romani* (Arnob. 5.8). A letter written by Cicero to Atticus on 23 June 45 suggests that two years previously Varro had at least been thinking about the composition of the *De lingua Latina* (13.12.3). A letter written to Varro himself on 11 July (Fam. 9.8) shows that by that date nothing had appeared.

103 For the conceptual unity of the two sets of *antiquitates* see Cic. Ac. 1.8-9, Aug. Ciu. 6.4. Jerome's index (see above, n. 8) treated the 45/42 books as one unit. The individual books, however, of the two sets were numbered separately.

104 Horsfall, op. cit., 122, shows himself aware of the chronological squeeze and brings down the date of publication from the orthodox autumn 47 to summer or autumn 46; cf. Cardauns, *ANRW II* 16. 1 (1978), 86, who makes it not long before summer 45. In that case it has to be assumed that for a period Varro worked on the *Antiquitates rerum diuinrarum* and the *De lingua Latina* simultaneously. Boissier's arguments (op. cit., pp. 44-7) are still worthy of consideration.
in 46\textsuperscript{105} and the second version of the \textit{Academica} with a dramatic date of early in the following year,\textsuperscript{106} seemed to J.G. Schneider\textsuperscript{107} to represent the \textit{Antiquitates rerum diuinarum} as having been recently published. No one now would want to make anything of \textit{Brut.} 205, but Varro’s words at \textit{Ac.} 1.8

et tamen in illis ueteribus nostris, quae Menippum imitati, non interpre-tati, quadam hilaritate conspersimus, multa admixta ex intima philoso-phia, multa dicta dialectice, quae quo faciulius minus docti intellegenter, iucunditate quadam ad legendum inuitati; in laudationibus, in his ipsis antiquitatum prooemiis † philosophiae † scribere uoluimus, si modo consecuti sumus

and Cicero’s reply

sunt ista Varro. nam nos in nostra urbe peregrinantis errantisque tamquam hospites tui libri quasi domum deduxerunt... tu omnium diuinarum humanarumque rerum nomina genera officia causa aperuisti; plurimum quidem nostris omninoque Latinis et litteris luminis et uerbis attulisti atque ipse uarium et elegans omni fere numero poema fecisti, philosophiamque multis locis inchoasti, ad impellendum satis, ad edocendum parum

are still thought necessarily to date the publication of the \textit{Antiquitates rerum diuinarum} to very near the time of speaking; in other words, to after Pompey’s defeat and Varro’s return to Italy. In fact, both parties to the dialogue treat the whole of the \textit{Antiquitates rerum humanarum et diuinarum} as a unity and all that they imply is that this was a work recent in comparison with the imitations of Menippus.

Schneider also argued that Varro could not have addressed a work to Caesar during the period when he was a ‘client’ of Pompey’s. Now it is true that Varro served in Pompey’s armies over a long period\textsuperscript{108} and addressed many literary works to

\textsuperscript{105} There are clear references to events of late 47 at 21 and 171. The reference at 265 to L. Manlius Torquatus as dead would fix the date after news of the battle of Thapsus reached Rome.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{I.11} refers unmistakeably to the death of Tullia (February 45) and we know from \textit{Att.} 12.45.1 that Cicero took up residence at Tusculum, the scene of the dialogue on May 17.


Pompey but, while from late 47 he could be fairly called Caesar's 'client', that had never been his relationship with Pompey. He was not at all like a Curtius Nicia, a Cn. Pompeius Lenaeus, a Cn. Pompeius Demetrius or a Cn. Pompeius Theophanes. He came from a family much older and in some ways more distinguished than Pompey's. He rose only as high as the praetorship but was ten years Pompey's senior. He had great personal wealth and many powerful friends both in the financial establishment and in the Senate. He was on good terms with Caesar before the outbreak of the civil war. In any case, very close family and political bonds linked Pompey and Caesar from 59 to 54. If, there is any truth at all in Appian's account of

109 For the Ephemeris navaulis of 76 see Anon. Itin. Alex. 3 (D. Volkmann, Progr. Königg. Landesschule Pforta [Naumberg, 1871], p. 2; for the commentarius εισαγωγικός on senatorial procedure of 70 see Gell. 14.7. Jerome's index (see above, n. 8) listed three books De Pompeio.

110 For Curtius Nicia see Sueton. Gramm. 14.1; for Cn. Pompeius Lenaeus Plin. Nat. 15.127-8, Sueton. Gramm. 15.1; for Demetrius Plut. Pomp. 2.9, 40, Cat. min. 13.3-4, Joseph. B. Iud. 1.7.7, Dio 39.38.6; for Theophanes Cic. Arch. 24, Strab. 11.5.1, 13.2.3, Plut. Pomp. 42.8. For Pompey's interest in men of culture see also Plin. Nat. 7.112 (on Posidonius), Plut. Pomp. 10.8 (on Q. Valerius Soranus), 75.4-5 (on Cratippus).

111 To judge by Cic. Att. 13.13.1, Varro ranked far beneath men like Q. Lutatius Catulus (cos. 78), L. Licinius Lucullus (cos. 74) and Q. Hortensius Hortalus (cos. 69). Cicero felt some awe of him (Att. 2.25.1, 13.19.3, 13.25.3). To what extent this was due to social inferiority is unclear.

112 See Appian, B.C. 4.47, Themistius, Or. 34.8, pp. 452-3 Dindorf.

113 For the thesauri Varronis see D. Brutus ap. Cic. Fam. 11.10.5 (5 May 43). By the early fifties he owned estates in the Sabine country and Apulia (Rust. 2 praef. 6, 2.2.9), near Tusculum (Rust. 3.3.8, 3.13.1; cf. Cic. Fam. 9.1.2, 9.5.3, 9.6.4), near Arpinum (Cic. Q. fr. 3.1.4), near Casinum (Rust. 3.4.2, 3.5.8-17; cf. Cic. Phil. 2.103, Appian, B.C. 4.47), near Cumae (Cic. Fam. 9.1.2, 9.5.3, 9.8.1, Ac. 1.1) and in Epirus (Rust. 2.1.2-3). I. Shatzman, Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics (Brussels, 1975), pp. 400-401, argues that he acquired much of this wealth through the direct assistance of Pompey; for Pompey's generosity to his quae前期 and legati see Plin. Nat. 37.16, Appian, B. Mithr. 116.

114 For T. Pomponius Atticus see Cic. Att. 2.25.1, 3.18.1, 4.2.5. For C. Agrius and P. Agrasius see Varr. Rust. 1.2.1.

115 For Ser. Sulpicius Rufus (cos. 51) see Gell. 2.10.1; for Q. Fufius Calenus (cos. 47) Appian, B.C. 4.47. His father-in-law C. Fundanius was a senator (Varr. Rust. 1.2.1).

116 Cic. 2.17.2.

117 For Pompey's marriage with Julia in 59 see Cic. Att. 2.17.1, Tiro ap. Gell. 4.10.5-7, Vell. Pat. 2.44.3, Plut. Caes. 5.7, 14.7, Pomp. 47.10, Cat. min. 31.6, Sueton. Jul. 21, Appian B.C. 2.14. For Julia's death in 54 see Cic. Q. fr. 3.1.17,
the drift of the Τρικάρανος,\textsuperscript{118} it indicates that Varro felt obliged to no individual in Roman society as long as the republican constitution remained intact.

R. Merkel argued that, since convention frowned upon the absence of the pontifex maximus from peninsular Italy, Caesar's many and prolonged absences between his election to the office in 63 and his return from Pontus in 47 would have made the dedication to him during this period of a traditionalist work like the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum extremely tactless.\textsuperscript{119} What Varro said about the restrictions of the office of pontifex maximus in his second book\textsuperscript{120} is not reported. Our very imperfect historical record has P. Licinius Crassus Diues in 206 withdrawing of his own accord from a ballot for an overseas command,\textsuperscript{121} Licinius' son in 176 having to make a positive case against being given a Spanish province,\textsuperscript{122} M. Aemilius Lepidus around 155 being sent to Alexandria to act as a royal tutor,\textsuperscript{123} P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica Serapio in 132 being sent on an embassy to Asia,\textsuperscript{124} P. Licinius Crassus Diues Mucianus in 131 commanding an army in Asia,\textsuperscript{125} Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius fighting in Spain between 79 and 71.\textsuperscript{126} If ever there was a firm convention demanding the presence of the pontifex maximus at all times within the boundaries of Italy, casuists must also have been found to design escape

\textsuperscript{118} B.C. 2.9. What we know of Varro's relations with Pompey at this period from Cicero's correspondence (\textit{Att.} 2.20.1, 25.1) makes it unlikely that the work was a direct attack on the political trio. The problem has been much discussed: cf. M. Hubbard, \textit{JRS} 45 (1955), 225-6; W. S. Anderson, \textit{Pompey, his Friends and the Literature of the First Century B.C.} (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963 [\textit{Univ. of California Publ. in Class. Philol.} 19.1]), p. 45; R. Astbury, \textit{CQ} n.s. 17 (1967), 403-7; E. S. Gruen, \textit{The Last Generation of the Roman Republic} (Berkeley, 1974), p. 95 n. 36; A. Garzetti, \textit{Atti del congresso ... studi Varroniani}, 95-7; B. Zucchelli, ibid., 609-25.


\textsuperscript{120} For talk of a convention see Liv. 28.38.12, 28.44.11, Plut. \textit{Ti. Gracch.} 21.6, Dio, fr. 57.52.

\textsuperscript{121} See Liv. 28.38.12, 28.44.11, Dio fr. 57.52.

\textsuperscript{122} See Liv. 41.15.9-10.

\textsuperscript{123} See Val. Max. 6.6.1, Tac. \textit{Ann.} 2.67.2, Justin 30.3.4.


\textsuperscript{126} See Appian, \textit{B.C.} 1.108.
clauses. There is no reason to suppose that Varro or anyone else thought Caesar's absences abroad after 63 religiously damaging.

Agahd's reference to the first book of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* of Augustine's report at *Ciu*. 3.4 of a Varronian statement to the effect that belief in the possession of a divine parent, though necessarily false, engenders in the brave a self-confidence beneficial to the state, won immediate favour and Reitzenstein declared that Varro had particularly in mind Caesar's claim to descent from the goddess Venus and the series of victories Caesar won in the East in 48 and 47. Reitzenstein's guess now enjoys wide acceptance as a proven fact, underpinning the theory that Varro drew the outline of a Caesarian religious programme. It was not in fact a very good guess.

Caesar's successes in Gaul in the fifties were much more unambiguously beneficial to the state than the later ones in the East. In any case, if Varro did mean his readers to think of Caesar and Venus they would scarcely have taken his statement as complimentary to Caesar. To deceive others for reasons of state, as did sceptical pontifices like Q. Mucius Scaeuola and C. Aurelius Cotta, and as Varro himself encouraged statesmen to do, was one thing. To deceive oneself was quite another. If a privately sceptical Caesar had made his claim to divine descent for reasons of state, he would not have been amused to read of himself as actually believing it. If, on the other hand, he did believe it, he would have been even less amused to see his belief described as false and his gullibility patronised as beneficial to the state.

---

127 Cf. the argument about riding horses *in provinci*a at Serv. Dan. *Aen*. 8.552.

128 Horsfall and Misdariis (in the works cited above, n. 33) find some merit in Merkel's case.


The context of Augustine's report needs to be looked at more carefully. Augustine is deploring the morality of the story that the mortal Aeneas had a divine mother and the similar story about the paternity of Romulus. He cites Julius Caesar as believing the first story and Varro as rejecting both, although rather defensively. The way that Augustine refers to Varro leaves it a little uncertain whether the latter even mentioned Aeneas. Certainly Augustine's earlier reference to Julius Caesar could come from his general knowledge of Roman history.\textsuperscript{135} If we accept that Varro did mention Aeneas as well as Romulus, the context would most likely be a discussion of that category of divinities which comprised mortals raised to heaven after a life of great deeds on earth.\textsuperscript{136} Most of these had according to story an immediate divine parent. They were regularly discussed in theological works,\textsuperscript{137} and at least one of the books of the \textit{Antiquitates rerum diuinarum} had a place for them.\textsuperscript{138} Julius Caesar was eventually treated although, curiously, he had never claimed or been given a divine mother or father.\textsuperscript{140} If the honours granted to him by a servile

\textsuperscript{135} For Caesar's claim to descent from Venus see above, nn. 44-7.

\textsuperscript{136} Francken (op. cit., pp. 1-8) put the statement either at the beginning of book I or somewhere in book XIV, but offered no guess about the argumentative context. He adduced a number of passages relating to the idea that the souls of brave men have a special fate in the afterlife (Cic. Rep. 6.13, Tusc. 1.27-9, \textit{Nat. deor.} 2.62, 3.45-50, Lactant. \textit{Inst.} 1. 15, Aug. \textit{Epist.} 103.2) and other sceptical statements of Varro's cited by Augustine (\textit{Ciu.} 4.27, 31; 6.5-6). Agahd assigned the statement to book I and a general discussion of the Platonic and Stoic doctrines on the immortality of the soul (see n. 129). Cardauns put it in book I (fr. 20), in the same context as a statement denouncing the falsity of the poets' stories about divine sexuality (\textit{Aug. Ciu.} 4.32, 6.6) and one approving the deception of ordinary people in religious matters (\textit{Aug. Ciu.} 4.27, 31).


\textsuperscript{138} See Serv. Dan. \textit{Aen.} 8.275 (listing Castor, Pollux, Liber and Hercules among the deified humans worshipped by both Greeks and Romans). Merkel (op. cit., p. clxxxv) set this passage in book XIV, Agahd (op. cit., pp. 72-4, 152-3) in book I along with Tertull. \textit{Nat.} 2.14.1 (cf. Cardauns, op. cit., p. 28). The account of Aeneas indiges at Tertull. \textit{Nat.} 2.9.12-18 and that of Romulus at 19 were placed by Merkel in book XV and have been kept there by Agahd and Cardauns. It is, however, likely enough that even if Tertullian was here sneering at the contents of book XV (for criticism of Merkel see Schwarz, op. cit., 417-22), Aeneas and Romulus also figured in a more general discussion of the class of deity in book I, a discussion perhaps abbreviated by Servius Danielis (cf. also Arnob. 3.39).

\textsuperscript{139} See Lactant. \textit{Inst.} 1.15. 28-30.

\textsuperscript{140} As did Dionysius II (Plut. \textit{Mor.} 338 b), Alexander (\textit{Hyperid. C. Demosth.}
senate after Pharsalus and Zela anticipated or foreshadowed his later status in the Roman state pantheon and the lists of the theologians, there is yet no good reason to make Varro a literary advocate of them. The statement alluded to by Augustine need have related only to the worship of Hercules, Aeneas indiges, Romulus et al. and have made no direct reference to the genealogy Caesar was advertising for himself.

I come now to those topics of the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum which in my view would be more plausibly assigned to a work of the fifties than to one of the forties.

Against Horace's reference to the crumbling shrine of the Sabine goddess Vacuna at Epist. 1.10.49 Porphyrio writes

Vacuna in Sabinis dea, quae sub incerta specie est formata. hanc quidem Bellonam, alii Mineruam, alii Dianam.

The 'Pseudacronian' scholia record from different commentaries

Vacunam alii Cererem (uenerem I), alii deam uacationis dicunt, alii Victoriam, qua fauente curis uacamus

and

Vacunam apud Sabinos plurimum cultam quidam Mineruam, alii Dianam putauerunt; nonnulli etiam Venerem esse dixerunt; sed Varro primo rerum diuinarum Victoriam ait, quod ea maxime hii gaudent, qui sapientiae uacent.

A single source clearly underlies the three statements, the last of which is the most detailed and the most accurate. We appear to have part of an account of the circumstances in which Varro composed the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum. The framework of a book which communiter de omnibus loquebatur, as we know the first book to have done, would have had no place for


141 For Varro's justification of the false belief in the divine paternity of Romulus cf. that offered by Livy, praef. 7.

142 See Aug. Ciu. 6.3. Other specific citations of this book are made only by Nonius (pp. 156.7-8 [fr. 48 Cardauns], 197.12-14 [fr. 49]; there is no need to suppose that the following quotation — et religiones et castus id possunt ut ex
discussing the nature of an obscure Sabine deity. On the other hand there was almost certainly a short personal preface. Varro had led an active public life, often serving with armies abroad. He would have felt compelled to explain at every opportunity how he had become free to do the research and writing required by works of antiquarian subject matter. For a member of the senatorial class public service took precedence over all else. The nationality of Vacuna is significant. In many different kinds of works Varro gave a special prominence to the language and customs of his Sabine homeland. The preface of a work on religious antiquities provided an opportunity to discourse on a deity who was specially connected with Reate and could be represented as having to do with both war and scholarship. The identification with Bellona suggests that some feature of Vacuna’s posture, dress or equipment had a warlike aspect; so too does the identification with Victoria, a deity rather more martial than any Greek Ἁρμια. Varro’s etymology of her name connected her both with the results of success in war for a military aristocracy and with the kind of activity in which he passed his own leisure time. It cannot be doubted that Varro discussed

periculo eripium nostro — necessarily belongs to the same book] and Servius (Aen. 6.703 [fr. 29]).

143 The list of municipal deities cited by Tertullian at Nat. 2.8.6 and Apol. 24.8 (assigned to book XIV by Merkel, op. cit., p. clxxviii; to book I by Agahd, op. cit., pp. 70, 71, 161, and by Cardauns (fr. 33)) shows no room for etymological discussions.

144 Cf. Rust. 1.1-3.

145 See Cicero’s frequent apologies for occupying himself with the composition of philosophical dialogues: Ac. 1.11, Fin. 1.10-12, Tusc. 2.1-9, Div. 2.4-7.


148 Vacuna was linked with uincere on one hand and with uacare on the other.

149 For sapientiae uacare cf. philosophiae uacare (Cic. Div. 1.11, Donat. Vit. Verg. 35). Varro uses sapientia not in its proper and traditional sense of ‘mental agility and shrewdness’ but in one of the more extended senses of the Greek
Vacuna early in the first book of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*, in the context of an assertion that some great victory of arms had given him the opportunity to research and compose such a work. Merkel took the victory in question to be that won by Caesar at Pharsalus.\textsuperscript{150} This victory did, in fact, provide Varro with years of leisure. But in a very paradoxical way. Varro had played a most inglorious role on the losing side. It was, furthermore, a victory in a war undisguisedly a civil one, and Caesar studiously ignored it when he celebrated a quadruple triumph in 46.\textsuperscript{151} Thus neither the writer nor the dedicatee of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* had any cause to dwell on the events of 49-48. The many Asian and Syrian victories which Pompey celebrated with a triumph in 61\textsuperscript{152} and the dedication of a temple of *Venus victrix* in 55\textsuperscript{153} would, however, have provided an honourable background for the explanation of Vacuna’s name cited by the Horatian commentators. We know that Varro served with distinction in the 67 campaign against the Cilician pirates\textsuperscript{154} and may guess that he also served in Asia and Syria in the succeeding years.\textsuperscript{155} Certainly by the time that Pompey disbanded his veterans, Varro was too old to have hopes of dying a *consularis* rather than a *praetorius*.\textsuperscript{156} His duties as *uigintiuir* during the 59 land distributions would not have taken up much time. Between 62 and 55 he had for scholarly work ample leisure fully attributable to the victorious end of warfare against Roman enemies abroad.

At *Nat.* 1.10.13-19 Tertullian draws a strained analogy between the behaviour of contemporary Christians towards the cults of


\textsuperscript{151} See Flor. 2.13.88-9.


\textsuperscript{154} See above, n. 108.

\textsuperscript{155} F. Münzer (*Beiträge zur Quellenkritik der Naturgeschichte des Plinius* [Berlin, 1897], p. 278) and C. Cichorius (*Römische Studien* [Leipzig-Berlin, 1922], pp. 194-6) take different views.

\textsuperscript{156} For Varro’s praetorship see above, n. 112.
other groups and the measures taken by the Roman authorities in the distant past against various cults imported into the city: the reprimand handed out to a M. Aemilius for dedicating a shrine to a deity Alburnus without prior senatorial approval, the demolition of religious buildings by censors on their own initiative, the measures taken throughout Italy against the worship of Bacchus by the consuls of 186, the destruction of the Capitoline altars of the Egyptian deities Serapis, Isis, Harpocrates and Anubis as the result of a senatorial decree in 59, and the maintenance of the senate's ban by the consuls of the following year. He mentions Varro's name in connection with the ban on Serapis and his fellows. Not unreasonably Agahd made a passage of the first book of the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum the ultimate source of all Tertullian's information. There was room here for a general account of how the Roman state treated religious novelty. It is odd, however, that Varro should have referred to the decree of 59. He was not given to referring directly to the persons and events of his own time and the senatorial decree of 59 did not illuminate the principle under discussion any further than had the events of 186. If the conventional dating of the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum to the forties is correct, it is even odder that Varro referred to the decree of 59 rather than to the similar ones of 53, 50 and 48. But once the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum is taken back to the fifties, the difficulty disap-

157 Cf. Tertull. Apol. 5.1, Marc. 1.18.4. Alburnus, perhaps a Celtic deity, does not appear elsewhere in our record.

158 Cf. the discussion of T. Mommsen, Römisches Staatsrecht II (Leipzig, 1887), p. 437 n. 4.


162 Agahd's derivation of the content of Aug. Ciu. 4.23 from Varro (op. cit., pp. 32-3, 65-8, 157-60) is less secure.

163 Hence Cichorius derived Tertullian's statement from Varro's De vita sua (op. cit., pp. 197-8). This ignores the context and the proven links between the Ad nationes and the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum.

164 See Dio 40.47.3.

165 See Val. Max. ep. 1.3.4.

166 See Dio 42.26.2.
pears. Varro mentioned the events of 59 and 58 because they occurred near to the time of writing and happened to have pleased both himself and his political friends.\textsuperscript{167}

At \textit{Ciu.} 6.2 Augustine tries to enlist Varro as a kind of covert supporter for his own attitude to the \textit{di certi}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{quis Marco Varrone curiosius ista quaesuuit? quis inuenit doctius? quis considerauit adtentius? quis distinxit acutius? quis diligentius pleniusque conscripsit? ... iste inquam, urt tantus ingenio tantusque doctrina, si rerum uelut diuinarum de quibus scrispsit oppugnator esset atque decretor easque non ad religionem, sed ad superstitionem diceret pertinere, nesco utrum tam multa in eis ridenda contemnenda conscriberet. cum uero deos eosdem ilia coluerit colendosque censuerit, ut in ea ipso opere litterarum suarurn dicat se timere ne pereant, non incursu hostili, sed ciuium neglegentia, de qua illos uelut ruina liberari a se dicit et in memoria bonorum per eis modi libros recondi atque seruari utiliore cura quam Metellus de incendio sacra Vestalia et Aeneas de Troiano excidio Penates liberasse praedicatur; et tamen ea legenda saeculis producta, quae a sapientibus et insipientibus merito abicienda et uteritati religionis inimicissima iudicentur: quid existimare debemus nisi hominem acerrimum ac peritissimum, non tamen sancto spiritu liberum, oppressum fuisse suae ciuitatis et consuetudine consuetudine ac legibus, et tamen ea quibus movebatur sub specie commendanda religionis tacere noluisse?
\end{quote}

The reference to the legendary Aeneas and that to the consul of 251 and 247, L. Caecilius Metellus, were assigned by Francken to a passage of the first book of the \textit{Antiquitates rerum diuinarum}\textsuperscript{168} and appear there in the collections of Agahd and Cardauns.\textsuperscript{169} It has been opined by Wissowa\textsuperscript{170} and others that Varro referred to Aeneas in order to compliment Caesar. We may accept this even without the assignation to the first book of Varro’s work.\textsuperscript{171} But if Aeneas was commonly recognised as the founder of the Julian

\textsuperscript{167} For Varro’s hostility to the Egyptian cult see Serv. Dan. \textit{Aen.} 8.698, Aug. \textit{Ciu.} 18.3, 5, 40 (reporting the \textit{De gente populi Romani}), \textit{Suda} II p. 193.15-17, s.v. \textit{εγκατεσκηπαν}. In 67 A. Gabinius had as a tribune of the people sponsored the bill giving Pompey command against the pirates (Cic. \textit{Manil.} 44,52, Plut. \textit{Pomp.} 25.3, Dio 36.23.4-5) and in 66-62 had served under Pompey in the East as a \textit{legatus} (Dio 36.42.4, 37.5.2). For Pompey’s support of his candidature for the consulship see Plut. \textit{Pomp.} 48.4, \textit{Cat. min.} 33.7.

\textsuperscript{168} Op. cit., p. 32.

\textsuperscript{169} See Agahd, op. cit., pp. 15, 141-2; Cardauns, op. cit., pp. 15, 137. It is difficult to see what Merkel’s view was (op. cit., p. cix).

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Hermes} 22 (1887), 44 (= \textit{Ges. Abh.} p. 112).

\textsuperscript{171} See below p. 182.
gens, so, too, was the consul of 251 and 247 thought of as the first great Metellus. Now after Pompey's death the leadership of the Republican forces fell to his father-in-law Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio (cos. 52), the head of the Metelli. Metellus had long been a member of the pontifical college and saw himself as pontifex maximus in the event of Caesar's demise. He preferred suicide rather than seek the mercy of Caesar after Thapsus. The reference to the consul of 251 and 247 was at least as complimentary to him as the reference to Aeneas was to Caesar. It is difficult to imagine such a compliment in a work published in the forties. We are thus driven back yet again to the time before the outbreak of civil war if we wish to find a credible date of publication for the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum.

Once the composition of the Antiquitates rerum diuinarum is set in the period 62-55, attempts to associate its design with a Caesarian religious programme must fail. Between 62 and 55 Caesar had weightier personal concerns. In any case, it did not lie with the pontifex maximus either to make religious innovations or to initiate action against neglect of ancient custom. He and the other pontifices merely acted as advisers and judges on matters referred to them by a magistrate or the Senate. The consuls, praetors and tribunes dealt with religious offences.

172 The use of the elephant as a coin motif (RRC 262, 459) is significant.

173 This man was born to P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica and adopted by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius, consul in 80 and Caesar's predecessor as pontifex maximus, probably in 63; for the funerary ludi which he celebrated in 57 see Cic. Sest. 124 and schol. Bob. ad loc. (p. 137.21-5 Stangl). For his daughter's marriage to Pompey see Ascon. p. 30.22 Stangl, Plut. Pomp. 55.1, Appian, B.C. 2.24, Dio 40.51.2-3. For his leading role in the Senate's decision to resist Caesar in 49 see Caes. Ciu. 1.1.4, 4.3.

174 For his pontificate see Cic. Dom. 123, Har. resp. 12, Brut. 212, Sueton. Tib. 4.1. L. R. Taylor, AJPh 63 (1942), 398, surmises that he took his adoptive father's place in 64-5. For the premium demand to succeed Caesar see Caes. Ciu. 3.83.1, Plut. Pomp. 67.9, Caes. 42.2, Appian, B.C. 2.69.


176 For the functions of the pontifices see Cic. Dom. 1. 107, Leg. 2.20, 30, 47, Liv. 1.20.5-7, Dionys. Hal. Ant. 2.73.2. On Dionysius' misunderstanding of the powers of the pontifex maximus see Mommsen, Römisches Staatsrecht, II i (Leipzig, 1887), p. 52 n. 2.

177 It was as tribunus plebis that Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus prosecuted M. Aemilius Scaurus in 104 (Ascon. p. 24.4-9 Stangl). For the action against the Egyptian cult in 58 see above, p. 174.
and the quinquennial censors looked after the physical maintenance of the temples and the supply of the means for executing the regular acts of cults. In the hands of the censors also lay the ultimate sanction against upper-class irreligiousness, namely, the power to expel senators and humiliate publicly members of the equestrian order.

**The Antiquitates rerum diuinarum and the Theme of Public Utility**

It could be accepted that Varro published the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* sometime in the fifties and yet maintained that his purpose was to urge a programme of religious restoration upon Caesar, Pompey, Crassus and like-minded senators, that a similar spirit animated both parts of the *Antiquitates* and Cicero's two dialogues of this period, the *De legibus* and the *De republica.* Since Krahner's time scholars have been anxious to portray Varro as a man with a genuine religious concern and to emphasise the patriotic aspects of all his antiquarian writings. F. Jacoby drew a sharp distinction between these writings and apparently similar Greek writings: "Varro ... is a scholar and supplies much more information than is needed for daily life; but he stated as his purpose the instruction of the public". Certain statements in the works of the Church Fathers attributed by editors to the first

---

178 For the role of the *aediles* see Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.36; for the *censors* letting contracts for the feeding of Juno's geese see Plin. *Nat.* 10.51.

179 For the case of Ap. Claudius Pulcher (cens. 50) and C. Ateius see Cic. *Diu.* 1.29.

180 Cf. P. Wendland, op. cit., p. 86 n. 5 on Cic. *Leg.* 2.19-22 and a supposed desire for a philosophical cleansing of the state cult.


book of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* seem at first sight to support such views. These need reconsideration.

Agahd may have been right to derive Minuc. Fel. 25.1, Tertull. *Apol.* 25.2, *Nat.* 2.17.1 and Aug. *Ciu.* 3.11 (cited above, pp. 155-6) from a Christian source who cited Varro as the author of a proposition that the Roman state owed its imperial success to the care with which its leaders maintained the traditional cult. In the period to which we have assigned the composition of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*, Pompey was being hailed as a conqueror of the inhabited world.\(^{183}\) Certainty is of course unattainable,\(^{184}\) for the proposition was a commonplace at many periods not only among Romans\(^{185}\) but also among Greek observers.\(^{186}\) There can, however, be no doubt that Varro declared it useful to the state that its leaders maintain the traditional cults and discourage scepticism about the power of the objects of these cults at least among the masses. Both at *Ciu.* 4.27

relatum est in litteras doctissimum pontificem Scaeuolam disputasse tria genera tradita deorum: unum a poetis, alterum a philosophis, tertium a principibus ciuitatis. primum genus nugatorium dicit esse, quod multa de diis fingantur indigna; secundum non congruere ciuitatibus, quod habeat aliqua superflua, aliqua etiam quae obsit populis nosse. ... haec pontifex nosse populos non uult; nam falsa esse non putat. expedire igitur existimat falli in religione ciuitas. quod dicere etiam in libris rerum diuinarum Varro ipse non dubitat

and at 4.31

quid ipse Varro, quem dolemus in rebus diuinis ludos scaenicos, quamuis non iudicio proprio, posuisse, cum ad deos colendos multis locis uelut religiosus hortetur, nonne ita confitetur non se illa iudicio suo sequi, quae ciuitatem Romanam instituisse commemorat, ut, si eam ciuitatem nouam constitueret, ex naturae potius formula deos nominaque eorum se fuisse dedicaturum non dubitet confiteri? sed iam quoniam in uetere

---

\(^{183}\) See *Cic.* *Sest.* 129, *Balb.* 9, 16. In the triumphal procession of 63 there had been carried a τροπαίον ... γραφήν ἔχον διότι τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐστίν (*Dio* 37.21.2).


Augustine refers to statements from Varro affirming the general utility of certain traditional Roman religious practices.\(^1\) A statement affirming a particular kind of utility, like the one given by Minucius Felix to his pagan interlocutor, could easily have been made at some point in the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*.

As the power of the Christian church grew and its intolerance of rival cults became apparent many argued that the gods whom they worshiped had in the past positively assisted the rise of Rome and would, if neglected, wreak vengeance. When the Empire became Christian, disasters, whether natural or military, were interpreted as signs of that vengeance.\(^2\) Varro and other writers of the classical period were invoked and the ambiguity which had often marked their pronouncements about religion exploited. Now Varro, in fact, dismissed the possibility that sacrifices and prayer were materially efficacious and almost certainly said so somewhere in the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*. The Christian Arnobius turned Varro's doctrine against his own pagan enemies.

\(^{1}\) The account of Scaevola’s scepticism could come from a different Varronian work (see above, n. 133) but Augustine’s discourse shows that Varro’s attitude as expressed in the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* was no different.

\(^{2}\) Cf. Zosimus 5.41, Olympiodorus ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 80, 57 b, 60 a, Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 476 (attributing the victories of Julian to the support of the pagan gods, Alaric’s rampage in Greece to their anger).

\(^{189}\) *Adversus nationes* 7.1. Popma placed the passage among the “fragmenta non indicato opere ab autoribus allata”. Merkel (op. cit., p. cviii), Schmekel (op. cit., p. cvii).
heedless of the fact that the church's view of the relationship between man and the divine was equally vulnerable to the kind of argument used by Varro. It was the belief of the masses in the efficacy of sacrifices and prayer that Varro considered useful to the welfare of the state. And so as not to do any damage to that belief, he described the practices which expressed it in a reticent and reverent spirit. If he said that piety brought the Romans success and empire, he was not talking at all like the genuinely pious pagan of Minucius' dialogue. Careful students have been aware of this and willing to agree that it was only among the masses that Varro wanted to encourage piety. It does not, however, follow from any of his remarks about the social utility of religious practices that he considered his own motive in writing at length about such practices to be primarily a utilitarian one. The tone of these remarks was one of mildly cynical detachment.

At Ciu. 4.22 Augustine cites a statement by Varro asserting the utility of knowing the proper functions as well as the names of Roman divi. He then goes on to ridicule this multiplicity. Varro's very words can be restored without difficulty from Augustine's discourse:

quoniam nihil prodest hominis alicuius medici nomen formamque nosse et quod sit medicus ignorare, ita nihil prodest scire deum esse Aesculapium si nescias eum ualetudini opitulari atque ita ignores cur ei debeas supplicare. non modo bene uiuere sed uiuere omnino nemo potest si ignorat quibus medicus sit faber, quis pistor, quis tector, a quo quid utensile petere possit, quem adiutorem adsumere, quem ducem, quem doctorem. hoc modo nulli dubium est ita esse utilem cognitionem deorum, si sciatur quam quisque deus uim et facultatern ac potestatem cuiusque rei habeat. ex eo enim poterimus scire quem cuiusque causa deum aduocare et innocare debeamus, ne faciamus, ut mimi solent, et optemus a Libero aquam, a Lymphis uinum.

---

190 His view was that put by Cicero into the mouth of the sceptical Cotta at Nat. deor. 3.5 rather than the Stoic Balbus's (Nat. deor. 2.8). For the the theme of preserving traditional religious habits despite their absurdities, cf. Max. Tyr. 8.9.

191 Fr. 3. Cf. Ciu. 6.1. One cannot always be sure about the order of words.
Merkel and Agahd argued that this belonged to the introductory first book of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*.\(^{192}\) Cardauns has with some hesitation accepted their arguments.\(^{193}\) Francken, however, assigned the statement to book XIV,\(^ {194}\) and rightly so in my view. In other chapters of *Ciu. 4* Augustine draws heavily for his account of the deities from whom the Romans sought material benefits upon the fourteenth book of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*, the book concerned with the *di certi*.\(^ {195}\) At *Ciu. 6. 9* he describes in similar terms the purpose of this book:

> denique et ipse Varro commemorare et enumerare deos coepit a conceptione hominis, quorum numerum est exorsus a Iano, eamque seriem perduxit usque ad decrepiti hominis mortem, et deos ad ipsum hominem pertinentes clausit ad Neniam deam, quae in funeribus sernum cantatur; deinde coepit deos alios ostendere, qui pertinent non ad ipsum hominem, sed ad ea, quae sunt hominis, sicuti est uictus et quaecumque alia huic utiae sunt necessaria, ostendens in omnibus, quod sit cuiusque munus et propter quid quique debeat supplicari.\(^ {196}\)

It is in the fourteenth book that an editor of the fragments of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* acting without preconceived notions would place the statement cited by Augustine at *Ciu. 4. 22*. Augustine’s introductory words

> quid est ergo quod pro ingenti beneficio Varro iactat praestare se civibus suis, quia non solum commemorat deos quos coli oporteat a Romanis, uerum etiam dicit quid ad quemque pertineat

mistake, or perhaps deliberately misrepresent, the spirit of Varro’s discourse. Varro did not believe, for example, that an offering to Ianus actually helped the mouth of a recalcitrant uterus to open during sexual intercourse.\(^ {197}\) For him the truly divine needed nothing from men.\(^ {198}\) What Augustine actually cites of Varro’s discourse is not so much boastful as defensive. Varro feared that

\(^{192}\) See Merkel, op. cit., p. cix; Agahd, op. cit., pp. 16, 143-4. Popma had put it among his “fragmenta incerta”.


\(^{195}\) See *Ciu. 6.3-4*. A number of specific quotations of this book (see below, pp. 192-3) confirm that this was its theme.

\(^{196}\) See Francken, op. cit., p. 51; Merkel, op. cit., pp. clxxxv-vii; Agahd, op. cit., pp. 20, 165-6; Cardauns (fr. 88).

\(^{197}\) See the material about Ianus cited at *Ciu. 7.2-3* (fr. 90).

\(^{198}\) See Arnob. 7.1 (cited above, p. 179).
the effort which he had expended in finding, and more particularly in explaining, so many obscure divine names might seem to more publicly active senatorial colleagues useless pedantry\(^{199}\) and to the philosophically instructed an encouragement to foolish superstition.\(^{200}\) He defended himself with heavy-handed humour. It suited Augustine not to see this. We, however, should not be deceived into thinking that we have here a statement about the motivation of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* as a whole.

The statements cited by Augustine at *Ciu*. 4.31 and 6.2 (see above, pp. 154-5, 175, 179) and universally assigned to book I of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*\(^{201}\) are as little entitled as the one cited at 4.22 and 6.1 to reside in this book. At both points Augustine is trying to enlist Varro as a kind of covert supporter for his own attitude to the *di certi*. Unless the Christian writer is twisting the pagan's discourse in a very extreme fashion, Varro must be understood to have been referring to the contents of book XIV, not to those of all the books from I to XVI.\(^{202}\) His tone was quite clearly a defensive one. He feared both the studious person who wanted more information than he was willing to provide about some rites\(^{203}\) and the kind of senator who had no desire to see the state cult neglected but felt embarrassed at having his attention drawn to aspects which betrayed its rustic origins.\(^{204}\) It

\(^{199}\) For impatience with the etymologising of divine names see Cic. *Nat. deor.* 3.62-3.

\(^{200}\) For an attempt by Varro to distinguish between the *superstitiosus* and the *religiosus* see Aug. *Ciu*. 6.9 (assigned by Agahd, op. cit., pp. 20, 155, to book I of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*). Vulgar superstition was a target for both philosophers (cf. Theophrast. *Char.* 16, Lucret. 5. 1198-1203 [= Epicurus]; the *De superstitione* of Seneca and the *περὶ δεισιδαιμονιας* of Plutarch had long ancestries) and poets (cf. Lucil. 484-9 [ap. Lactant. *Inst.* 1.22.13], Persius 2.52-75).


\(^{202}\) Note *illa* referring back to *deos nominaque eorum* at 4.31 and *illos* referring back to *deos* at 6.2 (the passages are cited above, pp. 154-5).

\(^{203}\) For pontifical secrecy in the interest of maintaining piety in the populace see Liv. 4.3.9, 6.1.10. Cf. Val. *Max.* 1.1.13.

\(^{204}\) See Cic. *Nat. deor.* 2.71 *non enim philosophi solum urerum etiam maiores nostri superstitionem a religione separauerunt*. Even Livy, faced with the events of 204, was moved to say *impleuerat ea res superstitionum animos, proni* et *ad nunta* et *et ad credenda prodigia erant* (29.14.2).
is quite wrong to see in Varro's statement anything of the religious or political zealot.

**Latin Antiquitates and Greek ἀρχαιολογία**

If the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* was not a blue-print for a practical programme of religious reform, what then, it may be asked, was it? The answer is to be deduced from the work's title, its contents as a whole, the arrangement of these contents, and the methods of working displayed.

In the catalogue of Varro's works quoted by Jerome two shapes of title can be discerned: *liber de* / *libri de* + abl. and *liber* / *libri* + gen. The former is exemplified by *III de uita populi Romani, de lingua Latina XXV, de sermone Latino V* et al., the latter by *XLV libri antiquitatum*, *imaginum XV, Λογιστορικῶν LXXVI, disciplinarum VIII, quaestionum Plautinarum V, annalium III, legationum III, suasionum III, rerum rusticarum libri III, rerum urbanarum libri III, satirarum Menippearum libri CL, poematum libri X, orationum libri XXII, pseudotragoediārum libri VI, satirarum libri III*. Clearly an *antiquitas* formed a distinct unit like a *satira*, an *oratio* or a *poema*. The noun could be further defined with a genitive phrase: e.g. *antiquitas rei humanae* or *antiquitas rei diuinae*. The extant three books of *res rusticae* have to do with agriculture as it was practised in Varro's own time and mention earlier stages of its development only in passing. A *res rustica* was a very different thing from an *antiquitas rei rusticae* and likewise, we may be sure, a *res divina* from an *antiquitas rei diuinae*. Scholars ought not to be misled by the abbreviated way in which Latin writers often cited the sixteen books of the *Antiquita-

---

205 See above, n. 8.

206 The figure XLII occurs further down the catalogue. Simple error suffices to explain the situation. A. Klotz (*Hermes* 46 [1911], 6-7) thought that the catalogue maker included the four books *de gente populi Romani*, the twenty-five of *antiquitates rerum humanarum*, and the sixteen of *antiquitates rerum diuinarum* (see Aug. Ciu. 6.3).

207 For the latter see Non. p. 480.1 and cf. Gell. 11.1.1.


209 Cf. 1.2.3-16.
Varro’s full title proclaimed an interest in the ancient origins of cult observable at the time of writing. Varro must have meant by antiquitas an “account of something antiquus”. This was an extension of the normal meaning, “state of being antiquus”. It gained some currency doubtless as the result of the prestige of Varro’s writings. Material to be discussed later proves what one might guess, namely that it was a calque on the Greek ἀρχαιολογία, a word with a morphological structure which could not be exactly reproduced in Latin. Historia, a direct borrowing from Greek, had long been domesticated in Latin with the same very wide semantic field it possessed in its original language. It could be applied to the kind of story Varro called an antiquitas but tended to be restricted to stories which were based on some sort of personal experience rather than on the investigation of written records. Those who called themselves historici stressed the utility of their narratives to statesmen and even when they began in times well before their own they usually dismissed antiquitates as pedantic and lacking in utility and interest for the audience they were addressing.

Varro himself cited them as libri antiquitatum (Ling. 6.13, 18). For antiquitates diuinae see Charis. p. 186.18. Res diuinae, however, is far and away the most commonly used title. The situation of the remains of the Antiquitates rerum humanarum is similar.

Note also Cicero’s full description at Ac. 1.9: tu aetatem patriae, tu descriptiones temporum, tu sacrorum iura, tu sacerdotum, tu domesticam, tu bellicam disciplinam, tu sedum regionum locorum, tu omnium diuinorum humanarumque rerum nomina generis officia causas aperuisti. For this use of causa see Off. 2.5, Tusc. 5.7.

The lexica fail to make necessary distinctions. With the Varronian title belong Ateius Capito ap. Gell. 13.12.2 ... ut dieo Augusto iam principe et rem publicam obtinente ratum tamen pensumque nihil haberet, nisi quod iussum sanctumque esse in Romanis antiquitatis legisset, Sen. Dial. 8.5.2 antiquitates evoluere, Plin. Nat. praef. 24 (Antiquitates as a book title), 13.87 (Varro’s report that among the books of Numa uncovered in 181 were humanarum antiquitarum VII), Gell. 2.15.2 ut scriptum in antiquitatis est. 5.13.3 testimonia aquire documenta in antiquitatis perscripta, Arnob. 1.5 uetera et nullis antiquitatibus inaudita, Ammian. 16.7.8-9 (cited below, n. 216).

Cf. Plaut. Men. 247-8 quin nos hinc domum redimus nisi si historiam scripturi sumus? (slave to owner who has been travelling all over Mediterranean), Serv. Virg. Aen. 1.373. At Cic. De orat. 1.165 historia seems to be distinguished from antiquitas.

Cf. Sempronius Asellio ap. Gell. 5.18.9.

Cf. Ammian. 16.7.8-9, cui spadonum ueterum hunc comparare debeam
The fact that Dionysius of Halicarnassus refers to Varro’s *antiquitates* as ἀρχαιολογία indicates the model of the Latin writer’s title and widens the field of evidence relevant to the question of his motivation. Plato described the lectures of Hippias of Elis on the origins of families and the foundations of cities as ἀρχαιολογία. Cleanthes of Assos seems to have used this word as the title of one of his own works. Dionysius called the Ἱστορία of Phanodemus an Ἱστορία ἀρχαιολογία and his own account of Roman affairs from the foundation of the city to the point where the Ἱστορία of Polybius began a Ἱστορία ἀρχαιολογία. The Jewish priest Josephus called an account of his people which came down to the year A.D. 66 but concentrated on the distant past a Ἱστορία ἀρχαιολογία. Commentators on the classic Ἱστορία of Thucydides called his digression on early Greece an ἀρχαιολογία. Thucydides had concentrated on what he himself observed or learned from eye-witnesses. He was himself a statesman, ever loyal to the state which had expelled him, and hoped that other statesmen would find his work useful. He despised those who based accounts of the distant past on books, documents and learned guesswork and sought merely to entertain. The imitators of Thucydides were also statesmen and

---

antiquitates replicando complures inuenire non potui ... urum si forte scrupulosus quidam lector antiquitatum Menophilum ... nobis opponat, Oros. Hist. 5.1.16 ne antiquitatibus videar immorari.


218 *Hipp. mai.* 285d. Hippias wrote an Ὀλυμπιονικὸν ἀναγραφή and an Ἐθνῶν ἄνομασίων.

219 See Diog. Laert. 7.175.

220 *Ant.* 1.61.5.

221 Little is known of the contents of Simmias’ Ἀρχαιολογία τῶν Σαμίων (*Suda* IV p. 360.12, S.v. Σιμίτως), Juba’s Ῥωμαιικὴ ἀρχαιολογία (Steph. Byz. s.v. Νομαντία) or Hieronymus Aegyptius’ Φοινικικὴ ἀρχαιολογία (Joseph. *Ant. Iud.* 1.3.94). For the word see also Dionys. Hal. *Ant.* 1.4.1, Strab. 11.14.12, p. 530 Casaubon, Diodor. Sic. 1.4.6, 1.9.5, 2.46.6, Plut. *Mor.* 855 d, Joseph. *Ant. Iud.* 1.1.5, Philostrat. *Vit. Apoll. Ty.* 2.9, Proclus, *Comm. Plat. Tim.* 22 a-b, I pp. 101-2 Diehl, *Suda* IV, p. 713. 25, s.v. Φιλοσόφις. Whereas Ἱστορία at times extended to cover any account of the past, near or distant (cf. Steph. Byz. svv. Ἱστορία, Ὀμοτία, for Juba’s work as the Ῥωμαιικὴ Ἱστορία, ἀρχαιολογία could never denote a work like Thucydides’s regarded as a whole.


223 Cf. 1.22.4. It is perhaps significant that at 7.69. 2 Thucydides uses the verb ἀρχαιολογεῖν in a thoroughly pejorative way.
maintained the same utilitarian stance. Hippias and Cleanthes, on the other hand, made a profession of educating the young in other men's cities. If they alleged utility in what they said and wrote about the distant past, it was a different sort of utility from what Thucydides had in mind. Certainly, the sheer pleasure Hippias gave his listeners struck observers. It may be no accident that among stage-entertainers of a later time there figured an ἄρχαιολόγος. Interest in the past affected many members of the Roman and Greek upper classes in Varro's time. Varro was not a Hippias or a Cleanthes but his *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* would have appealed to the same sort of disinterested curiosity about the past that the Greek educators exploited. It is not impossible that the work offered simultaneously a blueprint for a practical programme, but the tradition in which Varro wrote provided no models and Varro was no innovator.

Varro's title has a universalist sound that echoes in references to it by Greek writers (e.g. in Dionysius' ἐν τῇ θεολογίᾳ πραγματείᾳ and in John the Lydian's ἐν τῇ τεσσαρεσκαιδεκάτῃ τῶν

---

224 The *Istoriai* of Ephorus began with the deeds of the sons of Heracles but seems to have been designed to culminate with the victory of Philip II in the Sacred War. The relationship between Theopompus' *Ἐλληνικὴ ἱστορία* and Φιλιππικὰ ἱστορίαι is not clear. There may have been a unitary conception and certainly there was much about the period through which Theopompus himself had lived. Where Timaeus intended to place the emphasis of his ἱστορίαι when he began writing is obscure. A very substantial part of what he left concerned the Sicily of his own time. Polybius' ἱστορίαι was originally designed to account for the imperial position Rome had gained by 167, the year of his deportation from his native city. He stressed the utility of the work (1.1) and commented harshly on writers who concerned themselves with genealogies and the foundations of cities (9.1.4). Just as Theopompus began where Thucydides finished, so, too, did Posidonius' ἱστορίαι continue the work of Polybius. It ended, and doubtless was designed to end, with Sulla's restoration in power of the Roman nobility, an event of some importance to the ruling class of Posidonius' adopted city.

225 See Plat. Hipp. mai. 285 d.
226 See *CGIL* II 22.40-42 and *IG* II 2153 as interpreted by L. Robert, *REG* 49 (1936), 235-54 (= *Opera minora selecta* I [Amsterdam, 1969], 671-90).
227 The behaviour of Alexander (cf. Curt. 4.8.3) provided a model. Boys at school read about the companion of Servilius Geminus *multa tenens, antiqua sepulta uetustas quae facit* (Enn. Ann. 247-8). Cicero's Brutus frequently refers to antiquarian knowledge: e.g. 81 *Ser. Fabius Pictor et iuris et litterarum et antiquitatis bene peritus, 205 L. Aelius ... antiquitatis nostrae et in inuentis rebus et in actis scriptorumque veterum litterate peritus, 267 Appius Claudius ... antiquitatisque nostrae bene peritus.*
228 *Ant.* 4.62.6.
θείων πραγμάτων 229) and in the way that the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* bundles its use of *res diuina* under the rubric *i.q. res caelestis* along with Cic. *De orat.* 1.212 ... ut is qui studet omnium rerum diuinarum atque humanarum uim naturam causasque nosse et omnem bene uiuendi rationem tenere et persequi, nomine hoc appelletur, *Tusc.* 4.57, *Off.* 1.153, 2.5 et sim. 230 Cicero’s *res diuinae* are what the Greeks called sometimes τὰ φυσικά and sometimes τὰ θεῖα. While books I, XIV, XV and XVI of the actual work could fairly be said to concern *res diuinae* in this sense, the rest could not. Varro, in fact, made it clear at an early point that his concern was not with the whole inhabited earth but only with the city of Rome. 231 Significantly he devoted entire books to the pontifices, the augures and the quindecimuii sacris faciundis and ignored the Etruscan haruspices, despite the attention which the Senate and individual Roman aristocrats paid the pronouncements of the latter during the first century B.C. 232 He must have meant his title to cover the whole area of business which the Roman consul was expected to treat first in a *relatio* to the Senate. 233

The history of religious institutions as such had long interested quite a wide public, and from the fifth century B.C. onwards there appear in our record of Greek writing titles (if little else) of prose monographs devoted to places of cult, to periodic festivals, to religious calendars, to forms of sacrifice, to divinities and to divine names. 234 It is noteworthy that no title refers to priests. The authors were in the main professional grammarians and philosophers, in other words men like Hippias of Elis. A few, like Philochorus, 235 were men who took an active part in the political life of their own native city. Nothing, however, suggests that they orientated their works differently from those of the professionals. Our record of Latin writing down to the time of Varro contains

229 *Mens.* 4.2.
230 *V i,* 1622. 46-65.
231 See *Aug.* *Ciu.* 6.4 (fr. 5).
233 See Varro’s advice to Pompey on senatorial procedure: *Gell.* 14.7.9 ... *de rebusque diuinis prius quam humanis ad senatum referendum esse.*
234 The material is collected by A. Tresp, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Kultschriftsteller* (Giessen, 1914 [Religionsgesch. Versuch. und Vorarbeit. 15.1]); cf. *RE* Suppl. 4 (1924), 1119-23, s.v. *Kultschriftsteller.*
235 See *Suda* IV, p. 736. 6-21, s.v. Φιλόχορος.
titles similar to those in the Greek record except that some refer to priesthoods.\textsuperscript{236} Consideration of the names of the Latin authors reveals an interesting difference from the Greek situation. Most turn out to be members of the Roman ruling class. Q. Fabius Maximus Servilianus, author of a work on the \textit{ius pontificium},\textsuperscript{237} was consul in 142. C. Claudius Marcellus, author of a work about \textit{auguralia},\textsuperscript{238} was praetor in 80. L. Iulius Caesar, author of an \textit{Auspicia},\textsuperscript{239} was consul in 64. M. Tullius Cicero, author of a \textit{De auguriis},\textsuperscript{240} was consul in 63. App. Claudius, who wrote an \textit{Auguralis disciplina},\textsuperscript{241} was consul in 54. M. Valerius Messalla Rufus, who wrote a \textit{De auspiciis},\textsuperscript{242} was consul in 53. P. Nigidius Figulus, who wrote a \textit{De dis},\textsuperscript{243} a \textit{De augurio privato},\textsuperscript{244} and a \textit{De exitis},\textsuperscript{245} was praetor in 58. We know nothing about the persons of the Ennius who wrote a \textit{De augurali disciplina},\textsuperscript{246} the Gavius Bassus who wrote a \textit{De dis},\textsuperscript{247} the Veranius who wrote an \textit{Auspicia}\textsuperscript{248} and a \textit{Quaestiones pontificales},\textsuperscript{249} the Granius Flaccus who wrote a \textit{De indigitamentis},\textsuperscript{250} or the Octavius Hersennius who wrote a \textit{De sacrificis saliaribus Tiburtium}.\textsuperscript{251} In no case does the name betray a non-Roman origin and it may be that they all wrote under close aristocratic supervision.\textsuperscript{252} The fact

\textsuperscript{236} The Greeks seemed even to themselves careless about priests; see Dionys. \textit{Hal Ant.} 2.21.3.

\textsuperscript{237} See Macrobr. \textit{Sat.} 1.16.25. This may be the work cited by Nonius, p. 518. 36.

\textsuperscript{238} See Cic. \textit{Leg.} 2.32.


\textsuperscript{240} See Charis. pp. 133.23, 156.23, 176.15. Servius, \textit{Aen.} 5.738, cites \textit{Cicero in auguralibus}.

\textsuperscript{241} See Fest. p. 386.13-14.

\textsuperscript{242} See Gell. 13.15.3-4.

\textsuperscript{243} See Macrobr. \textit{Sat.} 3.4.6.

\textsuperscript{244} See Gell. 7.6.10.

\textsuperscript{245} See Gell. 16.6.12, Macrobr. \textit{Sat.} 6.9.5.

\textsuperscript{246} See Sueton. \textit{Gramm.} 1.3.


\textsuperscript{248} See Fest. p. 366.10-11.

\textsuperscript{249} See Macrobr. \textit{Sat.} 3.5.6. Cf. 3.6.14, 3.20.2.

\textsuperscript{250} See Censorin. \textit{Nat.} 3.2.

\textsuperscript{251} See Macrobr. \textit{Sat.} 3.12.7.

\textsuperscript{252} Granius Flaccus dedicated his \textit{De indigitamentis} to Julius Caesar. He wrote a commentary on the \textit{ius Papirianum} (Paul. \textit{Dig.} 50.16.144), which would suggest that he was a man of some status.
that Q. Fabius Maximus Servilianus was a pontifex and C. Claudius Marcellus, L. Iulius Caesar, M. Tullius Cicero, App. Claudius Pulcher and M. Valerius Messalla Rufus were all augures is also of some significance. Varro reached the praetorship and it has been argued that he was a member of the college of the quindecimuir sacris faciundis. I must confess that the spirit of the literary product of such a group would have differed from that, say, of Polemon of Ilium’s works on the religious monuments of a variety of Greek cities. There was bound to be a certain nationalistic possessiveness and pride. It is unnecessary, however, to suppose that all or any had more than an antiquarian purpose in view.

The encyclopaedic character of Varro’s title distinguishes it from all those which survive of earlier Greek and Latin works on religious matters. It would be good to know what gave encyclopaedias their appeal to educated men of the first century B.C. The Antiquitates rerum humanarum et diuinarum was not the only one which Varro composed. The Disciplinae covered all the professions to which members of his social class gave some honour. Roman gentlemen did not, however, as a rule profess grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music, medicine or architecture. No one, even among the Greeks, attempted seriously to profess them all. Practicality was scarcely Varro’s motive in putting them together. The management of the Roman res diuinae was divided into a number of specialisms not totally different from those which marked professional activity and it is difficult to see what use a paterfamilias or a magistrate or a pontifex or an augur or a quindecimuir could have found for Varro’s sixteen books. On the other hand, while ultimate authority lay in the hands of the Senate and debate about the res diuinae required some detailed knowledge, the sort of detail

---

253 See above, n. 112.
255 For the remains, see Tresp, Die Fragmente, pp. 85-90, 114-15, 143-4, 204-211.
256 On general knowledge in ancient education see H. Fuchs, RAC 5.35 (1960), 365-98, s.v. Enkyklios Paideia.
257 See Vitruv. 7 praef. 14, Gell. 10.1.6, 18.15.2, Non. pp. 135.10, 551.13, Pseudacro, Hor. Ars 202, Isid. Orig. 2.23.1.
purveyed by Varro would not have assisted a senator to persuade his fellows. Convention frowned on the display of excessive erudition.\(^{259}\)

Many references in the remains of Varro’s sixteen books confirm the deduction which the word *antiquitates* in the title of the work suggests. Book II mentioned the journey of Aeneas from Troy to Latium;\(^ {260}\) book III the encounter of one L. Scipio with a lightning bolt;\(^ {261}\) book IV the ten Sibylls, the selling of books of oracles to L. Tarquinius Superbus by Amalthea, the Sibyll of Cumae, and the reconstitution of the Capitoline collection of oracles after the fire of 83;\(^ {262}\) book V the spelling of the word *ara* in ancient times;\(^ {263}\) book VI the planning of the temple of Saturnus by L. Tarquinius Superbus and its dedication by T. Larcius.\(^ {264}\) Somewhere, in all likelihood, were accounts of the official introduction at various times of new cults to Rome,\(^ {265}\) of the prohibition of others,\(^ {266}\) of L. Tarquinius Priscus’ establishment of temples and anthropoid statues,\(^ {267}\) of Aeneas’ disappearance in the battle with the Laurentes, of Romulus’ disappearance at a popular assembly, of the madness of Faunus, of the shyness of Fauna, of the hospitality given by Sanctus to Titus Tatius, of the service performed for Hercules by Larentina and the latter’s

\(^{259}\) The disclaimers which Cicero makes to detailed knowledge of pontifical and augural practice at *Dom.* 33, 39, 121, 138 are instructive.

\(^{260}\) See Serv. *Aen.* 1.382, 3.256 (excluded by Cardauns from the *Res diuinae*).

\(^{261}\) See Non. p. 334. 29-31 (fr. 53).


\(^{264}\) See Macrob. *Sat.* 1.8.1 (fr. 73).


\(^{266}\) Agahd (see above, n. 161) assigned the substance of Tertull. *Nat.* 1.10.14-17 to book I and is followed by Cardauns (frs. 44-46).

disappearance,²⁶⁸ of the conception of Branchus, his endowment with the gift of prophecy and disappearance.²⁶⁹ Such antiquarian information had not the slightest utility for statesmen wishing to develop religious policies. For the advocate of novelty it was an irrelevance. On the other hand, by illustrating the degree to which the content and form of Roman cult had changed over the centuries, it would have hindered any advocate of a return to ancient ways. The only period for which Varro expressed a positive admiration was that which preceded the monarchy of Tarquinius Priscus and he disclaimed any desire to have the religious institutions of that period restored.²⁷⁰ He was, it ought to be clear, interested in antiquity merely for its own sake. The catalogue of buildings once used for purposes of cult which book VI presented,²⁷¹ and the lists of divine names which books XIV, XV and XVI presented,²⁷² would have been intended, not to inspire or aid a political effort at reestablishing neglected practices, but to set the scene for describing the ancient history of things and words still observable.


²⁷⁰ See Aug. Ciu. 3.12 nec his sacris tamen Roma dignata est esse contenta, quae tam multa illic Pompilius constituerat. nam ipsius summum templum nondum habebat louis (derived along with Tertull. Apol. 25.12, Nat. 2.17.12-13 et al. from book I by Agahd, op. cit., pp. 69-70, 157, and Cardauns [fr. 38]), 4.31 quid ipse Varro ... nonne ita confitetur, non se illa iudicio suo sequi, quae ciiuitatem Romanam instituisse commenhorat, ut si eam ciiuitatem nouam constitueret, ex naturae potius formula deos nominaque eorum se fuisse dedicaturum non dubitet confiteri? sed iam quoniam in utere populo esset, acceptam ab antiquis nominem et cognominum historiam tenere, ut tradita est, debere se dicit et ad eum finem illa scribere ac perscrutari, ut potius eos magis colere quam despiceru vulgus uelit (derived from book I by Francken, op. cit., p. 31, and succeeding collectors of the fragments) ... dicit etiam antiquos Romanos plus annos centum et septuaginta deos sine simulacro coluisse, 'quod si adhuc, inquit, mansisset, castius dii obseruarentur' ... nec dubiat eum locum ita conclusere, ut dicat, qui primi simulacra deorum popolis posuerunt, eos ciiuitatibus suis et metum dempisisse et errorem addidisse (on the location of this statement see above, n. 267).

²⁷¹ See Aug. Ciu. 3.17 (testimon. p. 49 Cardauns).

²⁷² See below, pp. 192-8.
THE CONTENT AND ARRANGEMENT OF BOOKS I, XIV, XV, AND XVI OF THE *ANTIQUITATES RERUM DIVINARUM*

While the general content of each of the sixteen books of the *Antiuitates rerum divinarum* is clear, few details are known of any except the introductory book I and the concluding books XIV, XV and XVI. About all four books there are uncertainties not always properly recognised.

About book I we know for sure that it began with a discussion of the Sabine goddess Vacuna and that it treated in some detail of the theory of the nature of the human elaborated in Plato’s *Phaiio*. Two statements cited from it by Nonius Marcellus are quite opaque. The sixteen ‘fragments’ found for it by Merkel, the fifty by Schmekel, the sixty by Agahd and the fifty by Cardauns contain much which can with plausibility be placed elsewhere. Argument about the structure of the book is therefore idle.

Augustine’s account at *Ciu. 6.9*

denique et ipse Varro commemorare et enumerare deos coepit a conceptione hominis, quorum numerum est exorsus a Iano, eamque seriem perduxit usque ad decrepiti hominis mortem, et deos ad ipsum hominem pertinentes clausit ad Neniam deam, quae in funeribus senum cantatur; deinde coepit deos alios ostendere, qui pertinent non ad ipsum hominem, sed ad ea, quae sunt hominis, sicuti est uictus atque uestitus et quaecunque alia huic uitae sunt necessaria, ostendens in omnibus, quod sit cuiusque munus et propter quid cuique debeat supplicari makes the structure of book XIV quite clear. The first and last of the series of *di certi*, Ianus and Nenia, are named. John the Lydian confirms the presence of Ianus. Gellius adds the names Parca,
Nona and Decima;\(^{280}\) commentators on Virgil’s *Aeneid* Venilia and Iuturna.\(^{281}\) It has long been recognised that much in the second book of Tertullian’s *Ad nationes* and in the fourth and seventh of Augustine’s *De ciuitate Dei* derives directly from Varro’s account of the *di certi*.\(^{282}\) The results of the sifting by R. Peter\(^{283}\) and by Agahd\(^{284}\) of these and other ancient discussions of deities with very particular functions in Roman private life has been accepted through this century.\(^{285}\) Perhaps too readily. At any rate it must be emphasised that Tertullian and Augustine cited only what seemed to them ridiculous. A much less distorted view of the character of the book can be had by looking at what Gellius cites of discussions of the Greek, Gallic and Spanish elements in the Latin vocabulary\(^{286}\) and of older attitudes to premature and delayed births,\(^{287}\) at Nonius’ reference to the behaviour of widows who remarried,\(^{288}\) and at John the Lydian’s mention of the Etruscan cult of Ianus.\(^{289}\)

Only three statements are directly attributed in our sources to book XV:

\begin{quote}
ulgus rumorem
\end{quote}

| at Charis. p. 186. 18-19;\(^{290}\) |

\begin{quote}
Cum in hoc libello dubias de diis opiniones posuero, reprehendi non debo. qui enim putabit iudicari oportere et posse, cum audierit, faciet
\end{quote}

\(^{280}\) See 3.16.5-10 (fr. 98).


\(^{282}\) What Tertullian says at *Nat.* 2.11 and Augustine at *Ciu.* 4.11 and 21 differs in some small respects from what Augustine says in *Ciu.* 7. O. Gruppe (*Wochenschr. f. kl. Phil.* 6 [1889], 513-16) argued that only the latter came directly from the Antiquitates rerum divinarum.

\(^{283}\) In W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, II (Leipzig, 1890-97), 137-48, s.v. Indigitamenta.


\(^{286}\) 1.18. 1-4 (frs. 89, 194), 15.30.6-7 (fr. 203).

\(^{287}\) 3.16.5-10 (fr. 98).

\(^{288}\) p. 480.1-3 (fr. 156).

\(^{289}\) *Mens.* 4.2 (fr. 201).

\(^{290}\) Fr. 224.
ipse. ego citius perduci possum, ut in primo libro quae dixi in dubitatio-
em reuocem, quam in hoc quae perscribam omnia ut ad aliquam
dirigam summam

at Aug. *Ciu.* 7. 17;²⁹¹ and

pontifex in sacris quibusdam uitulari solet, quod Graeci πατρικέαν
uocant

at Macrob. *Sat.* 3. 2. 11.²⁹² There is also an indirect statement at
Aug. *Ciu.* 7. 28 which must come from this book:²⁹³

hinc etiam Samothracum nobilia mysteria in superiore libro sic interpre-
tatur eaque se quae nec Sais (*Wissowa*: suis *codd.*) nota sunt scribendo
expositurum eisque missurum quasi religiosissime pollicetur. dicit enim
se ibi multis indicis collegisse in simulacris aliud significare caelum, aliud
terram, aliud exempla rerum, quas Plato appellat ideas; caelum Iouem,
terram Iunonem, ideas Mineruam uult intellegi; caelum a quo fiat
aliquid, terram de qua fiat, exemplum secundum quod fiat.

We thus can only guess at the names of Varro’s *di incerti*. Agahd
took over a view of Wissowa,²⁹⁴ that under this rubric Varro put
the deities about whose nature and function he was unsure, and
constructed for book XV seventeen further fragments dealing with
the Di penates, the Di consentes, the Lares, the Manes, the Musae,
the Nouensiles, Pater indiges / Aeneas, Romulus / Quirinus,
Sterculus, Faunus, Fauna, Sanctus, Larentina, Luperca,
Praestana, Panda / Panticæ, and Feronia.²⁹⁵ Earlier scholars saw
some objectivity in Varro’s distinction between *di certi* and *di
incerti*.²⁹⁶ So, too, some later ones.²⁹⁷ Cardauns however follows

²⁹¹ Fr. 204.
²⁹² Fr. 223.
²⁹³ Fr. 206. Popma put the passage in book XVI. Francken was nonplussed
(op. cit., pp. 108-109) and Merkel omitted it (but cf. op. cit., p. clxxxix). Krahner,
*Curio*, pp. 3, 7-8, assigned it to the *Curio de cultu deorum*. *Wissowa* (*Hermes* 22
[1887], 48-9 [= *Ges. Abh.* pp. 117-18]) made the facts clear; cf. also Agahd,
op. cit., pp. 11-12.
n. 4; cf. *Religion und Kultur der Römer* (Munich, 1902), pp. 67-70; ‘Echte und
Varronischen *di certi* und *incerti*’, *Hermes* 56 (1921), 113-30.
(Berlin, 1881), pp. 71-3.
Begriffsbildung* (Bonn, 1896), p. 75; A. v. Domaszewski, ‘Dei certi und dei
Agahd even more slavishly here than elsewhere in his collection.\textsuperscript{298} Whether Wissowa's view is right or wrong, the structure of book XV must remain a mystery.

Augustine lists at \textit{Ciu.} 7.2 the twenty \textit{di selecti} treated by Varro in book XVI:

\begin{quote}
\textit{hos certe deos selectos Varro unius libri contextione commendat: Ianum, Iouem, Saturnum, Genium, Mercurium, Apollinem, Martem, Vulcanum, Neptunum, Solem, Orcum, Liberum patrem, Tellurem, Cererem, Iunonem, Lunam, Dianam, Mineruam, Venerem, Vestam; in quibus omnibus ferme uiginti duodecim mares, octo sunt feminae.}\textsuperscript{299}
\end{quote}

This would seem to be the order in which he treated them. A direct quotation at \textit{Ciu.} 7.28

\begin{quote}
quoniam ut primo libro dixi de locis, duo sunt principia deorum animaduersa de caelo et terra, a quo dii partim dicuntur caelestes, partim terrestres, ut in superioribus initium fecimus a caelo, cum diximus de Iano, quem ali\textsuperscript{2}i caelum, ali\textsuperscript{2}i dixerunt esse mundum, sic de feminis scribendi facimus initium a Tellure\textsuperscript{300}
\end{quote}

offers some confirmation. Fragment collectors have sifted items of Varro's discourse from the polemic directed against it in \textit{Ciu.} 7.2-29\textsuperscript{301} but leave obscure the way in which Augustine transfers the attributes of the pagan \textit{di selecti} to the Christian god at 7.30:

\begin{quote}
illumin deum colimus, qui naturis a se creatis et subsistendi et mouendi initi\textsuperscript{2}a finesque constituit; qui rerum causas habet, nouit atque disponit; qui uim seminum condidit; qui rationalem animam, quod dicitur animus, quibus uiuentibus indidit; qui sermonis facultatem usumque donauit; qui munus futura dicendi quibus placuit spiritibus inperitiuit et per quos placet ipse futura praedicit et per quos placet malas ualetudines pellit; qui bellorum quoque ipsorum, cum sic emendandum
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
incerti', \textit{Arch. f. Rel.} 10 (1907), 1-17 (= \textit{Abhandlungen zur römischen Religion} [Leipzig-Berlin, 1909], pp. 155-70); E. Bickel, \textit{Der altroemische Gottesbegriff} (Leipzig-Berlin, 1921), pp. 13-35; 'Varros di certi und incerti', \textit{BPhW} 41 (1921), 832-8. The argument rages around Serv. Dan. \textit{Aen.} 8.275, \textit{Varro dicit deos alios esse qui ab initio certi et sempiterni sunt, alios qui inmortales ex hominibus facti sunt.}
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{298} He merely conflates Arnob. 3.40 and Aug. \textit{Ciu.} 4.23 (on the \textit{Di consentes}) and shifts Macrob. \textit{Sat.} 3.2.11 to the rear.

\textsuperscript{299} Fr. 229.

\textsuperscript{300} Fr. 263.

et castigandum est genus humanum, exordiis progressibus finibusque moderatur; qui mundi huius ignem uehementissimum et uiolentissimum pro inmensae naturae temperamento et creauit et regit; qui uniuersarum aquarum creator et gubernator est; qui solem fecit corporalium clarissimum luminum eique uim congruam et motum dedit; qui ipsis etiam inferis dominationem suam potestatemque non subtrahit; qui semina et alimenta mortalium, siue arida siue liquida, naturis competentibus adtributa substituit; qui terram fundat atque secundat; qui fructus eius animalibus hominibusque largitur; qui causas non solum principales, sed etiam subsequentes nouit atque ordinat; qui lunae statuit modum suum; qui uias caelestes atque terrestres locorum mutationibus praebet; qui humanis ingenii, quae creauit, etiam scientias artium variarum ad diuandam utiam naturamque concessit; qui coniunctionem maris et feminae ad adiutorium propagandae prolis instituit; qui hominum coetibus, quem focis et luminibus adhiberent, ad facillimos usus munus terreni ignis indulsit.

It is clear that Varro related the twenty deities of book XVI to the fiery cosmic ψυχή which he had learnt about from the study of natural philosophy. Many modern scholars have held that the book was entirely concerned with the theologia naturalis, which Varro elsewhere distinguished from the poetica and the civilis. We must, however, beware of the distorting effects of Augustine’s polemic. It suited the bishop most of the time to treat the book as concerned with advocacy of the sort of theology which still appealed to educated men in a still only superficially Christianised Roman world and to ignore everything which was not philosophical or outrightly risible. When, however, at Ciu. 7.17 he cites from the three books de dis two passages which seem to him to indicate a lack of confidence on Varro’s part, he describes the main content of book XVI as civilis theologiae uanitates et insaniae mendaces. The second passage cited

de dis populi Romani publicis, quibus aedes dedicauerunt eosque pluribus signis ornatos notauerunt, in hoc libro scribam, sed ut

---

302 Schwarz, op. cit., 462-3, noted what Augustine did and exploited his discovery in the case of the fragments relating to each of the twenty deities. Likewise Agahd. Cardauns appears to be sceptical about some cases.


304 See Tertull. Nat. 2.1.9-11, Aug. Ciu. 4.27, 6.5 (assigned by Popma, Francken, op. cit., p. 40, Merkel, and later collectors to book I; = frs. 7-10 Cardauns, excluding the matter on Scaevola).

305 His misunderstanding of the way Varro grouped the male and female di selecti (Ciu. 7.28) is patent.
Xenophanes Colophonius scribit, quid putem, non quid contendam, ponam.\textsuperscript{306}

indicates that the temples built by the Roman people for the twenty deities were at least as important to Varro as their relations with the cosmic \(\psi\upsilon\chi\eta\). The ‘Genius’ of the list given at \textit{Ciu.} 7.2 was the \textit{genius populi Romani} whose temple stood in the forum near that of Concordia.\textsuperscript{307} Other quotations permit us to see the way in which Varro cited poetical statements about the \textit{di selecti}\textsuperscript{308} and drew conclusions about their history, not only from etymological speculation\textsuperscript{309} but from the study of Roman temples and religious statuary,\textsuperscript{310} the pontifical literature,\textsuperscript{311} and the cult practices of the Romans\textsuperscript{312} and neighbouring peoples.\textsuperscript{313} It is significant that the only direct quotation in pagan literature,

\textsuperscript{306} Fr. 228. 

\textsuperscript{307} On the \textit{genius populi Romani} see Liv. 21.62.10 (referring to the deity simply as “Genius”), Dio 47.2.3 and the Republican denarii of 76-5 and 74 B.C., \textbf{RRC} 393, 397. 

\textsuperscript{308} See \textit{Ciu.} 4.10 \textit{aetheris partem superiorem Mineruam tenere dicunt et hac occasione fingere poetas quod de luis capite nata sit} (fr. 278; first assigned to Varro by Schwarz, op. cit., 438-41), 7.8 \textit{nonnulli poetae Latini caelum vocauerunt palatum} (fr. 232; Varro’s actual words), 19 \textit{Caelum patrem Saturnus castrasse in fabulis dicitur} (fr. 245; Varro’s actual words). 

\textsuperscript{309} See \textit{Ciu.} 7.13 \textit{Genius ... uim habet omnium rerum gignendarum} (fr. 248), 14 \textit{Mercurius quasi medius currens} (fr. 250), 22 \textit{Venilia ... ad litus uenit} (fr. 257). 

\textsuperscript{310} See \textit{Ciu.} 7.5 \textit{tamquam si uasa ponerentur causa notandorum deorum et in Liberi aede oenophorum sisteretur, quod significaret uinum, per id quod continet id quod continetur, ita per simulacrum ...} (fr. 225), duas eum facies ante et retro habere quod ... (fr. 232) ... cum uero eum faciunt quadriscriptum et lanum geminum appellant (fr. 234), 14 alas eius in capite et pedibus significare ... (fr. 250), 16 \textit{Apollinem ... Dianamque ... sagittas habere quod ...} (frs. 251, 276), 19 \textit{Saturnus ... falcem habet ... propter ...} (fr. 243), 24 ... quod tympanum habeat ... quod turres in capite ... quod sedens fingatur ... leonem adiungunt solutum ac manusuetum ut ... (fr. 267). 

\textsuperscript{311} See \textit{Ciu.} 7.11 \textit{dixerunt eum Victorem, Inuictum, Opitulum, Inpulsorem, Statorem, Centumpedam, Supinalem, Tigillum, Alnunm, Ruminum ... quod} (fr. 237). 

\textsuperscript{312} See \textit{Ciu.} 4.10 \textit{Vestam ... iedo illi virgines solere seruire quod} (fr. 282; first assigned to Varro by Schwarz, op. cit., 438-41), 7.7 \textit{ideo Terminalia eodem mense Februario celebrari dicunt, cum fit sacrum purgatorium, quod uocant Februm, unde mensis nomen accepit} (fr. 231), 23 pontifices ... quattuor dis faciunt rem diuinam, Telluri, Tellumoni, Altori, Rusori (fr. 266), 24 quod Gallos huic deae ut seruirent fecerunt significat ... quod se apud eam iactant ... cymbalorum sonitus ferramento-rum iactandorum ac manus et aeris crepitus ... significat ... (fr. 267). 

\textsuperscript{313} See \textit{Ciu.} 7.19 for Carthaginian and Gallic practices (fr. 244), 20 for an Attic practice (fr. 271), 21 for a practice of the citizens of Lavinium (fr. 262).
Nonius’ *hoc nomine antiquos secundis rebus comas habita*, refers to some ancient custom.

If a desire to expound a *theologia naturalis* determined the choice of deities discussed in book XVI, it is difficult to see why Varro chose the twenty he did from among those who received public worship in Rome. The natural functions of several chosen overlapped. Those omitted from the selection could all easily have been fitted into a natural scheme. If Liber could be treated as the male sexual principle rather than a son of Iuppiter by a mortal woman, parallel interpretations were discoverable for Hercules, Castor, Pollux, Aesculapius, Quirinus and Faunus. There was no reason why Fides, Pietas, Concordia and the like should not have been regarded as cosmic virtues. The conclusion seems unavoidable that Varro chose his twenty not for philosophical reasons but because of some special prestige which they held among Romans totally unfamiliar with philosophical theologies.

Varro intended a certain unity in books XIV, XV and XVI. This unity, however, should be distinguished from the sort of philosophical work *περί θεῶν* which Varro himself refers to in his discussion of the three types of theology. His model was rather of the grammatical kind exemplified by Apollodorus’ *Περί θεῶν*,

---

314 See p. 318. 28-9 (fr. 284).
316 Many deities with public temples were probably identified with one or other of the named *di selecti* (see Aug. *Ciú. 7.24* [fr. 268] on Magna mater, Ops and Proserpina in relation to Tellus).
317 See Aug. *Ciú. 6.3.*
318 See Aug. *Ciú. 6.5* (fr. 8). He expressly denied he was writing *de omni natura deorum* (see Aug. *Ciú. 6.4* [fr. 5]). The title *Περί θεῶν* is credited to Protagoras among the philosophers of the fifth century (Euseb. *Praep. eu.* 14.3.7); to Speusippus (Diog. Laert. 4.4) and Xenocrates (Diog. Laert. 4.13) among the Academics; to Theophrastus (Diog. Laert. 5.48) and Strato (Diog. Laert. 5.59) among the Peripatetics; to Epicurus (Diog. Laert. 10.27); to Cleanthes (Diog. Laert. 7.175), Chrysippus (Diog. Laert. 7.148) and Antipater (Plut. *Mor.* 1052a) among the Stoics; to the Academic Antiochus (Plut. *Lucull.* 28.8), the Epicurean Phaedrus (Cic. *Att.* 13.39.2) and Philodemus (P. Herc. 26, col. 26), and the Stoic Posidonius (Diog. Laert. 7.138) among first-century philosophers.
a work which attempted to explain the names and descriptive epithets of the deities of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Varro set himself the task of explaining the historical background of the names and epithets of the deities he found or thought he found mentioned in Roman religious documents. The *theologia naturalis* was simply one of several tools of explanation.

Krahner, Francken and other mid-nineteenth century scholars thought that Varro got all the material set out in books XIV and XV from the archives of the Roman priests, particularly those of the *pontifices*, and most of the material of book XVI from some Greek writer of the Stoic school of philosophy. Hence it was easy for them to attribute to Varro two practical purposes, one to promote a restoration of ancient belief and practice, the other to provide a more sophisticated intellectual basis for pious behaviour. Some succeeding scholars have emphasised the former purpose, others the latter. The lack of harmony between the two purposes has gone practically unnoticed.

Wissowa and others demonstrated the differences between the highly practical *libri sacerdotum populi Romani* and what Augustine and others got from Varro's *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*. The names of many of the *di certi* turned out on close examination to be epithets of other deities or misinterpretations of obsolete words in Varro's source material or to belong to deities with quite different functions in actual Roman life. Many func-

---


320 It certainly figured in book XV (see Aug. *Ciur. 7.28* [fr. 206]) and there is no reason to think it absent from book XIV.


324 The material is collected in P. Regell, 'Fragmenta auguralia', *Progr. Hirschberg*, 1882) and G. Rohde, *Die Kultsatzung der römischen Pontifices* (Berlin, 1936 [Religionsgesch. Versuch. und Vorarbeit. 25]).
tions proved to be based on no more than Varro's own etymological guesses. The framework in which Varro arranged his statements was such as to assist the production of unconscious falsehoods. We have to do, it is clear, with the same industrious and over-imaginative systematiser of collected erudition as the text of the De lingua Latina displays. Nevertheless the old view of Varro as the would-be promoter of a religious restoration remains unchallenged. No one asks what use to any paterfamilias or magistrate with pious intentions an arrangement like that of book XIV could have been. The person short of water and thinking that an ancient ritual might help, needed to know more than the name of the appropriate deity. Varro did talk of utility when introducing book XIV but it was with tongue in cheek.

I have already dismissed the view that book XVI offered an ideological basis for a monarchical regime, showing how widespread its particular kind of monotheism was among supporters of the old Republic. That view did not surface until 1901 and has had only a few supporters. Most scholars would probably still hold to Krahner's view that Varro was offering fellow Romans philosophical reasons for maintaining long-established rituals, even something like the creed which the state religion seemed in Krahner's eyes so conspicuously to lack. If, however, largely non-philosophical reasons determined the choice of the twenty di selecti, if the content of book XVI was as antiquarian as that of its fifteen predecessors, and if the theory of the cosmic ψυχή was not as prominent as Augustine's polemics might suggest, Krahner's view must begin to look somewhat less than steady. It can be shaken further.

The theory of the cosmic ψυχή and the identity of many deities given distinct names by the language of religion, the etymological analysis of these names and the allegorical exegesis of poetry, art

325 Caeculus qui oculos sensu exanimet (Tertull. Nat. 2.15.2 = fr. 159) looks almost like a deliberate invention.
326 See Aug. Ciu. 6.9. (fr. 88); above, p. 192.
327 With the distinction between di ad ipsum hominem pertinentes and di ad ea pertinentes quae sunt hominis made in the passage cited in the previous note compare Ling. Lat. 5.10: in hoc libro dicam de vocabulis locorum et quae in his sunt, in secundo de temporum et quae in his fiunt, in tertio de utraque re a poetis comprehensa.
328 See above, pp. 180-3.
329 See above, pp. 162-4.
330 The view in fact of Augustine himself (Ciu. 6.8).
and ritual which Varro certainly made use of in book XVI, can all be paralleled in the literature of the Stoic school of philosophy and in the account of Stoic theology put into the mouth of Q. Lucilius Balbus in the second book of Cicero’s dialogue *De natura deorum*. Now, in defending Stoic views Balbus argues, perhaps more in the manner of a law-court advocate than a philosopher, that if educated men accepted these views rather than the Epicureanism of C. Velleius or the academic scepticism of C. Aurelius Cotta, the state cult would be better maintained and the material welfare of the state better served by the divine powers. The temptation to identify the purposes of Varro and the Ciceronian Balbus is, accordingly, very strong. It should, however, be resisted. Balbus believed in the real efficacy of ritual, Varro did not. And while the theology of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* may look Stoic to modern scholars given to thinking only in terms of ideas, it would not have so looked to knowledgeable contemporaries. Teachers of philosophy gave themselves the traditional labels in the first century even when they borrowed doctrines from rival schools. Varro openly proclaimed his allegiance to a man who succeeded to the headship of the Athenian Academy. He had himself buried in a “Pythagorean” way. Stoics might claim or invent similarities between their own doctrines and those of Pythagoras, but the Academy had a genuine link with the schools founded in south Italy and Sicily by the pupils of Pythagoras. However much Antiochus’ Περὶ θεῶν may have been coloured by Stoic notions, it stood in a tradition of theological speculation which had been maintained in the Academy since the time of Plato. The actual remains of the earlier books of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* show many signs of their fundamentally Academic stance: an admiration for Plato, a contempt for the views of the uneducat-

331 Cf. 2.168, 3.94.
335 Cf. *Cratyl.* 396a-c, *Epin.* 984d-7d. For the books of Speusippus and Xenocrates see above, n. 318.
336 See *Serv. Aen.* 6.703 (fr. 29).
ed, a belief that the poets of the school syllabus told lies and aimed only at giving pleasure, an attempt to associate a piece of Samothracian statuary with the primary cosmic cause of Plato, his secondary cause and his ἴδεια. The opening of book XVI proclaimed an attitude to the validity of its own doctrines redolent of Academic opposition to Stoic dogmatism:

de dis ... in hoc libro scribam, sed ut Xenophanes Colophonius scribit, quid putem, non contendam, ponam. hominis est enim haec opinari, dei scire.

This was obviously not the attitude of a writer out to fuel a change in the religious stance of a whole community or even of its leaders.

The question remains as to what purpose Varro could have had in using theological notions about the cosmos so extensively in book XVI. Several, perhaps all, of the twenty di selecti had already figured among the di certi of book XIV. There Ianus had been associated with human reproduction and something was said about the way Latin-speakers and others cultivated him. At the same time the nature of the cosmos had been introduced into the discussion of at least some of the di incerti of book XV. Thus book XVI did not stand isolated. In books II-XIII there had quite certainly been a strongly antiquarian approach to the subject

337 See Serv. Aen. 11.787 (testim. 8), Aug. Ciu. 4.31 (frs. 18, 21).
338 See Aug. Ciu. 6.5 (fr. 7), 6 (fr. 11).
339 See Aug. Ciu. 7.28 (fr. 206). Agahd (op. cit., p. 11) opined that Varro deployed here a conflation of the theories of Plato and the older Stoics made by Posidonius. W. Theiler (op. cit., [above, n. 88] pp. 19, 40) made Antiochus responsible for the conflation. The same theory was deployed in book XVI in connection with Iuppiter and Iuno (see Aug. Ciu. 7.9, 16 [frs. 235-6, 272]).
340 Aug. Ciu. 7.17 (fr. 228). Contrast the Stoic attitude of the Ciceronian Balbus: Nat. deor. 2.2 est enim et philosophi et pontificis et Cotta de dis immortalibus habere non errantem et uagam, ut Academici, sed, ut nostri, stabilem certamque sententiam. Augustine’s earlier citation in this chapter of a passage of book XV (fr. 204; see above, pp. 193-4 for the wording) may have a wider application than Agahd, Wissowa and Cardauns give it. Certainly the phrase in primo libro should on the face of things relate to Book I rather than book XIV of Varro’s work.
343 See John Lyd. Mens. 4.2 (fr. 201).
344 See Aug. Ciu. 7.28 (fr. 206).
matter, with discussion frequently going back even into the period before the foundation of Rome. Books XIV-XVI still bore the title *Antiquitates* and it must be supposed that the antiquarian approach continued. We are used to seeing etymological speculation and allegorical exegesis used by Stoic philosophers to provide support for their own view about the nature of the cosmos. I should, however, point out that these modes of thought had a history antedating Zeno of Citium and that they could also be used to establish what much older generations might have thought about the things denoted by words in current use or presupposed by current religious practice. In book XVI Varro attempted to take the history of the twenty deities most honoured by the Roman state in the middle of the first century back before the time of oral and written record. He would have considered that the first human communities had purer ideas about the nature of the divine than the mass of his fellow Romans and would have expected at least some readers of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* to share his view. He did not, however, want to make new converts.

The *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* and C. Iulius Caesar

The studies of the remains of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* which have appeared during the last hundred and fifty years were largely inspired by a belief that they would aid us to understand the religious history of first-century B.C. Rome and the intentions which Julius Caesar had in regard to the state cult at the time of his dictatorship. I hope I have succeeded in destroying this belief.


It will nevertheless still be asked why Varro dedicated his work to Caesar rather than to Pompey or even to some less politically prominent figure.

We cannot push the date of publication of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* back beyond the beginning of the year 58.349 During the fifties the *pontifices* retained their ancient prestige. They continued to be consulted by the Senate on *res diuinae*.350 Caesar had become head of the college.351 There was thus no more suitable public figure to whom an encyclopaedic account of the history of Roman cult might be addressed. Pompey had become an *augur*,352 but *augures* ranked in status behind *pontifices*.353 Indeed, to have failed to address such a work to the *pontifex maximus* might have been construed as a gratuitous slight.

Personal factors cannot be discounted. The piety of Caesar's heroic ancestor Aeneas and the role which Aeneas played in the history of some cults still preserved in Latium and of others transferred to Rome were common knowledge. The first century B.C. coinage shows a number of families advertising the religious deeds of ancestors, but none could point to a more distinguished past than could the Julian. Caesar exploited that past to the full for reasons of political ambition, but doubtless had some inner pride in it. The ties of friendship which bound Varro to Caesar from at least 59 onwards,354 however weak, would have alone predisposed him towards making the dedication he did make.355

It is also relevant that Caesar was a man of very wide intellectual interests, capable both of writing elegant verses and of arguing about fundamental linguistic questions.356 A certain curiosity about religious matters comes out clearly in the account

---

349 See above, pp. 173-5, on the reference to the consulship of Piso and Gabinius at Tertull. *Nat.* 1.10.18.
350 See above, n. 57.
351 See above, n. 76.
354 See above, nn. 116, 117.
355 For dedications to Pompey see above, n. 109. Three books of the *De lingua Latina* were dedicated to his quaestor P. Septimius, some or all of the rest to Cicero (see *Ling.* 7.109, Gell. 16.8.6, Prisc. *Gramm. Lat.* II 540.4). He addressed the first book of his *Res rusticae* to his wife Fundania, the second to his friend Turannius Niger, the third to another friend Pinnius.
he gives in his *Commentarii Belli Gallici* of Gallic and Germanic society (6.1-24). He could not have been totally unaffected by upbringing in a family conscious of a special religious inheritance.\(^{357}\) His cousin, L. Iulius Caesar, cos. 64, wrote a large work called *Auspicia*.\(^{358}\) The *De indigitamentis* of Granius Flaccus was dedicated to him.\(^{359}\) C. Trebatius Testa, a man who served him loyally for the last twenty years of his life, was to write nine books *De religionibus*.\(^{360}\) I should suggest that Varro recognised in Caesar the same sort of curiosity about the past which moved himself, the same sort of sceptical detachment. There is no accidental link between the way Caesar's *Commentarii* regularly ignore the performance of religious ritual by the Roman army and never attribute a military success to divine aid\(^{361}\) and the impression of irreligiousness which Varro's *Antiquitates rerum diuinatarum* made on the pagan grammarian Servius.\(^{362}\) The two authors belonged to a world incomprehensible to fourth and fifth century Christians. It is a great misfortune that so much of what we have of the *Antiquitates rerum diuinatarum* has come to us via Augustine. The modern student cannot easily free himself from Augustinian modes of thought, but he must do so if he is to comprehend what Varro was attempting to do.

\(357\) He was marked out at an early age to be the *flamen dialis* (Vell. Pat. 2.43.1, Sueton. *Iul.* 1.1-2). For the family pride in the link with Venus see above, n. 81.

\(358\) See above, n. 239.

\(359\) See above, n. 250.


\(361\) Contrast the *Bellum Alexandrinum* (75.4, 76.1). Caesar thought luck an important factor in military success (cf. his letter to Cicero, *Att.* 10.8 B.1) but that personal view should not be confused with public professions about the goddess Fortuna (cf. Plut. *Caes.* 38.5). Editors of the *Commentarii* ought not to spell *fortuna* with a majuscule initial letter (e.g. at *Gall.* 4.26.5, 5.58.6, 6.30.2, 35.2, *Ciu.* 3.26.4, 73.3).

\(362\) See above, n. 22.