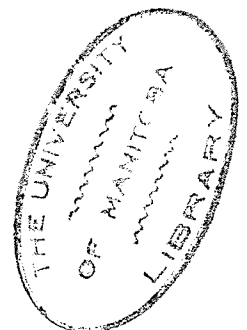


THE VIEWS AND OPINIONS  
OF TACITUS ON CONTEMPORARY ROMAN SOCIETY  
AND THOUGHT

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE  
STUDIES AND RESEARCH, OF THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MANITOBA IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIRE-  
MENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

APRIL 1957.



CONTENTS.

PREFACE .....	iii.
INTRODUCTION.....	1.
CHAPTER I RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY.	
RELIGION.....	13.
PHILOSOPHY.....	49.
CHAPTER II SOCIETY IN ROME.	
THE ROLE OF WOMEN.....	66.
THE ROLE OF THE FREEDMAN.....	105.
WEALTH, EXTRAVAGANCE AND LUXURY.....	120.
THE POORER CLASSES.....	131.
CHAPTER III GOVERNMENT AND LAW.	
THE PRINCIPATE.....	139.
THE LAW.....	161.
THE PROVINCES.....	171.
THE ARMY AND WARFARE.....	184.
CONCLUSION.....	198.
REFERENCES.....	203.
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	218.

## PREFACE

The task in composing this essay has been to derive what information is possible concerning the views of Tacitus on Roman life and society from his extant writings. Clearly it would be absurd to base conclusions upon the evidence of writings which, though <sup>they/</sup> almost certainly are Tacitus' work, yet may not positively be ascribed to him. The Dialogus de Oratoribus is of course the work in question, and the least possible use has therefore been made of it.

Quotations in English from the Annals have been taken from the translation by Professor Michael Grant, Tacitus on Imperial Rome, published in the Penguin Classics series. In the case of the Agri-cola and the Germania, use has been made of H. Mattingly's translations, Tacitus on Britain and Germany, published in the same series. Quotations from the Histories have been drawn from the translation by G. G. Ramsay, published in London in 1915.

## INTRODUCTION

It is more or less impossible to glean from the few facts known of Tacitus' life much information about him as a person - it is his writings that betray his character and way of thinking most clearly. What details survive concerning his life are these: his date of birth is not known for certain, but was probably the year 55 A.D. He appears to have been born not at Rome but in a neighbouring province, most likely either northern Italy or Southern Gaul. His father's status is unknown, but Tacitus was admitted to the Senate at an early age; in the reign of Vespasian (69-79 A.D.) he entered upon his official career, the 'cursus honorum'. He contracted a marriage extremely satisfactory in all respects, it would appear, with the daughter of Agricola in 77 A.D., and eleven years later, still climbing the senatorial ladder, he became praetor and quindecimvir sacris faciundis. He obviously had a great admiration for Agricola, and it was a source of great sorrow to him that he was away from Rome - it is not known where - when his father-in-law died in 93 A.D. On his return to Rome he was a witness during the three last years of Domitian's savageries. In 97 A.D. he became consul suffectus and delivered the funeral oration over his predecessor in office, Verginius Rufus. Tacitus was famous, and had been so for some time, as a lawyer and orator, and was much sought after as a teacher; with Pliny he led the prosecution in an extortion trial in 100 A.D. His proconsular province in the year 112-113 A.D. was probably Asia; and it is known from a passage of the Annals that he was still



living in the year 115 A.D. (1).

If these material facts are so scant, the more so are records of his views: consequently the internal evidence of his writings must be relied upon if any trace of these views is to be discovered. Now to be strictly accurate it must be acknowledged that internal evidence could be said to yield the opinions of Tacitus upon contemporary society only if the subject matter of his writings was the times in which he was living when he wrote them; but this surviving works cover no period more recent than the year 69, over thirty years before their publication.

A certain amount of elasticity must therefore be given to the word "contemporary". While there are passages which demonstrate there were differences, in his own mind, between social conditions obtaining in the period he describes and those of Tacitus' own lifetime, nevertheless there are excellent grounds for believing that this elasticity of meaning constitutes no grave handicap in a search for evidence of his attitude towards the circumstances and events that he was witnessing as he wrote. In the first place, although there were enormous differences in the character of the rules of Claudius and Nero on the one hand and those of Trajan and Hadrian on the other, there was a common background to both of those periods. The religious problem underwent no profound change; a fashionable Stoicism continued to mould the characters and private lives of aristocratic Romans; no great changes occurred in senatorial acquiescence in the

dictates of the emperor; and the Roman attitude towards the provinces changed little.

A more cogent reason, perhaps, for justifying this somewhat loose use of the word "contemporary" is to be found in an important part of the motive of Tacitus in writing his historical works. This question will be discussed more fully below (2), but to anticipate its main conclusion Tacitus saw his function as a writer as much from the point of view of a moral preacher as of an historian in the modern sense of the word. The events of the past thus in a sense become the text of his sermon, his congregation the Rome of his own, Trajan's and Hadrian's day, and the sins which he preached against those of his congregation and their neighbours. For his sermon to have any measure of relevance and hope of success it had to be especially pertinent to the vices and problems of the day, and its application readily understandable to his hearers.

There is also a third reason for using "contemporary" in this way. It is a commonplace to speak of the didactic element in classical art; the value and merit of a poem, an oration, a tragedy was measured less by the amount of aesthetic enjoyment that it provided its hearers at the time of its completion than by its capacity for edifying posterity. The whole tone of moral instruction in Tacitus' works is very much in accord with the earlier Greek view upon the function of art as revealed for instance in the Frogs of Aristophanes (3). The writer, historian or poet of classical times, while not oblivious of present applause, was to a greater extent than his successor of today writing with an eye to his future

readers. Much of Tacitus' outlook is more readily understood when his concern for posterity is considered; for this extends beyond a mere didacticism. It embraces the whole field of living. In a later discussion (4) it will be suggested that neither Tacitus nor many of his contemporaries had a conception of an after-life so clear as the Christian conception simply because there was no systemised <sup>at/</sup> theology upon which it could be founded. Inasmuch as Rome was the centre of humanity and seemed endowed with an eternal foundation, to live on in a spiritual sense with future generations of Romans would be the summit of ambition of a proud and high-principled noble such as Tacitus. He regarded the past in a similar way; he was living in Rome not only with his contemporaries of the early years of the second century but also with what his ancestors had left to Rome. These bequests to posterity made by previous generations were closely identified with the men who made them. In other words Tiberius' life did not cease so far as Rome was concerned when his servants smothered him with blankets in his retreat in Capreae; a part of him - and a real part is meant - acted whenever some new victim was put on trial charged under the treason laws for whose application and enforcement in Rome he and his mother had been so much responsible. In the same way a real part of Messalina and of Nero was alive when each new act of profligacy, to which in its earlier stages of development they had been so addicted, occurred at Rome. As the maiestas laws and a wide range of debauched activities were their legacies, a spiritual part of these long-dead people was identified with acts which sprang from the precedents

they had set in their lifetime. In this sense Tacitus saw the past as contemporaneous with the present, and his era at Rome cannot accurately be appraised apart from the events which were chronologically past but which endured interwoven with the present.

So by 'contemporary' society will be meant society over the whole period of the early Empire; and the fact that Tacitus is discussing men and women most of whom were long dead when he wrote should not be allowed to create the idea that the vices of Tiberius, Claudius, Nero and their womenfolk were by this time entirely obsolete.

It is evident that the question of Tacitus' motives in writing his historical works merits close examination. It has all too readily been assumed that as his interest lay in writing of the events of the past he was in the modern sense of the word an historian, one who by assembling information and intelligently interpreting it hopes to arrive at a truly accurate view-point from which to survey the events of the past; this is a wholly mistaken notion, and consequently it is equally wrong to require him to use the scientific methods which are employed in modern historical research.

There are passages which can be adduced in support of the view that Tacitus was - or rather wished to be - an historian in the modern scientific sense.

"Many of these matters that I have already and will in future mention", he says (5) "perhaps seem small and of little consequence; I know.....but it will be advantageous to have examined at their first appearance those trifling matters in which, often, momentous happenings have their beginnings".

And again:

"....so that <sup>not/</sup> only events and their outcomes, which usually happen quite by chance, but their motives and causes may also be known". (6).

Both of these statements are interesting, but when read out of their contexts may be misleading. The first statement is actually part of an apology to the reader for the narration of what Tacitus fears is a monotonous catalogue of treason trials of apparently little individual significance. It may be remarked in passing that so far as is known Tacitus never describes the momentous happenings of which these treason trials are the beginnings, but since his concern with the maiestas law is clearly considerable, it is most likely that the missing books of the Histories contain the final justification of his detailed accounts of the earlier trials. The second quotation is better evidence of a scientific approach in his work, and indeed as will be seen later in this introduction the Histories (from which this comment is taken) are more akin to 'modern' history and yet dramatically far less satisfactory than the Annals.

In a later chapter (7) it will be seen how the scorn of Tacitus for the society of his day and his cynical attitude towards ingenuously accepted beliefs grows with his advance in years, and is more noticeably present in his last work, the Annals, than in the earlier Histories. Indeed it would be surprising if this trend had not taken place in a life in which bad ruler followed bad ruler culminating in the uniquely bad final few years of Domitian's reign. The Histories do constitute a more serious attempt to give a matter-of-fact account

of the events after the death of Nero - assuming always that the last books follow the same trend as do the surviving first four books. The second quotation given above sounds as though this were really a claim to a scientific attitude towards his task, and that, at a glance, is a natural enough interpretation of Tacitus' words. In the event, however, all that it comes to mean is that a number of comparatively dull facts will have to be mentioned so that the future denouement - the factions and the wars for the succession - will be intelligible to the reader. This is not a claim to be engaged in the writing of scientific history; it is simply a comment explaining why his lengthy description of the state of the Empire and its legions is necessary for an understanding of his subsequent narrative.

What then were Tacitus' intentions in describing the political history of Rome from the death of Augustus? Briefly, he has given a gloomy account of the early Empire; his adherence in his narrative to what is known from other sources to be the truth is always remarkably close, yet many have suspected that the times were not - could not have been - so appalling as he has portrayed them. And yet most of his story's gloomy character is due not to actual statements but to hints and implications. One gains a less favourable impression of the reign of Tiberius, for instance, from a general reading of the Annals than from a closer and more literal study of the words in which the reign is described. The reason for this tendency to distort the true historical personalities of the leading figures of Rome during the first century is that, far from being scientific, Tacitus' purpose is fundamentally a moral one.

Obviously these two different types of approach to history are entirely incompatible; and if at the same time as preaching an emotionally stimulating sermon to his hearers he could also inform them by presenting a story consisting of cold hard fact, Tacitus felt, so much the better, for his persuasiveness would thus be increased. He is at pains, therefore, to claim for his work the two most elementary qualities necessary for a factual and scientific treatise - veracity and impartiality.

"But I am not inventing marvels", he insists when an especially amazing piece of conduct has to be described (8), and "What I have told, and shall tell, is the truth. Older men heard and recorded it".

The Annals are introduced by the claim:

"I shall write without indignation or partisanship: in my case the customary incentives to these are lacking". (9). That his search for truth was genuine is readily demonstrated by the fact that other sources - contemporary writings and archaeological discoveries - continually corroborate and only rarely contradict his statements. (10). Concerning his impartiality there is introduced the question not of facts by themselves but of their interpretation; and Tacitus naturally makes their interpretation subservient to his moral purpose. The result is inevitable; despite his claims to impartiality almost all students - sympathetic as well as unsympathetic - have agreed in finding him deficient in this respect.

Even if its moral purpose were not implicit throughout the length of his work, his statement of the purpose, in his

estimation, of historical writing is not at all ambiguous.

"I hold it the chief office of history", he says, "to rescue virtue from oblivion, and that base words and deeds should have the fear of posthumous infamy". (11).

Moral judgment is also implied in a further passage:

"We Romans neglect modern history while praising the deeds of our ancestors". (12);

that 'praising' is the correct translation of the verb 'extollere' in the passage "dum vetera extollimus recentium incuriosi" is shown by the context of the comment; it occurs in an excomium upon Arminius. Thus again Tacitus sees the historian's function not as recounting and explaining but as 'praising'; and praise or condemnation involves moral assessment, anathema to the man whose thought is genuinely scientific. Elsewhere he makes a plea for the perpetuation of the memory of illustrious men:

"And let us make at least this concession to the reputation of famous men: as in their burial they are distinguished from the common herd, so when their deaths are mentioned let each receive his separate, permanent record". (13).

Tacitus is here craving his reader's indulgence for the unending catalogue of similar deaths which he is retailing - the reason he himself gives for so doing. It is not an obsession with the 'victim' type as suggested with such confidence by B. Walker. (14).

If the purpose of his writings is fundamentally a moral one, it is to be expected that the style will be predominantly anecdotal. This is true especially of the style of the Annals.



But the anecdotes must be contained within conscientiously applied limits which are the measures of the truth, not of the credibility of his subject matter. He is emphatic in his determination not to include incredible stories to scare people out of vice into virtue. Popular report, even though it may be widely accepted, is rigorously to be excluded unless its truth can be established:

"My own motive and intention in mentioning and refuting the rumour has been to illustrate by one conspicuous instance the falsity of hearsay gossip, and to urge those who read this book not to prefer incredible tales - however widely current and readily accepted - to the truth unblemished by marvels". (15).

Although Tacitus states that histories in general should concern themselves with important affairs (16), it is with people rather than with events that he is primarily concerned. No better demonstration of this could be furnished than his account of the Cherusci receiving Italicus as king - an appointment that had the support of Claudius. A lengthy passage discusses the German reaction to his coronation; the character of the new ruler is carefully analysed in speeches by his supporters and their opponents. After all the speeches Italicus' whole subsequent career is described thus:

"There followed a battle - important by native standards - which Italicus won. But success made him arrogant and he was ejected. Subsequently he was restored with the help of the Langobardi. But in good and bad fortune alike he proved disastrous to the Cherusci". (17).

As Fourneaux comments:

"These sentences are intended to sum up the whole of his reign, and no further mention is made of him". (18). One gains the impression that after discussing the pro's and con's of the appointment in at least adequate detail Tacitus lost interest when an objective appraisal of his later career is needed. This is only one of many examples that could be given where his interest in men rather than in events is manifest. This being the case, there is no reason to doubt that he really did believe that moral exposition was the 'praecipuum munus annalium'.

A later discussion will show (19) how inextricably interwoven were the Roman concepts of religion and politics; and as even to the Romans there was some vague connection between morals and religion, the Histories and Annals furnish not only a moral but a political commentary on the times. Many of Tacitus' anecdotes offer both moral and political instruction, and the courses of action discussed usually involve some degree of internal conflict. Politically speaking, for instance, expediency requires a silence during periods of oppressive rule - it is folly to hazard one's life by freely expressing oneself before irresponsible tyrants; and yet when times improve the conscience is apt to be troublesome by providing reminders of what in retrospect appears as cowardice rather than as prudence. There is virtue in endurance indeed, and Tacitus is able to boast (20) that for fifteen years he and his fellow-members of the Senate endured the arbitrary conduct of a savage without complaint. Times may be bad, but better days will always come, and they

must be awaited patiently. (21).

These points are to be borne in mind before evidence of Tacitus' views can begin to be extracted from his writings. There are good reasons for accepting what he wrote of the past as evidence of what he thought of the present; to impose upon him the title of historian in the modern sense of the word involves imposing upon him critical standards with which he never intended to conform; and since his aim as an artist was to instruct future generations rather than to amuse his fellows, he sought by his examples and his interpretation of those examples to offer moral - and to some extent political - guidance to his readers.

## RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY.

### I. RELIGION

Religion in the early Roman Empire meant little more than the due observance of traditional ceremony and ritual. Some of these observances had originated in the rather nebulous regal period, as Tacitus himself records (1); others were of a much more recent origin, and the Augustan settlement besides re-organising the existing corpus of ritual gave rise to more (2). Apart from the discretion shown by Augustus in instituting these religious innovations - for they were an important component of the Pax Romana - two contributory causes secured their acceptance into Roman life; one was the extension to Augustus' ordinances that the succession of Tiberius secured. In this respect the mediation of Livia between her husband and her son cannot be ignored and will be discussed later (3). The second cause was the innate conservatism of the Roman people themselves.

Whatever the etymological derivation of the word 'religion' (4) its usage in imperial Roman times implies nothing of metaphysics or of codes of ethics. It seems to be related to the word 'lex' - a fact which indicates a worldly obligation in supposedly other-worldly matters.

The old republican religion was essentially pantheistic; it consisted in fact of an adaptation of the Greek pantheon upon which there became superimposed a local and native system of numina. Veneration was paid to the Lares and Penates of the farm and family. The fields, the crops, the crossroads and the family hearth each had its lesser diety, and these became indissolubly associated with their presiding gods since these

humble things constituted the daily environment of the simple agrarian Roman.

Inevitable questions arose in times of want and adversity; then the hollowness of such ritual became disconcertingly apparent. Further, there was the erosive effect of Hellenisation and its concomitant philosophies; such speculation had already existed as an integral part of Roman life since the days of the Scipionic Circle. Its danger as an enervating influence upon Rome had been noticed and much commented upon by Cato; and a reading of Juvenal and Martial shows to how great an extent Greek influences were propagating themselves in the early days of the Empire, and how the Roman mind nurtured as it was chiefly by a Greek education was absorbing Greek medicine, Greek astrology, and in fact all the Greek influences of the day, which were every bit as debilitating politically as they were humanising intellectually.

These influences were felt in the sphere of religion as well as in other activities; that sphere gradually grew so that it embraced what the Christian era accepted as fundamentally important ingredients - codes of moral conduct together with metaphysical and theological enquiry. The Stoic school of philosophy had for generations before Tacitus held sway over many of Rome's leading characters and statesmen; its code of ethics was that which to a great extent moulded the lives of such men as Cicero, Mucius Scaevola Pontifex and Brutus, and in the early empire its devotees formed the nucleus of the anti-Caesarean opposition.

Ethic systems were becoming insufficient in themselves during

the lifetime of Tacitus; the old formal religion was observed with no great enthusiasm despite the new lease of life that Augustus had won for it, and depended for its survival largely upon the intense respect for tradition so characteristic of the Roman. The outward ritual was the same as ever, but the spirit had almost disappeared. Indeed there was likely to be little spirit in a corpus of what now seem to have been observances that included a belief in the divinity of deceased emperors. Some credence might conceivably be placed in the divinity of one who in life had at least put an end to interminable wars and private armies; some plausibility might even be found for the apotheosis of the haughty, gloomy and unapproachable Tiberius, for his and Livia's conservatism had ratified and thus perpetuated Augustus' settlement; but no thinking Roman could subscribe to such an elevation of the pusillanimous antiquarian Claudius. Yet these deities were assiduously cultivated, mechanically without doubt, along with all the rest of the lore bequeathed by the Republic; and Tacitus followed these customs too, for in religious as well as in most other matters he was a narrow, blind and mechanical conservative. (5).

The ground was in fact clear, a way made for the entry into Roman life of some other form of religious experience that was direct-personal. Foreign intercourse and imports both visible and invisible from the east had to reach Rome almost invariably by way of Greece; now there was reaching Rome bearing the stamp of Greece an element of eastern mysticism stimulating the Roman mind to a search for individual spiritual exaltation, and

encouraging an inflation of the non-corporeal ego. Thus through Greek media eastern religions reached Rome, and their blending with the Greek schools there was the inevitable consequence of the Roman's spiritual void. It is no intention of the present discussion to suggest how much, if at all, Tacitus was tinged with these supernatural searchings; attention need only be drawn to the presence of eastern religious thought in first - and second-century Rome as part of Tacitus' environment. (6).

He could hardly fail to be aware, however, that his own observance of Roman religious ritual was merely perfunctory, and that it helped uphold Rome's greatness rather than satisfied his intellectual needs. Though his remedy for this deficiency seems to have been refuge in an elaborate moral code designed somewhat eclectically himself for himself, he indulges in metaphysical speculations on several occasions during the course of his narrative. (7).

The notion of Fate was a prominent motive force throughout classical antiquity. This mysterious force was thought <sup>to control/</sup> the whole universe, and even Zeus the father of the gods was believed subjected to it. (8). The Aeneid may be cited as evidence that fatalism of this colour was certainly accepted in Rome at the beginning of the Empire; (9) Suetonius in fact portrays the Empire's founder as addicted to this belief. (10). Indeed a belief in the predictability of future events from present omens, widespread as it was at Rome, seems from the manner in which such predictions were received to have demanded such an acquiescence in this concept of fatality. Soothsaying and augury were to such an extent part and parcel of Roman life that whatever happened to be the views of the individual Roman

concerning the organisation and development of the cosmos they could be accepted by him simply as being what his predecessors in Rome had accepted.

Nevertheless, although Tacitus is willing to believe in the accuracy - under certain conditions (11) - of such predictions, he gives utterance to profound and uneasy doubts. After describing how Thrasyllus, a member of the "tribe of astrologers" against which he often and bitterly inveighs (12), became influential over Tiberius, he admits being unable to decide whether an inflexible Fate governs the world, or whether events happen quite fortuitously with the gods holding themselves entirely aloof from the world and its problems (13); so too in the Agricola (14) he is unsure whether or not there is the reward of an afterlife awaiting "the great and good". To such questions as these Tacitus, it seems, has no answer; the odd fact is that this agnosticism does not appear to be a source of anxiety to him. He seems to share at least this with the Epicureans: that the most important fruit that life can bear to any man is the happiness that is born not in a belief in the beneficence of the gods, although Tacitus would find it difficult to subscribe to the extreme atheism of the Epicureans, but of the tranquillity of an ordered society; again he would disagree with them on the question of the means to be adopted to obtain this order in society.

Two aspects of religion then can be recognised in the Rome of Tacitus' day: the personal philosophical aspect, in which opinions tended to be of a cautious and experimental nature; and the practical daily observances with little more



than a purely secular significance. So prominent a public figure as Tacitus (15) who was so concerned with man and his problems must have absorbed them both to some extent, for there was something of both statesman and philosopher in his personality. To the degree that he was a conservative aristocrat he doubtless accepted the strict 'religio' of Rome; and to the extent that he was an independent thinker new directions in religious thought and observances must have affected if not positively attracted him. His rôle in respect of the newer strains of religion was much less that of a devotee than that of an enquirer.

Examination must now be made of how Tacitus reacted towards 'religious' thought as he found it; later, attention will be paid to his approach to the fundamental questions that religion - with the more recent implications of that word - raises in the minds of men possessed of such considerable intellectual and imaginative powers as he.

Mucius Scaevola Pontifex said that there were three types of religion, those of the poet, the philosopher and the statesman. Only to the last of these did he attach any importance (16). His statesman's religion was an elaborate ritual, antiquarian in spirit, and requiring extreme formal accuracy in its observances (17). Whilst there are many allusions to various examples of Roman ritual in the writings of Tacitus, all that can be learnt of his views of its observance from them is that he never allows himself to appear sceptical. This is, unfortunately, a very negative conclusion to have to draw; and at its face value does not help towards the discovery of what his attitude really was.

His apparent indifference may be the result of a deliberate attempt to conceal either extreme acquiescence or complete contempt. That Tacitus in reality approached either of these extremes is, however, most unlikely; in other questions where his personal preference is involved he allows himself the luxury of reiterating his approval - or, as is more usual, his dislike - in no equivocal manner. His penchant for certain turns in literary or grammatical style (18), his love of the terse summing-up of a character (19), or of rounding off a section with a trenchantly telling phrase (20) - all these idiosyncrasies he exploits to the greatest extent and effect possible. Thus, although he protests his general impartiality as an historian (21) he approaches all his material with a high degree of subjectivity. Plainly he was a man of considerable sensitivity and feeling, and one who tended generally to wear his heart on his sleeve.

One must infer in the absence of definite knowledge that Tacitus never wrote feelingly about the ritual of Rome for the simple reason that he never felt more than lukewarm about it. Like his friend Pliny he was a subscriber to its forms and loved through them to feel associated with the famous names of Rome's greater days. He welcomed an opportunity to trace back the history of a rite to Numa (22), or to introduce mention of the name of Rome's founder into his discussion (23) - the name, that is, of one who to the twentieth century is a legendary figure, but who to Tacitus, who suffered the disadvantage of living nearer his reign by over eighteen hundred years, was a real enough person. But 'religio' meant little more than politics to Tacitus whose attention was always focussed upon statecraft; what affection he expended upon it

was a love of the end towards which Roman religion was the means. That end had nothing to do with the appeasement of the individual conscience, much less did it concern anything approaching the Christian ideals of loving God and one's neighbour. Many of the leaders of the public life of Rome were committed in their minds to a belief in the stern and inflexible necessities of Fate, when carefully examined ritual could be little more than tokens of obedience to the will of the state.

Although an imaginative thinker Tacitus was in many respects a child of his age, and his perfunctory allegiance to ritual discipline was similar no doubt to that of many of his senatorial contemporaries. Only by assuming that he possessed an ingrained tendency towards cynicism does it seem possible to explain the adoption and profession of such a patently silly notion as the deification of former emperors. Different sections of the Roman people would be moved by different motives in respect of affection for the memory of a dead ruler; the ordinary man-in-the-street in Rome itself was able to enjoy immunity from the evils and hardships attendant upon corn scarcities; there was too an increasing number of circus spectacles and similar pageantry available for his amusement. There was more security now that the perpetual tramp of marching armies had gone, for rural communities - although in any case the emperor-cult would hardly have been noticed by them. There seems to have been a decided improvement in the standard of governors in the provinces, a fact which helped to bind her

subject-peoples more closely to Rome; and finally, the senatorial and equestrian orders accepted the divinity of a deceased emperor in a spirit similar to that which prompted their passive servility towards the reigning monarchs - servility and/ which time again impels Tacitus to expressions of his contempt.(24). Affection for a memory is one thing, however, belief in 'divine honours' is another. In a society such as that of Rome, steeped in the culture that had been passed on by the earlier Greek civilisations, this belief seems almost inexcusable; it presupposes a degenerate and materialistic state of that society, and its folly is equalled only by the idea that the apotheosis was dependent upon the vote of the Senate.(25). One might well suspect that the cynicism of Tacitus is given deliberate expression when he describes Tiberius' letter to the Senate on the occasion of the death of his mother Livia:

"...he added that she was not to be deified - she herself had not wished it"; (26)

that there should be any choice granted in this matter to the proposed recipient appears at the least a very quaint idea.

Whilst his own testimony is lacking, an earlier historian - though one the general circumstances of whose life were quite similar to those of Tacitus - offers many parallels in the underlying spirit of his writings. Livy professed himself a believer in an immutable Fate "by whose law the pattern of human affairs is inflexibly fixed" (27), just as Tacitus sometimes seems inclined to do.

"Most men, however, find it natural to believe that lives are predestined from birth", he says (28); "Perhaps he - i.e. Galba - despised such matters as affairs of chance;

perhaps he thought that the decrees of fate, although signified to us, are not to be avoided" are his two possible explanations of Galba's scorn for certain omens. (29). Indeed this would be in keeping with Stoic teaching, towards which, although not committing himself any more than by admiring examples of Stoic conduct, Tacitus inclines. (30). Both Livy and Tacitus express acceptance of the validity of predictions by augury and other similar means (31), and this involves them in an apparent inconsistency with their inclinations towards determinism. Livy, however, suggests his reasons. His mind, he says, takes on as it were an antique tinge, and he is constrained to believe that they - that is, auguries and the like - must have their significance, seeing that the wisest of the ancients deemed them worthy of public attention. (32). This remarkably unscientific explanation, so astonishing to a twentieth century reader, was not expected to surprise its author's audience nearly two thousand years ago. Its serious acceptance requires a conservatism which more modern and more liberal-thinking generations cannot grasp. (33).

It might then be offered as a reasonable hypothesis, in view of the similarities between him and Livy, that Tacitus, resembling his predecessor in the respects just mentioned, further resembles him in his view of the relationship between Fate and Religion - or Religion as seen, from a Roman point of view, in one at least of its most important aspects.

An admirer of Tacitus is strongly tempted to persuade himself that his author was really indifferent towards the practice of divination so widely used - and misused - in

his day. A perusal of the Histories and the Annals, however, indicates that although a tendency towards scepticism is apparent in his later work, he never so far as one is able to judge completely abandoned faith in prognostications.

In the first place it must be borne in mind that the prodigies and omens which in certain instances he accepts took place either before he was born, or at any rate during his early boyhood (34); the account that he received of them was, at best, second-hand. In expressing or implying his credence of any prescience from prodigies and the like, he was indeed being wise after the event, for the prodigy and its outcome were already history. This will have to be remembered when Tacitus speaks with conviction upon the reliability of certain omens; his attitude would necessarily have been less credulous had he been in the position of the person to whom the omen appeared.

Secondly, differentiation must be made between a scepticism towards the possibility of prophecy by means of omens, and a scepticism towards a particular interpretation of what the omens portended. Not invariably were these interpreted correctly; error was always liable to occur when the mob - a usual target of Tacitus' contemptuous ridicule - formed its own conclusions. Error would often arise also during times of fear and danger, when the fever of excitement provided opportunity for misconstruing what was seen in a very brief glimpse into the future.

"Monstrous births had taken place", he recounts at one period of crisis, "together with many other marvels such as

in uncivilised ages are observed even in quiet times, but which nowadays are only heard of in times of anxiety". (35). Fear then brought the Romans down, in Tacitus' estimation, to the level of primitive peoples because of their too hasty belief in wonders. Again he speaks contemptuously of Rome as "a city that finds meanings in everything" when a chance event is taken as an omen by the credulous populace. (36).

It will be worthwhile to examine some of the more important examples of omens and similar prophecies. Before a major engagement with German tribesmen, Germanicus was given an indication of the way in which the course of the ensuing battle would go.

"Meanwhile" narrates Tacitus, "Germanicus saw a good omen. Eight eagles attracted his attention by flying around and then into the woods. He called out to his men, 'Come on, forward! Follow the Roman birds, the legions' own dieties!'..... a great victory followed, at small cost to Germanicus". (37).

Here is a case of a good omen, its recognition and correct interpretation, and its happy outcome. It may be no more than that Tacitus read, or was told by someone who had heard, that the eight eagles were remarked by Germanicus, and that the historian liked the dramatic effect that this manner of introduction of a battle added to a more straightforward account. This may well be so, although as will be seen as further evidence of Tacitus' respect for augury appears, it is an unlikely explanation. Even if it were the correct explanation, however, it would reveal his credulity by its very inclusion;

and further evidence that another explanation must be sought lies in the fact that the omen relates to one of Tacitus' few heroes, Germanicus. (38).

Another series of omens is stated to have been seen when Nero began his rule.

"A series of prodigies....indicated changes for the worse. Standards and soldiers' tents were set on fire from the sky. A swarm of bees settled on the pediment of the Capitoline temple. Half-bestial children were born, and a pig with a hawk's claws....." (39)

This certainly sounds like wisdom after the event, for it must be assumed that it was Rome that was to suffer these changes for the worse. The veracity of these prodigies is demonstrated by the whole of the remaining chapters of the Annals - Nero's principate was approaching. Only a few chapters earlier, however, (40) in describing equally fantastic events though admittedly more closely related to ordinary human experience, Tacitus avows that what he has told, and what he will tell is the truth; older men had heard and recorded it. If this protestation is sincere, and there is no reason to doubt that it is so, Tacitus clearly believes that the prodigies mentioned in the passage in question did in fact occur; he had found the account written in some source which he found it unnecessary - as was his custom - to specify.

Another passage mentioning rather similar prodigies is less easily explained.

"Many vain prodigies intervened at this stage. A woman gave birth to a snake.....These occurrences<sup>ry/</sup> were so much



due to the anger of the Gods that Nero continued in  
in his rule and excesses for many years afterwards". (41)  
This is a remarkable passage, and it might be interpreted (42)  
as an ironical comment upon the futility of augury; but as  
Tacitus elsewhere attaches importance to very similar  
'praesagia' (43) such an interpretation would demand the  
supposition of an intolerable inconsistency such as is not  
found elsewhere in his work. That the prodigies actually  
occurred and were seen Tacitus does not doubt. He apparently  
feels that not every time a snake is brought into the world  
by a woman is there bad or good news at hand. One is left  
with the feeling - although this notion is not expressed -  
that the interpreters of this series of omens were the public  
at large, and as has been suggested above, the interpretation  
was false as a consequence.

The irony is aimed at something other than the institutions  
of augury. 'The Gods' in their apathy towards human affairs  
added no further punishment to men even when prodigies of a  
threatening nature were seen. Nero's reign merely continued for  
many years to come. This does not imply any mitigation, any  
intrusion in the form of assistance to mankind on the part of  
the Gods - as though men in their estimation were being  
punished sufficiently anyway. The portents were indeed 'irrita';  
the Gods were simply unconcerned - sine cura deum - and  
nothing is implied regarding the authorship of these phenomena  
by the verb 'eveniebant'. In times of distress, it seems, the  
Gods were indifferent - too indifferent even to punish. Such  
inefficient Gods, Tacitus seems to suggest, had only an

ornamental value, and that only to minds prone to superstition.

Next there is an instance of the realisation of threats arising from bad omens.

"Paetus....entered Armenia" states Tacitus "...but the omens were sinister. For while crossing the Euphrates bridge, the horse carrying the consular insignia took fright for no apparent reason, and bolted to the rear. Then a victim due for sacrifice - when the construction of the winter camp was complete - escaped outside the rampart before the work was done. Moreover some soldiers' javelins caught fire - a particularly significant portent since the Parthian enemy fights with missiles. But Paetus disregarded the omens". (44).

This extract offers a straightforward description of sinister omens which, had they been regarded with anything but scorn by Paetus - for the word 'spretis' does not suggest a mere failure to recognise what was portended - would have dissuaded him, one presumes, from adopting the course that he did adopt with such disastrous results. Such a narrative suggests most cogently the credulity of Tacitus. Even more conviction accrues from the parenthetic phrase 'magis insigni prodigio'; for one who was sceptical of prodigies generally would hardly be likely to admit varying degrees of significance.

For Tacitus to be so openly credulous is exceptional; regularly his descriptions of omens are elusive. Perhaps this elusiveness emanates from uncertainty; perhaps it is deliberate ambiguity; or perhaps it is born of an ironical approach towards the prevalent senses of values that were accepted at Rome around the beginning of the second century. In this last case the

whole point or content of the irony cannot be recaptured. A period of enlightened rule was beginning; that this was really so was everybody's hope, but nobody actually could know it. Similarly enlightened were the earlier years of the reigns of Tiberius and Domitian, and even Nero had been less of a scourge to Rome at the beginning of his reign. Possibly this sense of doubt and diffidence is best conveyed by a passing remark put into the mouth of another of Tacitus' heroes - Thrasea Paetus. (45). Thrasea comments that this retrogressive tendency which Tiberius, Nero and Domitian had exhibited seemed to be a permanent feature of Romans in office. (46). Perhaps too Tacitus is still conscious of the dangers of this trend. Anyway, whatever the reason, in the majority of citations by him of omens, prodigies and the like he appears to be almost self-consciously non-committal. Again one must beware of confusing the rejection of an omen with the rejection of a particular interpretation or relevance of an omen. It is fair to conclude that even when the portents are described but the outcome proves them to have been wrongly interpreted their very mention by an author who knows that they are to be contradicted by the subsequent facts that he himself supplies, is either an outright mockery of omens or an act of faith in them; but for this to constitute an outright mockery, omens would have to be expected to be despised uniformly throughout the whole of the written work of the author. So in the greatest number of references to omens and portents in the historical works of Tacitus, an impartial statement of an omen as it was seen or was reported to have been seen, even when the narrative later rejects

its evidence as unreliable, may not be taken to suggest Tacitus' incredulity.

In several other anecdotes he gives an account of how the mob seized upon a wrong interpretation of some phenomenon. Sometimes they erred by basing their suppositions upon popular belief; sometimes superstitious fancy was the culprit; often the instances merely show how right Tacitus was when he said that our minds are ready to believe anything once they lose their normal poise. (47).

Tacitus recounts an episode when Nero and Britannicus appeared together at a public spectacle.

"While Claudius was present at the games in the Circus" he relates, "...the greater applause received by Nero - greater, that is, than that received by Britannicus - was regarded as prophetic. A further story that in his infancy serpents had watched over him was a fable adapted from foreign miracle tales. Nero himself - who was not over-modest - used to say that just one snake had been seen in his bedroom". (48).

The first part of the story - that concerning the popularity of Nero - is told, for what it is worth, without comment, although the expectations of the crown were unfortunately realised. But the story of the serpents is dealt with by Tacitus in a very brusque manner. This is not because the circumstances are any more fanciful than others that he accepts, but simply because they are contrary to what he knew to be the true facts concerning Nero's infancy. If the tale could have been

substantiated at all, then surely Nero himself of all people, Tacitus says, was the man to do so. This instance shows that he preserves his critical faculties in the treatment of at least one omen, and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that he so far violated his critical instincts elsewhere as to include in his historical works several other no less improbable anecdotes, unless he really believed in those others.

In describing an unusually destructive fire which took place on the Caelian hill in Rome, Tacitus says:

"[The calamity that occurred when a huge amphitheatre collapsed with the loss of many thousands of lives] was not forgotten when Rome suffered from an exceptionally destructive fire which gutted the Caelian hill. This was a fatal year, people said. Fastening on a scapegoat for chance happenings (as the public does), they detected an evil omen in the Emperor's decision to leave Rome. Tiberius disarmed criticism by distributing money in proportion to losses incurred". (49).

This passage is rather difficult to construe. Tacitus arraigns the ordinary people for seeking to find a guilty act in order to explain things that they believed to be ill omens, but which in fact are shown to be merely matters of chance. Now why he should choose to believe that these events were any less ill omens, any the more simply fortuitous occurrences, than for instance the shying of a horse or the escape of an intended sacrificial victim, is difficult to explain. It may be the result of conscience, and a wish to moderate a narrative which is causing much damage to the reputation of Tiberius -

an attempt to show that that Emperor was not intrinsically a bad man excepting where his mother's ambition overrode his own personality. (50). A far more likely explanation may be extracted from a consideration of the circumstances of these and other 'omens'. It seems that the omens to which Tacitus gives the greatest amount of credence are those which gain dignity from their attendant circumstances. Things learnt from entrails by the haruspices, occurrences at altars of sacrifice, prodigies seen by generals before battle - these and such-like matters are found to be recorded if not without reluctance to give judgment, at any rate without scepticism. Events affecting the ordinary people, on the other hand, events that had little bearing upon the 'summa imperii' had no hallowing environment, and can therefore be dismissed by Tacitus - whose snobbish attitude is manifest at every turn - as valueless.

The above has been a survey of the more important omens narrated by Tacitus in the Annals. It has no pretensions to exhaustiveness, but claims to suggest merely his general attitude towards the subject. In the last two cases mentioned he rejects them as being either entirely unfounded or the result of the unskilled interpretations of an undiscerning public; in the other instances he describes the portents as matters of fact, which in itself indicates at least a lack of that contempt which the twentieth century would find itself inclined to bestow upon them; and in three examples at least he gives his complete acquiescence to the validity of the omens.

From these facts a general conclusion may be arrived at;

that is, that from the descriptions of important prodigies, portents and omens in the surviving books of the Annals there are sure indications that the author fully believed in the prophetic validity of such praesagia, with the reservation that the hasty assumptions of the public, and interpretations formed in times of stress and danger are likely to be inaccurate. If the evidence upon which this conclusion is based seems at times to be tenuous, this may be charged to the habitual elusiveness of Tacitus when there is question of placing his private opinions and judgments upon record. His method of treating his matter is exceptionally subjective, there is no doubt; and this might well be regarded as a great advantage in the present inquiry. But the advantage invariably disappears as Tacitus, in his efforts to attain impartiality, involves himself time and again in apparent inconsistencies.

The Annals comprise his latest extant writings. It cannot reasonably be supposed that the circumstances of his life should have led him to become any the more gullible and ingenuous in the Annals than he was when writing his earlier works; he, a man of potentially great consequence in Roman politics, spent the greater part of his life under conditions of acute political unrest, not to mention the terrors of persecution; he lived without either the stimulus or the consolation of a religious code and discipline into perspective with which he could marshal his thoughts and feelings.

So far as the question of belief in omens and prodigies is concerned the expectation of an increasing scepticism in the later works of Tacitus is realised; as one can apparently reach fairly

definite conclusions about his beliefs in the Annals, similar conclusions based upon more emphatic evidence can be obtained from the Histories.

As early as in the third chapter of the first book, Tacitus has unequivocally committed himself.

"And in addition to these manifold disasters in human affairs" he states, "there were prodigies in earth and sky; there were warnings from lightning, there were presages for the future, some of good, some of evil, some obscure, some not to be misunderstood". (51).

To reject a clear statement of this nature, and to believe in the light of it that Tacitus was sceptical of divination and augury would require a fair degree of perversity.

Some of the more important 'praesagia' of the Histories will provide the basis for a discussion complementary to that based upon the omens mentioned in the Annals, as above.

A marvellous thing happened to Vitellius.

"As he was addressing the army" Tacitus states, "a flight of ill-omened birds passed like a cloud over his head, obscuring the light of day. There was another dire omen also; a bull escaped from the altar, and after scattering the preparations for the sacrifice was slain at some distance and in a manner different from that usually observed with victims". (52).

The unhappy events which these ill omens <sup>e</sup>forwarned duly took place very shortly afterwards. The Vitellian faction was completely overthrown. If Vitellius was in doubt concerning the issue before the occurrences of these prodigies, the wonders did in fact succeed



in shattering his confidence; his face, his gait showed alarm as each new messenger arrived; and finally he was for ever in his cups.

A most interesting circumstance occurred at the death of Otho.

"The inhabitants of Regium Lepidum narrate that on the day of the battle of Bedriacum a bird of unknown aspect alighted there in a frequented grove, where it remained unterrified and undisturbed by the throng of people, or by the birds that thronged around it until the moment when Otho put an end to himself. Then it disappeared; and a calculation of the time showed that the beginning and end of the marvel coincided with the last hours of Otho's life". (53).

There seems little room for doubt from these words that Tacitus accepts this story as an omen correctly interpreted; the rareness and persistence of the bird, together with the coincidence of its appearance and the death of Otho each preclude it from being a natural event. This anecdote is very strong in dramatic effect, and it is told with a sense of awe that forbids one to suppose that the event was fortuitous.

Another similar story is told of Galba sacrificing in the Temple of Apollo.

"....Galba was sacrificing in the Temple of Apollo when the soothsayer Umbricius announced in the hearing of Otho, who was standing by, that the entrails were unfavourable, portending an imminent plot and a foe within the house. Otho interpreted the omen in the contrary sense,

as favourable to himself and implying a prosperous issue to his enterprise". (54).

One might cynically suppose, of course, that the soothsayer was dropping in Galba's ear a word that had come to him from a source other than the entrails of the victim. Yet Tacitus, an adept in the use of innuendo, gives no hint of such a suspicion, and the incident is described with the straightforwardness born of credulity. The words 'e contrario' might be translated as 'from the opposite point of view', for the interpretation of Otho was not inconsistent with that of Umbricius; bad news for Galba meant at this stage good news for Otho. The important point is that Otho's interpretation is only incidentally correct. Further it might be suggested that the dignity of the scene, set as it was, in the Temple of Apollo, would help Tacitus towards belief in this prediction. (55).

Not only to Roman priests and generals does Tacitus ascribe the power of divination. A Cypriot priest is mentioned:

"The priest, whose name was Sostratus, perceiving that the entrails were all alike favourable, and that the Goddess looked approvingly on some great enterprise, gave a brief and ordinary answer for the moment, and then, granting a private interview, disclosed the future". (56).

Titus, the recipient of this information, believed it; his own and his father's armies certainly believed it, and there is no indication from Tacitus that he was any more sceptical than they were. As has been pointed out already, the admission of such a story into what the author claims to be a factual narrative, without any qualifications, helps to establish his

belief in divination in general.

Again Tacitus relates:

"When Vespasian was there, sacrificing, nursing secret ambitions in his mind, the priest Basilides after repeated examination of the entrails declared 'Whatever it is you are designing, Vespasian - whether it be the building of a house or an extension of your boundaries or a larger number of slaves - know that you are to have a big mansion, a vast domain and a multitude of attendants'". (57)

It is unlikely that Basilides imagined just how accurate in each of these three respects his prediction would prove to be.

One need not believe that Tacitus would have followed Vespasian into the heights of astrology which he mentions elsewhere in the same chapter.

"....the others boldly crowded around Vespasian, and encouraged him; they reminded him of certain prophetic utterances, and of certain movements of the stars. For Vespasian himself was not insensible to influences of this kind;".

The language of Tacitus makes it clear, in fact, that he wishes himself entirely dissociated from such views on his own part; yet he accepts the omens that Vespasian remembered concerning himself - once more, eloquently without comment:

"Old omens now recurred to his mind. A lofty cypress tree on his property had suddenly fallen: next day it had grown again on the same spot, as tall as before, and more exuberant....." (58).

This and the previous story seem to have been released by Vespasian and Titus only after the happy outcome that they signified had, in fact, been fulfilled. (59). It seems to the more sophisticated reader of the twentieth century that for an emperor to recount from his throne how foreign priests had foretold his destiny for his high office would be an invitation to derision; it was not so, however, for Tacitus, and he records the subsequent revelation in an impartially factual manner.

There are limits to his credulity, however; statues turning of their own accord and talking oxen seem to transgress what has already been seen to be a none too stringent compass:

"Alarm also was created by prodigies reported by divers witnesses. The reins of the chariot on which Victory stands in the area of the Capitol had dropped from her hands.....  
...an ox in Etruria had spoken; monstrous births had taken place, together with many other marvels such as in uncivilised ages are observed even in quiet times, but which nowadays are heard of only in moments of anxiety". (60).

The phenomena in question are certainly of an extravagant nature, not paralleled among other prodigies to which Tacitus accords belief, Tongues run riot during times of stress and emergency (61), and although his contemporaries do not as a general rule imitate their remote ancestors, they emerge little better than they - to judge from the wild gossip that flies around - in moments of crisis.

Later in the same chapter his complaint is of a different nature:

"And as soon as men's minds had been relieved from these fears, the fact that [Otho's] way to the war....was blocked, instead of being referred to chance or to natural causes, was interpreted as a portent, ominous of impending calamity".

Here again (62) is his caution against an all too ready acceptance of unusual sights or events as being omens. Not only do crises promote the invention of, gossip about, and finally belief in fanciful events, but perfectly natural things are taken as omens and portents. Again his scepticism includes not only the conditions of crisis obtaining at the time the 'omen' is seen, but the general irresponsibility of the herd. This contempt for the fashion of the people for discovering non-existent portents finds its clearest expression by Tacitus in the words (63): "apud civitatem cuncta interpretantem, funesti ominis loco acceptum est quod....."; Rome had attained to such a habit of seeing hidden meanings in things that nothing escaped its attentions.

Omens and prodigies, auguries, divinations and other prophecies, then, seem unmistakeably to have been real occurrences to Tacitus. They may forbode good or evil, they may be readily or only with some difficulty interpreted. Sometimes strange things are wrongly construed as being 'praesagia', but this is not always necessarily the case. How then are the valid indications of the future to be recognised? And once their validity is established, how is their meaning to be explained? And then what is one to do? Are their injunctions blindly to be obeyed, or has one any choice in the matter? An indication of the answers that Tacitus would supply to the first two questions has already been given; but there seems to be no means of discovering what his answers

to the remaining questions would have been. The questions themselves arise quite sharply in the following passage:

"....the day was disturbed by thunder, lightning and unwonted terrifying signs in the heavens. In ancient times, the observation of such things would have broken up a public assembly; but it did not deter Galba from proceeding to the camp. Perhaps he despised such matters as affairs of chance; perhaps he thought that the decrees of Fate, although signified to us, are not to be avoided". (64).

This dilemma may, of course, have existed in the mind of Galba as Tacitus states; but this would seem inconsistent for a man whose gullibility and proneness to superstition was almost legendary. (65). The alternative is much more likely; that this is another instance of Tacitus transferring his own thoughts into the speeches of others. (66). The dilemma is simply presented, however, and Tacitus makes no attempt, unfortunately, to suggest which of the alternatives he regards as the more reasonable.

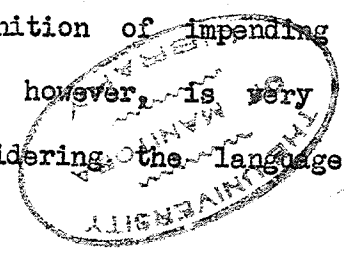
Unlike the later Histories and Annals, the earlier works of Tacitus throw no positive light upon his attitude towards omens and prodigies. This is not altogether surprising; for whereas the Histories and the Annals are describing the complex fabric of state and statecraft in which augury is present as one fine but important thread, an encomium upon his father-in-law, a geographical survey of the German tribes and their territories and a dialogue in which the subject of eloquence is discussed, are media in which it would be more surprising than otherwise to find supernatural phenomena influencing or forecasting the behaviour of any of the characters.

It was remarked at the outset of this discussion that there are grounds for believing that there became manifest in the later writings of Tacitus a heightened critical sense, and less general credulity. It has also been pointed out that an existence under murderous rulers capable of the most arbitrary conduct is likely to cause disillusionment and cynicism, and to make one who survived such a period of terror more soul-searching and cautious for the future. A further interesting fact emerges from a study of the omens, portents and the like in Tacitus: to speak arithmetically, the Histories contain just as many accounts of such phenomena as do the Annals, although the former are considerably less than half as long as the latter, and cover a very much shorter period. It does not seem too much to infer that Tacitus did, in fact, become increasingly cynical in his last years and that thus he became less prone to sacrifice the description of hard facts, unpleasant because closely related to his own experience, in favour of mysterious anecdotes.

This point, however, cannot be laboured too much. Statistical methods of studying the Humanities, especially the classical authors, do not in principle seem a satisfactory means of solving the problems involved. Then, too, consideration must be given to the sources from which Tacitus' material was obtained. In the case of the Annals, written records were necessarily drawn upon. In the Histories, however, many of the details of the agonising year of the Four Emperors must have been stamped upon his memory as the incidents occurred; a youth of fifteen years of

age of Tacitus' station must have been very much alive to the dramatic happenings of the time. And apart from his own memory, he must have been served by the memories of older eye-witnesses, some of them perhaps rhetoricians with an eye for the incredible less scrupulous than Tacitus himself.

Included in the above discussion has been mention of the vocabulary employed to describe the various means of looking into the future with some degree of official sanction. The terms have been used for the most part without precise distinctions because Tacitus' own terminology - in keeping indeed with that of his fellow Roman historians - is also very loose. F.B. Krauss (67) has attempted to define some approximate areas of meaning for the various terms used by Livy and Suetonius as well as by Tacitus; he shrewdly makes no claim to absolute accuracy as both Servius (68) and St. Augustine (69) state that no clear-cut demarcations were recognised. According to Krauss, the term with the widest range of meaning is 'prodigium', and this normally relates to a purely accidental phenomenon. Both the words 'portentum' and 'ostentum' describe phenomena manifesting the future to the public at large rather than to a private individual; in the case of such a revelation to a private person the usual word is 'omen'. This latter word may also indicate an event which is thought to be of no importance at the time of its happening. Finally he finds that the word 'monstrum' contains a distinctly threatening note, an admonition of impending retribution from a divine source. This summary, however, is very general, and is of little assistance when considering the language





of Tacitus. In fact it could be definitely misleading if it were used in an attempt scientifically to relate his meaning to his terminology along these lines.

The future could be explored by other means at Rome - at least that was the claim of certain people thus concerned. These people were the astrologers or 'mathematici'. Concerning these Tacitus is for once clear in the expression of his feelings. He most strongly indicts them at the beginning of his historical writings:

"...a tribe of men who betray the great, and befool the credulous - a tribe that in our city will always be proscribed, and always hold their ground". (70).

He regards them as a complete nuisance to all men of consequence - those who have, and those who have not yet arrived at the height of power. Just how stubbornly they did hold their ground is seen from the number of fruitless attempts to remove them from Rome, as related by Tacitus (71) and other writers. (72). In spite of decrees of expulsion, however, they continued to flourish in Rome so successfully that Diocletian, two centuries later, was to be exasperated by their never-ceasing presence. (73). A compelling explanation of these decrees is that the Emperors themselves attached so much importance to their prophecies that they feared that others, emboldened by similar prophecies, would come to rival themselves in their desire for power; the Imperial astrologers would thus, of course, be retained. (74). It is likely that Tacitus' abundant contempt for

their wares springs from a contempt for the vendors themselves, for many freedmen (75) and their inferiors were numbered among the astrologers. Worse than their status was the unfortunate degree of influence which they enjoyed over the Caesars and their immediate family circles, and it appears to have been invariably a degrading influence.

Significant are the reasons given by Claudius, and seemingly endorsed - or at least undisputed - by Tacitus (76) for the establishment of a school of soothsayers at Rome. Claudius speaks of the impetus to the observance of religious ceremonies which the advice of soothsayers has given in the past; but at present the advance of foreign superstitions - a heading which could not fail to include astrology - has contributed to public indifference towards the older native art. This conservatism - a preference for things Roman to things foreign, and for established customs to innovations - is quite consistent with the general outlook of Tacitus.

This is not to say that he attaches no credence to the utterances of astrologers. His "implicit faith in the skill of these eastern imposters" accompanied by "such distrust of their honesty" (77) constitutes another example of the difficulty one finds in discerning what was the state of religious belief during this period. It appears that with a widening of interest in mysticism and the occult there had followed an opening of ears to the prophecies of astrologers, to the extent that the city was overflowing with professors of the art, bogus and genuine, and they constituted a strong subversive influence upon public morals. (78). Tacitus does not fail to mention instances of

correct predictions by astrologers, or at any rate, predictions that he is willing to take seriously. For example, he is so impressed by the intelligent forecasts of Thrasyllus to Tiberius that his recounting the story of how the astrologer ingratiated himself with the emperor leads him into speculations concerning fate and free-will. (79). Again, the matricide and principate of Nero are foretold to his mother Agrippina by astrologers. (80).

To conclude this discussion of the views of Tacitus upon religion, it is necessary to turn from religion as it was accepted and practised at Rome, and to consider his views upon the religions of other peoples, both in other lands and when these foreign religions were introduced into Rome itself.

When speaking of foreign religions as practiced abroad, his tone is normally that of an interested antiquarian, well worthy of any scholarly work today. The deep interest that he betrays in such matters suggests that he would be willing to agree that an understanding of his religious beliefs can offer a deep penetration into the mind, and hence the disposition of the believer.

His description of the religious beliefs and codes of conduct of the Germanic tribes is given in this interested manner - a manner that has been interpreted by some as the betrayal of admiration for a consistent monotheism, free from ornamentation and sophistication, which Tacitus himself sought in vain. It is true that there is envy, only thinly disguised, of their simpler life, and he seems pleasantly surprised that their religion is so closely correlated with their daily life, in a living rather than the perfunctory way that it was conducted at Rome.. There

is, too, a note of surprise - which is probably a significant indication of the customary manners in the corresponding field at Rome - when he notes the finality with which the injunctions of omens and portents are accepted by the Germans. (81).

The Histories contain an interesting story of the founding of the temple of the Paphian Venus in Cyprus, and of the rites that took place there (82); the priest Sostratus evidently earned the respect of Tacitus because of the prophecy of good fortune which he made to Titus and his father. (83).

Similarly absorbing is the account of Vespasian's brief and, so far as is known, only association with the Egyptian god of healing, Serapis, at Alexandria. (84). After obtaining the credit for what Tacitus appears to believe were fortuitous healings, Vespasian became infatuated with the cult, and upon this peg is hung an account of its history and the remarkable events which preceded its inception. The whole account is passed on without comment, as one which had been given to Tacitus from another source; there is no indication as to whether the picture of a God walking unaided on to a ship was within Tacitus' powers of imagination or not. Perhaps it was. As a scientist he was completely lacking in training. (85). In an age when scientific ignorance was not exceptional, there was probably a greater inclination to believing the abnormal, because no scientist was ready round the corner to explode an attractive tale.

Making appropriate allowances for the spacious manner in which the Histories are recounted as compared with the Annals, it is nevertheless interesting to note that four complete, long chapters are devoted to the description of the cult of Serapis.

Other brief references to aspects of foreign religions are made according as they became appropriate to the narrative; for instance, when the Bructeri hold Veleda as a woman of acknowledged authority it is mentioned in passing that the Germans held women as prophetic and even divine. (86).

The description of the appearance in 34 A.D. of the Phoenix and of its history (87) shows how Tacitus' treatment of a religious topic is strictly secular. Though the history of this fabulous bird is not, to be strictly accurate, a religious topic, it is related to religion by its bizarre nature - it is if not a supernatural at least a praeternatural phenomenon, and as Tacitus states (88) it is sacred to the sun. His treatment of this theme is thoughtful, reasonable and free from any tendency to make up the reader's mind for him; in fact it is written very much in the same vein as is the history of the Capitoline temple of Jupiter. (89). Although sacrifices to Jupiter are described in numerous places in Tacitus' narrative, his temple and its history seem no more personal, no more personally related to Tacitus than is the Phoenix or, for that matter, Serapis; each of them is an object of purely academic and antiquarian interest.

This consideration of foreign cults and creeds has so far been concerned with matters only incidental to life and society at Rome. The tone of the historian changes most noticeably when any foreign religion or belief makes its appearance at Rome, or in any way affects the life of the city. At once Tacitus rises to defend Roman religion from the mischievous superstitions which have intruded themselves upon the scene. Although the Christians,

he realises, were used by Nero as the innocent scapegoats for the fire at Rome in 64 A.D., and were subjected, ostensibly on that account, to the most inhuman cruelties, they were regarded by Tacitus nevertheless as 'notoriously depraved' - quos per flagitia invisos. (90). Their deadly superstition - exitiabilis superstitio - gravitated towards Rome just as "all degraded and shameful practices collect and flourish there" - ("quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque"). It is likely that he detested the Christians for no more logical reason than that they were an offshoot of the Judaism which he loathed. (91). Their insistence upon devotion only to their God he ascribed no doubt simply to perversity and contempt for the city-gods which in actual fact satisfied him no more than them. The precise reason for his harsh language against the Christians is for the present less important than the high-handed and intolerant attitude which occasioned it.

Towards the Jews, as has been stated, his attitude is similarly uncompromising. Their exclusiveness is a constant source of irritation to him.

"....compassionate and unflinchingly loyal to each other, they hate all other men with a deadly hatred". (92). It is easier to sympathise with the Jews than with Tacitus here; one is compelled to suspect that their hatred of all other men was essentially a defensive hatred born of a fear of Roman high-handedness and intolerance. Tacitus gives the impression of suspecting them of having arrogated to themselves a religion superior to that of other men - that is, of the patriotic Romans:

"...they deem them impious who, out of mortal matter, fashion effigies of gods after the likeness of men". (93).

The indictment continues by alleging that they bestow no distinctions such as they bestow upon their intangible God upon either kings or Caesars. Their religion, he claims, lacks both charm and dignity.

Tacitus' condemnation of Judaism, Christianity and Egyptian religion - or for that matter any other religion that infiltrated into Rome - is not born of a religious intolerance in the modern sense of the term; for how might a professed agnostic presume to be dogmatic in matters concerning religion? It is the result of a hatred of treasonable activity with which any religious innovation was bound to be identified, since as has been seen (94), ritual and politics at Rome were so inextricably bound together. This consideration would tend to justify - though not exculpate - the means which Tiberius used, and Tacitus himself condones, of removing freedmen tainted with Jewish and Egyptian religion from Rome, and banishing them to an infected island in the hope of eventually exterminating the offenders. (95).

## II. PHILOSOPHY

Stoicism in the first century of the Christian era was the most influential of the recognised schools of philosophy at Rome. At this time it seems largely to have lost its concern with theology; its phase of euhemerising was dead, and there are few traces of interest in its physical science. (96). Its role was in fact little more than the providing of a code of ethics corresponding in many ways to Christian ethics but stripped of ritual and liturgy. The notion of God was vague; from the original Zenonian conception of an omnipresent breath, an 'anima mundi', it was readily assimilated into the idea of a single presiding diety to whom man was related through his soul, and to whom he was responsible.

Of other schools at Rome during the Imperial period much less is known. The most important was the Epicurean school, which advocated an approach to life in a spirit of aloofness from the world of politics and commerce. By the very nature of this doctrine the scant records of the school give what in all probability is a false impression of the inactivity of its adherents. Moreover the Epicureans clung more closely to the old Athenian idea of a philosophical school than did the Stoics; they lived in closed communities having the minimum possible of intercourse with the outside world.

It is most unlikely that Tacitus had any direct experience of the sequestered life of the Epicurean; he was however at least aware of his fundamental attitude towards the world and towards the gods, and he was not prepared to dismiss it as



absurd. (97). Like that of Stoicism, the function of Epicureanism in Roman society was to offer - not a religion, for that would have constituted an outright contradiction of Epicurus' most fundamental teaching - but an attitude towards religion.

It can be demonstrated that although Tacitus was too diffident - or too cunning - ever to place on record his considered opinion upon any controversial issue, in philosophy he exhibited strong leanings towards 'the Stoic side'. Evidence of two kinds may be produced towards this demonstration. In the first place are several statements which clearly express his admiration for certain leading, professed and well-known Stoics. In the second place is a number of more or less categorical statements in which he admires certain aspects of Stoic teaching; added to, and also related to these are the numerous moral conclusions that he draws which are at least tinged with Stoicism.

The evidence of either of these two types alone quite clearly could not be regarded as at all conclusive. Indeed the cumulative effect of all the evidence presents no more than a probable indication of the trend of his feelings at the time of writing; his habitual reluctance to express his viewpoint destroys all possibility of reaching definite conclusions.

It must also be mentioned, moreover, that even if there were no evidence of his bias towards the Stoa, the probability of his leaning in this direction might be inferred from his station, circumstances and role in public life. This probability should not be unduly emphasised; but it is an interesting

reflection when examined along with the more cogent considerations mentioned above and now to be discussed.

The first type of evidence consists of statements of admiration made by Tacitus for leading, professed Stoics. Perhaps Barea Soranus is the most important from the point of view of the dramatic content of the Annals, and at least one author (98) has seen the unjust trial of this upright man to constitute the turning-point of Nero's career - the point where his true character first became known to the Senate.

Soranus is first mentioned - to speak chronologically - when he moved a resolution in the Senate to make a monetary gift to the freedman Pallas (99), who was already the possessor of a very substantial fortune. (100). This resolution does not redound to the credit of Soranus, but it appears from Pliny (101) that he was acting under pressure from Agrippina. (102). If Pliny is correct in this statement, Soranus was in fact following a course of action recommended elsewhere as a general principle ~~by~~ by Tacitus himself (103) - in bowing before the storm of events. Later Nero sought to overthrow 'Virtue herself' when he allowed Soranus and Thrasea Paetus (104) to be charged. (105). His provocation in the case of Soranus was his justice and diligence as proconsul in Asia. (106). His trial and subsequent death are of especial interest because one who testified against him was Publius Egnatius Celer, himself a professed Stoic, a friend (107) and preceptor (108) of his victim. The circumstances of the trial as recounted by Tacitus leave the reader in no doubt of the innocence of Soranus. Elsewhere (109) it is noted that Egnatius was handsomely rewarded. Furthermore it is highly

likely that it was Barea Soranus who was in the mind of Tacitus when he spoke of 'men who had no enemies being destroyed by their friends'. (110).

Although there are traces of disapproval of the conduct of Thrasea Paetus in at least one passage of the Annals (111), Tacitus invariably speaks of him as a man of unassailable integrity; a man whose very fault of rebellious impetuosity, ineffective though it was, served as an example to his fellow-senators and so made them less servile. (112). His love of reputation was matched by an exemplary courage (113), demonstrated never more clearly than at the time of his death (114), which he wrought upon himself in the best tradition of Roman nobility. His last moments he spent discussing the question of survival after death, thus inviting comparison with Socrates, the wisest of men (115); like Socrates he sought to the end the company of philosophers, and it was with the Cynic Demetrius that he engaged in his last discussion, resigned but happy in his innocence.

Helvidius Priscus was the son-in-law of Thrasea Paetus. He shared with him all the virtues required of the Stoic man-of-the-world of his day in all departments of living, and in ample measure to satisfy Tacitus. The historian's description of Helvidius, although somewhat long, is well worth quoting for the insight that it gives into the qualities Tacitus expected of a Roman nobleman:

Helvidius Priscus had from early youth devoted his great talents to lofty studies (116), not using a grand name, like so many others, as a screen for ease and indolence,

but with a view to fortifying himself against the chances of public life. He followed the teaching of those philosophers who hold that virtue is the only good, that nothing is evil but what is base, and who account power, high birth and all other things outside the mind as neither good nor evil. While still of quaestorian rank, he had been chosen by Thrasea Paetus to be his son-in-law; from him he drank in, above all other things, the spirit of liberty; and in every relation of life - as citizen, Senator, husband, son-in-law and friend - he maintained an equally high level of conduct; contemptuous of wealth, unswerving in rectitude, undaunted in the face of danger. (117).

Both Thrasea and Helvidius entered whole-heartedly into the turmoil of political affairs at a time when government was at the height of its corruptibility and vice. Such participation in public life was intended to exhibit, and no doubt succeeded in exhibiting, a Catonian contempt for the frivolities of the age, and to restrain them by example.

At the same time as the death of Thrasea, Helvidius was banished by Nero, but upon the accession of Galba returned to impeach Thrasea's accuser, Eprius Marcellus - a loathsome creature if Tacitus is to be believed. (118). The result was a judicious compromise which would probably have been justified as placing welfare before the settlement of personal animosities (119); in fact he abandoned the impeachment when he realised that half the Senate was thereby implicated.

Another instance of Helvidius' concern with public affairs is

his attention, in the office of praetor, to the formalities of state religion (120); Tacitus' accord with these observances has already been discussed (121). There is no reason to suppose that Jupiter, Juno and Minerva - to whom Helvidius sacrifices - in any way represent the 'anima mundi'; it seems as though it was incumbent upon the Stoic public figure, in the interests of the state and the Empire, to pay special attention to the niceties of the old religion.

Despite his wishes to the contrary, Rubellius Plautus was much discussed as a probable successor to Nero (122). Tacitus portrays him as a man fond of the old ideals as became a good Stoic, of a somewhat diffident nature and not particularly anxious to have greatness thrust upon him. As a professed Stoic however he was inevitably distrusted by Nero and his creatures (123), and as the threat of execution grew, he put behind him all thoughts of resistance as advocated by his father-in-law, from fear of subsequent reprisals which might be taken against his wife and children (124). This concern for his family resembles the great love of Soranus for his daughter Servilia (125), and that of his own wife Antistia for himself and her father (126). In describing her death and those of her father and mother (127) Tacitus achieves a level of pathos which he seems to reserve for occasions when family ties are endangered or finally severed (128).

Antistius Vetus was the father-in-law of Rubellius Plautus and the father of Antistia, whose death has just been mentioned. He

is not known certainly to have been a Stoic, though that he was so is strongly suggested by his relationship with Rubellius and by his manifest affection for Stoic virtues. Among these is an arrogance common to most Roman aristocrats of the age, and quite clearly practiced by Tacitus himself. His views upon freedmen for instance (129) are well-matched by Vetus' withdrawal to Formiae rather than face an ex-slave on terms of equality (130).

Musonius Rufus was, states Tacitus (131), a zealous Stoic, although his enthusiasm for evangelising at inopportune times could become a source of irritation or amusement. When such a story is told against him, however (132), he shows the more serious side of Stoicism, and brings honour to himself in the process by accusing the Stoic traitor Celer (133). In this enterprise he met with more success than did Helvidius Priscus in his attempt to bring to justice Eprius Marcellus (134). From the story of Rufus' unseasonable preaching and from the fact that he was banished by Nero on the grounds of his eminence as a professor of philosophy, one gains the impression that he was less the man-of-the-world and more devoted to the 'ivory tower' than was usual for a Stoic during this period. (135).

The best - known of all the Stoics of this age, on account of his writings, was Lucius Annaeus Seneca. His writings contain an apparently sincere exposition of Stoic ethics. Seneca himself has always presented an enigma; although he gave out a wealth of moral instruction closely akin with the precepts

of Christianity, he was one who could readily relax his scruples when expediency suggested such a course. The attitude of Tacitus towards Seneca seems not so warm as might be expected of so whole-hearted an admirer of the Stoics already discussed.

The speech of Suillius reviling Seneca for his lack of mature political judgment, for his prodigious wealth and his eagerness for more, is retailed at some length. (136). The transparency of the falsehoods in the letter to the Senate which Nero read, but which Seneca had composed and which purported to explain the death of Agrippina (137), was apparent not only to Tacitus (138) but to every thinking person. Yet the description of his self-inflicted death (139) shows Seneca to have died in the manner most befitting a Stoic - unhesitant, calm, resigned, cheerful and displaying strong tokens of affection between himself and his family.

Elsewhere Tacitus shows no more definite affection for or antipathy towards Seneca. The account of his relations with Nero is far from fulsome, but appears impartial and merely factual. Occasionally there is even a quiet sneer at his vanity (140); those who tell Seneca of the personal attacks against his luxurious living are classed by Tacitus as men 'who had still some sense of decency remaining'. (141). On the other hand he is described as a man of affability - comitate honesta - (142). Generally speaking, therefore, it must be stated that Tacitus is non-committal.

Seneca was born into the equestrian order. Even though many of the more wealthy knights vied with the aristocrats in

influence, they lacked the reverence for the past and their ancestors that the more distinguished families exhibited. This gave rise to a somewhat different conception of and attitude towards religion between the two orders; the knights could only regard themselves as part of Rome's present, while the nobles identified themselves with the remnants of her former greatness. This may explain in part the lukewarm admiration for Seneca that Tacitus shows; no matter how close was the similarity between their moral outlooks, there was a fundamental social distinction that could not be removed.

The only alternative explanation seems to be to follow Miss B. Walker (143); she appears to believe that Tacitus saw in Seneca all the vices which he himself wished he had not. Both were equally exposed to the charge of collaboration with tyrants.

At the trial of Thrasea Paetus the tribune Arulemus Rusticus had offered to veto the proceedings of the Senate which were to be instrumental in the sentencing of the Stoic (144); the offer was declined on the grounds that it would endanger the life of Arulemus without accomplishing anything. Although Tacitus speaks of this offer as arising from a desire for personal glory (145), he elsewhere speaks of Arulemus with admiration. <sup>He endorses the sentiments of/</sup> (146). A kindred spirit Suetonius in suspecting the tribune's motives; at any rate there must have been a strong bond between Arulemus and Thrasea, for his death under Domitian is recorded (148) on the ground that he spoke of Thrasea, along with Helvidius, as 'sanctissimi viri'.



Whether each of these characters as portrayed by Tacitus carries conviction that he existed as a separate individual or whether, on the contrary, one accepts Miss Walker's argument (149) that they are to be regarded as variations of a character-type, there is the inescapable fact that Tacitus admires five professed Stoics whole-hearted<sup>ly</sup> and one to a qualified extent, and in doing so expresses his admiration of sentiments or actions which are especially Stoic.

The second type of evidence of Tacitus' inclination towards Stoicism is the statement which expresses admiration of some Stoic precept. In this enquiry it will be necessary to be critical of the occasions when the historian rejoices to find instances of conduct which, while being enjoined by Stoic teachers, are not essentially Stoic but part of the deep-rooted Roman notion of virtue. Such instances would suggest no more than that Tacitus clung to the old republican qualities advocated by his ancestors.

If not the most important, certainly one of the most striking qualities of Stoic discipline is the stress laid upon the maintaining of bonds within the family, and, closely related to this, loyalty in friendship. Friendship was the subject of a philosophical treatise written by Cicero a hundred years before Tacitus was born. Aristotle had considered the topic sufficiently important to form the main subject-matter of two books of his ethics. Friendship was both an aid to virtue<sup>and a virtue/</sup>, in itself. Seneca repeatedly laid emphasis upon concord among men, on kindness and love (150); many similar<sup>ex</sup>hortations are found

in the mediati<sup>t</sup>ons of Marcus Aurelius. (151). But more important and far more immediately relevant is the notoriety of Publius Egnatius Celer (152), who was said by Tacitus (153) to have professed to be an authority on friendship, at the same time as being a professed philosopher, and in fact, as Juvenal records (154), a Stoic. This evidence helps to demonstrate both how friendship was regarded by the Stoics as a virtue to be cultivated, and how ■ similarly stern a view of a faithless friend is taken by Tacitus himself.

The importance of the bonds by which friends are held together is a constant feature in Roman writings. It seems at least possible that the fear of a renunciation of the Emperor's friendship (155) may have been due to a conception of the word among Romans generally - not necessarily the Stoics exclusively - different from the modern notion of friendship; today this word allows of an infinity of varying shades of meaning. It may be of further significance in this context to note that in one instance where the 'amicitia Neronis' is in question, the reconciliation between Nero and Thrasea Paetus was formally announced to Seneca by the emperor. It would be unfortunate if Seneca's reply - he congratulated Nero - were to lose anything of its humor through an interpretation deeper than the meaning Tacitus intended; but the emperor is depicted speaking to one Stoic about another, in a matter which was one of great concern to Stoics generally. The possibility at least exists that here Tacitus is subscribing to the Stoic's high regard for the importance of formal friendship. That this formal

friendship extended beyond the relationship between emperor and subject is shown in the oath of allegiance of the Paphlagonians towards Augustus (156) in which they all promise to

"regard as their own friends whomsoever Caesar, his children and descendants so regard, and to regard as enemies whomsoever they so adjudge".

Similar oaths were made by the Assians (157) towards Caligula, and doubtless these sentiments were present or implied in all such oaths of allegiance.

The above remarks suggest, then, that at Rome there was in the early Empire at least a recognition of an attachment between certain friends, the honouring of which was a matter of great importance. This is not to say that all friendships possessed so formal a recognition, nor that whenever Tacitus mentions a friend of friendship, any so close liaison must automatically be assumed. That so close a liaison could, and did, exist, is a notion that assists one to grasp the full implications of certain passages.

Barea Soranus was charged by Sabinus with 'friendship with Rubellius Plautus' (158); a Roman knight Titus Sabinus was dragged to gaol because he had been a friend of Germanicus (159); most important of all, the treacherous friend of Soranus, Publius Egnatius Celer offers an opportunity of showing the gravity with which friendship was viewed. (160). The full implication of the latter's betrayal of friendship in a formal sense - 'amicitia' - as used in the other instances above mentioned, explains the high indignation with which the occurrence is recounted.

If then this form of friendship, this 'amicitia', is as it appears, to be, the strongest of bonds between two persons, blood relationship excepted, it would be assumed to exist between a man and his wife's parents; and this mutual esteem is found in Tacitus with an almost obsessional frequency. The most eloquent instance is of course his own affection for his father-in-law, Agricola, in whose honour he wrote an eponymous appreciation. Times without number, he draws attention to the apparently numerous virtues of Agricola; he speaks with obvious pride of his having been selected as his son-in-law (161), and with apparently equal feeling upon his death. (162). In the relationship between Tacitus and his father-in-law there seems to be a distince reminiscence of the relationship between Helvidius Priscus and his father-in-law Thrasea Paetus; and when it is found that the qualities which he finds in Agricola are similar to those found in the Stoics whom he admires in the Histories and Annals, this may be taken as evidence of Stoic learnings in both Tacitus and Agricola.

This would correspond with the relationship between the Stoics Thrasea Paetus and his son-in-law Helvidius Priscus. It would be rash, however, to draw too close a parallel between Helvidius and Tacitus, but it seems likely that, as he wrote of the willingness of Priscus to share the fate of his wife's father, he wrote with the image of his own father-in-law, now dead, before his mind; and as Helvidius was raised to a fanatical zeal for Stoicism under Vespasian after the death of Thrasea, so were born the moral sermons of Tacitus. This in effect is what his historical writings come to be, although unlike

Helvidius' actions, Tacitus' writings were always tempered with discretion.

If it were incumbent upon a Stoic to impeach the successful accuser of a friend (163), it was certainly so in the case of a son-in-law when, upon his return from exile, Helvidius was able to commence, although not to conclude, proceedings against Eprius Marcellus. (164).

Tacitus' views upon the relationship between husband and wife will be best understood after consideration of his attitude towards adultery. (165). It is sufficient to remark here that this is the basic relationship of the family, without a loyal and dutiful observance of which there is little prospect of any other form of mutual understanding. It would be superfluous to protract the discussion of Tacitus' insistence upon the virtues of love, concord and solidarity within the family circle. If he recommends such a policy among friends and relations through marriage, it may safely be taken for granted that its need is the greatest when relationships are the closest. One or two will serve as examples for the present purpose.

"This year also witnessed" he says in the Annals (166), "a terrible instance of tragic heartlessness. Before the Senate appeared two men called Vibius Serenus - a son prosecuting his father. The father, dragged back from exile, dirty and shabby and now manacled, had to face the charges of his elegant, brisk young son".

Apart from the fact that as the narrative develops it becomes clear that the charges were completely false, it seems that

Tacitus here uses his dramatic skill to bias the reader against the glib young man bent upon severing the bonds of filial affection in this cowardly manner.

"I find it recorded" he states (167), "by the best authorities that so insensible were the victors to right and wrong that a private horse-soldier claimed a reward from the general for having slain his own brother in the late battle; and though human law forbade them to honour such an act, military policy did not permit them to punish it.....A similar crime had been committed in a previous civil war; for Sisenna records how in the battle against Cinna on the Janiculum a Pompeian soldier killed his own brother, and on discovering what he had done, killed himself; so much greater among our ancestors was the honour paid to virtue, and the penitence felt for wrong-doing".

In this case Tacitus applauds the Pompeian soldier for the sense of honour which prompted him to kill himself. This is by no means an isolated example, and as a final topic there remains this further point of contact between the historian and Stoic teaching: his admiration for the brave suicide. Most striking of all the suicides in the works of Tacitus is the self-inflicted death of Otho. By the courage to do with his own hand what would otherwise certainly have been done by the executioners of Vitellius, Otho, so far as Tacitus is concerned atones in one last moment for a life of luxury and vice:

"Some of the men" he narrates, "slew themselves beside the pyre:.....for love of their prince (i.e. Otho) and

in emulation of his glory".

"Two notable deeds - the one infamous, the other glorious - gained for him in the eyes of posterity an equal share of good and of evil fame". (168).

The last book of the Annals is virtually a catalogue of suicides, several of them by men and women of certain Stoic creed:

"Lucius Antistius Vetus and his mother-in-law Sextia and daughter Antistia Pollitta....died just as courageously"(169);

"The courage he had often demonstrated against the enemy Ostorius turned upon himself.....he told a slave to hold his hand firmly with a dagger in it - nothing more.

Then Ostorius pulled the slave's hand on to his own throat". (170).

these examples can be matched with many others, all of a similar nature. (171). The deaths, again by their own hands, of Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus constitute the description of Virtus herself: as has been seen (172), these men were leading Stoics. (173).

These deaths were merely the carrying out by those marked out for destruction by the emperor of their own death sentences. Tacitus does not condone suicides which are needless, and which produce no improvement in the circumstances they seek by their deaths to remedy. He disparages the conduct of the many who

"have stormed by precipitous paths the peak of honour, winning fame without serving their country, by a melodramatic death". (174).

This sentiment is in keeping with the love of Rome that

prompts Tacitus blindly to accept the hollow state religion; a willingness to serve the state by death, if need be, or, if Rome's interests will thus be served the better, by sacrificing an opportunity. There is a sharp contrast between the old and the more recent attitudes towards suicide; between admiration for the courage necessary to kill oneself and the cowardice of one afraid to continue his responsibilities. (175).

As was stated at the beginning of this discussion, these points make no pretence of demonstrating that Tacitus was either a Stoic or one who found himself in very close accord with the teachings of that school; they merely help to show that he was at least tinged with its practices rather than its precepts. To his fundamental spiritual needs, the Stoa, as all other forms of teaching of which Tacitus had first-hand knowledge, had no effective solace to offer.



## CHAPTER II

### SOCIETY IN ROME

#### I - THE ROLE OF WOMEN

In discussing another aspect of the development of Tacitus' thought (1) it was mentioned that it is by no means unreasonable to suppose that his cynicism was a gradual growth nourished liberally during the reign of Domitian. As experience followed bitter experience during the years of his early forties he became increasingly dubious of the standards that had won universal acceptance, less willing to accept without question ideas which at an earlier date he might have taken for granted and less sure within himself of the dignity of men in general and wealthy Romans in particular. It was also noticed in another context (2) that the whole of his moral purpose is closely bound up with this tendency towards disillusionment. The Annals, his latest work, exhibits to the most marked degree his concern for political morality; it is a moral sermon to almost as great an extent as it is a work of historical compilation.

There are fundamental differences between the Annals and its precursors the Histories. When he wrote the Histories, the main concerns of Tacitus were the intrigues contrived and the battles fought on behalf of each successor to the imperial throne; once Galba had acceded to the throne the problem of the succession appeared in a new light. No longer were the Julio-Claudians the monopolisers of the Empire; now the secret had been divulged, remarks Tacitus, that emperors could be made elsewhere than at Rome. (3). There was no stability during the year of the four emperors, no lull during which power once seized might be consolidated, and most of the difficulties

that arose were settled summarily by the sword.

The Annals on the other hand cover a far broader canvas - not only in the length of time they describe but in the scope of the narrative of that period. Foreign wars, decrees of the Senate, religious matters, treason and other trials, personal animosities and plots of rulers and their families - all are not only mentioned, but elaborately recounted so that the picture of imperial life is complete even though somewhat falsely coloured. Galba it is true to say, so far as Tacitus is concerned "struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more"; but the case of Nero or of Tiberius is very different. Although the schemings and deceit which resulted in Nero becoming Emperor are narrated, as is the case with Galba or Otho, the narrative extends beyond his seizure of power, and he is able to be seen as Emperor for over twelve years - or, to express it more vividly, throughout the length of four books of the Annals. The same applies to the long reign of Tiberius, and even the account of the rule of Claudius, abbreviated though it has been through the loss of the books preceding the eleventh, is longer than any one reign's description in the Histories. Not only are the machinations necessary to secure the throne put on record; there is also an extended record of how that power was used.

Tacitus is a moralist on two different planes; besides writing in an episodic style where each individual scene carries its own moral lesson, there is a deeper moral purpose implicit in the way the whole of the Annals unravel themselves. In the various episodes - or at least in many of them - it is apparent that Tacitus thought what many before and since his time have

believed: that the world would be a far happier place to live in if the ambitions of women could be satisfactorily contained. Yet he does not restrict the preaching of this sermon merely to many of the episodes that afford suitable contexts. It is noticeable that the more familiar one becomes with the Annals the more the women of the imperial family appear to be portrayed, dominating at every turn their less strong-minded but equally vicious men-folk.

The three reigns of the Annals - those of Tiberius, Claudius and Nero (that of Caligula has unfortunately been entirely lost) - may be regarded in the form in which they survive as a moral triptych representing three distinct forms of evil that can spring from feminine ambition. Tacitus had already realised (4) what an ineradicable quality of the human mind is the desire for power, and how completely it dictates the whole course of history. It seems as though on further reflection he later realised that, pernicious though this yearning for power could be when it affected men, who, as he would argue, were the legitimate possessors of such desires, the debaucheries and wickedness of the early Empire had become a graver evil when it was the hands of unscrupulous women that fell upon the strings of government; when their puppets were first a vacillating, then a tractable, and finally, in the Annals, an over-sensual Emperor. This point of view of Tacitus is naturally based upon the firm belief in the right of men to hegemony in all important matters. Like the overwhelming majority of men in antiquity Tacitus was quite clearly

drawn to this social creed.

Roughly speaking, his thesis appears to be this: the woman's duty first and foremost is to provide for her husband an efficient household, the supervision of the education of their children and a happy mental environment for him to concentrate upon the more important affairs of State. Her responsibility in fact is their marriage, and if there is any diminution in their mutual love it must necessarily be her fault, since her husband is - or at least ought to be - busied with more farreaching matters. This certainly is the impression that one receives from a passage in the *Agricola*. (5). Once a woman deviates from this conception of duty, and begins to concern herself with matters which, to put it bluntly, are none of her business, troubles inevitably follow. Both conditions - both where women comply, and fail to comply with these strictures that Tacitus and those sharing his sentiments would impose upon their lives - are exemplified among his writings.

It is important to bear in mind that the women in question, although to a greater or a less extent evil creatures, are not regarded by Tacitus as themselves the undoers of Rome and the corrupters of her society. Rather does he see their ambition as the agency which impelled towards evil the men in whose hands rested the fortunes of the city and of the whole Roman world. The effects upon Claudius, for instance, were the same whether Messalina was the

motivating force behind his conduct, or Agrippina; in the hands of either of these women he was appallingly weak and inclined towards cruelty. Similarly the nature of Nero exhibited the same vicious tendencies irrespective of whether his mother's attempted domination or the sensualities of Poppaea were the occasion of his shortcomings. In each case the Spinner who directed the destiny of Rome towards decline is not so much Lachesis as Livia, not so much Atropos as Poppaea, and not so much Clotho as Agrippina. Such an inverted allegory might almost have been part of Tacitus' intention, for the Hesiodic parallel is surprisingly apt, despite the fact that he was never, in all probability, consciously aware of its significance.

The three Emperors are all dissimilar; but they are inasmuch as they are all worked upon by energetic and crafty women, each bent upon securing the fruition of long-standing ambitions. Here the moral thesis almost founders; if men are by nature entitled to regard themselves as the superior sex, should they not ipso facto be held responsible for their actions and indeed those of their wives? In reality, however, these women were unnatural. Whatever deity or supermundane force presided over the activities of men - on this question, as has been seen (6) Tacitus had no settled opinions - that force had for some reason inflicted upon Rome these unnatural women as instruments of its malice or its vengeance or of some other motive obscure to men. Such a quasi-religious explanation is necessary to avoid the apparent inconsistency; but there is little doubt that it is thus that Tacitus would explain it. In the

case of Sejanus, whose ascendancy over Tiberius he regarded as an analogous infliction upon Rome, he attributes his power not so much to the contrivings of Sejanus, but to the wrath of the gods against Rome. (7).

It will be convenient to consider in some detail the Principates of Livia, Messalina, Agrippina and Poppaea, and how each of these rulers set about reaching the pinnacle of power.

Tiberius was a man who, according to the implications of Tacitus, was glad enough to succeed Augustus; at least this is the assumption that is most commonly and justifiably made, although his desire to rule is never explicitly stated. (8). If Tiberius was willing to rule, Livia, his mother, was more than willing - in fact most eager - that he should rule. (9). As one candidate for the succession after another disappeared from the scene, Livia was able to abandon surreptitious intrigue and openly to persuade the old Augustus her husband, over whom she held a great amount of power, to adopt her son Tiberius as his successor as Princeps; in fact she may have had a hand in the deaths of the young sons of Agrippa. (10). She won the day; Augustus in his will appointed Tiberius and Livia as joint heirs (11) before dying perhaps with some assistance from his wife. (12).

Once she had attained this object (13) the Augusta became what she was to remain until the end of her life, the guiding hand behind her son's reign; sometimes her personal influence became manifest by the reflection of her power upon

her friends (14) or by the extraordinary privileges she enjoyed. (15). She was certainly instrumental in setting Plancina against Agrippina, and was thus to some extent implicated in the death of Germanicus, one of the few among the pages of Tacitus to emerge with an unsullied record. Emperor and mother were significantly absent together from the funeral of Germanicus (16) although Tiberius' complicity in the death of his adopted son is very doubtful. When Apuleia Varilla (17) was charged under the law of 'maiestas' of speaking insultingly about Augustus, Tiberius and Livia, Tiberius ordered a condemnation in respect of the remarks made concerning his step-father and that no action should be taken concerning his own defamation; but he could not be induced to say anything about the charge of slandering Livia until the next meeting of the Senate. When that assembly was convened again he requested in his mother's name that this charge also should be squashed. It seems evident that this was his mother's decision. The alternative is that this was in fact a kindly gesture of filial deference to his aged mother rather than a realisation that his mother would insist upon over-ruling whatever decision he made. This is possible, but when mother and son are considered in the light of this whole discussion, it is very improbable. Finally when his name was inscribed after that of his mother on a public statue, he dared not - or at least he did not - express the disapproval that this affront must have occasioned him to feel.

Were there any quarrels between Livia and Tiberius, or was the Emperor wholly resigned to the domination, the impotentia,

of his mother? It is significantly remarked by Tacitus (18) that up to the point of this affront, relations between them were still friendly, or were made to appear so. This certainly gives the impression that at some later stage even the veneer of cordial relationship was split. Yet the remainder of Tacitus' account of the life of Livia discloses no downright rift between her and her son. Rumour had it, comments Tacitus (19) that it was exasperation over the continual interference of his mother that finally drove Tiberius to Capri. Neither assent nor dissent, however, is added to this rumoured statement. Nevertheless it is almost certainly true, for both Dio Cassius (20) and Suetonius (21) affirm that this was the case. It is possible in this instance that the three writers were indebted to some common source such as the memoirs of Agrippina; yet it is much to the credit of Tacitus that he avoids stating categorically the truth of a circumstance which would have added enormous force to his moral essay. It is certain that he had this alleged breach in his mind when he wrote that no overt differences had arisen between Livia and Tiberius up to the time of the affront mentioned above.

The career of Livia is summed up shortly by Tacitus:

"an overbearing mother and an understanding wife,  
competent to deal with the guiles of her husband and  
the hypocrisy of her son" (22)

Immediately after her death Tiberius broke loose with a crushing tyranny. During her life there had still been a moderating



influence since Tiberius always retained a deep-rooted deference to his mother. (23).

It is not sought to establish that Livia was an evil influence upon Tiberius during his reign; indeed this last statement immediately gives the lie to such an idea. Tacitus makes it abundantly clear that Tiberius was a man entirely unsuited to the role of Emperor. He was suspicious, hesitant, arrogant and unable diplomatically to waive even occasionally (24) one of his high principles in order to endear himself to the populace. Any one of these autocratic failings would have been sufficient to make him a man unsuitable for the throne. Nevertheless before the death of Augustus and the commencement of his own rule, his life, Tacitus claims (25), was beyond reproach, and one may speculate that with the absence of the cares of supreme office might well also have been noticed the absence of the development of those vices, previously dormant, which made him so far as Tacitus at least is concerned, so unsatisfactory a ruler.

So it seems reasonable to maintain that Livia - or rather the unbridled ambition of Livia for her son - was to Tacitus the villain of the whole piece; and upon the facts he records them can be built a fairly credible picture of what turned a good soldier into a bad emperor. Tiberius had been deeply devoted to his mother; his mother perhaps begged him for her sake to undertake the rule of the Empire. He would at one stage of his career have welcomed her labours on his behalf in this direction, but after a series of disappointments he was

now quite indifferent to the prospect. Livia applied all her considerable energies and persuasions to Augustus and obtained from him the promise that Tiberius should rule, as in fact he himself had originally intended. Then - it may be conjectured - Tiberius steeled himself for the task appointed to him for his declining years, and being an extremely proud as well as a somewhat diffident person became suspicious, gloomy - in short allowed the less pleasant aspects of his character to feed upon his anxieties. Shortly after the Augusta fell seriously ill, he retired to Capri - why can never be known. Perhaps it was the result of thirty years' tension suddenly released by an event of great personal concern; but perhaps Dio Cassius, Suetonius and a good proportion of public opinion were right after all in saying that the one moderating influence upon Tiberius had disappeared. By the time that Livia finally died he had been ruling over Rome and her Empire for twenty-three years. By now it was too late for him to be expected to revert to his personality before being called to Empire; even in those days the influence of Livia had in any case been present. There was no alternative before him but to live out what days remained to him on the throne. He had no sons or daughters, little of a family circle at all for that matter, whose love and solace he could hope to enjoy. Sejanus was at this time wooing him with the loyalty of a friend who would lay down his life for him if necessary (26), and Capri had its attractions.....

This then is the first portrayal by Tacitus of Woman in

command; even in this presentation he strives his utmost to avoid partiality, and his reader is left with the impression not of an appalling, hateful shrewish woman, but one who despite her predominant vice - disastrous to Rome though it was - was an enlightened and human woman. What her own character was or was not is however beside the point; she is merely the incarnation of a mother's insatiable ambition for her son, a woman who sought to gratify in the first place her own wishes and together with those wishes her own interpretation of her son's wishes - for Tiberius seems to have been considered by his mother to be under such a heavy obligation to her as to forfeit all right of self-expression. Only in second place did she wish to assist in and improve upon the administration of the Roman Empire. In common with all the Julio-Claudians she appears to have had little care for the moral implications involved in the acceptance of the throne.

It is unfortunate that Tacitus' account of the rule of Caligula and of the earlier years of the reign of Claudius were narrated in the books of the Annals now lost and although it would be attractive to speculate how Tacitus treated whatever influence upon Caligula his four wives enjoyed, and to what extent the tractable Claudius was swayed by the wishes of his first two wives, such guesswork would be irrelevant to a discussion of the historian's views based upon the evidence actually available.

Tacitus begins book eleven on a characteristic note; Messalina, at this time the wife of Claudius, suspects Poppaea Sabina of

being the lover of Asiaticus whose beautiful gardens she covets. (27). This chapter is in a sense the key to the whole of Tacitus' accounts of the principates of Claudius and Nero. Although Suillius later emerges as a villainous prosecutor his actions are directed from behind the scenes by Messalina. (28). So with Sosibius; and later it is found that Agrippina similarly directs Pallas. (29). Callistus previously a highly influential freedman under both Caligula and Claudius (30) disappears from the scene as soon as his arguments in favour of Lollia Paulina and against Agrippina as the worthiest candidate for the honour of being Claudius' fourth wife go unheeded (31); and Narcissus (32) found the burden of her hostility so difficult to bear that he quickly ran off to Sinuessa for health reasons (33), aware of the disaster that was bound to follow. (34).

Most of these incidents relate to the later power of Agrippina rather than to that of Messalina; but it is useful at this stage to realise that the power of the freedmen, disproportionate to their worth though it was, was received from, or at least subservient to these powerful and unscrupulous women.

Could Messalina, however, be so all-powerful, it might well be asked, when disaster was so soon to descend upon her? Indeed it must be admitted that once events had commenced to take a bad turn she was powerless to stave off the eventual catastrophe. Even however in the matter of absolute power - which is of secondary interest in this discussion - it is clear that by the very nature of her position at the beginning of her affair with Silius she was omnipotent and could have remained so had she not embarked upon the incredible enterprise of marrying Silius

while she was still married to the reigning Emperor. At Tacitus remarks, it is fantastic that she and her dupe could have felt themselves so secure. (35). She embarked upon this mad course, he says,

"purely because of its sheer outrageousness - a sensualist's ultimate satisfaction". (36).

It is important constantly to bear in mind that it is Tacitus' attitude towards these events that is the present concern; and while it is quite possible - though by no means easy to establish - that this marriage between Messalina and Silius might have been part of a plot against Claudius (37), there is no such suggestion made by Tacitus; his explanation of the motives of Messalina at the time of her last marriage has already been stated. It is a moral, not a political explanation, occurring as it does in a work whose prime purpose is moral rather than political. (38). He seeks to portray Messalina not primarily as a woman holding immense power - although such a woman she was, he demonstrates, until her last supreme folly - but as a force of evil and a source of corruption in Roman life. Evidently the greater was her power, the greater her opportunity to exert her pernicious influence.

That Messalina was such a force of evil can be seen most clearly from the Annals. During her ascendancy she must have been completely in command of so weak and tractable man as Claudius. This is shown by her decision to try to thwart his anger - when her marriage with Silius had become known to the Emperor - by a device "she had often found to be her protection before". (39). This device was to meet Claudius and to employ her blandishments upon him. In fact the whole question

of whether her destruction could be averted turned upon her being properly tried before Claudius; her doom was known by all concerned to be inevitable if the anger of her husband was allowed to take its natural course, and if the gravity of her mischief could be sufficiently manifested to him before she had an opportunity to use her persuasions upon him and pardon her, as he most certainly would - so flexible was his weak mind.

Moreover Messalina had destroyed Poppaea Sabina (40), the two knights Petra whose house had been alleged to be a meeting place for Poppaea and a freedman Mnester (41), and Asiaticus for the very good reason that she wanted his gardens. (42). By a remarkable twist of irony it was in these gardens that she eventually met her fate. (43). In fact, the assassinations she brought about were, as the Imperial household well knew, many. (44) At this stage of the discussion the loss of Books VII to X inclusive of the Annals is most to be regretted. They must have extended if not completed the picture of Messalina; beyond what has already been mentioned of her, the rest must be in the nature of conjecture.

It would be entirely inconsistent both with the style of Tacitus as a raconteur and with the moral purpose to which he is dedicated to portray Messalina in any lighter colour in the books that are now missing than he portrayed her in the books that have survived. The accomplishments that have just been mentioned occur within the short compass of the shortest surviving book of the Annals, and in terms of time, within one year; but her marriage with, and presumably her ascendancy over Claudius extended back a further seven years. Even when allowance has been

made for the fact that, married as it seems at the age of fifteen (45), she was probably not so dominant over Claudius during their first few years together, her force as a corrupter of Roman imperial society may quite safely be presumed to have received adequate notice from Tacitus during the course of the missing books. (46).

Even by her death - though it would hardly be fair to hold her responsible for this - she caused further woes to be inflicted upon Rome; her successor as the wife of Claudius was every bit as depraved as she had been, and in addition had the ambitions of another Livia. This was her enemy Agrippina. (47).

Agrippina's career as described by Tacitus falls into three distinct phases: her power over Claudius, her power over Nero and her overthrow by Poppaea. In each of these phases there is to be seen an amalgamation of the vices of Livia and Messalina. Livia, it has been seen, was an ambitious woman unscrupulous in the means she chose to employ to attain her goals, but having ingrained into her personality something of the Roman matron of earlier days, a steadfast if rather formidable wife to Augustus, a zealous - in fact far too zealous - mother to Tiberius, and a friend to be relied upon of her creatures such as Urgulania. (48). Messalina too was unscrupulously ambitious, but her most manifest attainment was her grossness and sensuality, a simple love of a debauched and ignominious existence. (49). Now there emerges Agrippina, whose overweening ambition first on her own, then on her son's behalf is matched by her general depravity. Tacitus' drama of the female Dictator reaches in this act its culmination.

The first appearance of Agrippina of any consequence is the occasion when, after the death of Messalina, the freedmen - principally Pallas and Callistus, each seeks to marry to Claudius his own protégé, Lollia Paulina in the case of Callistus and Agrippina in the case of Pallas. One should beware of being misled by the ironical comment of Tacitus (50) that the freedmen were quarrelling about who should choose the Emperor's next wife. In reality these men had nothing to gain by Claudius marrying again; only insofar as each could secure a marriage between the woman whose hireling he was could they have had ambitions in this direction. If Agrippina and her rivals wielded little power and were of little consequence Pallas and Callistus would have been more immediately in control of Rome and Claudius if he were to remain single. The truth of the matter must have been that the freedmen were simply pawns on the political chessboard; the argument in reality was between Agrippina herself and either Paulina herself or some elements in the Palace whose interest it was to withhold power from Agrippina at any cost, and saw Paulina as a worthy instrument of that policy.

Agrippina's point of view - either because of its inherent strength or because of the cogency with which it was argued, coupled with her physical appeal (51) - prevailed. Once assured of her incestuous marriage to Claudius, she commenced reaching her ultimate goal of establishing her son Nero to the throne. First a trumped-up charge of incest with his sister disposed of the intended husband of Claudius' daughter Octavia; incest was permitted only between Emperors and their cousins and nieces.



The first phase of Agrippina's career ends with the Senate being convinced how desirable it was that Uncle and niece should marry - in those days of Senatorial degeneracy (52) no great task. So far she has not emerged too badly - a strong-willed and determined woman well able to use her undisputed charms on the uxorious and impressionable Claudius. But immediately after the wedding, says Tacitus (53) there was a complete transformation. Complete obedience was accorded to a woman under a rigorous, almost masculine despotism.

Eventually as her power dwindled in proportion with the growing self-assertiveness of her son and the shrinking effectiveness of her pillars or support Burrus, Pallas and Seneca, Agrippina is described as becoming more and more timid, and as she nears destruction almost a pathetic creature with whom one is inclined almost to sympathise - only however because she is overshadowed in monstrosity and treachery by Nero.

But at the zenith of her power she is depicted, as has been seen, as a woman whom no scruples of any description withheld from single-mindedly pursuing her ambition - or to be more precise her passionate desire for power for her son, and consequently prestige for herself.

"In public she was austere and often arrogant. Her private life was chaste - unless power was to be gained. Her passion to acquire money was unbounded. She wanted it as a stepping-stone to supremacy". (54).

This is Tacitus' text; the commentary upon it is constituted by her steps towards her objectives - the destruction of Silanus Torquatus and his sister (55), of Claudius himself (56), of

Lollia Paulina (57), of Statilius Taurus (58), of Domitia Lepida (59), of Narcissus (60), the eventual adoption of Nero as successor to the throne in preference to Britannicus (61), her ostentation of her power in the provinces (62) and the appointment of Burrus to the command of the Praetorian cohorts.(63).

As she nears her death the reader obtains a modified impression of this remarkable woman. She emerges as determined as ever; her death which she was to receive at the hands of her own son she had anticipated for years previously, but she accepted this prediction - it was learnt from astrologers (64) - as a fatalist, and meanwhile continued with unmitigated purposefulness. She rises in the estimation of the reader because of her courage; her swimming ashore from the boat whose sinking was contrived by her son (65), and her final bravery when faced with her executioner Anicetus and his gang. (66). She must have been not only sufficiently dignified but sufficiently lovable for Tacitus to consider the possibility of Mnester (67) having committed suicide at the time of her cremation. (68).

Whatever compassion is felt for Agrippina, to whatever extent her misdeeds were overshadowed by those of her son, Tacitus has made his point. The chief sin of Agrippina is not contained in the catalogue of her murders, her intrigues and her indifference to the feelings of others - although these were deplorable indeed - but, as was the case with Livia, upon whom she seems to have modelled herself, in many respects, as empress, if Tacitus is to be believed, her insatiable ambition. Through her ambition Rome was deprived of a weak but comparatively harmless emperor, and as a substitute received an emperor who was, as

events were to show, proved to be far more cruel and far more unscrupulous than his mother. In fact these bad qualities of Nero might never have burst out had the possessiveness of his mother not strained his self-control to breaking-point. Agrippina, it might be said, is portrayed by Tacitus as the inventor of a terrible explosive, that blew up herself as well as hundreds of more or less innocent bystanders; even Tacitus himself was rocked by the repercussions.

She carries a further responsibility. Tiberius before his reign and during its earlier years conducted himself in a manner most reasonable from every point of view. If he was the victim of moods and suspicions this was due in part - but only in part - to Livia's upbringing and moulding of his character during his formative years; and when those moods and suspicions began really to afflict Rome those formative years were very distant. The case of Nero is quite different, and no part of his adult life can be said to show any vestige of enlightenment or of moderation. His boyhood was spent - presumably as the apple of his mother's eye - in a manner certain to insure him to every form of calculated mischief, and a large portion of the blame must be attached to his mother for the fact that he showed such precocious aptitude for following the callousness inculcated into him by example if not by precept by his mother.

To find the relationship between Agrippina and Nero merely as a carefully evolved repetition of that between Livia and Tiberius, as one author has thought (69) is to fail to appreciate a substantial portion of Tacitus' purpose. The rudimentary resemblances

between those relationships are sufficiently obvious for the most casual reader of the Annals to notice; so, however, are the differences. Livia is by far the subtler woman; she raises to complete power a man already mature and experienced in sharing the administration with her late husband and - though she would never have allowed a contemporary observer to notice - herself. Once he is in power she is able to control Tiberius almost until her deathbed. During her lifetime his regime is moderated by her influences and is in consequence a period of fairly enlightened rule. Only in extreme old age does she drive her son to exasperation with her interferences. On the other hand, Agrippina's puppet is much younger and more pliable, and his propensity for crime is largely the result of her handiwork; but the life that she bestows upon this puppet turns against her and annihilates all her previous accomplishments, all within a matter of five years. Livia's son turns to a hard tyranny in exasperation with her rule over him; Agrippina's as a direct consequence of her power.

There is nothing in the character of Poppaea as described by Tacitus that is really original, and it would be pointless to give an unduly extended account of it, as has already been commented, Poppaea provides a final and unpleasant sample of feminine domination. Ironically it is the result of Poppaea's persuasions (70) that Nero finally resolves upon killing his mother, and no sooner has he rid himself of the rule of the one than he finds himself dominated by the other.

The four women who have just been discussed cannot be regarded as typical Roman women of their day; they are women in

whose hands was power of an exceptional nature, and, as they exceed what Tacitus requires of a woman, they must be regarded as phenomena of an almost supernatural import sent by the gods to harry Rome. (71). And yet they equally may be said to demand inclusion in a discussion of Tacitus' views on women, for they demonstrate extreme cases of the fatal results of too much power falling into the hands of womankind. Nevertheless a more general survey of women drawn from all walks of life is required before any clear indications of his views are forthcoming. If a woman is conducting herself in conformity with the behaviour which Tacitus regards as becoming to her sex, she will achieve nothing worthy of mention in such a work as the Annals or the Histories. The examples of immoral women may be expected to out-number the virtuous women in his pages for this reason, and this expectation is in fact realised. Most of the evidence being of a negative nature it will be difficult to say what Tacitus expects a woman to do, rather than what he expects her not to do.

The other Agrippina - the wife of Germanicus - provides perhaps the best and fullest commentary in a single person of Tacitus' views of feminine virtue and vice. She fulfills a pathetic role in the Annals - that of a woman of dignity and high birth whose fortunes compel her to parade her grief before the common gaze on two different occasions. In the first case she is torn away from her beloved husband's side when the armies under his command become involved in mutiny; in the second instance she is mourning the premature death of Germanicus and at

the same time was tortured by his insistence that she should avenge his death by bringing to justice Piso and his wife Plancina who, Germanicus believed, were responsible for his being poisoned. The resultant picture of Agrippina that one gains from reading Tacitus' account of her sorrows is one of a great-hearted woman (72), faithful to her family (73), proud of her lineage (74), unafraid of accepting responsibilities - even responsibilities that in reality did not devolve upon herself (75) - which normally did not fall to the lot of a woman. It is true to say, in fact, that to a great extent she shares the limelight that habitually shines around her husband.

Yet there is a debit side. She is requested by her dying husband to shake off her haughty pride (76); she is 'violenta luctu et nescia tolerandi' (77) 'semper atrox, tum et periculo propinquae accensa' (78), 'pervicax irae' (79), and 'aequi impatiens, dominandi avida' (80). All these strokes of the pen add up to the picture of a woman whom one can believe in, if not admire. Although she is mentioned less than the four really powerful women (81) she is more readily visualised as a real person. Like her enemy Plancina she participated in camp life, and became beloved of the soldiery; unlike the case of Plancina, however, this was an involuntary association different essentially and entirely from that departure from customary feminine propriety. (82).

As contrasting colours can add dramatic depth to a picture, so Tacitus uses the device of contrasting personalities to add to the dramatic tension of his narrative. Plancina furnishes this

contrast with Agrippina the wife of Germanicus. This woman, the wife of Piso, is alleged by Tacitus to have been the instrument of Livia's jealousy of Agrippina (83); she was immodest (84); she rather than her husband was, in the estimation of Germanicus, the real cause of his impending death (85); she certainly eclipsed Piso by the ostentatious jollity with which she celebrated the death of Germanicus when the poison had done its work. (86). Her methods included necromancy (87) which savoured too much of foreign rites for Tacitus to approve. (88). Later in Rome she was more fortunate than her husband (89), doubtless because of her great wealth (90) and her influence with Livia; so she was able to let him face his fate alone. Here again she offers a contrast; this time with the Arriae (91), Paulina and Antistia Pollitta. It is clear that it affords Tacitus great pleasure to relate that a fate similar to that of her husband awaited Plancina too, and her suicide when finally it occurred was both well-deserved and overdue. (92).

Many of the women mentioned in the Annals are of merely passing interest; their conduct gives little or no indication of Tacitus' ideas of vice and virtue among their sex; Acerronia was beaten to death when, in Agrippina's sinking boat, she claimed that she herself was Agrippina. ((93). The unaltruistic motive for her conduct given by Fourniaux (94) seems to afford the most reasonable explanation of her 'imprudencia'. Acilia was accused by her son, the poet Lucan, of being implicated in the Pilonian conspiracy against Nero (95); her role is purely a passive one so far as Tacitus is concerned. Acutia was tried for and convicted of treason (96), but nothing indicates Tacitus' attitude towards her. The same

applies to Aelia Paetina, a former wife of Claudius, who was recommended again to him by Narcissus after the death of Messalina. (97). Antonia the younger is only casually mentioned, although it seems likely that Tacitus would have been well-disposed towards her since she was the mother of Germanicus. (98). Vipsania, a daughter of Agrippa, seems to have been introduced into the narrative only as an oddity; she died a natural death. (99). Vitia was executed for lamenting the death of her son. One may feel sure that in this anecdote Tacitus is less interested in the conduct of the old lady than in the ferocity with which Tiberius was at this time wielding the 'Maiestas' law. (100).

Most of the women who Tacitus mentions fall into one or other clearly defined types. The most significant of these types, if only because of its numerous examples, is the adulteress. Aemilia Lepida the elder was accused of adultery, poisonings and the consultation of astrologers. 'quamvis infami ac nocenti' is the damning verdict of Tacitus. (101). Her daughter of the same name was abhorred by Tacitus; she committed suicide without troubling to defend herself against the charge of adultery. (102). Albucilla receives only a single notice to the effect that although she had been married to Salvus Secundus she was famous for her many illicit love affairs. (103). Appuleia Varilla was charged under the 'Maiestas' law of having spoken slightly of Augustus, Tiberius and Livia. (104). Whatever Tacitus believes ought to have been the verdict on these counts, he entertains no doubt that she was justly sentenced for adultery. (105). Domitia is accused by Agrippina, the mother of Nero, of adultery with Atimetus and Paris; it is probable that notwithstanding the character of her accuser



Tacitus believes the truth of this charge (106). Domitia Lepida is described as being the rival of Agrippina in nobility, beauty, wealth and immorality. (107). Ennia was induced by her husband Macro to pretend to love Gaius (i.e. Caligula) and entice him into a promise of marriage. Even if she were incapable of evil on her own behalf she was clearly tarred with the usual brush of immorality. (108). Julia the daughter of Augustus is noticed only retrospectively as having died in banishment. She had been sent into this exile by her father for her immorality. (109). Julia Livilla, while, as Tacitus implies, worthy of sympathy, was less an object for commiseration, he says, than Octavia, the wife of Nero. Her exile incidentally was the result of a charge of adultery with Seneca, and perhaps Tacitus' regard for the memory of that great name impels him to silence. (110). Junia Silana was noble, beautiful - and immoral, like so many others. Her career was one of enmity with Agrippina which resulted in her exile and subsequently her death. (111). Livilla was the lover of Sejanus, seduced into crime by him, and eventually as a means of helping him to the throne, assisted him to poison her husband, the emperor Claudius. (112). Mutilia Prisca is mentioned only once, as an adulteress with Julius Postumus. (113).

Pontia was a married woman with whom a tribune Octavius Sagitta fell in love. She was bribed by him - at a high price, it must be admitted - to become his mistress. When she hesitated to make good her promise of marriage, she was murdered by her lover. (114). Silia is another woman who receives only a passing mention by Tacitus. She shared with Nero in almost every type of impropriety despite being married to a Senator. As she was one

likely to betray Nero's confidence, she fell under suspicion after Petronius' famous eve-of-death indictment was published, and was banished. (115). And finally there was Statilia Messalina, who is casually mentioned as being one of Nero's mistresses. If Suetonius (116) is correct in stating that Nero married her after he had kicked Poppaea to death (117), the emperor became her fifth husband.

There are other instances of feminine vice, of course, but no type of licentious conduct is so often and so sternly reproved by Tacitus. Annia Rufilla, for instance, is described as one of the bad characters who were slandering and insulting respectable folk, and escaping punishment by clasping an effigy of the Emperor. As a means of exterminating this practice Drusus sent her to gaol, as she had in any case been already convicted of fraud. (118). Might it not be that Tacitus' apparent impatience with this widespread practice of escaping deserved punishment is eloquent also of his feelings regarding Emperor-worship? (119) Another woman is condemned roundly even when her participation in the Pisonian conspiracy might have been expected to be a source of praise for her. "She had extracted the secret of the plotters - it is not known how, for she had never before interested herself in anything good" says Tacitus (120). She later raised herself in his estimation by her refusal to divulge the names of those involved in the conspiracy, and by braving death in the face of torture. (121) What Tacitus thought of Junia Calvina cannot positively be ascertained. Her role in the Annals is both small and passive. She is described as the 'sane decora et procax soror' of Silanus. Although

'procax usually means 'shameless' and is thus translated by Prof. M. Grant (122) this may not have been the meaning which Tacitus had in mind. (123).

Two other women incur Tacitus' displeasure because they have associations of not quite 'the right sort'. Acte, who figures to quite a large extent in his account of Nero's principate, does not appear as contemptible as her rival Poppaea, yet the sneers 'paelice ancilla' and 'contubernio servili' indicate well enough Tacitus' contempt. (124). Livia Julia committed a sin which added materially to the Emperor's miseries: she married the grandson of a Roman knight. (125). In addition there are mentioned in the Annals two women who were poisoners by profession. (126).

So much for the vicious women of Tacitus. They have their counterparts in the camp of virtue, and these fall into two clear categories. First are the women who display such affection for and loyalty to their husbands that they are prepared to die with them rather than live out a miserable and solitary existence. Arria is the name of both the wife and the mother of the Stoic Thrasea Paetus; both of these women wanted to share Thrasea's death. (127). Paxeae committed suicide with her husband Pomponius Labeo. (128). Pompeia Paulina desired to die with her husband Seneca and in fact did open her veins for that purpose. On the order of Nero she was constrained to live, and showed throughout the remainder of her life her devotion to her late husband by the pallor of her cheeks. (129). Servilia offers a further instance of stoic devotion to the family, this time to a husband and a father. She, a mere girl still in her teens (130) was implicated in charges made against her father, the Stoic Barea Soranus. (131).

Of her, her father said that her only crime was too much family affection. (132). Sextia, like Paxaea, committed suicide with her husband Aemilius Scaurus. (133). Antistia Pollitta was the daughter of Lucius Antistius Vetus, and the wife of the Stoic Rubellius Plautius, who had already met death under Nero. She together with her father's mother-in-law Sextia (134) died along with Vetus. (135). Love between the various members of a family, love even to the extent of sharing in another's death was, as has been seen (136), characteristic Stoic teaching, and Tacitus significantly honours the memory of these people, mostly avowed Stoics, who gave such strong proof of their devotion to this doctrine.

The second category of good women contains only three names, though there is a considerable similarity among them in the circumstances and the words used by Tacitus to recall them. Junia Torquata is described as 'priscae sanctimoniae virgo'. This would appear from Tacitus to be almost rank eccentricity in those days had she not been a priestess of Vesta. (137). Occia too was a priestess of Vesta whose saintly priesthood had lasted fifty-seven years. Tacitus' language recalling olden-day virtue is noticeably similar: 'quae septem et quinquaginta annos summa santimonia Vestalibus sacris praesederat'. (138). Vibidia was yet another Vestal - 'virginum Vestalium vetustissimam' - who insisted that Messalina should be given a fair hearing. To Tacitus the old religious ritual of Rome was, no matter how little conviction it carried (139), part of the Rome which was for him all, or nearly all that mattered in life; so he speaks with reverence for all its observances and hence its priests and priesthods.

Only the hapless young Octavia of all the women of the Annals awaits discussion. She, the legal wife of Nero, is displayed as a girl who was the victim of the sins of others, rather than as being especially virtuous on her own account. (140). Her role is similar to that of Britannicus, harmless and innocent - if only because of her youth - and a means for Tacitus of emphasising by contrast the bestial conduct of Nero, Agrippina and Poppaea. Her youth adds pathos to an already tragic situation.

It must again be noted that this no doubt odd mixture of women does not represent a typical cross-section of the women of Rome of the early Empire. Tacitus must be permitted a certain amount of distortion, for he is quite honest in stating his precise purposes in writing history. ( 141). He must be expected to adhere to fact inasmuch as he claims to be an historian, but to accentuate them to suit the point he is making according as he is a moralist. The result must fairly be expected to be a distorted image of the times he describes.

If then it is admitted that there is distortion in his picture of Roman women, there must be a plan, certain distinct traits in that distortion. It is not very difficult to discover these traits.

A small number of these women play, as has been noted, a rather indeterminate role in the story of their times; they may be accused of rashness, as Acceronia; they may be mentioned merely in passing, as Vipsania.

The first and most striking feature of the remainder - those whose part is of some consequence - is the large proportion of adulteresses that they contain - numerically almost half of the

women mentioned. Three others, Epicharis, Plancina and Annia Rufilla, are portrayed as being bad women generally without their precise activities being discussed; they too may have included adultery in their lists of immoralities. It is clear then that Tacitus is very concerned with unchastity among women, and especially among married women. This preoccupation would be very much in accord with what have been discussed among his leanings towards Stoic precepts; not only towards chastity as a laudable end in itself but as a means of reinforcing one of the fundamental supports of all civilisation - the family and its unity.

Unchastity then appears to be one of the objects of Tacitus' especial dislike. He emphasises this loathing for unchastity further by mentioning the chastity of the three priestesses of Vesta - Occia, Vibidia and Junia Torquata. In exalting these virtuous women he is no doubt paying court to the established religion of Rome, but there seems to be an added emphasis upon celibacy.

Chastity is also implicit in his delineation of Agrippina, the wife of Germanicus, for, as it has been remarked (142) she was in Tacitus' estimation the thorough-going materfamilias of the republican type. Conversely, Plancina, her contrasting enemy, is depicted as the force that drives Piso, her husband, to his acts of insubordination and hostility towards Germanicus. This together with her willingness to take part in the exercises of the troops suggests a character nottruly in accord with Stoic ideas of feminine reticence.

The love of strong family ties is quite clearly the

motivating force behind the 'Stoic' deaths - or intended deaths. The mutual resemblances between the accounts of Paulina, Servilia, Antistia Politta and the Arriae are strikingly close. The fact that Paulina did not actually die with her husband is, of course, quite irrelevant; she was willing, in fact most eager to die rather than survive her beloved Seneca. Similar too are the suicides of Paxaea and Sextia - the wife of Aemilius Scaurus - who although not avowed Stoics emulated their practice by dying with their husbands. Sextia indeed, the account in Tacitus mentions, was also the means of persuading her husband to maintain the dignity of the Aemilii by anticipating condemnation. Plancina again affords a contrast; she is bent upon self-preservation. Her devotion to Piso must have appeared through Stoic eyes to be very much that of an opportunist. She already had wealth and influence; had her plans been successful the reward for the destruction of Germanicus by her husband and herself might have been adoption into the Imperial household.

To substantiate Tacitus' stress upon family unity and consequent family vigour, one may cite the repeated emphasis which he lays upon the fecundity of women as a qualification for marriage, Agrippina the elder is the most prominent woman involved, for almost every mention of her includes a mention of one or more of her children born or about to be born. Of her qualities which Tacitus describes as affecting the soldiers in camp, he cites the fame of her birth and 'her impressive record as a wife and mother'.

(143)

In a comparison between her and Livilla the wife of Drusus these two qualities recur in the same order: 'Agrippina was more distinguished than Drusus' wife Livilla - and had more children" (144); and again, Germanicus in his speech given from his deathbed is made to say precisely the same thing:

"Show Rome my wife - the divine Augustus' granddaughter.

Call the roll of my six children". (145).

This same emphasis on child-bearing recurs when the leading freedmen are advocating their various candidates for the privilege of being Claudius' next wife, after the death of Messalina. Narcissus points out that Aelia Paetina has already produced a daughter for Claudius - in other words he may look forward to further offspring if he re-marries her. (146). Pallas, proposing Agrippina the younger makes the same dual claim that has just been mentioned concerning her more virtuous namesake:

'Let the Emperor ally himself with a noble race and unite two branches of the Claudian house rather than allow this lady of proved capacity for child-bearing still young to transfer the glorious name of the Caesars to another family'. (147)

To emphasise how fantastic was the marriage between Silius and Messalina, Tacitus speaks of the formality and the legality of the wedding. The form included the pledge to undertake the marriage for the purpose of rearing children - velut suscipiendorum liberorum causa, a statement that adds contempt to Tacitus' amusement. (148).

Marriage if not admirable as an end in itself Tacitus would



no doubt have advocated as in the interests of the state. Respect for marriage as an institution causes him no less than Juvenal to condemn the childless rich. (149) This attitude he adopted at a time when the practice of voluntary birth-control had not yet attained the popularity which provoked epigrammatic allusions from Martial. (150). Perhaps however there were symptoms of this trend, and families such as that of Germanicus and Agrippina with their total of nine children, might, by the time that Tacitus was writing the Annals, have been rapidly becoming a thing of the past. (151).

Some four chapters of the Germania (152) are devoted to a statement of the marital morals of the German tribes; and although it would be rash to assume that Tacitus is wholehearted in his admiration of their social behaviour, it is clear that he believes there are lessons in this subject that they might well teach Rome.

"The observance of the marriage tie" he says "is very strict, and there is no point in their manners which deserves greater praise".

Again he says in a passage that deserves to be quoted at length:

"Chastity is well cloistered in their lives. They are not corrupted by the allurements of the theatre or the subtle temptation of banquets. Neither men nor women know anything of clandestine correspondence. In proportion to their numbers adultery is very rare.....In Germany no-one laughs at vice nor calls mutual corruption 'the spirit of the age'. Better still is the life of those tribes where only virgins are married; their hopes and aspirations are settled once and

for all. Thus to the wife her husband is one body and one life with her; she has no thought beyond him, no further desires; it seems as though her love was not so much for her husband as for the married state. To limit the number of offspring or to kill one of the later-born children they consider a crime; and their good morals are of more avail than good laws in other places".

'in other places' refers of course to Rome, where the Lex Julia in 17 B.C. and the Lex Papia Poppaea of 9 A.D. has been passed to encourage and regulate marriage.

For even clearer evidence upon Tacitus' views of woman's station in society one has to go back to the Agricola. (153). Discussing the happy union between his parents-in-law he says:

"They were always a wonderfully united pair. Their affection was mutual, and each looked up to the other.

Perhaps in marriage a good wife deserves more praise than a good husband; at any rate we blame a bad wife more".

In other words more than half the responsibility for the success of a marriage rests upon the woman. It is unlikely that this means that a man may be considered free to enjoy illicit unions whereas a woman may not, for Tacitus speaks freely against masculine unchastity (154); furthermore such sins involved women - often married women in similar vice. What is meant is that the bringing up of children and the maintaining of a happy and a tranquil domestic environment in which her husband is free to devote himself to his interests in public affairs is the concern of the conscientious Roman matron; a state of affairs indeed that many people today regard as ideal. This can be achieved only when

the wife as well as the husband is alive to her responsibilities; these demand a faithfulness to her family even to the extent, as has been noticed, of dying or at least being willing to die with her husband. Alternatively if the interests of the family require it of her, she must be willing to set aside all inclination to die, no matter how uninviting may appear the prospect of surviving her husband. In such a marital association there is no room for unchastity.

Nor is there room for a dictatorial woman. The consequences of domineering women such as Livia and Agrippina have already been considered, although it is true that ~~their~~ dominations were at their most severe during their respective widowhoods. But in general the man must remain unchallenged as the head of the family, while at the same time leaving his wife a free hand in matters that fall within her own sphere of duty.

One side of the picture of the Roman mother has been in the accounts of Livia and Agrippina. As a portrait of the way in which a Roman lady ought in Tacitus' view to look after her sons he presents Julia Procilla, the mother of his father-in-law Agricola. (155). She is in fact a direct descendant of the type of mother represented by the famous Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, who was so much extolled during the days of the Republic. Julia Procilla is a lady 'of rare delicacy of mind'. As Agricola was brought up at her knee it was owing to her loving care that he spent his boyhood and early youth engaged in the acquiring of a liberal education. This feeling of reverence for an enlightened mother is identical with the feeling suggested in the discussion in the Dialogus (156), where the superior training given by a Cornelia or an Amelia or an Atia to her

Gracchi or Caesar or Augustus is praised, in contrast with the fashion contemporary with Tacitus, of leaving these responsibilities to a Greek servant-girl.

As the Roman matron had her special responsibilities, so she had her special dignity to maintain. Tacitus complains of women studying degrading parts in stage performances (157), and of women and knights making scandals of themselves in the arena. (158). These protests are echoed by Juvenal somewhat later (159) and no doubt such displays did portray the general degradation of the times.

To summarise briefly Tacitus' views on the women of the early Empire, it may be said that they had a role to play in the home complementary to that which their husbands played in public life; that it was largely their responsibility to maintain a cordial and tranquil atmosphere of concord at home without which the careers of their husbands would be in jeopardy; more than this, in fact - the very welfare of the state depended to a large extent upon the well-being of its leading families. So women had a two-fold responsibility - to their husbands and to the state - to bear children and to lead a modest and a chaste life. To emphasise the dangers which unchastity occasioned, Tacitus introduces adulteresses into the Annals to the extent of almost half the number of female characters mentioned, and there are several other women introduced into various anecdotes which stress the importance of maintaining family ties even in the extreme crisis. And yet, while women had dignities and rights to maintain, there are limits beyond which their influence cannot extend without the introduction of the dangerous effects of feminine

tyranny. Women were not equipped, in fact, for handling power, as was shown by the disastrous results of their influence and power over Rome's earlier Emperors. After all, the German tribes were less than slaves' when they accepted the rule of a woman (160); what then were the Romans, who while completely ruled by imperious women, paid sycophantic court even to the underlings of those women?

In conclusion, let Tacitus himself put forward two opposite sides of the Roman woman (161) - the realistic statement which is brought forward by Aulus Caecina Severus, who is an object of Tacitus' admiration as the up-holder of old-fashioned discipline in the army (162), and the smooth, cajoling and defeatist "things are in a bad way - what can we do about it?" attitude advocated by Messalla Messalinus, who is otherwise noticed by Tacitus as a flatterer of Tiberius. (163). The speeches occur in an account of a Senatorial debate on whether women should accompany their husbands on assignments to the provinces. It is entirely characteristic of Tacitus that his account is heavily biassed against the spirit of luxury that permeated the life of the wealthier Romans of the early Empire, and that the specious utterances of Messallinus fall upon readier ears than the more stoical words of the old disciplinarian.

Caecina's speech is recounted first.

"My wife and I" he says "are good friends and have produced six children. But I have kept her at home during forty years of service in various provinces.....Women are not only frail and easily tired. Relax control and they become

ferocious ambitious schemers, circulating among the soldiers, ordering company commanders about.....women give the more wilful and despotic orders. They have burst through the old legal restrictions.....and are rulers everywhere - at home, in the courts and now in the army".

Much of this speech is characteristic of what Tacitus himself thought - complaints against the too great ascendancy of women, and their inability to use power discreetly or in moderation when they do obtain it. When Caecina says that women are rulers everywhere, it is no doubt aimed at Livia in particular, though it would obviously have shown a dearth of prudence on his part had he said as much in so many words.

The more popular and cajoling speaker Messallinus begins by remarking how modifications to old discipline have been made in many respects and with little harm done. This is the voice of the 'spirit of the age' which Tacitus condemns so roundly in another context (164).

"Men are.....surely entitled" continues the speaker "to relax with their wives when they return from their labours.....If a woman misbehaves it is her husband's fault. Besides, the weakness of one or two husbands is no reason to deprive all of them their wives' partnership in good times and bad.....Marriages scarcely survive with the keeper on the spot - whatever would happen with some years of virtual divorce to efface them? When reforming abuses elsewhere, remember the immortality of the capital".

These words are an insult to the integrity of women generally. Women, contends Tacitus, have shown themselves loyal to their husbands throughout their lives not only when parted from them during a tour of duty, but even after their death (165).

The contrast between these two speeches is most eloquent of the seriousness with which Tacitus viewed the question of marriage and the mutual responsibilities of husband and wife.

11 Freedmen

The status of freedman was achieved when a slave bought or otherwise earned his manumission from his master. His master now became his 'patron'. The fortunes of the freedman varied in accordance with those of his patron; the freedmen of the Imperial household were the most fortunate, although to secure pre-eminence among the vast numbers of Imperial freedmen demanded a high degree of ability, or - much more likely - of unscrupulous craft and flattery.

During the times discussed by Tacitus in the Histories and the Annals the role of the Imperial freedman started very modestly during the earlier years of the rule of Tiberius - years during which, as Tacitus willingly admits, much discernment and enlightenment was shown by the Emperor. Gradually they rose in importance, so that they figure very largely in the history of the reigns of Claudius and Nero. The zenith of their power occurred during the rule of Domitian; owing probably not so much to any improvement in the conduct of the more self-seeking freedmen as to a firmer control upon their aspirations and a decline in the influence of the three most important secretariates (166) appear after the reign of Domitian less as individual corrupters of Emperors and more and more as integral parts of the machinery of State. Actually it was Hadrian who first successfully contained the rise to power of the ambitious freedman; he allocated his most important secretarial and advisory offices exclusively to members of the equestrian order.

It is quite in accordance with expectations that Tacitus shows a strong antipathy towards freedmen holding any great power.



It is with apparent pleasure that he records the care that Tiberius showed in selecting the best men for government posts of every kind, basing his choice upon ancestry, distinction in the field and reputation - whether juristic, literary or oratorical - gained in Rome itself (167). More specifically it is stated that the household of the Emperor was conducted by only a few liberti (168). This was, as has been remarked, in the earlier part of his reign; the time that Tacitus is discussing marks the beginning of a decline in the quality of Tiberius' administration (169).

Adumbrations of the future greatness of the freedmen occur in the account of the later years of the same Emperor. They had evidently aroused sufficient antipathy in certain quarters to cause the delator Lucius Fulcinus Trio to leave a will denouncing, as well as Tiberius and Macro, the Emperor's leading freedmen; he then escaped imminent prosecution by killing himself (170). Other sources mention the rise of certain freedmen about this time, whereas Tacitus has little to say - as yet (171). Tacitus' silence on this point seems to show that he is disinclined to denounce persons or institutions purely for the sake of so doing; he speaks in outright condemnation of the freedmen when they become an evil in the state, but not before they reach that stage of notoriety.

Under Claudius the liberti do in fact reach that pernicious stage. This Emperor, Tacitus says, gave even ex-slaves, placed in control of his personal estates, equal authority with himself and the law (172). This may be something of an overstatement; yet much the same thing is said later, of one of the freedmen,

Pallas specifically (173).

"Nero" says Tacitus".....deposed Pallas from the position from which, since his appointment by Claudius, he had virtually controlled the Empire".

The position in question was that of 'libertus a rationibus' (174)

It is true to say that no freedman to whose hands came any vestige of real power escapes the censure of Tacitus; the faults of the freedmen may be isolated acts (175) or a concatenation of mischiefs as in the cases of Anicetus and Pallas (176).

It will be instructive to follow the careers of one or two of the leading freedmen who rose to power during the reigns of Claudius and Nero. This will assist one to realise to what extent they really did control the Roman world, and will indicate the reaction of Tacitus towards their activities and misdeeds.

Throughout Tacitus' narrative concerning the fall of Messalina, the freedman Narcissus plays a leading role. He is portrayed as handing out orders to all the principal actors concerned, and his authoritarian manner throughout the episode is quickly felt to be an ironical commentary by Tacitus upon the inferior type of man in whose hands such enormous power rested. He is depicted demanding - and indeed obtaining - a seat in Claudius' carriage (177); pressing Vitellius for his opinion, although in this instance Narcissus is thwarted (178). Vitellius, it should be noted, was the most famous courtier of the time; he was in this year consul for the third time, and colleague in that

office and in the censorship with Claudius himself. Next, Narcissus is seen ordering the removal of the Emperor's children (179); deciding for the Emperor that he will hear the pleas of Messalina (180); and thereafter taking complete charge of the proceedings, including the ordering of Messalina's death, (181). His arrogance is further shown later when he appears bandying words with Agrippina, the mother of Nero. Here, however, it becomes manifest that, powerful though he is, the power of Agrippina is greater (182). Although it was not noticed at the time, his nullifying of the court over the Messalina affair was only upon the orders of a more ruthless and intransigent bully behind the scenes - Agrippina herself; The outcome of this disagreement could take only one course; the two became openly hostile (183). Although Tacitus hates freedmen, he hates Agrippina the more. Consequently in this controversy between her and Narcissus, sympathy is enlisted for the freedmen.

"Whether Brittanicus or Nero come to the throne' he says 'my destruction is inevitable. But Claudius has been so good to me that I would give my life to help him. The criminal intentions for which Messalina, with Gaius Silius, was condemned (184) are present in Agrippina. ...Her intrigues in Nero's interests are fatal to the Imperial house - more ruinous than if I had said nothing about her predecessor's unfaithfulness'."

Narcissus here is the less black character, for what he predicts about Nero's rule is confirmed as the narrative proceeds. But Narcissus has not suddenly reformed, and become less concerned

for his own affairs than for those of Rome. Another freedman was overtaking him in power and influence, and was enjoying, it seems, Agrippina's goodwill to a fairly liberal extent; for Narcissus continues: 'Here too there is unfaithfulness. Agrippina's lover is Pallas. That is the final proof that to imperial ambition she sacrifices everything - decency, honour, chastity'.

Narcissus' final misfortunes were a source of regret only to Nero and to kindred spirits absorbed in greed and extravagance. After his altercation with Agrippina,

"his anxieties caused his health to fail. He retired to Sinuessa, to recover his strength in its mild climate and health-giving waters" (185).

Immediately after the accession of Nero harsh treatment and the threat of imminent execution drove him to suicide (186).

It is quite in keeping with the usual practice of Tacitus to enlist support even for his blackest characters when catastrophe is finally overtaking them (187). So despite the pathos of Narcissus at his end and the even greater detestation which Agrippina elicits from the reader, there is no doubt that to Tacitus, he like all similar upstarts is a contemptible object.

It seems incredible that the bearer of such an illustrious name as Cornelius Scipio should be depicted by Tacitus as stooping to the basest forms of flattery to a freedman. It seems even more amazing when it is remembered that this same Scipio had recently lost his wife Poppaea Sabina through the machinations of a freedman Sosibius (188) and that he had earned the praise of Tacitus for his 'diplomatic compromise

between marital affection and political expediency' (189). It seems to be much more likely that, when reproducing Scipio's fulsome words, Tacitus is relating the speaker's irony rather than demonstrating a new depth in Senatorial servility (190) as some interpreters have assumed. It is interesting to note that coupled with the name of Scipio is that of Barea Soranus, the well-known Stoic, who with much praise from Tacitus committed suicide along with his daughter (191). Scipio suggested that Pallas should be given the nation's thanks because, though descended from Arcadian kings, he preferred the national interests to his antique lineage, and let himself be regarded as one of the emperor's servants. The irony could not be more telling; although it has been suggested that Scipio

"imagines for him a descent from Pallas, the mythical ancestor of Evander and eponymous of the original Pallanteum on the Palatine Hill" (192)

it is more likely that this ancestry was claimed by the lively imagination of the Greek who later disgusts Nero with what Tacitus describes as his "surly arrogance" (193). Furthermore the weaknesses of Claudius must have been known by those around him, and to speak of Pallas, whose arrogance later prompts him to boast that

"all orders in his home were given by nods or waves of the hand - when more detailed instructions were required he wrote them to avoid personal contact" (194)

to speak of such a person as regarding himself as one of the servants of such a weak and amenable emperor as Claudius is

such a travesty of reason that nobody, surely, could have regarded such a statement as serious.

If this were not sufficient evidence that the words used by Scipio as quoted by Tacitus are heavy with irony, another piece of bitter Tacitean irony adds credence to the idea that the historian was unable to discuss this most arrogant of freedmen without acrimony. The cause of Scipio's ironical praise, a senatorial decree, was engraved in letters of bronze; it loaded praise, comments Tacitus, for old-world frugality on an ex-slave who possessed three hundred million sesterces (195). And yet again, when the occasion of Pallas' deposition by Nero from the office of 'libertus a rationibus' - the post from which he had virtually controlled the Empire - is described, Tacitus is heavily sarcastic. 'As the ex-slave left the palace with a great crowd of followers, the emperor penetratingly commented 'Pallas is going to swear himself out of his state functions'. (196)

Such consistent irony makes inescapable the conclusion that Pallas and any other men drawn from his walk of life who later find themselves in positions of such eminence are the butt of some of Tacitus' most savage and bitter verbal attacks.

Another freedman, Anicetus, was the originator of Nero's ingenious scheme for ridding himself of his mother (197). In discussing the activities of this confidant of the emperor Tacitus shows less bitterness than he does when discussing those of Pallas; nevertheless he leaves the reader in little doubt of his assessment of him. In the first place he felt towards him what he appears to have felt towards the whole breed of

freedmen; by birth they had no claim to greatness, and their attainments were merely travesties of justice. Furthermore his reverence for family ties and filial devotion (198) would certainly cause him to look with disdain upon one who instigated a son to murder his mother, even if the mother in question was Agrippina. In describing the despicable part he played in bringing about the ruin of the unoffending Octavia (199) Tacitus comments scornfully that "Anicetus' warped character found no difficulty in a further crime" (200), "His record then proved to be a great asset in obeying his emperor's orders," and enabled him incidentally to save his own skin by retiring to a comfortable exile.

If Rome was used to the vast influence held by former slaves, other peoples were not; and Tacitus quite clearly delights in telling how Polyclitus with a vast train of attendants arrived as a special investigator in Britain (201). Although he intimidated the Roman army, "the enemy" says Tacitus laughed at him. For them, freedom still lived, and the power of ex-slaves was still unfamiliar. The British marvelled that a general and an army who had completed such a mighty war should obey a slave. There is a play upon the words 'libertate' and 'libertinorum' reminiscent of a similar play in the Germania (202). In that contest Tacitus says in the vein of satire that runs through that work that "Freedmen (203) rank little higher than slaves; they have seldom any

serious influence in the household, never in the State, excepting only in nations under the rule of kings! It is worth mentioning in this context that Polyclitus obtained quite a bad reputation for rapacity subsequently (204).

Other important freedmen whose conduct receives censure from Tacitus' pen may be cited. Vatinius, for instance, who was almost certainly a freedman, is described by Tacitus in the following terms:

"This outstanding monstrosity of the court had originated from a shoe shop. Deformed in body and scurrilous in wit, he had first been taken up as a butt for abuse. But then he gained power enough to eclipse any scoundrel in influence, wealth and capacity for damage. He rose by attacking decent people" (205).

The ancients were of course less sensitive about attacking the physical defects of their contemporaries than are their descendants, and Tacitus is here guilty of no worse taste than most of the Romans of that time (206).

Icelus, Galba's freedman seems, if not more odious, at least more influential than Vatinius, and was able to grasp a vast amount of plunder during the first seven months after the death of Nero (207). Galba's fall meant also his fall, and Tacitus relates that he suffered a freedman's execution - in public (208).

Asiaticus was Icelus' opposite number under Vitellius. He is described by Tacitus as

"an infamous menial who had nothing but his vices to commend him" (209).

Like Icelus he is mentioned as suffering the death that



became one of his lowly origin (210).

It might be argued that these accounts of the conduct of ex-slaves, damning though they may be, are no more eloquent of Tacitus' contempt for the race of freedmen than his accounts of Piso, the enemy of Germanicus, of Eprius Marcellus and of Galba prove his contempt for the Senatorial order. This may well be so, for cruelty and unscrupulousness are not the possessions of any one class of society. But the freedmen are arraigned on grounds of conduct the very opposite to what one would expect of men of humble birth in a society such as that of Imperial Rome. They possessed fabulous wealth and a desire for more; and they were intolerably arrogant. If Piso was an accomplice of Tiberius and aimed at the usurpation of the power that belonged to Germanicus, he was, according to Tacitus' aristocratic point of view, entitled in a sense to do so as a member of the ruling caste, moving in the same circles as Emperors and their adopted sons; if Eprius Marcellus claimed that his accusations were matters of the highest national importance, he was largely correct in this claim, for he was after all a senator. Galba's hauteur was excusable as that of an Emperor. But to a conservative such as Tacitus the art of government could be attained by an individual only after a thorough immersion in its traditions, after pursuing a public career through the steps of the cursus honorum, which had been designed to train public servants. If there was to be a governing class, it had to have wealth to command the necessary respect; and if such - and greater - wealth was

to fall into the hands of mere upstarts with no thought of the dignity of the state except insofar as it coincided with their own immediate interests, the result would be misgovernment and an eventual weakening of all legitimate authority.

That it was only these aspects of the freedmen - their enormous power, wealth and consequent arrogance - that so distressed Tacitus is shown by his willingness to admit that ex-slaves were capable of extreme loyalty towards their patrons, and even to strangers. The example of Epicharis is a signal piece of heroism; she as an ex-slave and a woman offers a sharp contrast with the cowardice and treachery of free-born men. He does not regard her as an especially virtuous woman - indeed, before her concern with the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero she had never, he says, interested herself in anything good (211). When threatened with torture, if she did not reveal the names of the conspirators, she acquitted herself so nobly that Tacitus praises her conduct liberally. His account, indeed, is worth quoting at length:-

Thinking that no female body could stand the pain, Nero ordered her to be tortured. But lashes did not weaken her denials, nor did branding - nor the fury of the torturers at being defied by a woman. So the first day's examination was frustrated. Next day her racked limbs could not support her, so she was taken for further torments in a chair. But on the way she tore off her breast-band, fastened it in a noose to the chair's canopy, and placed her neck inside it. Then, straining with all

her weight, she throttled the little life that was still in her. So, shielding in direst agony men unconnected with her and almost strangers, this ex-slavewoman set an example which particularly shone when free men, Roman gentlemen and Senators, were betraying, untouched, their nearest and dearest. For Lucan, Senecio and Quintianus gave away their fellow-conspirators wholesale (212).

Tacitus has written this account in a most dramatic manner, and apparently with the greatest intensity of feeling. He is indeed suffering from a troubled conscience, for he shared to some extent during the reign of the Domitian the weakness of the free men mentioned in this story. Probably he did not betray his friends at all, but he was guilty of acquiescence in all that the emperor enjoined upon him and his fellow-senators; the difference between him and Lucan, Senecio and Quintianus was not one of type, but only one of degree (213). He feels added remorse when he has to relate what a brave contrast Epicharis afforded.

Tacitus also recounts how Mnester, a freedman, stabbed himself to death during the cremation of Agrippina the younger (214). Two alternative motives are suggested, with little to indicate which carried the greater probability: Either he loved his patroness, or he feared assassination. (215)

If it was for love of Agrippina that Mnester committed suicide, it was - Tacitus would insist - a dog-like devotion, the devotion of an inferior to a superior being; it would not be returned by Agrippina, it is certain. For Epicharis and Mnester were, like many thousands of their fellow-freedmen and women, harmless, humble and often poor people; Narcissus

and Pallas belonged to a number of potentates drawn from the ranks of former slaves that was fortunately very small. The majority of former slaves were, as has just been remarked, inferior beings - so inferior in fact that, had every one of the four thousand of them who were banished from Rome to the deserted and diseased island of Sardinia because of their being tainted with Egyptian or Jewish religious beliefs, perished, the loss, according to Tacitus, would have been slight (216). Such creatures had at one time been slaves, constituting the mob of Rome; and for the Roman mob no disparagement or censure is, for Tacitus, sufficiently strong. (217)

In summing up, it may be stated that the works of Tacitus, especially the later books of the Annals, describe periods when a vast amount of power was wielded by freedmen. Such men were achieving distinction in all fields; they could be found in the role of

Masseur, diviner, painter, rhetorician,  
professor, necromancer or physician,  
or tight-rope walker or geometician

as Juvenal remarks (218).

Those who attained to pre-eminence among the vast number of their colleagues in the royal household could hope for countless privileges and abundant wealth if they paid adroit court to the woman who at the time was ruler of the Roman Empire.

Tacitus, quite understandably, was not pleased by this state of affairs. It seems that, although Narcissus, Anicetus and Pallas were by nature extremely unpleasant men, Tacitus

was considerably prejudiced against them because of their origin. Although this contempt cannot be justified, it can be understood; Tacitus was high-born and proud of the fact, and it is a delusion common among all societies that aristocratic connections ought to be, a passport to power. He was, a man of considerable attainments in the field of letters, a brilliant orator steeped in the literary traditions of Rome (219) and a writer of undoubtedly great power, especially when his subject offered him an opportunity to exercise his scathing wit. Here then was his second claim to power; but this claim, too, like that founded upon his blue blood, would have availed him little in the days of which he writes; he and men similarly qualified would have been impotent in their efforts to exploit their legal and academic training against these men of great audacity but little education who had risen from the gutter. At the nod of such men as these his predecessors in the Senate had opened their veins; even the Emperors had been subordinated to the whims of the freedmen who occupied the three great secretariates.

Tacitus does not seem to have been very much preoccupied with the acquisition, of wealth; nevertheless his bitterness in enumerating the fabulous properties of the freedmen of the Imperial household (220) is very noticeable. His objection to this would probably take the form not of a grudge against these possessions, but of a protest against their ostentation (221).

His view of the freedmen's use of authority - and it

seems to be on accurate assessment of the situation - is that Rome suffered in proportion to the ascendancy of the powerful freedmen (222). Were he a little less biassed, he would have to add as a corollary that the freedmen assumed this ascendancy only when a Claudius was too involved in adding new letters to the alphabet, and when a Nero was too immersed in debauchery, adequately to restrain them. After all, Tiberius had been well able to contain the aspirations of the freedmen (223).

It is most improbable that Tacitus was personally affected by the pre-eminence of these freedmen. His contempt for the class is complementary to his pride in his own class. A consideration of the history of the period indicates no reason for complacency; the conduct of the Senatorial order does not seem to have been much superior to that of the freedmen. And with years of experience of rule they ought to have known better.

### III Wealth, Extravagance and Luxury

In the first place it must be borne in mind that Tacitus was a very wealthy man. He was of the Senatorial order, membership of which was dependent upon satisfying, amongst other things, a property qualification (224). There is no reason to suppose that Tacitus was only just able to gain admission on these grounds: he was a successfully practising lawyer. Pliny states that he had earned a reputation as an orator before his own professional career began (225) from the same author it is learnt that on the death of the consul Verginius Rufus in 97 A.D., Tacitus was appointed consul suffectus and delivered the funeral eulogy of his predecessor (226). Three years later Tacitus and Pliny were associated in the prosecution of the proconsul of Africa, Marius Priscus (227). Pliny, always an admirer of Tacitus, when mentioning this fact speaks of the grave dignity of his oratory. Elsewhere the various phases of Tacitus' 'cursus honorum' are mentioned. When he was chosen at the age of twenty-three or so to be the son-in-law of Agricola, and the rank and personal character of the latter justify the assumption, in the words of Fourniaux (228)

"that the chosen husband of his daughter would be a young man not only of moral excellence, but of already assured position and promise".

From 89-93 A.D. he was absent from Rome in some provincial command (229).

If this successful and prosperous public career is not sufficient indication of the wealth of Tacitus, a further

indication of the extent of his resources is the quality of the company that he kept. In the Dialogus - if it is genuine - he represents himself as on terms of friendship with the leaders of the Roman bar even at the age of twenty to twenty-two years (230). More convincing than this however is his subsequent friendship with Pliny. Pliny despite his protestations to the contrary (231) was extremely wealthy (232); yet he speaks of Tacitus not in the manner of a patron to a client, nor as though he were addressing a poor relation, but in terms of absolute equality (233).

The indications from external evidence, therefore, are that Tacitus was a wealthy man. Internal evidence does not suggest anything to the contrary. He makes negligible mention of money in a way that leads one to suppose that he had a sufficiency of it at least to enable him to devote his attentions exclusively to other matters. Thinly veiled under different words, one often finds the patronising maxim used even by the rich of today - 'money isn't everything' (234). In keeping with the spirit of the property qualification for membership of the Senate, he believes that a certain amount of wealth is necessary to maintain the dignity of a man in high station (235). Marcus Hortensius Hortalus - 'a young nobleman who was obviously poor' - appealed to the Senate for financial means of avoiding destitution on the grounds that Augustus had previously encouraged the survival of his illustrious family. Although the Senate was well-disposed towards the appeal, Tiberius only grudgingly made a slender allowance to each of



the four sons of Hortalus, which was not perpetuated as a regular pension (236). The whole narrative infers that the author was entirely sympathetic to the appeal of Hortalus, and only moderately pleased by the fact that although money was allowed, it was allowed sparingly.

To Tacitus, the nobility had a right to property which other orders did not share. His hatred of the Imperial freedman has already been seen to lead him to protests against their wealth (237); a freedman was always a slave at heart (238) - 'libertorum servilia ingenia' - and a slave with wealth was dangerous to social order. The equestrian classes - that is, largely, the mercantile classes - doubtless included money-lenders, and they were apt to regard patriotism as less important than private profits (239). Only Tacitus and his equally high minded fellow-senators required an adequate fortune to be able to devote their entire energies to patriotism.

In fairness, however, it must be said that Tacitus' lofty idealism is matched by what seems to be a similarly deep sense of proportion as to the value of money. There is no trace of a desire for greater wealth in the whole of his writings, probably because he would have been unable to use it if he had a greater estate. His hatred of extravagance permeates the whole of his work, and parallel with his contrast between the old free republic and the present enslaved empire is a further parallel between the simple life of the past, and the extravagant and effeminate luxury of the present. Looking back nostalgically upon the old days of Rome when

there were no foreign influences, Tacitus is inconsistent in rejoicing in the territorial expansion of the Roman world (240) and yet deploring the foreign pollution that was affecting the atmosphere of the capital. Admittedly much of the infiltration would have taken place whatever success attended the building of the Roman Empire; yet its greatest effects were caused by slaves taken during the campaigns of the late republic.

Although Tacitus complains that the dregs of every nation find their way to Rome, (241) it is the insinuation of eastern vice which has proved to be the greatest single undermining influence upon Roman society. Not only were oriental tyrants synonymous with general depravity (242) in great need of Roman culture (243); their nations too were synonymous with luxurious living. Tiridates king of Seleucia was a weak ruler, it is recounted because

"foreign luxury had made him effeminate"

(244). Hunting and feasting are specified as 'barbarian pastimes' (245).

But by the time of the Empire, these vices had ceased to be the exclusive possession of 'barbaric peoples' and had passed to Rome. Drusus the son of Tiberius was sent to Illyricum because his father believed, for one thing, that camp life would be better for him than the 'present frivolous life of juvenile extravagance' at Rome (246). It was about this time in fact that a discussion was held in the Senate on the subject of extravagance; as this vice was widespread (247), Tacitus' description of the proceedings is worth quoting:

Quintus Haterius and Octavius Fronto denounced current

extravagance. The use of gold plate for private entertainments was prohibited, and so were the silk clothes into which male costume had degenerated. Fronto went further and demanded restrictions on silver plate, furniture and slaves. Gaius Asinius Gallus spoke in opposition. 'The extension of the Empire' he argued, 'has meant the growth of private fortunes. This is nothing new; indeed it is in keeping with the most ancient history. Wealth meant one thing to the Fabricii, another to the Scipios. It must be judged in relation to the country. When the nation was poor, people's houses were small. In its present grandeur individuals, too, expand.

'In slaves, plate, or any other article for use, the only criterion of moderation or excess is the owner's means. Senators and other gentry have special property qualifications, not because they are intrinsically different, but because their precedence in station, rank, and honours warrants special provision for their mental and physical well-being. Otherwise leading men would have all the worries and dangers, and none of their compensations'. This euphemistic admission of debauchery readily won his audience, since extravagance was widespread (248).

No comment need be made upon Tacitus' obvious prejudices in this question. Only six years later the same topic had another lengthy discussion in the Senate. In fact its even greater length than the passage just quoted betrays Tacitus' great concern over the question. The reason for his concern is not immediately apparent, since, as he says (249), the

luxury and extravagance that persisted in the period between Actium and the year of the four Emperors had by his own time abated. It is difficult to believe that his method of writing the Annals demanded space-filling when there was scant news of Imperial disorders or conquests (250). Perhaps he saw that inversions of the social order allowed vast sums to fall into the coffers of Imperial freedmen, who, in an age of appalling servility, set a pattern of ostentation which all sought to follow; or perhaps he judged the reverse to be the case: that the debility from which society of that century suffered was the consequence of the spread of luxury. In either case, such a sermon on luxury as he preaches would be consonant with his moral purpose, and would help society, if only it would listen, to achieve a higher level of virility.

His explanations of the return to a more moderate way of living after 69 A.D. are clear, and convincing. During the reign of terror - that of Domitian must certainly be in his mind - rich families were compelled to live modestly to escape the notice of the emperor. Furthermore, many self-made provincials brought frugal habits to Rome, and persisted in their frugality even when they had made fortunes, as many of them did. In the third place Vespasian had set a fine example of old-fashioned simplicity, and this had apparently not passed unnoticed by his subjects. A further explanation, which may be added to those given by Tacitus, related to the fact that all new schemes and enterprises bring in their train problems which time alone can dispose of. The awakening of Arab nationalism today, for instance, is causing much trouble to the world; the British National Health Service took several years before most

of its attendant troubles were eliminated. So too with the Roman Empire - although Rome had acquired most of her Empire before the Christian era, a hundred years or so later she was only beginning to learn how to rule the wealth that she acquired from her possessions.

Regarding the question of luxury itself, Tacitus is again torn between two loyalties; he is conscious that the growing extravagance in Rome was causing not only social but also economic difficulties (251) and his love for Rome would make him deplore these conditions. Yet he has to agree with Tiberius who prudently declines to begin what inevitably would have been a losing battle in attempting to stem the tide of luxury, when he says that social distinctions had reached the unfortunate state of depending upon ostentation of wealth (252). As a man of rank Tacitus clearly wished these distinctions to remain. It is interesting to conjecture what would have been Tacitus' attitude towards luxury had he been compelled to maintain his prestige during his lifetime in the way that his predecessors had had to do during the reign of Nero.

Luxury caused military discipline to deteriorate (253). Not only were the Romans the sufferers in this respect; often they themselves were able to gain advantage over an enemy because of his effeminacy or luxury. During the uprisings of the Gallic tribes in 21 A.D., tribes which, fortunately for the Roman cause, lacked discipline and battle experience, the Roman commander Silius is made to say,

"The wealthy, luxurious Aedui look unwarlike. Prove that they are! When they run, you can spare their lives" (254).

The result was a substantial victory for Rome. Civilis, many years later, was to rely upon the results of too much banqueting when he convinced his chiefs of his need to attack the Romans; (255). After being plied with a great feast, they abandoned resisting Civilis' schemes.

One aspect of extravagant living that Tacitus is particularly severe upon, is drunkenness. His temperance campaign is never waged aggressively, although the topic is one of the few in which he consistently maintains the same attitude. Just as the Aedui were rendered ineffectual in battle by their luxurious living, drunkenness often seems to have lost battles in the early Empire. Germanicus is described as securing an advantage over German tribes because of their state of

"uncontrolled, drunken prostration" (156).

The Germans, he relates elsewhere (257), in fact often held drinking bouts lasting a day and night, and these were not considered by the Germans themselves in any way disgraceful. Cotys, one of the joint kings of Thrace appointed by Augustus when their father died, was ensnared by his brother Rhescuporis one night after drink had put him off his guard (258).

Thracian auxiliaries in the Roman army on one occasion

"abandoned sentry duty in favour of dissipation or lay drunkenly sleeping" (259).

Italicus made his appeal to German tribesmen partly by the drunkenness and lustfulness which natives admire (260). Otho might have become emperor before January 23, 69 A.D. had the difficulty of securing joint action on a previous occasion among drunken men not prevented them from carrying out their purpose (261).

One of Messalina's wildest revels is described in bacchanalian terms.

terms. "...She was performing in her grounds a mimic grape-harvest. Presses were working, vats overflowing..."

(262)

References to drink become more numerous when Nero arrives on the scene. Britannicus scored a success at the expense of Nero during a drunken party (263). Nero himself is described as drunk (264), and as a frequenter of taverns (265).

It would be surprising, in the light of what Tacitus has to say on the Principate, (266) if he let any tendencies to extravagance on the part of the emperors themselves pass unnoticed. The chief offenders are Nero, Otho and Vitellius, and of course, the principle ladies Messalina and Agrippina. The excesses of Nero are too well-known to need close analysis, and Tacitus' attitude towards them if not explicit is easily imagined. But there is the description of a

"prodigal and notorious banquet.....given by Tigellinus" which may be regarded for the present purpose - as Tacitus himself chose to regard it - as a typical instance of the imperial debauchery that took place during the reign of Nero (267). The illuminating, if unpleasant, reading of the text deserves for that reason to be reproduced in full;

To avoid repetitious accounts of extravagance, I shall describe it, as a model of its kind. The entertainment took place on a raft constructed on Marcus Agrippa's lake. It was towed about by other vessels, with gold and ivory fittings. Their rowers were degenerates, assorted according to age and vice. Tigellinus had also collected birds and

animals from remote countries, and even the products of the ocean. On the quays were brothels stocked with high-ranking ladies. Opposite them could be seen naked prostitutes, indecently posturing and gesturing.

At nightfall the woods and houses nearby echoed with singing and blazed with lights. Nero was already corrupted by every lust, natural and unnatural. But he now refuted any surmises that no further degradation was possible for him. For a few days later he went through a formal wedding ceremony with one of the perverted gang called Pythagoras. The emperor, in the presence of witnesses, put on the bridal veil. Dowry, marriage-bed, wedding torches, all were there. Indeed everything was public which even at a natural union is veiled by night.

So much then for the extravagances of Nero, and for Tacitus' undisguised and bitter contempt for them. Like Nero, Otho was much addicted to the grosser pleasures of Imperial court life.

"Otho's mind was not effeminate like his body" (268)  
He had, Nero's Imperial court to draw upon as a source of luxury

"with its freedom as to marriage, adultery, and other King-like indulgences;...if he did not seize them himself, they would fall to others" (269).

Piso, Galba's nominee as emperor, says of Otho:

"The vices which are his only glory were ruining the Empire even when he was only an emperor's friend. Should his gait and demeanour, should that womanish adornment of his person, give him a title to Empire? Let none deceive



themselves because his extravagance wears the garb of generosity: he will know how to squander, he will not know how to give. He is already planning revelries and adulteries and gatherings of women in his mind; these are what he deems to be the prizes of Empire" (270).

Later Otho is described by Tacitus as the most worthless and most debauched of mankind (271). Vitellius is equally severely dealt with:

"The torpid Vitellius drunk by midday and heavy with food, was enjoying a foretaste of his Imperial fortunes in luxurious ease and sumptuous banqueting" (272);

again:

"But his maw was foul and insatiable, Rome and Italy were ransacked to provide dainties for his palate; the roads from either sea hummed with the conveyance of them; the chief men in cities were ruined, and whole cities were wasted, in providing him with banquets, while the soldiers lost their old virtues in idleness and the pursuits of pleasure, and learnt to despise their general" (273);

yet again:

"The camp of Vitellius was a scene of disorder, drunkenness, and nocturnal orgies, rather than of proper military discipline" (274).

There are numerous other references by Tacitus to the extravagant living of Vitellius (275). With justice might Tacitus cry

"O mighty and unhappy country! to have endured in one year an Otho and a Vitellius....." (276).

#### IV - THE POORER CLASSES

This topic may be discussed very briefly. Tacitus has little patience with the socially less fortunate classes, and the instances of disparaging remarks are too numerous to require individual mention.

When all his contemptuous comments are analysed it is found that there are three distinct allegations against the humble folk - the "City mob" or the "rabble" as they are usually referred to. The first fault that Tacitus finds in them is their interest in pleasure alone; he echoes Juvenal's famous complaint that the only interests of the urban population were bread and the circus:

.....duas tantum res anxius optat, panem  
at circenses. (277).

As the mob of Rome was so closely associated with the circuses, Tacitus' hatred is also vented on the circuses themselves. When the trial of Tigellinus had worked up the frenzy of the populace, he describes them as

"flocking with redoubled fury and the entire city to the Palace and the forum, and filling the circuses and theatres, where popular license is most permitted, with disorderly cries" (278).

Vitellius is described as wooing popular favour by appealing to the people on their own ground:

"...He attended the consular elections along with the

candidates like a private citizen, and he courted in every way the favour of the rabble by attending the theatres, and by taking part in the factions of the circus" (279).

By

"building stables for his charioteers, filling the circus with shows of gladiators or wild beasts, and feeling away money as though his supply of it were inexhaustible" (280).

the same emperor was well on the road towards

"delighting the rabble as much as he was outraging all good citizens" (281).

"A Boian of mean origin dared to thrust himself into great affairs by pretending to divinity... He was...exposed to wild beasts; but as the beasts failed to devour him, the foolish populace believed him to be invulnerable until he was slain before the eyes of Vitellius" (282);

this remark displays incidentally Tacitus' belief that the humbly born had no concern with affairs of state - obviously in those days, the poor were ill-equipped for statecraft, but Tacitus' attitude indicates that under no circumstances should the lowly born presume to interfere with business of the great. Nero, to ingratiate himself with the people, described himself as their servant.

"Just as in private relationships nearest are dearest, he said, so to him the inhabitants of Rome came first: he must obey their appeal to stay! The people liked such protestations. They loved their amusements. But their

principal interest was the corn supply: and they feared it would run short if Nero went away" (283).

This constant desire for amusement is in reality only one facet of the greater sin of which, Tacitus claims, the populace is guilty. Political irresponsibility made such people almost beneath the notice of the aristocratic historian. They watched great events, merely as spectators, without any realisation of what those events signified.

"By this time, the entire populace", he narrates graphically in relating the events leading up to the death of Galba,

"slaves among the number, were invading the Palace, clamouring for the death of Otho and the destruction of the conspirators, just as if they were calling for some spectacle in the Circus or the theatre; not considering, or indeed meaning, what they said, seeing that on the same day they were ready to cry out for the opposite with equal enthusiasm: they were but following the established practice of greeting the emperor, whoever he might be, with extravagant and senseless acclamations." (284).

No passage in all his writings is more graphic than the description of Galba on his last ill-fated journey to the forum. The whole population is stated as being completely passive under the sense of impending catastrophe:

"Galba was swayed to and fro by every movement of the surging multitude; the basilicas and the temples around were packed with spectators of the woeful scene,

No word was uttered either by the people or the plebs; dismay sat on every face, and every ear was turned to listen. There was no uproar, there was no calm - only a silence like that of some great terror or some mighty passion" (285).

The energy and interest which should have been - and which formerly had been - devoted to politics was in fact dissipated at the circus games. The two problems - that of the love of spectacles of the populace, and the plebeian lack of political responsibility were closely related:

"The excitement which people had sought in politics they sought now in the races. Their stakes were laid no longer in the Forum but in the Circus, whose 'factions' had become a substitute for the ancient political parties...This mania was unquestionably the symbol of a moral decline.....At the same time we must recognize that it sprang from the need of the masses for something to stir their blood, and that the imperial regime showed skill in diverting it to the maintenance of its own stability and the preservation of the public peace" (286).

It was seen during the discussion of omens (287) that on several occasions prodigies were misconstrued by the wild assumptions of the populace. The credulousness of the public is Tacitus' third charge. During his account of a fire on the Caelian Hill which gave rise to gloomy speculations of the people, he claims that it is the wont of the public to fasten on a scapegoat for chance happenings; Tiberius'

departure from Rome to Capri was thus regarded as an ill-omen. Tacitus continues ironically to comment upon the venality of the public:

"Tiberius disarmed criticism by distributing money in proportion to the losses incurred....." (288).

"Rome" he says (289), "is a city that finds a meaning in everything"

- and here he is thinking not of the soothsayers and those whom he believed equipped to discuss portents and similar matters, but the mob whose custom it was to jump to hasty conclusions. This flexibility of the ordinary people is one of their salient characteristics, so that when Helvetian envoys came before Vitellius and his army, one of their number, Claudius Cossus, spoke so convincingly that

"the soldiers with the usual mutability of a mob, became as inclined to pity as they had previously been extreme in their severity" (290).

With slaves as a class Tacitus, as might well be expected, shows little sympathy or understanding; suchlike people are part of the equipment of the great houses of Rome in just the same way as gold, and silver plate (291). Most remarkable is the case of the murder of the city-prefect and ex-consul Pedanius Secundus. A slave was prosecuted for the murder, his guilt was undisputed and he was sentenced to death. But according to ancient custom, "it was required", says Tacitus (292),

"that every slave residing under the same roof must

be executed".

This sounds to be a brutal custom such as one would expect to meet among primitive societies. Indeed Tacitus states that

"a crowd gathered, eager to save so many innocent lives; and rioting began",

thus showing that he is aware of at least a certain amount of injustice. He also speaks of

"protesting cries of pity for the numbers affected - there were four hundred - and the women, and the young, and the undoubted innocence of the majority" (293).

After the slaves had been executed it was further proposed that Pedanius' ex-slaves too should be deported. Nero, Tacitus relates, vetoed this -

"the ancient custom had not been tempered by mercy, but should not be aggravated by brutality".

Much more significant than these suggestions by Tacitus that he recognised that there was some justice in an appeal for clemency, is the lengthy, arrogant and specious speech put into the mouth of Gaius Cassius Longinus, and the absence of a speech in which a juster point of view might have been put forward. Cassius' speech is too long to reproduce in its entirety; but when stripped down to essentials it portrays the attitude of the Roman nobleman towards slaves more accurately than any number of casual allusions that might be cited. He says (294):

'I have often been here...when decrees deviating

from our ancestral laws and customs were mooted, I have not opposed them. Not that I had any doubt about the superiority - in every matter whatsoever - of ancient arrangements, and the undesirability of every change. But I did not wish, by exaggerated regard for antique usage, to show too high an opinion of my own profession, the law.....

'An ex-consul has been deliberately murdered by a slave in his own home. None of his fellow-slaves prevented or betrayed the murderer.....Exempt them from the penalty if you like. But then, if the city-prefect was not important enough to be immune, who will be? Who will have enough slaves to protect him if Pedanius' four hundred were too few?.....

'Or was the assassin avenging a wrong? For that is one shameless fabrication. Tell us next that the slave had been negotiating about his patrimony, or he had lost some ancestral property! We had better call it justifiable homicide straight away (295).

.....Do you believe that a slave can have planned to kill his master without letting fall a single rash or menacing word? Or.....could he have passed the watch, opened the bedroom door, carried in a light, and committed the murder, without anyone knowing? There are many advance notifications of crimes. If slaves give them away, we can live securely, though one among many, because of their insecurity; or, if we must die, we can at least be sure the guilty will be punished.



'.....Nowadays our huge households are international. They include every alien religion - or none at all. The only way to keep down this scum is by intimidation.....' (296).

The admirer of Tacitus has to be honest and admit that this in reality is Tacitus himself speaking; Cassius is merely his mouthpiece. The conservatism implicit in the first paragraph emphasises this fact. The historian seems to be trying desperately to convince himself of the justice of such an atrocious massacre. It is in reality he who is the conservative lawyer, who in his esteem for his own petty dignity and security, deliberately withdraws from an attitude of elementary humanity.

## GOVERNMENT AND LAW

### I - THE PRINCIPATE

An important distinction existed in the mind of Tacitus between the power of autocracy and the power of the laws. This is the first and the most fundamental fact to be established before treating his concepts of government. "minui iura, quotiens gliscat potestas, nec utendum imperio ubi legibus agi possit", says Tiberius (1) in an almost untranslatable sentence, warning the Senate that the acceptance by himself of any further powers would be most detrimental to the state. That Tacitus himself approves of this sentiment is made clear by the words immediately following:

"These constitutional sentiments were welcome, the more so since they were not characteristic of Tiberius".

This differentiation between autocratic power and the power of the law-courts is made by Tacitus in his brief but illuminating summary of the origins of law.

"Some communities" he states (2) "...either immediately (i.e. at their inceptions) or when autocratic government palled (postquam regum pertaessum) preferred the rule of law".

To him, then, law was not what is enacted by a monarch or a despot, but is a code evolved from consultation between men duly authorised to formulate what must and what must not be done in the interests of social order by the citizen body. Law and autocracy are to Tacitus essentially contradictory terms.

The fact that he himself was one of those select individuals upon whom, if not the formulating, at least the application of

the law was entrusted is surely no coincidence. All men are selfish to some degree or other, and Tacitus was no exception. He was happy when he and his peers were free to enjoy the mode of life they sought; he was downcast when their interests were threatened. And autocracy - under whatever title it manifested itself, and however humanely it was conducted - certainly involved the denial of the liberties his class needed. It was, by Tacitus' own reasoning and according to the principles of government implicit in the whole of his work, an arrogation to himself by one man of what ought in reality to reside in the hands of a body of men. Consequently it is with grave concern and an ever-present mood of pessimism that he undertakes to describe in the *Annals* the evolution of the Principate.

To the ancients there were three distinct methods of government, and Tacitus follows Cicero in citing them as democracy, oligarchy and autocracy (3). A mixture of the three is easier to applaud than to achieve, and when achieved, he contends - thinking of the old republican constitution - its ability to exist for any great length of time is most improbable. His ideal, then, it appears - an ideal that can be attained but not maintained - is an alloy of these three ingredients. It requires little imagination to realise, in the absence of this impossible ideal, which of the three alternatives Tacitus would prefer. Autocracy is the negation of law, and the law was very much one of his preoccupations. And the writer of countless sneers (4) at the less fortunate social classes could hardly be expected to advocate their usurpation of governmental power.

The importance that Tacitus attaches to the deliberation in the Senate upon issues of national importance, the execution of justice by those appointed to the task without fear of frustration - in a word, the full operation of all the machinery of republican government - may easily escape notice. The functioning of this machinery is so much absent from the historical periods he describes that his implied alternative is all but concealed by his contempt for the sycophancy of the Senate. His argument is that power corrupts; nobody, no matter how well meaning, can assume sole authority and hope reasonably to see every aspect of the whole picture, let alone administer equitably to all sections of the community. Indeed even some virtues provoke hatred - for instance unbending strictness and incorruptibility (5).

"That is why" says one of his few favourite characters the Stoic Thrasea Paetus, "our officials usually start well and end badly" (6).

Experience of public affairs can offset this difficulty to some extent, though never completely; that is why the reigns of Caligula and Nero were bound to fail, doomed before they began.

"If Tiberius with all his experience has been transformed and deranged by absolute power" says Lucius Arruntius (7) shortly before the death of that emperor, "will Gaius do better?"

Autocracy was baneful not only to those whose misfortune it was to suffer it, but also to the tyrant himself.

"How truly" writes Tacitus (8) "the wisest of men [that is, Socrates] used to assert that the souls of despots, if revealed, would show wounds and mutilations - weals left

on the spirit like lash-marks on the body by cruelty, lust and malevolence. Neither Tiberius' autocracy nor his isolation could save him from confessing the internal torments which were his retribution". (9)

Tacitus then was well aware of the pain suffered by the tyrant as a result of his own rule. He must have visualised this as the price that tyrants were willing to pay for the gratification of some desire. What this desire is, if it were not self-evident, is explained in another of Tacitus' habitual digressions:

"Love of power" he states (10), "is an ancient and indeed an inborn passion of the human mind; it broke forth in full development with the greatness of our Empire".

Apart from the fact that the quality of the rule of an autocrat tends to deteriorate, there was another very good reason for Tacitus' affection for the republic system of government. It has been seen how his love for law as an instrument of rule was born of his brilliance and success in the legal profession.(11) He was also a politician, and his oratory, besides being used in pleading causes in litigation was employed in the Senate whenever political exigencies permitted or demanded on strictly governmental matters. But only under a Republican system of government could the political orator attain to true greatness. Just as in battle the sword is the only means of success, so in debate there is a corresponding need for the ability to wield words; and as in a period of peace the soldier is of little advantage to the community, so in times of peace - peace in the

sense of absence of political discord - the brilliant and self-assertive orator is a needless ornament in the possession of the state. Indeed an interesting parallel is afforded between the mischief that is engendered in the barracks when the soldiers have no truly military business to concern them (12) and the mischief in the shape of shameless flattery and unjust accusations that afflicts the Senators when they are made similarly inoperative in time of autocracy. The necessity for subservience to one overruling person will always occasion sycophancy and flattery; and this spirit of servility in its turn removes the opportunity of indulging in constructive debate which is so necessary to one such as Tacitus with his oratorical gifts and concern for political advancement. The Senate was of course kept alive - and moreover played an important part in the life and administration of the Empire during the better part of Tiberius' reign; but upon the deterioration of that ruler, its debates lost much of their moment since the matters which came up for its attention tended to be more and more of an insignificant nature. If these matters happened to be of some great significance there was no liberty of disagreeing with the emperor (13). Sycophancy, to Tacitus was a state of abjection; but it implied more than a mere spirit of subordination and dependence on the part of the men concerned, with all the political sterility that this state of affairs involved. It meant that there was no room for eloquence and skill in debate; no opportunity to sway and remould men's opinions for the simple reason that there were no independent <sup>opinions</sup> from which and to which they could be converted. It meant that Tacitus and men of his calibre were unable to

use their greatest faculties - the only real product of their elaborate education and training.

"We [i.e. the Senate]" he says in his preface to his life of Agricola (14), "should have lost our memories as well as our voices if it were as easy to forget as to keep silence".

speaking of the dark years before the Principate of Nerva.

The tragedy that took place during the dark reigns of the first century A.D. is ironically enhanced by the nature of the spirit of man, and the inevitable way in which he hopes for better things to come. A resurgence of spirits comes at the dawn of a new age, and all that has been suffered during the period of waiting is quickly forgotten. Instead of permitting them quietly to sink to the bottom, men's characters acted during the gloomy years of Domitian's reign as a sort of lifebelt, which compelled them almost against their wills to float on a turbulent surface, subject to the onslaught of whatever waves tyranny might swamp them with at any time. The storm died with Domitian; the hope that by burning the books of leading Stoics the voice of the Roman people, the freedom of the Senate and the conscience of all mankind might once and for all be silenced and proved an illusion in the minds of the aediles concerned.

"Now at last" writes Tacitus under Trajan "our spirits begin to revive" (15).

Other unhappy consequences of autocracy are of less importance but are none the less irksome. One such result was the loss that

the great aristocratic families sustained by way of casualties. In 48 A.D. in order to correct this state of affairs to some extent

"Claudius....elevated Senators of particularly longstanding and illustrious birth to patrician rank, which few surviving families possessed.....Even the families which the dictator Caesar and Augustus promoted....under the Cassian and Saenian laws respectively, and died out. This action was welcomed as beneficial, and the imperial censor enjoyed performing it" (16). Another consequence was the deep humiliation which these and other aristocratic families were compelled to suffer during the ascendancy of the freedmen (17). Tacitus notes with thankfulness that Tiberius during his better period arranged matters so that "his slaves were unobtrusive, and his household was limited to a few ex-slaves". (18) Later, however, there was a different story to tell. Visitors to Campania hoping to see Tiberius during his self-imposed exile "endured day and night the patronage and self-importance of his doorkeepers" (19); and Marcus Terentius, whose social status was only that of a knight, was infuriated by the condescending airs of the doorkeepers no less than were members of the Senatorial order. Boldly defending his friendship with the notorious Sejanus whose evil influence upon Tiberius was responsible for many of the atrocities that were heaped upon Rome towards the end of the life of that emperor (20), Terentius said,

"Think, Senators, not of Sejanus' last day, but the previous sixteen years. We revered even Satrius Secundus and Pomponius (21). We thought it grand even if Sejanus ex-slaves and doorkeepers knew us" (22).



In principle, then, it appears that Tacitus advocates an oligarchy as the best of the three alternative forms of government (23); a combination of the three forms, though desirable, is in reality impossible to achieve. Who are the men he would class as those suitable for assuming the role of oligarchs, and what qualifications does he expect them to possess? There can be no doubt that the Senatorial order is to him the obvious ruling caste. Seleucia, an eastern nation that had not, according to Tacitus, "decayed into barbarism" had a Senate numbering three hundred, selected for wealth or intelligence (24). In Tiberius' better period he showed enlightened policy in his conferment of office, for "he took into account birth, military distinction and civilian eminence" (25). In explanation Tacitus might have added that since an opportunity of attaining distinction in either military or civil spheres normally demanded birth in one or other of the more distinguished - that is, one of the wealthier - families of Rome, a man's birth, and consequently his hereditary wealth, was in reality the only governing factor.

There were property qualifications attached to membership of the equestrian and senatorial orders. In the case of the senatorial order, the property stipulated was established by Augustus as early as 13 B.C. at one million sesterces (26). Tacitus himself no doubt a wealthy man and who could easily qualify on this score clearly endorses the principle that to be a member of the governing class requires the upholding of one's dignity, and that this dignity could be upheld only by the possession of a specified amount of property. When the ex-praetor Propertius Celer asked for leave to resign from the Senate on the grounds of

poverty, Tiberius, finding that his lack of means was not due to extravagance on his own part, but was inherited by him, presented Celer with a million sesterces (27). Similarly Augustus is recounted as having given to Hortalus, the grandson of the orator Hortensius the same sum to ensure the survival of that most distinguished family (28). In describing the reluctance with which Tiberius assured a continuance of the survival of this particular family (29), Tacitus is clearly of the opinion that under the circumstances Tiberius ought to have been less reluctant to attend to what was a matter of duty. The emperor's expression of unwillingness to help, he says

"was applauded by those who habitually applaud emperors, right or wrong, But the majority received it in silence or with suppressed mutters".

Although 800,000 sesterces were given - 200,000 sesterces to each of Hortalus's four sons, the house of the Hortensii continued to sink into abject destitution. "But" adds Tacitus regretfully "Tiberius showed it no further pity" (30).

The pre-eminence of the Senate in his ideal of the best practical constitution possible does not in Tacitus' mind exclude the functioning of the Tribunate. What had been evolved by his ancestors could not be intrinsically wrong, and after all the Tribunate dated back to the regal period. He is well aware too that each section of any community must have set over them those who can understand, and, in the case of the plebeians, Tacitus would add, control them. He seems to look back to a period in Rome's republican history as an ideal era when the Senate was in the ascendant, and yet the contests between the 'ordines' were

able to continue; perhaps he would have regarded as Rome's greatest age the period between the end of the second Punic war and the advent of the Gracchan agitations. One can appreciate his judgment concerning the state of Rome during the last years of the Republic; the conditions that the young Octavian inherited are painted in grim colours in the prologue to the accounts of the Principate (31). Desperate remedies were needed at this stage in the history of Rome,, but perhaps in Tacitus' view not so desperate as the introduction of what in fact, whatever it might be named, was an autocratic regime; this cure was to the historian far worse than the disease, and in finding a means of securing peace Octavian had found also a means of securing the enslavement of the whole of Rome and her possessions (32).

But the gift of peace itself was not enough. By giving peace to Rome, Augustus attracted everybody's goodwill; "he seduced the army with bonuses, cheap corn he used as a successful bait for civilians" (33). What then does Tacitus require of an emperor - or of any regime that is at all satisfactory for that matter - besides actual freedom from military warfare? He himself has implied the answer a few lines before his description of these cajolements: he wants freedom from the occasions of the greatest vice of the early Empire - of insincere flattery, of the desire to obtain personal advancement through fawning upon the autocrat after abandoning all claims to self-respect and honesty (34).

This is not a rebellion against authority as such, on the part of Tacitus; anarchy is to him no solution. Authority of some kind he would consider a vital necessity to the state if only

because of the irresponsibility of the urban population (35). It is in fact a plea on behalf of men of his own station in life - men who might reasonably hope to obtain eminence in a political career where advancement depended not upon what original methods of flattery of an overlord could be devised (36) but upon genuine knowledge of men and legal procedure. Tacitus sheds no tears over the fortunes of the poor citizens; indeed they were often the gainers in an autocratic regime when a Nero for instance ascended the throne, promised and implemented his promises to secure better all-round administration (37); moreover the popular forms of entertainments of which Tacitus speaks with contempt (38) were growing in importance and in following throughout the period of which he is writing. He does not reveal himself especially anxious to improve the lot of humbler members of the great households, the more responsible and deserving slaves and freedmen, for low birth in the eyes of the snobbish (39) Tacitus constitutes an insuperable barrier to his understanding and concern. His only anxieties are on behalf of his fellows amongst the "Optimates", the nobles for whose difficulties the only solution at the present moment was sychophancy towards the reigning monarch or at best a discreet silence; indeed he admits that he himself sank to the humiliating depths of this latter course during the rule of Domitian (40). If the abilities of men of his class could not be expended through their proper channels, life was hardly worth the living; the only consolation was that emperors were not immortal, and a successor might mean a change for the better. "Kings have to be endured however they are, since continual changes are desirable" are words put into

the mouth of Claudius, and strictly their context relates not to Rome but Parthia; yet they are eloquent of Tacitus' general attitude towards monarchy (41). Unfortunately no matter how well-intentioned and successful might be the beginning of his reign, the emperor almost invariably became the more oppressive to his subjects as the intoxication of sole power corrupted him. Although the comment is made that "our officials usually start well and end badly" (42) the reference is to the elected magistrates rather than to emperors. Yet the steady deterioration of the reigns of Tiberius and Nero is a phenomenon of which Tacitus is clearly aware.

This is the theme which recurs, variously embroidered upon, throughout the historical work of Tacitus. It speaks well for his absorbing style and unfailing human interest that he never becomes monotonous or even noticeably repetitive. Although, as has been mentioned, he advocates a policy of waiting and hoping during times of oppressive rule, his attitude towards the Principate generally is paradoxically one of pessimism. Having accepted the Principate as the inevitable choice thrust upon Rome he makes no attempt to suggest a practical working alternative. There seems to be a stoic doggedness in his acceptance of the status quo - although whether his spirit of resignation under the rule of Domitian, for instance, was so complete as the resignation that he advocates in retrospect should be adopted during such oppressive tyrannies may fairly be doubted.

The most desirable form of government, it has been noted, is to Tacitus the least possible - a return to the old Republican

government, which was in fact something of the compromise between the three types of rule - monarchy, oligarchy and democracy - of which Tacitus speaks; and he does not desire the republic of the days of the last century B.C. with its private armies and proscription lists, but of an earlier period when the offices of state really meant what they purported to mean. He infers the inevitability of the continuance of the Principate when he derides what he claims to be a hypocritical reluctance to rule on the part of Tiberius (43). He is far from saying on the other hand that the state of the Republic which Augustus so adroitly and delicately transformed into the Principate was to be perpetuated or to be sought again; for Rome to succeed as an Imperial power the whole system of administration of the provinces desperately needed revision (44), and indeed the many bloody wars that were fought before their culmination at Actium, the result of all of which was the dearth of bold and enterprising spirits of which Tacitus complains (45) instead of adding to the glory of Rome (46) were merely a drain on her blood. Strabo (47) adds his witness to the fact that it would require a republican fanaticism bordering upon lunacy to seek an escape from the fire by wishing to return to that particular frying-pan.

Once the Republic was dead the passage of time ensured that it ceased to be sighed for as it receded from memory. So, Tacitus relates, at the time of the death of Augustus there was practically nobody who had ever seen truly Republican government (48). The country had been transformed, and there was nothing left, he adds significantly, of the fine old Roman character. This idolising of the finer qualities of the old republican nobility is a trait

in which, more than any other, he shows the greatest consistency. All eyes, he adds, watched for imperial commands. A continuance of the Principate under these circumstances was of course inevitable. How far Tacitus lays the blame for this irrevocable sentence to monarchical rule upon the dead founder of the system can be inferred to some extent from the opposing views upon Augustus which he gives in his usual antithetic form. The question now was not so much whether there would be a successor to Augustus as who the successor would be. Tacitus plainly puts forward the Anti-Augustan arguments with greater vehemence than the arguments of his supporters; (49); and it has already been remarked in the mind of Tacitus, Augustus had done more damage to the welfare of Rome than what the mere gift of a period of respite of civil strife could effect. In addition he wrecks the whole of the case of Augustus' supporters by putting into their mouths a most curious statement.

"Augustus had put the state in order" he makes them say "not by making himself king or dictator but by creating the Principate" (50). That this was so in theory Tacitus would certainly not have denied - Augustus had been most careful to avoid any resemblance to an absolute monarchy except in respect of his absolute power, and the titles of officials remained the same throughout his entire reign, which was indeed the case even after a number of years of Tiberius' Principate had elapsed (51). But in practice - and it is the practical outcome that Tacitus is concerned with, for he is no political theorist, the final result was very much the same as a monarchy or a dictatorship. To interpret the quotation given above in this way, that is as an ironical

self-condemnation by those who were disposed towards arguing on Augustus' behalf, seems much easier than the alternative suggested by Fourneaux in his discussion of the quotation; Fourneaux supposes that there was an ambiguity present in Tacitus' mind between the two entirely different appellations of 'princeps' and 'princeps senatus'. In this debate, it is interesting to recall the words of Tacitus:

"[The tribune's authority] was a designation of supremacy invented by Augustus, who had wanted some title other than 'king' or 'dictator' which would place him above other officials" (52).

Fourneaux would make this imply that there was therefore no such title as 'princeps' except inasmuch as Augustus had the privilege of being somewhat honoured in the Senate - 'princeps senatus'. Tacitus means, however, that the tribune's power was a device which enabled the emperor to overrule any rival senatorial legislation by means of his tribune's veto.

"The whole point of autocracy" remarks Sallustius Crispus to Tiberius at the time of his accession "is that the accounts will not come right unless the ruler is their only auditor" (53);

he meant of course that for an autocrat to be at all effective he alone must be responsible for all that happens within the Senate, and that nothing should occur without his fore-knowledge and approval. This comment indicates that it was autocracy to which Sallustius and his fellow-senators were accustomed. If, as the evidence certainly indicates, Augustus and his course of treatment for the maladies of the Roman world failed to meet with Tacitus' approval, there is once again an annoying/explicitness on the part  
lack of



of the historian; once again he makes no suggestion of what might have been a practical alternative when Augustus died and Tiberius seemed to hesitate before beginning his reign. One can only infer that Tacitus believed a natural recovery of the Republic had been a real possibility - though no mention is made of how this recovery might have been affected - before it was finally eradicated by Augustus. And this would be consistent with his optimistic attitude of which mention has already been made.

Sallustius Crispus' appalling sycophancy was shared at the time by all the other members of the Senate; for they along with all men, whatever their station in life, became abjectly servile in proportion to their importance. Augustus' tact and, perhaps to some extent, the long decline in the state of his health had rendered such an attitude unnecessary or undesirable during his lifetime; but when men were confronted with one known to be inclined towards arrogance and cruelty, diffidence and, most of all, inscrutability, and furthermore one who was literally bound to become their ruler, it was a very different story. It was every man for himself, and to the extent he made himself agreeable to Tiberius could his future advancement be expected to progress.

In disparaging the motives of Augustus, Tacitus must secretly have admired the discreet way in which avoiding new honours and empty titles he had secured his position against rebellion from any side (54).

The progress of the Principate and its ascendancy over the Senate develops gradually on this topic from page to page. At first the situation is more amusing than tragic; the reign of Tiberius opens with a flurry of senatorial flattery during which there is

hesitation on the emperor's part - real or assumed, although Tacitus is convinced that it is assumed - to ascend the throne, This apparent reluctance of Tiberius, and the evident desire on the part of the Senate that he should cease to refuse, gives rise to a sequence of ridiculous wooing scenes which Tacitus recounts in a manner that leaves his contempt for the whole business in little doubt. The absurdity of the situation is enshrined in the story of Haterius - a story which mocks both the Senate's flatteries and Tiberius' suspicious nature (55). Wishing to apologise for a previous offence, Haterius went to the palace and grovelled at the feet of the emperor as he walked by. Tiberius crashed to the ground, either by accident or by the grip of Haterius; and Haterius was thereupon all but killed by the guards. His eventual escape was due to the persuasions of Tiberius by his mother Livia.

Gradually the humour of the situation fades before successive encroachments by the emperor upon freedom in many of its aspects. Throughout the lifetime of Tiberius the Senate figures quite largely in Tacitus' discussions; under subsequent princes it becomes progressively less in evidence, and Tacitus plainly deplores the fact. It is easy to believe that he regards party faction as the life-blood of the state, for it is certainly an alternative to "this slavish passivity, this torrent of wasted bloodshed far from active service" (he is speaking of the later years of Nero's reign) (56). His remorse is not too bitter over the fact that by one decree Claudius handed over to the equities all the powers that had so often caused rioting and fighting at Rome; his real regret is that one man should have the power to do so (57); one feels that

debate, along with the best possible manipulation of permissible constitutional devices, would be Tacitus' solution to governmental problems rather than a decree by an emperor.

As the number of those constitutional devices was now becoming so limited, or while continuing to exist were becoming dead letters, it is not surprising that wherever possible Tacitus drops into argumentative speech as an alternative to sustained narrative. It is true that this method is characteristic of all ancient historiography; but this fact shows no more than that all ancient historians agreed in the efficacy of debate as a means of evolving the conclusions upon which wise actions should be based. Furthermore, Tacitus is far more addicted to the art of discussing an issue in the form of opposed speeches than any other leading historian in antiquity.

His descriptions of the houses of Germanicus and Drusus as rival factions within the state are also to be considered. Such a disagreement between the two families adds dramatic interest to the narrative and to some extent perhaps enhances the moral teaching of Tacitus' writing: there is no other source, however, that suggests there existed animosity between the rival houses as Tacitus apparently believed. This care in following the relative fortunes of the families in question and the desire to trace the history of an apparently imaginary quarrel seems significant evidence of the deep love of polemic which, as has just been seen, is manifest in the work of Tacitus. As government was clearly a one-sided affair in the Empire, interest might be added to his writing, he seems to have reasoned, by emphasising differences (58) not between the two brothers, for as he relates himself, their

relationship was always cordial (59), but between their respective supporters. This is not to say that such animosity did not exist except in the mind of Tacitus, for silence among other surviving authors is no proof of the non-existence of a feud; but it appears that as often there is an undue emphasis placed by Tacitus upon a topic that strictly in perspective would merit far less discussion.

It is stated above that while complaining of the Principate Tacitus had no practical alternative to offer, meaning that one could merely wait and hope for better times. To kick against the goad was no part of his philosophy of life, and he speaks disparagingly of those who undertake some heroic act without any hope of achieving the purpose behind the heroism. When Thrasylla Paetus - one of the few personalities living in the times he describes really to appeal to Tacitus - walks out of the Senate-house in disgust at a recent volley of flattery, Tacitus remarks that "he thereby endangered himself without bringing general freedom any the nearer" (60). Again, when summing up the achievements of his father-in-law Agricola, he says:

"Let it be clear to those who insist on admiring insubordination that even under bad emperors men can be great, and that a decent regard for authority, if backed by ability and energy, can reach that peak of honour that many have stormed by precipitous paths, winning fame, without serving their country, by melodramatic deaths" (61).

His account of the Pisonian conspiracy suggests that he regarded it as abortive from its inception (62). "He has.....used the episode to emphasise his theme of general demoralisation" (63).

His attitude is far from sympathetic towards the conspirators, yet the success of their plot would no doubt have been agreeable to Tacitus. But Imperialism at Rome was too well established and who was to say that, had the plot been successful, there would have been no new Nero to take the dead one's place?

Since Tacitus has admitted that, under the circumstances that Rome found herself in after the death of Augustus, there was no alternative for the future to a continuance of the regime that he had started, it is interesting to conjecture what was his description of an ideal emperor. There is abundant evidence of the characteristics which he thought undesirable in one in authority, but his criticisms of the emperors who actually reigned is, it must be admitted, of a destructive nature. Many aspects of what he considered to be the good men have already been noticed in various contexts; as one who, although not committed to Stoicism (64), was tinged with many Stoic opinions, his love of chastity, moderation, discipline, courage, perseverance and similar virtues is to be expected. But does it necessarily follow that the rules of conduct suitable to the ordinary Roman who sat in the Senate or was in command of a legion are suitable also to him in whose hands are lodged the reins of government?

In the Histories there are given parallel pen-pictures of the future emperor Vespasian and Mucianus. After comparing these two men, Tacitus adds:

"The virtues of the two men without the faults of either would have formed an admirable temperament for an Emperor" (65).

The descriptions that precede this comment should offer some

indication of Tacitus' ideal autocrat.

Vespasian was a keen soldier; Macianus on the other hand, he says, had more skill and foresight in the conduct of civil affairs. The ideal emperor would clearly need skill in both of these departments. Vespasian, Tacitus continues, would march in front of his men, and choose the spots for encampment; he would work day and night over his plans and himself take part in the fighting if need were; content with any food that came, scarce distinguishable in dress and bearing from any common soldier. This reminds one of the episode in the Annals (66) when Germanicus dresses as a common soldier in order to test the morale of his troops; and the well-known story concerning Alexander of Macedon, who is sufficient of a general in the estimation of Tacitus to deserve comparison with Germanicus (67). Against all this Vespasian had one besetting sin that Tacitus mentions: "had he only been free from avarice, he might have been ranked with the generals of olden days". This same vice or avarice had been one of the principle factors in the failure of Galba as emperor; a parsimonious policy adopted as the result of avarice was a fatal one to adopt during the Empire. Again there is noticeable a nostalgic backward look to the old republican discipline (68).

Mucianus was the opposite from almost every point of view. In wealth and in everything else he lived on a scale above private life. Avarice then is one extreme; prodigality the other. Tacitus would in characteristic Roman fashion like to see his ideal emperor steer a course between these extremes. With Mucianus lay the advantage of eloquence, and it can hardly be doubted that

Tacitus more than most men regards this as a real advantage to a prince (69).

After noticing these requisites for rule, it is easy to see why Tacitus was disappointed in all the emperors after <sup>u</sup>Agustus; Tiberius was a fine soldier, but inclined towards parsimony when such a policy was likely to lose him much popularity, and he was far from eloquent; Caligula, despite spending his tender years in the camp, was no general, as his adventure to Britain well showed. He had a certain amount of eloquence, as Tacitus himself admits (70), but whatever his accomplishments might have been, he was a madman, Claudius was no soldier at all, and was far too tractable to be successful in any undertaking, least of all as Emperor. Nero too had no inkling of generalship, was unable to compose his own speeches; and thrift to him was a word whose meaning he never discovered. Galba, as has just been seen, was too mean, and in any case, too old; and Otho's only accomplishment was his suicide (71).

The passage under discussion while being a sincere statement by Tacitus on the qualities needed of an emperor, may well be a piece of flattery aimed at ingratiating himself with the then reigning emperor Trajan; for that ruler does seem to have been able to claim to some degree each of the qualifications that Tacitus enjoins upon an emperor.

Finally there must be noticed occasional references to Brutus and Cassius, who as Republicans of the period of the dying Republic, symbolised to Tacitus and no doubt to many similarly circumstanced, the old and better order. At the funeral of Junia Tertulla, who was a niece, her mentions, of Cato, the wife

of Cassius and the sister of Brutus, were displayed the effigies of some twenty leading aristocratic families.

"But Cassius and Brutus were most gloriously conspicuous - precisely because their statues were not to be seen" (72). It is characteristic of the highly rhetorical style of Tacitus that the end of his chapters have usually some witty, poignant or otherwise remarkable statement. That he wished attention to be paid to this comment on eminent republicans is apparent from his placing the words at the end of the last chapter of a complete book. Again, there is the episode when Cremutius Cordus is indicted by dependants of Sejanus on the charges of praising Brutus in his 'History' and of referring to Cassius as 'the last of the Romans' (73). His speech in defence of himself is recorded at length by Tacitus; in it he says

"And [Brutus and Cassius] have their place in the historian's pages. Posterity gives everyone his due honour. If I am condemned people will remember me as well as Cassius and Brutus" (74).

Finally in a passage in the Histories (75), Tacitus represents men as saying that the Republic would have been saved under Pompey and Brutus.

It is such reminiscences of the great heroes of the Republican cause that add weight to the conviction that Tacitus looked back to the old days before the republic was finally shattered at Philippi, with a nostalgic longing.



## II - THE LAW

All discussion of other laws during the early Empire is overshadowed by the so-called 'Maiestas' laws, which, although they existed in Republican times, never attained the sinister significance that they found first under Tiberius and then under later emperors. In the last section it was seen that monarchy and the laws were regarded by Tacitus as contradictions; there is a remarkable piece of irony used by the historian when he first introduces the Maiestas laws into his narrative. Tiberius is asked by a praetor Quintus Pompeius Macer whether offences indictable under the treason laws were to receive attention. The emperor's reply is that the laws are to be enforced (76). That one who having committed himself to monarchical rule should pledge himself to upholding the laws which by his accession he had in principle denied, struck Tacitus as a piece of hypocrisy whereby Tiberius excelled himself (77). That this hypocrisy should prove to be a substantial nail in the coffin of Roman freedom enhanced the point of this anecdote.

In its early stages the Maiestas law was used by Tiberius with discretion and when it seemed necessary for him to apply it, with leniency. The reader may be referred to B. Walker's book (78) for an appendix which shows the precise number of Maiestas accusations and their results during the reign of Tiberius. A careful study of the text of the Annals will show that the figures she provides are biassed to show the emperor in as favourable a light as possible. For instance no mention is made in her Table I of the execution of those arrested for complicity with Sejanus (79). Although Tacitus' language seems to exaggerate the amount of blood

that was actually spilt, the figure of twenty dead given by Suetonius (80) is not inconsequential, and it does in fact more than double Miss Walker's total of eighteen. Nevertheless her point may well be allowed - she seeks to show that Tacitus exaggerates the gravity of the trials - for there is no need to dispute it. The trials under the rule of Tiberius are comparatively innocuous in themselves, but disastrous to Rome in that they paved the way for greater atrocities under future emperors, which is Tacitus' real concern.

Tacitus appears to have no quarrel with the treason laws as they existed under the Republic. Traitors to the cause of Rome during time of war quite clearly deserve the sternest punishments. But there is an enormous difference between such a crime and the crime of disposing of a statue of Augustus when selling some garden property - which was a charge brought against the knight Falanius during the earlier appearances of the law under Tiberius (81). Can it be determined to what extent Tacitus was in favour of the exercising of this law?

"The ancients" he says "had employed the same name but had applied it to other offences - to official misconduct damaging the Roman state such as betrayal of an army or incitement to sedition. Action had been taken against deeds, words went unpunished" (82).

When enforced to punish heinous offences only he appears to approve of the treason laws.

"The first employer of this law to investigate written libel was Augustus, provoked by an immoderate slander of eminent men and women, Cassius Severus", he continues.

Justification of the use of the law is here evidently regarded as reaching the borderline between right and wrong. The thin end of the wedge has been employed, and Tiberius, but the characteristically concealed remark already quoted - "The laws are to be enforced", drove the wedge into the breach that had already been made by his step-father.

The greatest evil was not so much the charges upon which people were liable to be arraigned under Tiberius' revival of the Maiestas law, but the methods by which they were liable to be prosecuted. There was no such office as that of public prosecutor at Rome; consequently any private person was able to prefer a charge, and was entitled to receive part of the defendant's property if the prosecution should prove successful. This brought into being a despicable, insidious class of men who lived on the profits derived from their often fraudulent accusations, the "informers" or "delatores". As abuse of the law became rampant, nobody could feel secure even within the walls of his own home. The ubiquity of the informers and the depths to which they were capable of stooping is dramatically described in the events that led up to the destruction of Titius Sabinus (83). He had been a loyal friend of the family of Germanicus during the hard times it suffered after the death of Germanicus, and thus earned the respect of good and the dislike of spiteful people. His downfall was planned by four ex-praetors ambitious for the consulship. One of them, Latiaris, became friendly with Sabinus "by an exchange of forbidden confidences", attacking Sejanus and even Tiberius. One day the other three hid between the roof and ceiling of Sabinus' house the next time Latiaris visited him, so that they were able

to eavesdrop and make a careful record of all the "treasonable" things that Sabinus had said.

As could only be expected, Tacitus has some very hard things to say about the informers, and with justice. Their interest in the law was purely to see how much personal profit was to be made through its enforcement, and their gain was often achieved, as in the case just noticed, by the death or banishment of entirely innocent men. One man, Cornutus, charged under the treason law, committed suicide because "he found the anxiety unbearable and regarded prosecution as equivalent to ruin" (84). According to his fellow-prisoner, this suicide was born of panic, not of guilt. A proposal was subsequently made, and practically carried, in the Senate to the effect that informers should forfeit their rewards whenever a man prosecuted for treason killed himself before the trial was finished. The measure was defeated, however, when - in the words of Tacitus -

"Tiberius quite sharply and with unaccustomed frankness backed the accusers, protesting that such a measure would invalidate the laws and endanger the nation. 'Better cancel the laws' he said 'than remove their guardians'. So that breed created for the country's ruin and never sufficiently penalised, the informers, kept their incentives". (85).

Attention has already been drawn to the irony of Tacitus when the autocrat Tiberius insists upon the laws being enforced; the irony is here carried a stage further when the same emperor insists that this race of "protectors" of the laws should be perpetuated, and thus help him in his enslavement of Rome.

This as far as Tacitus is concerned is Tiberius' cardinal sin. After reviving the Maiestas law and causing it to operate in such a way as to enrich the most despicable elements in the city, he thwarts the intention of the Senate in one of its all too few independent motions, and insists that the most iniquitous aspect of the law's operation should be continued.

To conclude this discussion of the Maiestas law, it must be once again emphasised that had such trials died with Tiberius, Tacitus would be justifiably accused of a complete lack of perspective, and of a fanatical zeal in a wish to blacken what was after all only one aspect of Tiberius' administration. But this is far from being the case; the horrors of the reign of Domitian seem to have owed their beginning to the lessons which the later ruler learnt from the memoirs of his predecessor. How much Tacitus suffered from his tyranny cannot be determined, but all indications point to one conclusion: that he underwent a very unpleasant three years immediately before the death of Domitian (86).

To see Roman life through the eyes of Tacitus, close attention, proportional to that which the historian himself bestowed, must be paid to the treason laws. Correspondingly briefly the remainder of Rome's laws may be discussed here, since for the most part he leaves them undiscussed, or mentions them only on isolated occasions. He is after all discussing the Principate, and as been seen he regards this regime as the contradiction of the laws. (87).

The judgment, that autocracy and the laws are mutually contradictory, is nevertheless one of theory rather than practice; he both realises and acknowledges that under the Empire the law did in fact continue to exist, and that not always in spite of, but

sometimes thanks to, the Emperor. "Emperors have enough burdens - and enough power" says Tiberius in one of his rare and consequently doubly welcome utterances of constitutional sentiments (88). "Strengthen this executive and you weaken the law. When one can act by law the use of official authority is a mistake". This is a clear indication that Tiberius too was aware that sole authority and the laws tend to act in opposite directions, and that the vision of republican institutions was not completely lost to him. Tacitus is even more explicit when he comes to the summing up of the first nine years of Tiberius' rule, a period of enlightened rule in almost every respect. "Moreover, the treason courts expected, the laws were duly enforced" (89). The whole point of the survival of the laws was of course the discreet fiction of Augustus sharing official duties with the Senate - the "dyarchy" as some of his admirers have euphemistically called it. And Tiberius was always anxious to conform with the pattern that his step-father had originated. Whatever were the motives behind the enforcement of the laws, the fact remains that the citizens were able to enjoy their protection.

Before attention is devoted to the views of Tacitus on the application of various aspects of the law, a passage in which he discusses the origins of law must be noticed. He divides the history of law into two phases - before, and after the Twelve Tables drawn up by the decmvirs in 451-449 B.C. In the earlier phase, laws were equitably enforced upon all classes of the community; in the later period, "laws" he states "other than those drawn up against specific current offences were forcible creations of class-warfare, designed to grant unconstitutional powers,

or banish leading citizens or fulfill some other deplorable purpose" (90).

This seems to betray an inconsistency; he says on the one hand, as has been seen (91), that autocracy and law are contradictions; on the other hand, he now says that laws since the Twelve Tables have fulfilled only nefarious ends. This would seem to make him condone autocracy; but the whole spirit of his work immediately denies this. The only answer to this difficulty involves him in using "leges" in two distinct senses. In theory only can he mean that law and autocracy are incompatible, for he has been noticed to say that the laws were well respected by Tiberius. By laws he here means "good laws", not only "bono in usu" but intrinsically good ordinances such as had not been enacted since the days of the decemvirs. But when Tiberius pledged himself to the maintaining of the law, it is evident that he had in mind only those aspects of the legal code that would further help to enslave the Roman people - in particular the treason laws. That he applied these laws reasonably is beyond dispute; and as Tacitus could see no possibility under the circumstances of an ideal constitution being devised, let alone established, he did not complain.

In fact, during his first nine years of moderate rule Tiberius showed that under a good emperor the existence of laws - however much those laws were aimed at promoting the interests of a minority - need not be irksome to the state. Again later under Vespasian, Tacitus states that "deference to the emperor and the wish to imitate him were more effective than legal penalties and threats" (92). This was because Vespasian more than any other man promoted simplicity by his old-fashioned way of life.

It may readily be conjectured that a similar state of affairs existed when Tacitus was writing. The essential qualities of a good emperor seem to include, in his judgment, the maintenance of a state of affairs where there is no need for a rigorous application of the laws. The laws continued to exist on the statute-book, of course, as elaborate and complex as ever; but like Vespasian, Nerva and Trajan rendered them inoperative by their own good example.

The tendency under the Empire was for the laws to increase the scope and complexity; and Tacitus must have regarded many, if not the majority of these complex ramifications of the law as beneficial to nobody except the ruling party - that is the emperor. It may well be that the aspect of law-giving to which Tacitus took the greatest exception was the many anomalies of which, as a man of law, he was doubtless familiar. The more elaborate and sophisticated becomes the society, the more impersonal and often unjust become the laws; and a conservative such as Tacitus can readily be imagined sighing for the old days of equitable legislation. In his enthusiasm for those old times in fact he becomes so nostalgic that he momentarily forgets how loathsome are the plebeians:

"but when men ceased to be equal" he says "egotism replaced fellow-feeling and decency succumbed to violence" (93).

To turn briefly to individual laws of which Tacitus makes mention, perhaps the most significant for the present purpose is the "Lex Papia Poppaea" designed apparently to absorb and codify much if not all of the 'ius civile' on the subjects of marriages and wills" (94). Despite Tacitus' essentially Roman emphasis upon



child-bearing and its importance to the family and to the state (95) this law appears to be the epitome of all that was bad in the then recent legislation. The purpose of the law was no doubt good; but the methods employed in maintaining it seemed to Tacitus all that was bad in autocracy. His preoccupation with this law is evident from the fact that upon his mention of it he deems it expedient to hang a discussion of the origins and history of law.

"From Augustus onwards" he says, "restraints were stricter. There were spies.....To rectify the situation Tiberius appointed a commission....." (96).

Other laws receive scant attention, largely because the matters with which they were concerned were unimportant in comparison with the great and far-reaching topics that were the main interests of Tacitus. In another chapter (97) it was seen that the departure of women from the lot which nature had destined for them was the cause that many of the world's troubles, and he has therefore to mention the Lex Oppia and, by inference, to add his approval of its enactments (98). This law, designed to curb the extravagance and hence the arrogance of women had been repealed as long ago as 195 B.C. despite the fierce opposition of Cato, another conservative of mentality very similar to that of Tacitus (99).

Tacitus is not greatly concerned with the courts except to portray them as instruments of Imperial domestic policy. He describes Augustus in the introduction to the Annals as having "absorbed the functions of the Senate, the officials and even the law" (100). He therefore displays no interest in where the courts are held, as the ultimate effect is the same as if they were all held in

the private rooms of the emperor (101).

In conclusion an isolated comment may be cited from which wither a great deal or very little - according to interpretation - can be deducted concerning Tacitus' views on the administration of justice at Rome. Its relevance largely depends upon what is to be thought of the fundamental reason Tacitus had for writing for Germania. This work has been interpreted as a satire upon Roman life by establishing unfavourable comparisons between Roman institutions and their counterparts among the German tribes. This is only one interpretation, of course; but one critic (102) who is a moderate in his contention that "Tacitus' tendency to moralise is a feature, but not the main purpose, of the book" finds the satirical element inescapable.

"Tacitus" he says, "unmistakeably contrasts the virtues of the Germans, which recall the uncorrupted morals of old Rome, with the degeneracy of the Empire" (103).

With this in mind, then, when Tacitus says of the Germans that "they make the punishment fit the crime" his inference may be reasonably taken to be that this is far from the case of Rome. (104).

Only in the descriptions of the 'Maiestas' prosecutions does the disparity between punishment and crime appear to be decried. As the Germania was published shortly after Domitian's death, this comment is in all probability a reflection upon the acts of inhumanity of that emperor. With this so clearly established in his mind it is little wonder that Tacitus' portrait of the originator of these legal devices should be so ominously forbidding. Here then is some justification at least for the prominence given to the 'Maiestas' laws.

### III - THE PROVINCES

Although a Republican at heart Tacitus is sufficiently a well-wisher of the Empire to rejoice in its greatness; some discussion is necessary of the provinces themselves and their importance to the Roman world.

Whatever takes place in the Roman Empire Tacitus sees especially from the point of view of an inhabitant of Rome. His whole being is centred upon Rome, and it is not unfair to accuse him of narrow-mindedness in this, as indeed, it must be agreed, in other important matters. Professor Michael Grant (105) comments:

"The emperor Hadrian into whose reign he may just have lived was to develop the idea of a Roman commonwealth in which the provinces had a proud role as constituent parts, anticipatory of the national states to come".

In this the thinking of the emperor was much more progressive than that of the historian, for Tacitus never wavered in his view that the provinces should be completely subservient to Rome.

This metropolitan outlook is never more clearly manifested than at the beginning of the Histories. The reader is promised a general review of the Roman world before the narrative of actual events is undertaken. One of the features of this brief review is to be an account of the attitude of the provinces (106) - 'quis habitus provinciarum' are his precise words. Not one word is said about the feelings or the condition of the provincials. This point is noted significantly by Ramsay (107);

"Tacitus speaks" continues Ramsay, "of 'the strong or sickly spots' of the Empire; what he means are the different

conditions which were elements of strength and loyalty to the Empire, or on the other hand of disaffection and discontent".

All is seen from the point of view of the Roman forces of occupation.

Just as he sees the provinces to all intents and purposes as occupied territories, Tacitus inherits from his antecedents at Rome their love of military glory and conquest. It is not offered as an argument in Augustus' favour that he drew up limits beyond which the frontiers of Rome were not to be pushed (108); his motives in so ordaining were according to Tacitus either fear or jealousy. The historian's feelings can be understood quite easily; apart from his dissatisfaction at seeing his beloved Rome constricted by the decrees of a dead emperor which took no account of the changes of policy which future exigences might demand, he himself was thus deprived of subject matter for his narrative.

"My chronicle" he laments "is quite a different matter from histories of early Rome. Their subjects were great wars, cities stormed, kings routed and captured" (109). "My theme" he goes on to say, "is a circumscribed inglorious field.

Peace was scarcely broken - if at all. Rome was plunged in gloom, the ruler uninterested in expanding the Empire" (110). Tacitus lived to see more glorious days, however; from the vantage-point of Hadrian's reign, he can look back upon the days "When the Empire was so much smaller" with a certain amount of scorn (111). It is with an awareness of the presence of such sentiments in the mind of Tacitus that the question of his views upon the

civil administration of the provinces must be examined.

Tacitus' fundamental approach to provincial matters is readily seen from his description of the revolts in Gaul under Florus and Sacrivir (112). The issue at stake is briefly mentioned - the Gauls were involved in heavy debts (113). One of the principal tribes concerned, the Aedui, are mentioned expressly as being unwarlike, wealthy and given to luxurious living (114). It seems most unlikely then, that such a people would fly to arms if there were any hope of having their grievances redressed by recourse to other methods. There is quite a large amount of evidence (115) to show that it was not unusual for provinces to find themselves in an unhappy financial position; and when they were burdened with debt the fault was more often than not the extortion and oppressive rule of the Roman provincial governors. There are indications in this case that the cause of the trouble was the requisitions made by Germanicus for his campaigns in Germany (116). It would seem therefore that Tacitus owes, but fails to bring forward, some explanation of why the Gauls found themselves in these straits. The reader becomes the more dissatisfied when, after reading the whole account of the fighting subsequent to the up-risings he finds no mention of the outcome. The episode becomes simply an opportunity to describe Roman military achievements in the field, and it is fairly evident that Tacitus' conscience is not unduly troubled by the possibility that the Gauls were somewhat unjustly treated.

This blindness to every point of view other than the strictly Roman one is noticeable throughout the whole narrative. To Tacitus,

rule over provinces and dependencies confers privileges but no responsibilities; the same spirit of domination is apparent in his account of a series of similar uprisings by African tribes under Tacfarinas - Roman arms prevailed, as was inevitable, anyway, and there the matter is closed until the inditements to revolt once again materialise (117).

Writing in Rome for Romans and surrounded by Roman dignitaries, Tacitus was quite unable to visualise that later generations would consider the questions he raised from a non-Roman view-point; the idea that there was such a thing as different opinion never presented itself to his dogmatic and rather narrow mind. Casual remarks can sometimes show what type of thinking Tacitus' apparent old-fashioned conservatism conceals; hence an unguarded expression used in his description of Germanicus' settlement of the eastern question is revealing. Speaking of Cappadocia he says, "To make Roman rule seem the preferable alternative, certain of its royal taxes were diminished" (118). Here is a bald enough admission that the idea of a commonwealth of nations which first entered Roman thought around the time of the death of Tacitus was an idea very alien to this historian; and that his views upon Empire were very much akin to those of Cyrus and Darius centuries before.

A further and perhaps a more striking example of Tacitus' failure to understand the provincial point of view is afforded by his account of a revolt of Thracian tribesmen. In this episode, his narrowness, intolerable to twentieth century thinking, is damned by his own evidence.

"The causes of the rebellion were their uncivilised and intractable temperaments" he states (119), "and their refusal

of the conscript system which drafted their best men into our forces.....However, before opening hostilities the Thracians sent envoys to stress their friendship, which would remain intact, they said, if no new burdens were imposed. But if, they added, they were enslaved like conquered men, they had the weapons, warriors and determination to be free or die". That there was any justification for these desperate threats does not appear from Tacitus' account. "Sabinus - in charge of the operations - gave conciliatory replies until his forces were collected" the narrative continues (120). There is no mention of any attempt to solve the problem by means other than force. Once military pressure was brought to bear upon the Thracians, the outcome was, of course, a foregone conclusion. The campaign is described in some detail - to the extent of six chapters - which is quite out of proportion to the importance of the affair. But Tacitus complains of the monotony of the treason trials which he has to recount (121); incidents such as this give him some respite, and are consequently welcomed by him.

Thrace at this period was not even a province, but a dependent monarchy. It became a province under Claudius in 46A.D. and ranked as such when Tacitus was writing the Annals. The episode is thus more justifiably mentioned here since Tacitus' account of the campaign is doubtless conditioned by his knowledge of Thrace's subsequent provincial status.

Lucius Vitellius is described (112) as showing old-fashioned integrity in his provincial administration. It is interesting to consider what precisely was meant by Tacitus' "integrity" in this role. It is hardly likely that he regarded republican provincial

governors as necessarily honest; he need only have consulted Cicero on this point. His use of the term "old-fashioned" refers to the superiority of the "good old days" in every aspect of life. To judge, however, from Tacitus' feelings for the rights of the provincials, it is quite probable that Verres would have been a governor of integrity had he been prudent enough to abandon his excesses just before the wrath of the Sicilians burst out of his undoing.

It has been remarked that Tacitus' notions of empire were not very much more advanced than those of the old Persian kings; the reverse might be argued from the report of the debate concerning the admission of Northern and Central Gauls into the Senate (123). First the arguments against their admission are set out; there would be a consequence of this measure less opportunity for advancement among Romans, and it would be an affront to the memory of those who died fighting the Gauls many years before if the descendants of those Gauls were admitted into the Roman Senate. Claudius, however, thought otherwise, and his views are expressed both more cogently and at greater length than the arguments that he was opposing. His speech was approved by the Senate, and the Aedui then became the first of these peoples to enjoy the privilege which he had won for them. Since Tacitus argues forcibly on behalf of the arguments expressed by Claudius, it might superficially appear that he favoured the idea of giving the provinces the fullest representation in the Senate. A much more likely explanation for his enthusiasm for the emperor's standpoint is that it was the only stand-point that he could in conscience take. If the majority of scholars are correct, Tacitus



himself could claim family ancestry within the city of Rome itself only to the extent of one generation; his origin is surmised variously to be north Italian or southern Gallic. If this were the case, he would have been most imprudent to espouse the opposite cause in this issue, for thus attention would immediately have been drawn to his own inability to live up to his blue-blooded pretensions. Far from indicating a liberal attitude towards provincials, this debate offers powerful evidence of Tacitus' non-Roman origin. "Their descendants" - that is, those of the distinguished immigrants from Spain and southern Gaul - "are with us; and they love Rome as much as we do" (124) are words that might well be autobiographical; they certainly have no precise equivalent in the actual words of Claudius as they survive (125).

Tacitus' treatment of Britain and its inhabitants is sufficiently elaborate to deserve special mention; it was in that colony that his father-in-law Agricola won his military reputation, and of course of his successes there is told at some length. Furthermore, earlier campaigns under Claudius and Nero are described in the later books of the Annals. The British propensity for war is emphasised repeatedly; the braver Tacitus makes them in his descriptions, the greater the honour that will be credited to Agricola. His description of British spirit as compared with that of the Gauls of the same period is interesting, as it explains to a large extent why Tacitus was never satisfied with Roman affairs unless they contained opportunity for military glory.

"[The Britons] have not yet been softened by protracted peace", he observes (126), "the Gauls too, we have been told, had their hour of military glory, but then came

decadence with peace, and valour went the way of lost liberty. The same fate has befallen such of the Britons as have been long conquered; the best are still what the Gauls used to be".

Tacitus plainly fears that too long an endurance of the peace that Augustus had moulded for the Roman world would bring the same debilitating effect upon the Romans themselves. When, a few lines later, Tacitus comments that the Britons were "broken into obedience, not to slavery", he is drawing a comparison, unfavourable to the Romans themselves, between the people of part of the overseas empire and those in the metropolis itself, for he repeatedly draws attention to the servility of the Senate. There are admirable aspects of life within the less civilised nations despite the barbarity of those peoples; this feeling is most noticeable in the Germania, as has been pointed out elsewhere (127).

If this admiration for certain aspects of barbaric life can be observed in statements that Tacitus makes, it permeates certain other passages of his writing without being explicitly announced. There is a striking contrast between the speeches of the British leader Calgacus and of those of Agricola himself shortly before a major engagement between the forces of the invaders and the invaded (128). In the former Tacitus finds it possible to express the sentiments which a man in the position of Calgacus would make, and incidentally to score a few points against the enervating effects Roman luxury: "Can you really imagine that the Roman's bravery in war comes up to their wantonness in peace?" asks Calgacus. One gains the impression that although Tacitus never for a moment doubts the imperial destiny of Rome, he feels that a brave race such as the Britons deserves better masters than

they were receiving.

"The Britons themselves submit to the levy, the tribute and the other charges of empire with cheerful readiness provided there is no abuse", he comments (129).

In other words the Romans, thanks to their inability to rule without abuse, have only themselves to blame for the expansive campaigns that their oppressed provincials caused them to undertake. After the sympathetic way in which Calgacus' speech is recorded, or rather composed, the unnecessary speech made by Agricola makes very poor reading. It is trite, smug and made with the glory of success in battle as its ideal rather than with any endeavour to co-ordinate the interests of the ruling with those of the ruled.

Elsewhere in the Agricola there are passages in which the simplicity of a barbarian existence is regarded by Tacitus as surpassing the more sophisticated form of life at Rome. "We have country, wives and parents to fight for", he makes them say (130), "The Romans have nothing but greed and self-indulgence". Speaking of the apparently inefficient way in which pearls are gathered by the Britons, he is inclined to think that the quality of the pearls does not warrant them being made into one of the staple industries of the country; "I find it easier to believe", he remarks acidly, "in a defect of quality in the pearls than of greed in us" (131).

"The barbarians now learned like any Romans, to condone seductive vices, while the intervention of civil wars (at Rome) gave a reasonable excuse for inactivity" (132). "And so the Britons were gradually led on to the amenities that

make vice agreeable - arcades, baths and sumptuous banquets. They spoke of such novelties as civilisation, when really they were only a feature of enslavement" (133).

Sympathy for the Britons is apparent in the description by Tacitus of administrative reforms carried out by Agricola.

"He eased the levy of corn and tribute by distributing the burden fairly, and cancelled those charges, contrived by profiteers, which were more bitterly resented than the tax itself. The provincials had been compelled....to buy back their own corn and pay farcical prices. Delivery ended.....by benefitting a few scoundrels only" (134).

The total effect of these and similar statements by Tacitus indicates an attitude much more favourable towards the provincials than the attitude he assumes in more general contexts as was noted above. The explanation of this fact is partly contained in the purpose he had in mind when writing the Agricola, which was fundamentally to glorify the memory of his late father-in-law. The bolder the Britons fought, the greater the credit that was due to Agricola. The greater and more flagrant the malpractices of former governors the juster and more honourable would appear the ameliorative measures that Agricola enforced. This however is not a full explanation; it will not account, for instance, for the grain of pity that Tacitus apparently feels for peoples who are fighting for their homes and families. This can be seen in a statement in the Annals. In a passage on the Britons sympathetic in tone and consequently the more surprising since it occurs in the Annals, he makes Caratacus, the great leader of the Britons who, unfortunately for their cause, had fallen into Roman captivity, say: "If you [the Romans] want to rule the world, does it follow

that everyone else welcomes enslavement?" (135). But this, it must be repeated, shows an exceptionally understanding attitude as compared with the rest of Tacitus' later historical writing.

A brief examination of the references to Britain and its inhabitants in the Annals indicates a remarkable difference in spirit from that in the Agricola. It cannot be said that in the Annals he is more openly hostile, for hostility towards the Britons is in any case not lacking in the Agricola. "One must remember" he comments at the beginning of his description of the Britons in the Agricola, "that we are dealing with barbarians" (136). The victories that the Roman soldiery won in Britain are recounted in glowing terms and with quite as much enthusiasm as the corresponding accounts in the Annals. The difference then is of another and less tangible nature. It would be equally incorrect to say that the Agricola sees the nature of the conflict between the rebels and Rome from the point of view of the Britons; but it is true to say that the Agricola acknowledges what the Annals never acknowledge; that there is such a thing as a British point of view, that the British fighting men were husbands, sons and fathers unwilling to see the indignities that the Roman invaders were inflicting upon their homeland. In a word there is a tenderness and humanity which is not evident in the same author's later work.

There is a distinct striving for bizarre effects in the descriptions of Britain in the Annals. "The enemy lined the shore in a dense armed mass. Among them were black-robed women with disheveled hair like Furies, brandishing torches.

Close by stood Druids raising their hands to heaven and screaming dreadful curses. This wierd spectacle awed the Roman soldiers into a sort of paralysis....The groves sacred to Mona's barbarous superstitions he [Suetonius] demolished. For it was their religion to drench their altars in blood of prisoners and consult their gods by means of human entrails" (137).

The description of the scene before Boudicca's last battle must have been a strange one to the Romans who were not accustomed to women leading armies;

"Their [the British] numbers were unprecedented, and they had confidently brought their wives to see the victory, installing them in carts stationed at the edge of the battlefield. Boudicca drove round all the tribes in a chariot with her daughters in front of her. 'We British are used to woman-commanders' she cried...." (138).

The British are thus shown to be utterly barbarous race with customs completely alien to the civilisation of Rome, and whose leaders are suitable creatures to arouse the curious gaze of Romans as they are paraded in a victorious procession.

A possible explanation for the relative amiability towards the Britons in the *Agricola* to augment that already suggested might well lie in what had happened to Tacitus personally during the intervening years between the composition of the *Agricola* and that of the *Histories* and *Annals*. The fact that the *Agricola* was published after the death of Domitian in 96 A.D. really proves nothing concerning its actual date of composition; if he composed it during that emperor's lifetime, Tacitus certainly was

not so foolish as to publish or publicise in any way such a work until after Domitian's death. When Agricola himself died in 93 A.D. Tacitus was away from Rome. Where he was is unknown, but it appears quite likely that he was somewhere in northern Europe, perhaps in Germany. As a guess - which from existing data is all that is possible - it might be hazarded that at the beginning of his duties in the provinces, wherever they took place, Tacitus felt a desire to write about the tribes under his authority, and since he was fresh from Rome, the simple ruggedness of those tribes struck him as being a pleasant change from the vice and luxury of the capital. These manuscripts he kept by him until his return to Rome, and then until the death of Domitian three years later. In this form the Agricola and the Germania were published around the year 98 A.D. But things were now beginning to improve: "now (after the death of Domitian) at long last our spirit revives" (139) are his words. The general improvement at the beginning of the second century culminated in a new policy of territorial expansion under the rule of Trajan. This reversal of the ordinances of Augustus was to Tacitus almost a re-birth of Rome and with it he assumed a militant attitude towards all other nations and races. Thus his present undertakings, his historical works proper, became tinged with this aggressive imperial way of thinking. This may afford some sort of explanation of what might otherwise seem two almost incompatible attitudes towards relations between provincials and their imperial masters.

#### IV - THE ARMY AND WAREARE

Tacitus has been seen to rejoice in the territorial expansion of the Empire and to have disapproved of the policy of Augustus and Tiberius of firmly establishing limits beyond which it was proposed not to expand the Empire. In expressing his regret to the readers that he is compelled to describe the Principates in terms of litanies of trials, executions and suicides, he again betrays where his interests and aspirations lay, and that he would be happier describing wars, battles and sieges (140). One may fairly conclude that not his least interest in public affairs was the army and military service. This sentiment was inculcated into him, no doubt, from earliest youth; one who was to embark upon a political career had to expect that he would be called upon to assist in or even to supervise the administration of some province, where military action, or at least the control of armies would fall within his range of duties. Indeed during four years of the reign of Domitian, Tacitus was away from Rome - almost certainly on some assignment to the provinces (141). His contact with Rome's military power in the provinces must have been inevitable. His own father-in-law he describes as a 'vir militaris' (142), although at the time of which Tacitus is speaking Agricola could have had no more than a year as a military tribune and three years as a 'legatus legionis' (143). Cornelius Fuscus, the procurator of the important frontier provinces of Pannonia, had had no previous military experience, yet his military responsibilities were very great (144). These facts indicate then that despite the fact that his fundamental claims to note were his literary and legalistic abilities. Tacitus could lay some claim to high



military rank, and to the qualifications necessary to discuss military matters with some authority.

His love of the old Roman republic is exceeded by his love for Rome itself, and this needs no stronger evidence than his obvious concern for his city during times which brought peace but at the same time the infringement upon personal liberty. Whatever his views upon the character of the Principate he derives great pleasure from the knowledge that Rome was strong. an Imperial power and a factor influencing realms beyond the limits of her Empire. He loved the sense of greatness that this power brought: "Vologeses was accustomed to foreign ostentatiousness" he states, when describing the possible affronts that the Romans might inflict upon his brother Tiridates. "Clearly" he continues, "he did not understand how we Romans value real power, but disdain its vanities" (145).

Whatever the method of provincial government that was employed however great might be the stature of the emperor in the eyes of the provincials, it was the army which not only in the last resort, ensured the cohesion of the Empire, but the various stages during the republican era, had actually caused it to be assembled. The army ~~therefore~~ is evidently very much in the thoughts of Tacitus, and he makes sure that the reader is not allowed to forget its importance to the Empire for any length of time.

Much information can be found in his works concerning the disposition of various units in the various provinces (146); the details of military strategy employed at important battles (147) are given, although in such a way as to cause most military historians to despair of his accuracy (148), but yet in sufficient

detail to furnish many facts which would otherwise have been forgotten. There are also discussions on such subjects as terms of service for the soldiers, and the rebellions that took place when dissatisfaction arose as a consequence (149). These topics, however, for the most part give little indication of Tacitus' own views except in incidental remarks. As it is no part of the present purpose to discuss Roman armies except in so far as Tacitus' attitude towards them can be ascertained, it will be upon the incidental remarks that attention will have to be focussed.

There is one point concerning Roman Imperial armies that Tacitus deplures more than all others, and that is the lack of discipline displayed by them at various times; the number of comments that he makes on this topic is overwhelming. The whole point of discipline - the whole point indeed of having a military system - is to be able to defend some ideal, and this ideal under the Empire was the emperor himself. It was seen in the discussion of the 'Maiestas' or treason laws (150) that the majesty of the Roman people was jeopardised, not only as when in republican times there was a question of an army's betrayal by an individual or some other crime which today would rank as 'high treason', but when an affront was offered to the emperor's person. The emperor, although not representative of Roman opinion, had become a kind of a representation or personification of Rome itself; and so when a soldier, no matter what his rank, protested his undying loyalty to a bad emperor, he met with the approval of Tacitus because he was, in reality, protesting his loyalty to Rome. Thus when, Quintus Junius Blaesus sought to put down the

rebellion of the Pammonian legions, he cried "Dye your hands in my blood instead! It would be less criminal to kill your general than to rebel against the emperor. As long as I live I shall keep my troops loyal - If I die, my death will help to bring them to their senses" (151). The most perfect portrayal of loyalty is given by Tacitus as coming from the man who had the most to gain from disloyalty. When the German legions urged Germanicus to accept the throne instead of allowing Tiberius to become established,

"he leapt off the dias as if their criminal intentions were polluting him....and moved away....Then shouting that death was better than disloyalty he pulled the sword from his belt and lifted it as though to plunge it into his chest .....(152).

Other instances reveal the reverence in which the emperor was held by the armies. The salutation of the emperor (a sort of dedication of their enterprises) - by the army was a well-known feature of military procedure (153); all their undertakings were done 'auspiciis imperatoris' (154).

Apart from his love of Rome's imperial greatness and his dissatisfaction when she was making no new strides in the direction of territorial aggrandisement, there is a further reason for his dislike of the state of affairs when armies have no new conquests to make; idleness of the soldiery renders it difficult to enforce discipline, and to avoid a tendency for them to become soft and effeminate as a consequence (155). The result of the luxury of the troops was unbridled license in all directions (156). It was mentioned elsewhere that there is a close analogy under the

Empire between the degenerate state of the Senate when most of its powers were impaired by the emperor, and the undisciplined state of the army when there were no wars to occupy it (157). Both these points are often reiterated - it would be very difficult, apart from being unhelpful to the present purpose, to compile a comprehensive catalogue of all such allusions.

The state of abundance and wealth which the Empire enjoyed contrasted unfavourably with the greater virility of less prosperous and less civilised races; and their relative fortunes are reflected in the standards of discipline and of actual bravery in battle. Calgacus is urging the Britons to bravery makes as one of his main points the contrast between the 'choice flower of Britain' - the Britons fighting simply for freedom from oppression and slavery - and the insatiable and arrogant Romans who give robbery, butchery and rapine the lofty name of 'Empire' and whose bravery in war could, be believed, never match their wantonness in peace (158). While the Romans were occupied with the civil wars of 69 A.D.

"The barbarians now learned, like any Romans, to condone seductive vices while the intervention of our civil wars gave a reasonable excuse for inactivity. There was, however, a serious outbreak of mutiny, for the troops, accustomed to campaigns, ran riot in peace" (159).

Although in the Germania no mention is made of deficient Roman discipline, Tacitus greatly admires the prowess in war of the German tribes, and regards them, in fact, as the greatest military threat ever levelled against Roman might (160).

The rebellions of the Pannonian and German legions were caused

primarily by bad discipline;

"Before long, easy living and idleness were all the troops wanted; the idea of work and discipline became distasteful", Tacitus says of the Pannonian legions. Their rebellion was instigated by one Percennius, who, before his military service, had been "professional applause-leader in the theater.....experienced in exciting crowds to cheer actors" (161). The revolt of the German legions, though on a much greater scale, had its origin in the same lack of discipline (162). Throughout the descriptions of these two rebellions, Tacitus deplores the poor discipline that had given rise to the mutinies. "What on earth, asked Germanicus, had happened to their famous, traditional military discipline .....?" (163). When Germanicus had been compelled by his troops to grant pay increases and legacies,

"the general Caecina took the remaining two brigades back to the Ubian capital. It was a scandalous march, Eagle, Standards and the cash stolen [sic] from the commander, all were carried along together" (164).

Tacitus not only discusses the effects of lack of discipline upon Roman warfare; drunkenness under any circumstances was a cause of his anger - and in the camp in particular it is most unlikely that he thought it conducive to good discipline (165). Thus he relates

"the Germans were lying in bed or beside their tables unafraid with no sentries posted. There was careless disorganisation everywhere. Of war there was not a thought. Their condition was one of peace - in this case, uncontrolled drunken prostration" (166).

There are other occasions for lack of discipline, apart from a scarcity of aggressive wars. The Histories as a whole are more or less a study of how during the appalling year 69 A.D. there took place a reversion to the state of affairs of the late republic, when generals had their own private armies, and when the politics of Rome were dictated by the fluctuations in fortune of the armies of the rival factions. The soldiers' whims are described as being pampered to at every turn:

"The generals were too much in the power of the men...." he states on describing Vitellius' march upon Rome (167).

Later, again speaking of Vitellius: "Whatever indulgences Vitellius granted to his generals, he permitted still greater licence to his men. Every man chose his own service for himself; however unfit he might be, he might enrol in one of the City Corps if he wished, while good men were permitted to remain in the legion, or in the auxiliary cavalry if they so desired...." (168).

Antonius Primus, one of Vespasian's generals

"Ceased to be the blameless person he had been before Cremona.....In order to train his soldiers in licence, he allowed the legions to fill up the places of the slain Centurions; they elected the most unruly of their number; and instead of soldiers being under the control of their generals, the Generals were dragged along by the violence of their soldiers. These disorderly proceedings, destructive of all discipline, Antonius turned to his own profit....." (169).

The result of this unhappy state of affairs was, not surprisingly, complete lack of discipline, with insubordination

and rioting everywhere.

"Pacensis" one reads....."was put in chains by his insubordinate troops; Antonius Novellus carried with him no authority, while Clemens, who courted popularity with his men, was as powerless to maintain discipline as he was eager for battle" (170);

and again in the same description:....."the soldiers glutted their greed by pillaging the innocent inhabitants" (171). Shortly afterwards, still speaking of the Othonian faction, he states:

"the most worthless....and most impudent of men poured violent and indiscriminate abuse upon Annius Gallus, Suetonius Paulinus and Marius Celsus.....Conspicuous among the promoters of disorder were Galba's murderers; maddened by the consciousness of their guilt, they wrought general confusion, now openly preaching sedition, now writing secretly to Otho" (172).

The Vitellian faction also faced the same problems to an even greater degree: "The camp of Vitellius was a scene of disorder, drunkenness and nocturnal orgies, rather than of proper military discipline....." (173). A further example may be cited (174),

"turning them to the standards and to the Gods of War, he implored them to direct this mad spirit of discord against the armies of the enemies".

Vocula, a henchman of Hordeonius was also involved in repressing mutiny:

"Next day, he put the ringleaders of the mutiny to death - so great in that army were the extremes of insubordination and submissiveness.....Hence arose all alternation of insubordination and punishment...." (175)

These riots among the soldiers were in reality instances, for the most part, of a deliberate plan of the general concerned, gone out of hand. The policy of wooing the soldiery with abundant licence to plunder augmented with regular donatives inevitably occasioned further demands which the generals were not in a position to meet. As in the republic, it was important for the general to maintain the morale of his troops at a high level, and he was generally willing to allow his troops to plunder wherever their marches took them - even on Italian soil. The difficulty lay in the fact that, as Tacitus repeatedly emphasises<sup>is</sup>, this licence breeds a spirit not conducive to maintaining good order at times when such solidarity was required.

Another complaint of a very similar nature to that just discussed, which Tacitus recurrently makes, is against the practice of the donatives employed by generals as a further means of currying favour with their troops. The need for such bribes constitutes for Tacitus an additional proof that obedience in the army had degenerated far below the standards of the old Romans. When Galba failed to give the troops the donative they had expected, Tacitus is compelled to admit that this was a mistake on the part of the emperor - the mistake of ascribing greater merit to the present-day soldiery than they in fact deserved.

"There is no doubt that the slightest liberality on the part of the miserly old man would have won them over: his old-world rigour and inflexibility - qualities to which we are no longer equal - proved his ruin" (176).

This was a source of anger and disappointment to the ordinary soldiers - 'The common herd' - since they regarded such donatives



as their due. Tacitus' irony is used very heavily in describing another donative. Vienne was an old and respected city in Gaul, into which Roman troops had entered under Valens. As was their custom, the soldiers were about to commence plundering, but

"Valens made a present of three hundred sesterces to every soldier: then at last the antiquity and dignity of the Colony prevailed with them, and they listened with approbation when Fabius commended to their keeping the life and security of the inhabitants" (177).

Exactly similar is a later anecdote of Otho attempting to persuade his troops to return to camp after a chaotic end to a banquet which he himself had held. Speeches were made by his lieutenants which "ended in each man having paid down to him the sum of five thousand sesterces. Then at last" comments Tacitus, "Otho ventured into camp"....(178). Vespasian, we are told later (179) made a firm stand against military largesses - and thereby greatly improved his army. When the Vitellian army reached Fanum Fortunae en route for Rome (180), the men seditiously clamoured for a 'claviarium' - strictly an allowance for shoe-nails; the soldiers were impatiently greedy and plundered the stores before there was any possibility of the donative being supplied in a more orderly and equitable fashion. Hordeonius met trouble when he found he could not redeem the promises of donatives he had made (181).

The year 69 A.D. then exhibited all the characteristics of lack of discipline in the army that Tacitus loathed; but it was an exceptional year - a brief return to the nightmare of the years immediately before the end of the Republic. It must be

remembered that this discussion concerns only conditions in existence at the time when Tacitus was writing, that is early in the second century. Although he must have remembered the year of the four emperors, it was in no respect typical of conditions, thirty or forty years later. Nevertheless, as has been seen Tacitus had experience with the army, and he was well aware that slackness of discipline led to contempt for all forms of subordination, and thence, if the soldiers were not checked, to rioting and to open insurrection. He favoured, doubtless, the payment of a fair daily rate (182), but no donatives as a means of currying favour.

It was mentioned in the brief survey of the life of Tacitus (183) that he was in all probability provincial governor in Asia in 112-113 A.D. This would to a large extent explain his deep interest in eastern affairs. His descriptions of the provinces at the eastern end of the Mediterranean are numerous, and, if one tries to keep an accurate check on the various kings who ruled in the various states, perplexing. His knowledge of the east is sufficient for him to make one or two general comments about the characteristics of the peoples and therefore the armies on those lands. The greatest emphasis is placed upon their treachery (184), although, in describing one of Corbulo's eastern campaigns, Tacitus states that

"Corubulo found that his own men's slackness a worse trouble than enemy treachery. His troops had come from Syria. Demoralised by years of peace, they took badly to conditions of service in wartime. The army actually contained old soldiers who had never been on guard or watch, who found ramparts and

ditches strange novelties and who owned neither helmet nor breast-plate - flashy money-makers who had soldiered in towns" (185).

But if Parthian treachery could be endured, Tacitus would not abide their presuming to claim that Parthia was approaching Rome in power; the humiliations that Paetus' defeated legions underwent produce genuine remorse in the historian (186). The humiliation in battle was almost the supreme catastrophe to the Roman. The defeat of Varus' legions in 7 A.D. constantly rankles in Tacitus' mind, and finds several mentions; he rates the German tribes, the destroyers of Varus and his army, as has been seen, as the most formidable of Rome's enemies:

"From Caesar they stole Varus and his three legions. It was not without painful loss that Gaius Marius smote the Germans in Italy, that the deified Julius smote them in Gaul, that Drusus, Nero and Germanicus smote them in their own homes....they have in recent times supplied us with more triumphs than victories" (187).

Germanicus' erection of an altar to the victims of that defeat in the Teutoburgian Forest is described at length, with considerable pathos (188), although it must be said that Tacitus' speaks highly of Arminius the vanquisher of Varus, and when he dies, as the result of his relations' treachery, Tacitus pays him a very handsome tribute (189).

The defeat by Vologeses of Paetus is a bitter event for Tacitus to have to record. When Corbulo's troops came to help Paetus' defeated armies, he states:

"There was no display of decorations or arms to point a

censorious contrast. Corbulo's men, in sad sympathy for their fellow-soldiers, wept so bitterly that they could hardly salute them. Successful men's incentives, rivalry in valour and ambition for glory, were gone. In the lower ranks especially, pity was the prevailing emotion" (190).

One does of course expect a good Roman like Tacitus to show regret at defeat and jubilation upon victory, yet the above picture, even when allowance has been made for his love of the dramatic, seems to be rather extravagant.

Treachery in warfare Tacitus decries: it is the salient characteristic of the Parthians, as was seen above, and no self-respecting Roman army would stoop to it. He regrets that Arminius succumbed to the treachery of his family, although his death removed a great thorn from Rome's side (191). Indeed, Tacitus relates

"a letter was read from a chieftain of the Chatti, offering to kill Arminius if poison were sent him for the job. The reported answer was that Romans take vengeance on their enemies not by underhand tricks, but by open force of arms. By this elevated sentiment Tiberius invited comparison with the generals of old, who had forbidden, and disclosed, the plan to provide poison to kill king Pyrrhus" (192).

It is surprising, after reading this passage, to find <sup>such</sup> a sentiment as the following:

"Then Corbulo sent agents to induce the Greater Chauci to surrender, and to trap and kill Gannanscus. The trap was successful. Being directed against a deserter who had broken faith it was not dishonourable" (193).

This is a condoning of treachery under conditions of a provocation. If the provocation can be allowed to have justified treachery in this instance, there can be no justification whatever for such an unchivalrous piece of casuistry as a later passage contains.

"Next day, the townsmen of Uspe sent envoys asking for the free population to be spared but offering to hand over ten thousand slaves. The victorious Romans rejected this proposal on the grounds that it was barbarous to slaughter men who had surrendered, but hard to provide guards for such large numbers - better that they should be slain in normal warfare. So the soldiers, who had scaled the defences on ladders, were given orders to kill; and the inhabitants were exterminated" (194 ).

Tacitus does not seem to have considered the fact that the Parthians produce equally convincing explanations of and excuses for their own treachery, perhaps every bit as cogent as those of the Romans.

## CONCLUSION

In a paper of this length it has been impossible to discuss every aspect of Tacitus' opinions, but the topics which have been chosen for special attention are of a sufficiently diverse nature to give an inkling of what were the main directions of his thought. By discussing religion and philosophy, what he considered was his relationship with the supernatural has been studied; the discussions on society have shown him in his attitudes towards various classes of his fellow-men and women; and his views upon the use of political power at home and abroad have been considered in the final chapter.

Dominating all other considerations perhaps is his great love of Rome and its institutions; his reverence for the city embraced not only the official dignities - which under the Empire were mere shadows of what they had been during the republican era - but included a great, almost fanatical admiration for its past, which involved him in clinging closely to the mostly meaningless form of the old religion. This religion, it was seen, was destitute of theology, philosophy and even ethics. He was writing at a time when the rate of growth of the Roman Empire had dwindled in comparison with the rate of expansion which the republic had seen; and so it was a source of regret to him that his subject matter was, for the most part, treason trials instead of the battles which his predecessors had had the good fortune to describe, and intrigues by wives and mothers of emperors instead of sieges and conquests.

In the days of old the Senate flourished; now it was a token institution, discussing matters of small importance and

almost entirely subservient to the will of the emperor. In the old days the army too had achieved great conquests, but in the years that Tacitus describes it had all too few campaigns to interest itself in, and the result was luxury and arrogance on the part of the soldiers, resulting in insubordination and sometimes in open rebellion. Tacitus, by constantly drawing attention of the reader to these points displays the similar level of inefficacy to which both of these once prosperous institutions had been reduced.

So far as society is concerned, Tacitus finds his interests inseparable from those of his fellow-senators; and although his aristocratic pedigree is apparently short, his pretensions to blue-blood are great. He despises all other classes of society; the knights he for the most part ignores, although he occasionally mentions commerce with distaste. The freedmen he also tends to ignore except for the Imperial freedmen - those men, once slaves, who by unscrupulousness combined with judicious flattery had themselves become almost equal to the emperor in power and wealth. To the aristocratic Tacitus only his own order had right to influence and property - these were absolutely essential to them in order that they could maintain the dignity due their pedigrees. Although the historian was a wealthy man, it seems quite likely that, besides hating Pallas and Narcissus for being the villains they undoubtedly were, he envied their wealth which transcended his own, and even to a greater degree their power, which far surpassed the impact that he was able to make upon history in the role of statesman. Slaves and the urban poorer classes irritated him; they were incompetent to deal with, or even to take an

interest in lofty matters - the affairs of state; they were credulous, exaggerated any gossip that came their way, and they interested themselves solely in popular amusements and the price of bread: an acquaintance with poverty might have persuaded him that their interest in the latter was one of necessity and not of choice.

Fundamentally he is neither feminist nor anti-feminist. He believes that women have certain rights and certain responsibilities, and certain generic virtues and vices. Great difficulty was caused to the Roman world by the ascendancy of women of the Imperial household, whose ambitions led them into seeking a way of life different from that which the conservative nobleman had assigned to them. To judge from Tacitus' account, adultery figured largely in the social life of the early Empire, and he is insistent in his denunciations of it. The woman is sufficiently master of her own destiny to be held responsible for her own sins, and if a wife is guilty of improper extra-marital leasions, her husband is guilty, it would appear, only of an imprudent choice of wife.

Other vices afflicted early Imperial society, although some of them had diminished by the time Tacitus came to write the Annals in the more enlightened reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. Luxury and extravagance were at their zenith during Nero's reign, encouraged by the example offered by that emperor. Recourse to old sumptuary legislation achieved nothing, and the situation was not mended until Vespasian set a splendid example of a parsimonious existence; the experience of Domitian's reign too carried this one blessing in disguise - that people who otherwise would have lived on an immoral and lavish scale were compelled to restrain themselves to avoid being noticed for their opulence by the emperor.



In the sphere of politics Tacitus was predominantly republican; as a conservative and an admirer of the "good old days" long before he was born, he loved what he judged to be the difficult and transient perfect blend of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. This had disappeared forever, and Tacitus was well aware of this fact. If one endures the bad rulers patiently, the time surely comes when wisdom prevails, and the Domitian is succeeded by men worthy of their high calling.

During the new expansion of the Empire under Trajan which occurred at about the time when he was writing the Annals, a new spirit of Imperialism appears in Tacitus and he now assumes an aggressive and militant attitude towards all provincial people. Previously, so far as one can judge from his earlier works, he had seen some justification for the stout resistance the Britons put up against the Roman invaders. As he later remarks -(curiously in the Annals) - that if Rome wanted to subdue the rest of the world, it did not follow that the rest of the world would be happy to accept slavery. Both the two earlier works, the Agricola and the Germania, contain a satirical element and compare the virility of the ruder folk in the northern provinces very favourably with their sophisticated, vain and vice-ridden contemporaries in the capital of the Empire. This note of satire is the stronger in the Germania. He is apt to be impatient of foreign races. The Parthians have sufficient effrontery to compare their power with that of Rome: this exorbitant conceit and the native treachery of the Parthians are strongly disliked by Tacitus.

But the character of a man is more readily discovered from his philosophy, or if he has no tangible beliefs in that direction, from his attitude towards those who have. Much of what he says

concerning moral conduct - and it was noted in the introduction that his most important work, the Annals, is concerned largely with morals - is distinctly Stoic. His great respect for friendship, for example, his call for strength in family ties, and his admiration for courageous suicide are all Stoic. He speaks in terms of the highest praise of several well-known and professed Stoics. But that is all that one can say; he speaks with no enthusiasm for the predominantly Stoic conspiracy against Nero, and, more important, he shows no belief in the Stoic "anima mundi," the one God who is identified with Nature. Indeed Tacitus seems aware of the complete inadequacy of the old ritual religion at Rome, but his attempts to solve the mysteries of existence are desultory and inconclusive.

In respect of many features of his personality and opinions he was a typical Roman, and such attitudes as he displays towards religion and society, for instance, do not make him unique, but quite often merely typical of his age and environment. Many of these characteristics do not endear him to the modern reader. If the vices of which he speaks are still to be found, consolation may be drawn from the fact that humanism and a respect for the dignity of the humbly born are becoming more universal daily. If the personality of Tacitus does not please, however, it must be remembered that it is not because of that but because of his writings that he is thought about and discussed today. As a satirical moralist with an eye for dramatic presentation of history he has rarely been excelled.

References in Text.

INTRODUCTION.

1. see Ann. II.61.2, and M.P.Charlesworth in Oxford Classical Dictionary sub 'Tacitus'.
2. see below, pp.5 ff.
3. Aristophanes, Ranae, e.g. 959 ff.
4. see Chapter I.p.15 f.
5. Ann. IV.32.1,3.
6. Hist. I.4.1.
7. see Chapter I.p.32.
8. Ann. XI.27.2.
9. Ann. I.1.5.
10. for a full discussion of this topic see Fourneauux, 'The Annals of Tacitus' I.pp 7-9.
11. Ann. III.55.6.
12. Ann. II.84.4.
13. Ann. XVI.16.4.
14. see B.Walker, 'The Annals of Tacitus' pp.218-220.
15. Ann. IV.11.5.
16. Ann. XIII.31.1.
17. Ann. XI.16-17.
18. Fourneauux, op.cit., ad.loc.
19. see Chapter I.pp.13-16.
20. Agr. 3.
21. Hist. IV.74.

CHAPTER I. RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY.

1. Ann. IV.64.3. 'adduntur sententiae ut mons Caelius in posterum Augustus appellaretur.....sanctos acceptosque numinibus Claudios et augendam caerimoniam loco (i.e. monte Caelio) in quo tantum in principem honorem di ostenderint.....sedem eam acceperat a Tarquinio Prisco, seu quis alius regum dedit'.  
Ann. XII.24.3. '....forumque et Capitolium non a Romulo sed a Tito Tatius additum urbi credidere.....'
2. Ann. I.10.5; and A.D.Nock in Cambridge Ancient History X. pp.488 ff.
3. for Livia's influence over Augustus, and more especially over Tiberius see Chapter II.pp.71-75.
4. see Lewis and Short, Latin Dictionary, s.v.
5. e.g. see below, p.138.
6. see Cochrane, 'Christianity and Classical Culture', pp.112-176
7. these instances will be discussed later in their appropriate contexts.
8. e.g. Aeschylus, Prometheus Vincetus, 511, 515. Herodotus, I.91. Plato, Republic, X.14-16 etc.
9. see the whole of the sixth book of the Aeneid.
10. Suetonius, Augustus,
11. see below, p.23 ff.
12. e.g. Hist. I.22.

13. Ann.VI.22.1.
14. Agr.46.1.
15. Ann.XI.11.3.
16. Cicero, de Officiis II.47. see Grenier, 'Roman Spirit in Religion, Thought and Art', pp. 83-105
17. see Pliny, Epp. VIII.8; IV.8; IX.39 etc.
18. Fourneau, op.cit.I. Introduction, pp.29-62 gives a fairly exhaustive summary.
19. e.g. Titus Vinius and Cornelius Laco, Hist.I.6.
20. e.g. Ann.I.7; II.51, concluding words. There are numberless examples of this trait to be found, especially in the Annals.
21. e.g. Ann.I.6. 'inde consilium mihi pauca de Augusto et extrema tradere, mox Tiberii principatum et cetera, sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo'.
22. Ann.XV.41.1.
23. Ann.XII.24.3; XV.41.1. see also Hist.III.72. for mention of other kings of Rome's regal period.
24. Ann.I.1.4; 8.5; 12.1.etc.
25. Ann.I.10.7 ad fin.
26. Ann.V.2.1.
27. Livy XXV.6.
28. Ann.VI.22.5.
29. Hist.I.18.
30. see below, pp.49-65.
31. Krauss, 'Interpretations of Omens, Portents and Prodigies in Livy, Suetonius and Tacitus'.
32. Livy, XLIII.13.
33. lack of space precludes an elaboration upon this phenomenon of the Roman mind. On the conservatism of Livy, see Cochrane, op.cit., p.104; on Roman conservatism generally, see ibid., pp.110,160.
34. Tacitus was fourteen or fifteen years of age in 69 A.D., the latest date discussed in his surviving historical works.
35. Hist.I.86.
36. Hist.II.91.
37. Ann.II.17.2; 18.1.
38. it seems relevant here to mention that Germanicus was a member of the antique priesthood of augurs; see Ann.I.62.3; II.83.2., and Orelli Inscr. 660, 3064 etc.
39. Ann.XII.64.1-2.
40. Ann.XI.27.2.
41. Ann.XIV.12.3-5.
42. e.g. Orelli, Taciti Opera, note ad loc.cit., 'irridet igitur potius portenta et eorum vanitatem indicat'.
43. Ann.XII.64.1-2.
44. Ann.XV.7.2-5; 8.1.
45. see below, p.52.
46. Ann.XV.21.5.
47. Ann.I.28.3
48. Ann.XI.11.5-6
49. Ann.IV.64.1.

50. on the relationship between Tiberius and Livia see Chapter II, pp.71-75.
51. Hist.I.3.
52. Hist.III.56.
53. Hist.II.50.
54. Hist.I.27.
55. see above, p.31.
56. Hist.II.4.
57. Hist.II.78.
58. ibid.
59. Hist.I.10.
60. Hist.I.86.
61. see above, p.29.
62. Hist.I.86.
63. Hist.II.91.
64. Hist.I.18.
65. see e.g. Suetonius, Galba, mult.loc.
66. see e.g. his use of Thræsea Paetus as his own mouthpiece mentioned above, p.28.
67. Krauss, op.cit.
68. Servius on Verg. Aen.II.681; III.336.
69. St. Aug. Civitas Dei, 21.8.5.
70. Hist.I.22.
71. Ann.II.32; XII.52; Hist.II.62.
72. e.g. Suetonius, Tiberius, 14 etc.
73. 'tota damnabilis ars mathematicae interdicta est'
74. Sir Samuel Dill, 'Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius', p.46., also Dio Cassius LXVI.9.
75. on the subject of freedmen, see Chapter II. pp.105-118.
76. Ann.XI.15.
77. Dill, op.cit., p.447.
78. see especially Mayor on Juvenal XIV.248.
79. Ann.VI.21-22.
80. Ann.XIV.9.5.
81. Germ.10.
82. Hist.II.2-4.
83. see above, p.35.
84. Hist.IV.81-84.
85. see e.g. his explanation of why it is difficult to row in the waters around the Orkneys, Agr.10. It must in fairness be added that many other distinguished Romans shared his scientific ineptitude.
86. Hist.IV.63. That Tacitus himself had a very different view will be seen later; see Chapter II. pp.66-104.
87. Ann.VI.28.
88. ibid.
89. Hist.III.72.
90. Ann.XV.44.3.
91. Ann.II.85.5.
92. Hist.V.5.
93. ibid.
94. see above pp.13-17.
95. Ann.II.85.5.

96. e.g. Seneaca, Quaestiones Naturales.
97. Ann.VI.22.
98. B.Walker, op.cit.p.211.
99. see Chapter II.p.110.
100. Ann.XII.53.2.
101. Pliny Major, H.N.35.18,58,201.
102. for a discussion of the power wielded by Agrippina, see Chapter II., pp.80-85.
103. Agr.42.
104. see below, p.51.
105. Ann.XVI.21.1.
106. Ann.XVI.23.1.
107. see below, p.51.
108. Juvenal III.116. 'Stoicus occidit Baream, delator amicum, discipulumque senex.....'
109. Dio Cassius, LXII.26.2.
110. Hist.I.2: 'et quibus deerat inimicus per amicos oppressi'. The plural need not be pressed; see e.g. Ann.XI.30.3: 'Vettios Plautios...'
111. Ann.XIV.12.2.
112. Ann.XIV.49.1. 'Libertas Thraseae servitium aliorum rupit'.
113. Ann.XIV.49.5.
114. Ann.XVI.34.
115. see Fourneaux, note ad loc.
116. i.e. philosophy.
117. Hist.V.5.
118. Ann.XVI.29.1.
119. 'quamquam fas sit privata odia publicis utilitatibus remittere' Ann.I.10.2. - is the principle involved, in the words of Tacitus in a different context.
120. Hist.IV.53.
121. see above, p.18.
122. Ann.XIV.22-23.
123. Ann.XIV.57.5.
124. Ann.XIV.58-59.
125. Ann.XVI.30-32.
126. Ann.XVI.10.4.
127. Ann.XVI.11.4 ad fin.
128. see any of the 'Stoic' deaths in Annals book 16, and the death of Germanicus, Ann.II.71-73.
129. see Chapter II.pp.105-119.
130. Ann.XVI.10.3.
131. Hist.III.81.
132. Hist.IV.40.
133. see above, p.51.
134. see above, p.53.
135. Ann.XV.71.9.
136. Ann.XIII.42.3-8.
137. Ann.XIV.10.5-11.2.
138. Ann.XIV.11.4.
139. Ann.XV.60-64.
140. e.g. Ann.XIII.3.2; II.2.
141. Ann.XIV.53.1.
142. Ann.XIII.2.1.

143. B.Walker, op.cit. pp.224-5
144. Ann.XVI.26.
145. Ann.XVI.26.6 'cupidine laudis'
146. Hist.III.80.
147. Suetonius, Domitian 10.
148. ibid.
149. B.Walker, op.cit. pp.204 ff.
150. Seneca, Ep.47.2; 55. de Otio III.5 etc.
151. Marcus Aurelius, Med.I.15; V.25 etc.
152. see above p.51.
153. Hist.IV.10.2.
154. Juvenal III.116.
155. e.g. Ann.XV.23.6; XVI.7.1. On Germanicus' friendship see Ann.II.70.3
156. Dittenberger, Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae, 532.
157. ibid. 797.
158. Ann.XVI.30.1.
159. Ann.IV.68.1.
160. Ann.XVI.31.
161. Agr.9.
162. Agr.43.
163. Musonius successfully impeached Celer, whose testimony had brought about the sentencing of Soranus.
164. see above p.53.
165. see Chapter II. pp.66-104.
166. Ann.IV.28.
167. Hist.III. 51.
168. Hist.II.49-50.
169. Ann.XVI.10.1.
170. Ann.XVI.15.4.
171. Ann.XVI.17.6; 19.5 etc.
172. see above, p.51.
173. Ann.XVI.21.1.
174. Agr.42.
175. see Ramsay, 'The Histories of Tacitus', introduction.p.xliv note.

## CHAPTER II. ROMAN IMPERIAL SOCIETY.

1. see Chapter I, p.32.
2. see Introduction, p.6 ff.
3. Hist.I.4.
4. Hist.II.38.
5. Agr.6.
6. see Chapter I, 14-20.
7. Ann.IV.1.3.
8. Ann.I.7.4: 'tamquam .....ambiguus imperandi', and elsewhere by implication.
9. Ann.I.3.3.
10. ibid.
11. Ann.I.8.1.
12. Ann.I.5.1.
13. Ann.IV.57.4.

14. Ann. II.34.3.
15. Ann. IV.16 .6.
16. Ann. III.3.3.
17. Ann. II.50.1.
18. Ann. III.64.1.
19. Ann. IV.57.4.
20. Dio Cassius LVII.12.
21. Suetonius, Tiberius 51.
22. Ann. IV.16.6.
23. Ann. V.3.1; VI.51.6.
24. Ann. I.54.3-4.
25. Ann. VI.51.5.
26. Ann. IV.59.1-4.
27. Ann. XI.1.1.
28. ibid. see Ann. XII.25.1.
29. Ann. XII.25.1.
30. Josephus, Antiquitates Judaicae 19.1.10.
31. Ann. XII.3.1.
32. see below, p.107-9.
33. Ann. XII.66.1.
34. Ann. XIII.1.4.
35. Ann. XI.27.1.
36. Ann. XI.26.6.
37. see J.P.Balsdon in Oxford Classical Dictionary s.v. 'Claudius'.
38. see Introduction, p.5 ff.
39. Ann. XI.32.4.
40. Ann. XI.2.5.
41. Ann. XI.4.1.
42. Ann. XI.3.3.
43. Ann. XI.37.1.
44. Ann. XI.28.2.
45. see Fourneaux, op.cit., II.introd.p.42.
46. The list of her crimes mentioned, already imposing, can be extended by information from other sources, e.g. Dio Cassius LX.8.5: 18.3; 18.4; 27.4; 31.2 etc. See also Fourneaux, op.cit., note on Ann. XI.29.1, and Juvenal VI.115-32.
47. Ann. XI.12.1.
48. see above, pp.71-72.
49. see Ann. XII.7.5.
50. Ann. XII.1.1.
51. Ann. XII.3.1.
52. see Chapter III.p.143.
53. Ann. XII.7.5.
54. Ann. XII.7.6.
55. Ann. XII.8.1.
56. Ann. XII.66.2 - 68.
57. Ann. XII.22.4.
58. Ann. XII.59.3.
59. Ann. XII.65.2.
60. Ann. XIII.1.4.
61. Ann. XII.25.3.
62. Ann. XII.27.1.
63. Ann. XII.42.2.
64. Ann. XIV.9.5.



65. Ann.XIV.3.6.
66. Ann.XIV.8.6 .
67. not of course the freedman of the same name mentioned above, p.79.
68. Ann.XIV.9.4.
69. B.Walker, op.cit.pp.6 9-70.
70. Ann.XIV.1.
71. for Tacitus' doubts concerning divine retribution etc. see Chapter I.  
p.26.
72. Ann.I.69.2: 'femina ingens animi'
73. Ann.I.33.6 .
74. Ann.I.40.3.
75. Ann.I.69.2: 'munia ducis induit'
76. Ann.II.72.1.
77. Ann.III.1.1.
78. Ann.IV.52.3.
79. Ann.IV.53.1.
80. Ann.IV.25.3.
81. Livia excepted, since the essence of her power is the clandestine way in  
which it is wielded.
82. Ann.II.55.5.
83. Ann.II.43.5.
84. Ann.II.55.5.
85. Ann.II.71.4: 'muliebri fraude'. The adjective 'muliebri' may, however,  
be a comment upon the method of an underhand nature characteristic of a  
woman employed by both Piso and Plancina to perpetrate the murder - see  
Ann.XII.3.2.
86. Ann.II.75.3.
87. Ann.III.13.3.
88. see Chapter I.
89. Ann.III.15.1.
90. Ann.II.43.4.
91. see below, p.92.
92. Ann.VI.26.5.
93. Ann.XIV.4.6.
94. Fourneaux, op.cit. II.p.239.
95. Ann.XV.56.4.
96. Ann.VI.46.1.
97. Ann.XIII.1.3.
98. Ann.III.3.1.
99. Ann.III.19.4.
100. Ann.VI.10.1.
101. Ann.III.22.3.
102. Ann.VI.40.3.
103. Ann.VI.47.2.
104. see above, p.72.
105. Ann.II.50.1.
106. Ann.XIII.21.5.
107. Ann.XII.64.5.
108. Ann.VI.41.5.
109. Ann.I.53.1.
110. Ann.XIV.63.2; see Dio Cassius LX.8.5.
111. Ann.XIII.19.2.
112. Ann.IV.10.1.
113. Ann.IV.12.6.

114. Ann.XIII.44.
115. Ann.XVI.20.1.
116. Suetonius, Nero 35.
117. Ann.XVI.6.1.
118. Ann.III.36.1.
119. see Chapter I, p.15.
120. Ann.XV.51.1.
121. Ann.XV.57.1.
122. Grant, 'Tacitus on Imperial Rome', p.245.
123. see Fourneaux, op.cit. note on Ann.XII.4.1.
124. Ann.XIII.12.1; 46.4; XIV.2.2.
125. Ann.VI.27.1.
126. L<sup>O</sup>custa - see Ann.XII.66.4, and XIII.15.4 - and Martina - see Ann.II.74.2 and III.7.2.
127. Ann.XVI.34.3; on the death of the elder see also Pliny, Epp.III.16.
128. Ann.VI.29.1.
129. Ann.XV.64.2.
130. Tacitus recurrently shows sensitivity to the fate of girls of this age; see e.g. Octavia.
131. see Chapter I, p.51.
132. Ann.XVI.30-31.
133. Ann.VI.29.7.
134. not of course the Sextia just mentioned.
135. Ann.XVI.10-11.
136. see Chapter I, p.62.
137. Ann.III.69.9.
138. Ann.II.86.1.
139. see Chapter I, p.65.
140. although see Ann.XIII.16-17; XIV.59.4.
141. see Introduction, p.5 ff.
142. see above, p.87.
143. Ann.I.41.3: 'ipsa insigni fecunditate, praeclara pudicitia'.
144. Ann.II.43.7.
145. Ann.II.71.6.
146. Ann.XII.2.1.
147. Ann.XII.2.3.
148. Ann.XI.27.1.
149. see Germ.20 ad fin; Dial.6.5; Ann.III.25.2; XIII.52.3 etc.
150. Martial XI.53; X.63.
151. see Carcopino, 'Daily Life in Ancient Rome', pp.95-100.
152. Germ.17-20.
153. Agr.6.
154. on homosexuality see e.g. Ann.XV.37.7-9; on immorality generally, Ann.XIV.15.4-5; XV.37.
155. Agr.4.
156. Dial.28-29.
157. Ann.XIV.15.2.
158. Ann.XV.32.3.
159. Juvenal I.22; and see Mayor ad loc; also II.53 and VI.246-7.
160. Germ.45.
161. Ann.III.33-34.
162. see Chapter III, p.186.
163. Ann.I.8.6.

164. Germ.19.
165. see e.g. Paulina, the wife of Seneca: Ann.XV.64.2.
166. named ab epistulis, a rationibus and a libellis.
167. Ann.IV.6.2.
168. Ann.IV.6.7: 'inter paucos libertos domus'
169. Ann.IV.6.1.
170. Ann.VI.38.2.
171. Dio Cassius mentions a freedman temporarily in the office of Prefect of Egypt under Tiberius - Dio LVIII.19.16; other freedmen are elsewhere named as influential: Thallus and Euhodus - Josephus, Antiquitates Judaicae, 18.6,4,8 - and Nomius - Pliny, H.N.13.65,94.
172. Ann.XII.60.6 .
173. Ann.XIII.14.1.
174. Suetonius, nClaudius 28.
175. e.g. Sosibius, who made a million sesterces by helping Suillius to prosecute Asiaticus and Poppaea Sabina - Ann.XI.4.6.
176. see below, pp.110-112.
177. Ann.XI.33.3.
178. Ann.XI.34.2.
179. Ann.XI.34.4.
180. Ann.XI.34.5.
181. Ann.XI.37.3.
182. Ann.XII.57.4.
183. Ann.XII.65.2-5.
184. see above, p.77-8.
185. Ann.XII.66.1.
186. Ann.XIII.1.4.
187. see e.g. the ends of Messalina, Ann.XI.37-38; Agrippina, Ann.XIV.7-9; Piso, Ann.III.15-18 etc.
188. Ann.XI.1.2.
189. Ann.XI.4.7.
190. see e.g. Duff, 'Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire', p.175.
191. Ann.XVI.30-32; see also Chapter I, p.51.
192. Fourneau, loc.cit., note.
193. Ann.XIII.2.4: 'tristi adrogantia'.
194. Ann.XIII.23.3.
195. Ann.XII.53.5.
196. Ann.XIII.14.1.
197. Ann.XIV.3.5.
198. see Chapter I, p.58.
199. see above, p.81.
200. Ann.XIV.62.6.
201. Ann.XIV.39.
202. Germ.25.3.
203. i.e. in Germany.
204. see Hist.I.37.8; II.95.4.
205. Ann.XV.34.3.
206. see Fourneau, loc.cit., note.
207. Hist.I.37.8.
208. Hist.I.46.
209. Hist.II.57.
210. Hist.IV.2.

211. Ann.XV.51.1.
212. Ann.XV.57.
213. Agr.2.
214. Ann.XIV.9.4.
215. see above, p.83.
216. Ann.II.85.1.
217. examples of this attitude of Tacitus are countless; see e.g. Hist.II.1; III.83. etc., and this chapter, pp.131-138.
218. Juvenal, III.76-77.
219. see Fourneaux, op.cit. I. Introd. pp.30-31. For his high esteem for Sallust in particular, see Ann.III. 30.3: 'C. Sallustius rerum Romanorum florentissimus auctor'.
220. e.g. Ann.XII.53.5; Hist.I.76.
221. on this whole topic see Duff, op.cit., pp.143-146.
222. Hist.I.76.
223. Ann.IV.6.7.
224. see Chapter III, p.146.
225. Pliny, Epp.VII.20.3,4.
226. Pliny, Epp.II.1.6.
227. Pliny, Epp.II.11.
228. see Fourneaux, op.cit., I, Introd.p.3.
229. Agr.45.4.
230. Dial.17.2.
231. Pliny, Epp.II.4.3.
232. see Carcopino, op.cit., p.77.
233. see Pliny, Epp.I.6; 20; IV.13 etc.
234. e.g. Ann.III.30; XIV.40.3; Agr.44 etc.
235. Ann.II.33.5.
236. Ann.II.37-38.
237. see above, p.118.
238. Ann.II.12.4.
239. Ann.VI.22.1.
240. see Chapter III, p.172.
241. Ann.XV.44.4.
242. Ann.VI.1.2.
243. Ann.VI.42.3.
244. Ann.VI.43.4.
245. Ann.II.56.2.
246. Ann.II.44.1.
247. Ann.II.33.6.
248. Ann.II.33.
249. Ann.III.55.1.
250. Ann.III.52.1.
251. Ann.III.52.3.
252. Ann.III.54.1.
253. see Chapter III, p.186.
254. Ann.III.46.4.
255. Hist.IV.14.
256. Ann.I.50.7.
257. Germ.22.
258. Ann.II.65.4.
259. Ann.IV.48.3.
260. Ann.XI.16.4.

261. Hist.I.76.
262. Ann.XI.31.4.
263. Ann.XIII.15.3.
264. Ann.XIII.20.1.
265. Ann.XIII.25.1.
266. see Chapter III? pp.139-160.
267. Ann.XV.37.2-9.
268. Hist.I.22.
269. ibid.
270. Hist.I.30.
271. Hist.II.37.
272. Hist.I.62.
273. Hist.II.62.
274. Hist.II.68.
275. see e.g. Hist.II.71,72,87,94 etc.
276. Hist.II.95.
277. Juvenal X.80-1; see also Fronto, Princip. Hist.p.210, ed. Waber.
278. Hist.I.72.
279. Hist.II.91.
280. Hist.II.94.
281. Hist.II.95.
282. Hist.II.61.
283. Ann.XV.36.5-6 .
284. Hist.I.32.
285. Hist.I.40.
286. see Carcopin o, op.cit.,p.222.
287. see Chapter I, p.31.
288. Ann.IV.64.1.
289. Hist.II.91.
290. Hist.I.69.
291. Ann.III.53.5.
292. Ann.XIV. 42.2.
293. Ann.XIV.45.1.
294. Ann.XIV. 43.1.-44.5.
295. for the point of this irony, see Fourniaux, note on Ann.XIV.43.5.
296. see Chapter I, pp.46-48.

#### CHAPTER III. GOVERNMENT AND LAW.

1. Ann.III.69.6.
2. Ann.III.26.3.
3. Ann.II.55.4.
4. see Chapter II, pp.131-1381
5. Ann.XV.21.6.
6. Ann.XV.21.5.
7. Ann.VI.48.4.
8. Ann.VI.6.2.
9. this statement is based upon a quotation from Plato, Gorg.524E. See Orelli, op.cit. note.
10. Hist.II.38.
11. see Introduction, p.1.
12. Ann.I.16.2 etc.
13. Ann.III.51.3-4.
14. Agr.1.

15. Agr.3.1.
16. Ann.XI.25.3-4.
17. see Chapter II, pp.105-119.
18. Ann.IV.6.7.
19. Ann.IV.74.6.
20. Ann.IV.1.3.
21. two of the less pleasant lackeys and informers of Sejanus; see Seneca, ad Marc.22.4; and Fourneaux, op.cit., note on Ann.IV.34.2.
22. Ann.VI.8.10.
23. see Ann.IV.33.1, and above, p.140.
24. Ann.VI.42.1.
25. Ann.IV.6.2.
26. Dio Cassius LIV.17.3; 26.3, although Suetonius (Augustus 41) quotes a figure of 1,200,000 sesterces.
27. Ann.I.75.5.
28. Ann.II.37.2. 'ne clarissima familia extingueretur'.
29. this instance of reluctance to maintain the prestige of the great families appears exceptional, and most of such houses exhibited the same pride and enjoyed the same honours as they did under the Republic. See Fourneaux, op.cit., I. pp.85-86.
30. Ann.II.38.10.
31. Ann.I.2.
32. Ann.I.4.1 etc.
33. Ann.I.2.1.
34. Ann.I.1.4-6.
35. see Chapter II, pp.131-138.
36. Ann.I.8.6.
37. Ann.XIII.4.2 - 5.1.
38. e.g. Ann.XIV.20-21.
39. his countless derogatory comments against the poorer classes and his admiration for families of distinguished ancestry make it impossible to exonerate him from this charge.
40. Agr.2.
41. Ann.XIII.11.3.
42. Ann.XV.21.5 .
43. e.g. Ann.I.7.4.
44. Ann.I.2.2.
45. Ann.I.2.1.
46. see below, pp.184 f.
47. Strabo, VI.288.
48. Ann.I.3.7.
49. Ann.I.9-10.
50. Ann.I.9.6. See Fourneaux, loc.cit. and I. p.65.
51. Ann.IV.6.2-3.
52. Ann.III.56.2.
53. Ann.I.6.6.
54. this point is well brought out by Miss B.Walker, op.cit., p.166. She remarks that Augustus' suavity was an essential ingredient in this success.
55. Ann.I.13.7.
56. Ann.XVI.16.2.
57. Ann.XIII.60.
58. e.g. Ann.II.84.3.
59. Ann.II.43.7; see also III.8.1.

60. Ann.XIV.12.2.
61. Agr.42.
62. Ann.XV.48.
63. Walker, op.cit., p.133.
64. see Chapter I, pp.49-65.
65. Hist.II.5.
66. Ann.II.13.1.
67. Ann.II.73.1-2.
68. see below, p.186 ff.
69. see Ann.XIII.3.3-6 for a description of the ability of early Roman emperors to speak publicly.
70. ibid.
71. Hist.II.49.
72. Ann.III.76.4-5.
73. Ann.IV.34.1.
74. Ann.IV.35.4.
75. Hist.I.50.
76. Ann.I.72.4 'exercendas leges esse respondit'.
77. Ann.I.72.3.
78. Walker, op.cit., App.II, P.263 ff.
79. Ann.VI.19.1.
80. Suetonius, Tiberius 61.
81. Ann.I.73.2.
82. Ann.I.72.3.
83. Ann.IV.68-69.
84. Ann.IV.28.2.
85. Ann.IV.30.4-5.
86. see e.g. Agr.2-3 'and now at last our spirits revive'.
87. see above, p.140.
88. Ann.III.69.6.
89. Ann.IV.6.3.
90. Ann.III.27.2.
91. Ann.III.26.3.
92. Ann.III.55.5.
93. Ann.III.26.3.
94. see Fourneaux, op.cit., I.pp.439-444.
95. see Chapter II, p.96 ff.
96. Ann.III.28.4-6.
97. see Chapter II.
98. Ann.III.33.4.
99. see Livy, XXXIV.1-8.
100. Ann.I.2.1.
101. Ann.XIII.14.2.
102. H.Mattingly, 'Tacitus on Britain and Germany'.
103. ibid., p.24.
104. Germ.12.
105. Grant, op.cit., introduction, p.15.
106. Hist.I.4.
107. Ramsay, op.cit., note ad loc.
108. Ann.I.2.7.
109. Ann.IV.32.2.
110. Ann.IV.32.3.

111. Ann. IV.4.6.
112. Ann. III.40-47.
113. Ann. III.40.1.
114. Ann. III.46.4.
115. see Fourneaux, op.cit., note on Ann. III.40.1.
116. Ann. II.5.3.
117. Ann. II.50; III.20; 32; 73; IV.23.
118. Ann. II.56.4.
119. Ann. IV.46.1.
120. Ann. IV.47.1.
121. Ann. IV.32; VI.8.
122. Ann. IV.32.6.
123. Ann. XI.23 - 25.2.
124. Ann. XI.24.4.
125. see Fourneaux, op.cit., II?, app.I., pp.54-60.
126. Agr. 2.
127. see Chapter II, pp.103, 112.
128. Agr. 30-32; 33-34.
129. Agr. 13.
130. Agr. 15.
131. Agr. 12.
132. Agr. 16.
133. Agr. 21.
134. Agr. 19.
135. Ann. XII.37.3.
136. Agr. 11.
137. Ann. XIV.39.1,3.
138. Ann. XIV.35.1.
139. Agr. 3.
140. see e.g. Ann. XVI.16.
141. Agr. 45.
142. Agr. 9.
143. see G.H.Stevenson in Cambridge Ancient History, X. p.225.
144. Hist. II.86.
145. Ann. XV.31.2.
146. e.g. Hist. I.8-11; Ann. XV.26.1-2.etc.
147. Hist. II.41-45; III.22-26 etc.
148. e.g. B.W.Henderson, 'Five Roman Emperors'.
149. e.g. Ann. I.16-30; 31-49 etc.
150. see above, pp.161-170.
151. Ann. I.18.5-6.
152. Ann. I.35.4-5.
153. see Ann. I.18.2; III.74.6.
154. 'auspiciis Tiberii', Ann. II.41.1; 'auspiciis Neronis', Ann. XV.26.3.
155. e.g. Ann. II.55.4-5; Hist. I.47 etc.
156. Hist. II.12; Ann. I.16.3.
157. see above, p.143.
158. Agr. 30-32.
159. Agr. 16.
160. Germ. 37.
161. Ann. I.16.3-4. On Tacitus' view of the theatre, see Chapter II, pp.131-138.
162. Ann. I.31.1: 'isdem causis'.
163. Ann. I.35.1.



164. Ann.I.37.3.
165. see Chapter II, p.127.
166. Ann.I.50.6-7.
167. Hist.II.56.
168. Hist.II.94.
169. Hist.III.49.
170. Hist.II.12.
171. Hist.II.13.
172. Hist.II.23.
173. Hist.II.68. See also Hist.I.87-88,93 etc.
174. Hist.III.10.
175. Hist.IV.27.
176. Hist.I.18.
177. Hist.I.66.
178. Hist.I.82.
179. Hist.II.82.
180. Hist.III.51.
181. Hist.IV.19; 36.
182. see his descriptions of the claims of the Pannonian armies, Ann.I.17.
183. see Introduction, p.1.
184. e.g. Ann.XIII.38.3; 39.3 etc.
185. Ann.XIII.35.1-4.
186. Ann.XV.15-16.
187. Germ.37.
188. Ann.I.6 1.
189. Ann.II.88.
190. Ann.XV.16.4-6.
191. Ann.II.88.3.
192. Ann.II.88.1-2.
193. Ann.XI.19.4.
194. Ann.XII.17.1.

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