

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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ANCIENT ROME – Cultural History

The beauty of Roman culture. In Roman culture we meet beauty, design brilliance, discipline, religious fervor, taste for pleasure—at the dinner table or in bed—all of which reflect a human enterprise intent on surmounting the darker realities of daily life; we meet a *civitas*, a polity, in which by and large the wonders of order, discipline, and responsibility play large parts. We occasionally try out the word ‘practical,’ in an effort to characterize the Roman cultural achievement, but should be careful of any suggestion that the Romans were ‘pedestrian.’ The Roman gift for order in government, for architectural vigor and engineering brilliance, the evidences of city planning and road construction on hitherto unknown scales, the by and large consistent investment in *gravitas* and *dignitas* on the public level: all these traits raise the Roman cultural achievement far above the pedestrian.

Conservative Roman culture. If any portmanteau term rivals ‘practical,’ as a descriptor for the Romans, it might be ‘conservative’ or ‘traditional.’ One thinks of religion, in such a connection, and would be right in thinking that ritual and sacrifice, chiefly to somewhat transformed versions of Greek god-tales, were of persistent importance for the Romans, from the early Republic to the mature Empire, and that the Roman resistance to Christianity owed much to this ‘piety.’ The Roman army would not consider a military encounter unless augurs had first consulted the birds, and priests had performed the accustomed sacrifices.

Orientation toward the past. The seemingly limitless growth of new cities, as Rome’s Empire grew, configures around a ground plan based on that of Rome, with one or more major temples at its center. In education it was customary for the youngster to imbibe traditional tales which illustrated the *mores maiorum*, the customs and values of the ancestors, and when it came to the Roman’s sense of his own historical mission it was always oriented backward into the past, as we see in the historical accounts of Livy or the founding narrative of Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

The Golden Age. We may generalize that the Roman historians—Tacitus, Livy, and Sallust—were for the most part concerned with the past and its lessons, rather than with the future. Roman culture is rarely clambering for the future, or in any way concerned with the idea of ‘progress’; instead it was a theme, throughout Roman literature, that the Golden Age was far in the past, and that the age of the present was Iron, fallen and needy. It might even be added, when it comes to fashion, clothing, and dining, that the Roman was there too faithful to old patterns. He/she tended to value what was known from before. That such conservatism might have had much to do with poverty is quite possible, for with 95 % of the population of Rome living ‘under the poverty level,’ with mortality rates for infants running around fifty per cent, life expectancy from birth running at 28 years (the same as in ancient Greece), and with rampant diseases like malaria, the plebs as a whole was unlikely to be thinking farther into the future than the next meal.

Political and religious opposition in Rome. The conservatism of ancient Rome was rarely challenged on the political level—one thinks of the Spartacan uprising from the heart of the enslaved world, at the time of the Punic Wars—and in fact remained, until the time of Christianity and the Barbarian incursions, chiefly threatened by internal power struggles. The causes of the ultimate ‘fall’ of the Roman Empire, which is probably datable to the late fifth or sixth century, was a mixture of internal dissent with pressure from the outside. The well organized Christians, of the second and third centuries, were for the most part unready to do more than bring pressure against a structure which was already falling. Neither the Christians nor the multiple ‘barbarian’ forces, pressing on the Roman Empire from outside it, was intent on radical political reorganization. Someone like Saint Augustine, in *The City of God*, was of course envisaging a polity profoundly different from that of the Roman Empire, but not one which challenged or even intersected with the Roman.

The technological in Rome. It is of interest, to us today, to note that while ancient Rome was stable for its time, it remained so without great resort to innovation or technical advancement, which, like the Greeks too, the Romans viewed as essentially a form of manual labor, and thus not worthy of mature attention.

Discussion Topics

It has been said that Roman religion is of a piece with Roman culture as a whole: practical, public, even military, and lacking (or not valuing) explorations of the inner life. It is equally often said that Christianity, reaching Rome already at the end of the first century A.D., brought a message of interiority that was fatal to Rome. What do you think of these assessments of the character of Roman paganism and Christian messianism?

Poverty was rampant throughout the Roman Empire; the average life expectancy was 28; only five percent of the population, by one estimate, was literate. Where, then, is the good life of entertainment, great dinners, sex in the city, fashion? There is a large disconnect here. Please try to come up with an assessment of the relation among/between the classes in Rome, and a judgment on whether the Roman government was responsibly interested in its citizens.

As the Roman Empire spread, covering almost half of the populated world in the first centuries after Christ, its communication issues got increasingly complex. How was it possible to pass news from Parthia to Northumbria to Libya? How did the Romans deal with this situation? Look into their very efficient pony express delivery system. Had they other ways of coordinating information from one part to another of the Empire?

On the face of it, we might think the educational system of ancient Rome was hardly complex enough to deal with the training of leading orators, engineers, bureaucrats, and military leaders. Is that a deceptive impression? Was on the job training sufficient to create good orators and statesmen? Engineers capable of building aqueducts? Or walls like the Hadrian's Wall in Britain? Please try to explain how the complex structures of a thousand year state were created on the basis of the *mos maiorum*, that value system of the elders which was prioritized in the schools.

Roman HISTORY (Historiography)

Overview Cultural self-awareness, the construction of something like national self-consciousness, depends on a group's historical consciousness. You have to know where you have been, as a group or nation, before you can know who you are. The same with an individual person. You have to know your own background, personality, temper, talents and weaknesses, and you need to know them as part of the living narrative which you are. An individual, like a state, comes together around such self-awareness.

The historians of Ancient Rome There was an abundance of historians in ancient Rome, many of them today virtually unknown, and remaining only as references, or in almost illegible fragments. Four of the most influential are these:

Sallust Sallust (86 B.C.E.--35 B.C.E.) was a man of middle class origins, a populist of a sort, and a strong partisan of Julius Caesar. His ruling theme was the moral decline of the Roman state and its citizens; a position he maintained undisturbed by his own felonious past. He is perhaps best known to us for his study of the Catilinarian conspiracy (63 B.C.); his interest in which, apparently, was chiefly to exonerate his ally Julius Caesar from any complicity.

Livy Livy (59 B.C.E.-17 C.E.) Livy is known for one great work, *Ab Urbe Condita (From the time of the Founding of the City)*, an history of the Roman state, chiefly the Republic, through to the imperial accession of Augustus. The work was of wide interest, sparking followers of the craft of history, and setting a model for both anecdotal and chronological history writing.

Tacitus Tacitus (58 C.E.-120 C.E.) was a masterful historian of Imperial Rome from the death of Augustus (14 C.E.) to the Roman-Jewish conflict of 70 C.E. His two great works, *The Histories* (105 C.E.) and *The Annals* (117 C.E.), are preoccupied with the events and intricacies of the courts of the Emperors Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero. He plumbs every depth of the human heart, in a period when corruption was rife and baroque.

Ammianus Marcellinus Ammianus (330-400 C.E.) was a Roman soldier and historian, whose lengthy *Res Gestae (Events; Deeds)* essentially covers the history of Rome from where Tacitus left off, to the death of the Emperor Valens (370 C.E.) Ammianus has provided the foundation of much of what we know of fourth century Rome.

Readings

Dudley, Donald, *The World of Tacitus*, London, 1968.

Matthews, J., *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, Baltimore, 1989.

Discussion questions

The Roman historians were famously conscious of their Greek historian predecessors as models. Do you see the work of Thucydides or Herodotus in the major Roman historians?

What kinds of self-image did the Roman historians bring into their work?

Does each of them mark his history with a distinctive personal trademark? Explain.

What kind of training did the Roman historians have, in writing history? Did they go to graduate school? Did they learn from predecessors? Did they learn from life?

Roman Art

Greek influence The visual arts, of ancient Rome, tend at their most characteristic to mass, weight—the Romans used concrete to good use, forming strong and lasting structures with it—and an impression of power. This, of course, is the broad sense left by Roman architecture and sculpture, the two Roman areas of decisive achievement, though of course Roman art was highly developed in other areas as well, like painting. Superficially resembling the Greeks in artistic expression, and during the early period avid for Greek sculptors, copyists, and models drawn from Greek art, the Romans slowly developed art styles that were distinctively their own.

Temples From the outset, temple structures were the most conspicuous expressions of Roman culture. The temple was a place of worship, a communal gathering space, and a public art-space in which the finest of architects could go on display. Display themselves they did, in splendid circular Etruscan-influenced structures like the Temple of Vesta in Roma (80 B.C.E.) or the *Fortuna Virilis* Temple from second century B.C.E. Rome, with its combination of Greek and Etruscan styles. The most elegant achievement of Roman temple architecture lay ahead, in the Pantheon (118-125 C.E.), a circular temple with a broad pediment and with a startlingly ample *oculus*, or skylight, that flooded the interior with daylight.

Monuments Monumental structures of many varieties abound today in the still well preserved vestiges of ancient Rome. The *Coliseum* (80 C.E.) dominates the center of the old city, with its three stories of varying arch styles, and its amphitheatrical prospect over the city. Lengthy, and stylish aqueducts testify throughout ancient Italy to the Roman gift for practical infrastructure artistically blended with active urban settings. Structures like the Column of Trajan (106-113 C.E.) soar up from the city floor with their patriotic vertical (125 feet tall) history.

Sculpture Free standing sculpture (so often of Emperors or military luminaries), as well as relief sculpture, brought to its perfection the Roman skill at carving, and digging under the stone for its most expressive qualities. The marble Augustus of Prima porta (20 B.C.E.) is a slightly more than life-sized self-commissioned impression of the Emperor, as a figure of dignity and withdrawal. His toga is imperial but noble, and his breastplate is decorated with emblems of pastoral peace, the condition he believed himself godsent to promote. He was following and establishing what was to be a Roman tradition of imperial portrait sculptures, designed to magnify the required traits. The portrait sculpture of the Emperor Constantine (325 C.E.) glistens with the far away spiritual look of the first Christian Emperor.

Painting Upper class Romans who could afford it decorated the walls of their summer villas, especially at the soon doomed cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, with brilliant paintings of land and nature scapes, and though much of this splendid work was destroyed by volcanic explosions the sumptuous achievement leaves us with a sense of the passionate sensibility that underlay much of the Roman achievement in art.

Readings

Henig, Martin, *A Handbook of Roman Art*, New York, 1983.
Strong, Donald, et. al., *Roman Art*, New Haven, 1995.

Discussion questions

The Romans are often characterized as a practical people, and contrasted in that with their more imaginative Greek predecessors. Does the Roman use of marble statuary and sculpture seem to you to reflect a practical spirit? How?

Many of the interior wall paintings from Pompeii are *trompe l'oeil* work, simulations (for example) of in depth rural scenes, which are actually painted on flat walls. Does this taste for artifice suggest an aesthetic sensibility which is far from 'practical'?

Does Greek art seem to have dominated the whole extent of Roman art? Does there come a point, in the development of Roman art, when it appears to have broken loose from its Greek forefathers, and to have discovered its own idiom?

Rome - Religion

Roman religious experience. There are many areas of cultural production in which the Romans appear to lack some of the inner creativity of the Greeks—for that cultural comparison is hard to avoid, given especially the Roman penchant for incorporating elements of Greek culture, especially after the gradual Roman conquest of Greece, which is complete by the end of the second century B.C. One of those incorporative areas is the religious experience of the Romans, which by our time cultural opinion has agreed to consider ‘less creative’ than the Greek religious/ mythical experience. That ‘agreed to’ carries a tweak, for the view of Roman culture as ritualized and plain—compared to the Greek—is one which has prevailed since the Romantic Movement of the 19th century and Romanticism, but which was not at all the view of the highly Latinate Renaissance. But let’s jump in. Let’s begin by considering what the Romans do with ‘Greek myths,’ as they absorb and transform them.

Native Italic mythology. Gradually, for different reasons at different times, the Romans grafted Greek mythical figures onto the stock of ancient Italic-Etruscan myth figures. Those myth figures are especially to be found in several major Roman texts: the archaic books (6th or 7th cent. B.C.) of commentary and ritual legislation, concerning the Sibyl and the earliest transfer of royal power in Rome; the first books of Livy’s *Histories*, which narrate most of the founding tales of the Roman people, going back to 800 B.C.; Virgil’s epic poem, *The Aeneid* (29-19 B.C.), which relates the founding actions of the city of Rome, and the mating between Rome’s heroic founder and the daughter of the local Etruscan kingdom, Lavinia; the fourth book of elegies of the Roman poet, Propertius. In those varied texts, and in a book like Ovid’s *Fasti* (8 A.D.), which records the sacred feast and ritual days of earlier Rome, we come in touch with traditional myth tales of ancient Italic vintage: tales such as that of the Sabine women, which consecrates a stage in earlier Roman appropriation of new territory; the marriage of a ‘mythical’ king, Numa Pompilius, to a nymph, Egiria, from which any number of descendants and tales follow; the story of the courage of Horatius at the Bridge; the legend of Marcus Scaevola, whose fidelity to the Roman Republic was so great that he would plunge his hand into boiling water to affirm his loyalty. Onto all such early Italic accounts, and there are many, the Romans found themselves, as we have said, grafting Roman tales and religiously tuned hero cults.

Development of the Roman pantheon. Those tales amounted, with the passage of time, to traditional lore in which was embedded material of Hellenic background but of relevance to the efforts of the Romans themselves to create their own cultural state. Thus, adopting the procedures by which the Greek mythological universe was generated, the Romans early promoted a godly trinity of Mars/Quirinus/Vesta which was effectually worshipped by the person on the street in Rome, say in the third century B.C., but which was simply a way of paying homage to the military and at the same time home-protective (hence Vesta) qualities of the Roman experience. God-trios like this ultimately merged into Roman trinities like Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, which were honored with official worship in great public centers of Roman cult.

Tales of the gods. While the tales of the Greek gods, on which the Romans also drew, were characteristically devoted to the complex social interrelations of the gods, the corresponding Roman god-tales were characteristically devoted to tracking, and abetting, the course of historical actions. Thus each of the actions going into the process of planting involves a prayer to the deity presiding over that particular action: Saturn, the ‘god of sowing,’ is adulated while the act of sowing the field takes place; Pales, the ‘god of the fields,’ is addressed in ritual prayer as the fields are ploughed; Pomona, ‘goddess of the fruit,’ is similarly adored and prayed to while the fruit is being invited to full development; and Ops, the ‘god of the harvest,’ is adored as harvest takes place. “Adored,” as these examples suggest, is a feeble attempt to characterize the type of piety in question here. The above examples are aimed at a single point: that ancient Roman religious worship intersected, at points, with the polytheism of the Greeks, but is notably different in being tied to ritual, prayer, and practical purpose far more tightly than were the Greeks’ tales of the gods.

The meaning of Roman mythography. In a sense, then, our overworked notion of the Romans’ public cultural stance is carried out in their religious practice, much of which deploys itself in performative practice, abetting a

desired end by inducing it in practice. For this reason we fall appropriately into the locution that the gods of the Romans 'stand for' this or that condition, like the action of the thunder, lightning, the power of eros, or the dynamism of the sea.

Reading

A Companion to Roman Religion, Joerg Rüpke (New York, 2007)

Discussion questions

How did the Romans combine native Italic religion with that of the Greek myths they inherited? Did the Romans make a conscious effort at

synthesis. Did any one leader exercise particular influence in a religious synthesis? In a wider sense, how do different religions or elements of those religions blend? (Take a look at the religious practices of the Roman Emperor Helagabalus—reigned 218-222 A.D.—who forced exotic Eastern religious ideals down the throats of the Romans. How does religious synthesis operate in his reign?)

In what sense is the prayer that accompanies planting what we might call 'performative,' carrying out the action it describes? In many cultures, including the Roman, agricultural harvest, in which the grains and fruits were collected, was a time when ritual dances, chants, and prayers rose from the ordinary men and women who were the life blood of the society. Does the official Olympian religion of Rome pay homage or relate to the nativist agricultural beliefs? To help grasp this complex issue review a great novel like Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885).

Could you call an epic poem like the *Aeneid*, which 're enacts' the founding of Rome, performative? In other words, could this entire epic creation, which culturally founded the new Empire of Augustus, be considered a religious text? If you see anything in this idea, can you think of other 'founding' texts which serve the same kind of 'religious performative' action? Does Homer, Milton, or Dante work create in this way?

Roman Philosophy

Greece and Rome The adage which says that Greece (meaning Greek culture and thought) conquered Rome even while the Roman military was overwhelming Greece, in the final two centuries of the classical era, applies in spades to the influx of Greek philosophy into early Roman thought.

Lucretius Lucretius (*The Nature of Things*, 50 B.C.E.) is an epic poem, in the same dactylic-hexameter meter we know from Homer and Virgil, and is an excellent instance of one of the greatest Roman philosophical texts highly dependent on Greek writing, in this case on the thoughts of Epicurus, the fourth century Greek moralist. Lucretius also thrived on the cosmological speculative physics of the Milesian (Asia Minor) philosophers. From those writers Lucretius formed or enriched his idea that the fundamental substance is atoms linking to one another in the void, and conjoining to form such random developments as organic life.

Seneca and Stoicism In the years following Lucretius (d. 55 B.C.) two of the finest Roman minds—Cicero (d. 43 B.C.) and Seneca (d. 65 A.D.)—drew their spiritual inspiration largely from the fund of Stoic ideas, a world view founded in late fourth century B.C. Athens, and destined to grow in strength throughout the Roman Empire. The basic thrust of this worldview was to promote self-control and the human peace that comes from co-operating with others, as well as from understanding how the world works. Cicero imposed a skeptical spin—‘our knowledge is limited—on this philosophy, while Seneca stressed control over the passions, and the dangers of sacrificing our independent judgments of things.

Marcus Aurelius To the modern reader, the most accessible of Roman philosophers is the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 C.E.), whose *Meditations* continue the Stoic trend of much Roman thought, while inflecting it with the standpoint from which he wrote—as a military commander on the front line, snatching a night time respite whenever he could, to write the text of his deeply human memoir, which he had no thought of publishing. Life lasts but a moment, he says, and we should coolly observe and enjoy our brief moment, meanwhile keeping our eye on the whole cosmos, and avoiding the delusions of vanity or flattery. While the world view of Marcus Aurelius still belongs to the Greek sphere, and is far from the Christian—lying ahead—it seems a harbinger of that one-god Platonism which was to shake Saint Augustine (354-430 C.E.) and to make of his *Confessions* a new kind of voice in the Roman world.

Saint Augustine Is it a philosophical voice we hear in Augustine? His speculations on God interweave with his reflections on memory, despair, guilt, hope. The fund of moral investigations that swarms through Roman Stoic and Epicurean thought, and that links Greek to Roman intellects, emerges in Augustine at the far end of considerations, intimate and sweeping, which will no longer be contained inside the framework of Greco-Roman thought.

Reading

Farquharson, A.S.L., *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, Oxford, 2008.

Inwood, B., ed. *Seneca: Selected Philosophical Letters*, translated with introduction and commentary, Oxford, 2007.

Discussion questions

Were the leading philosophies of ancient Rome all derived from Greek thought? What was the relation of Augustine’s thought to the Greeks? Did he inherit many of his ideas from the Greek Neoplatonists who were a formative element in later Roman cultural development?

The philosophical perspectives dominant in Roman philosophy were largely ethical, centered on questions about how to live the good life. Is there an element of logic, metaphysics, or theory of history in the Roman intellectual tradition?

While it is true, as in the adage above, that the Romans were in some sense conquered by their Greek subjects, would we say that the Romans made something new and fresh from what the Greeks gave them? What would you see as the distinctively Roman contribution to world thought?

Marcus Aurelius (121 A.D.- 180 A.D.; Emperor 161 A.D. -180 A.D.)

Stoics and Epicureans. We have been advancing through Roman literature by way of genres, and come at the end to philosophy, which requires a special prologue. At its peak, *Greek* philosophy, especially in Plato and Aristotle, had tried out systematic speculation, and established a power of rigorous dialectic with imagination which has left its mark on the formal study of philosophy to this day. But there were other themes in Greek philosophy, most influentially the schools of Stoicism and Epicureanism which came to flower in the third century B.C. These two branches of thought devoted their attention to the moral life, though not without concern for the ontological background of the universe in which human behavior is framed. Both the Stoics and the Epicureans, with their emphases on self-discipline, moderation, and toleration, exercised huge influence on Roman society and culture.

The Meditations. All this by way of direct approach to Marcus Aurelius, for whom Stoicism was an inspiration and staff of support throughout a hectically busy life at the top of the social/administrative ladder. Marcus' philosophy is embedded in a single book, which he called *To Himself*, and which we call the *Meditations*, and which is a living masterpiece of Stoic—and broadly human—wisdom. We will return to the book. Who was the man?

The Life of Marcus Aurelius. Marcus Aurelius was born in Ucubi, south east of Cordoba, Spain, to a family of wealth and distinction. His great grandfather had been a Senator, while Marcus' mother had inherited great wealth from her own father. This was already the formula for success, and Marcus, following the expectations of his class and educational aspirations, moved to Rome, where he spent his formative youth years in a upscale neighborhood, the Caelian Hill. (It will have struck us all, in this class, that Rome served as the magnet for all its future luminaries, though the leaders of Roman literary culture hailed widely from distant parts of the Empire.)

Education. In Rome Marcus was home-schooled, as were all young men of his class and expectation. Attracted by the ideal of the 'philosopher,' he went through a stage of dressing in dark rough cloaks, and sleeping on the ground—occupational traits of one kind of 'ancient philosopher'—until falling under the influence of Fronto, whom the Emperor Hadrian appointed tutor to Marcus Aurelius, and who—himself a wealthy and independent scholar—remained a prudent and affectionate guide to Marcus Aurelius throughout his life. Marcus was studious as well as active, and seemed destined for a superior role in practical political administration.

Imperial succession. In 138 B.C. the Emperor Hadrian chose Antoninus Pius to succeed him—Hadrian morbidly concerned with the decline in his health. As part of the succession deal, Hadrian stipulated that Antoninus should adopt Marcus Aurelius as his son. Pursuant to that deal Antoninus, taken as all were by the abilities of Marcus Aurelius, passed a law permitting his 'son' to assume the (very important) role of *quaestor*, before the age of twenty-four; and from there on the Emperor made all the necessary maneuvers required to prep Marcus as *his* successor. In 161 the death of Antoninus Pius opened the way for (a thoroughly reluctant) Marcus Aurelius, to become the last of the Antonine Emperors.

The worries of ruling. We are making our way back to a book, *The Meditations*, which Marcus Aurelius jotted down 'to himself' in intervals of camp and court life between 170 A.D. and 180 A.D. By the time Marcus was pushed to that brilliant literary survival tactic, his reign had become more than difficult, and more than a challenge to a man who, though a quick learner and a brilliant 'ruler,' had a strong withdrawal streak of the private intellectual in him. (Marcus' reign had started well, but already in 162 A.D. Rome had been hit by devastating floods which had killed most of the livestock in the city, destroying whole settled areas, and setting off a long lasting famine which had to be countered by opening emergency grain supplies. Not much later the frontiers of the Empire fell under attack from a wide variety of Marcomanni, Quadi, Sarmatians, and Germanic tribes avid to get their pillaged share of the Imperial fruits. The worries of ruling soon beset Marcus Aurelius, who was above all conscientious, and the literary result is a world classic of Stoic wisdom and good sense. The end of his life was essentially the conclusion of this book, which, as you will see, was essentially his life turned inside out.

Supreme self-help book. You will have little trouble following the themes of this work, which highlight the importance of self-control, self-examination, indifference to petty behaviors, a sense of our cosmic setting, a refusal

to be bullied by the seeming urgency of the moment. No self-help book, on the shelves at Barnes and Noble, can light a candle to the wisdom of the *Meditations*.

Here is a passage from Book One, in which Marcus is praising his father, for the virtues he learned from him:

whenever any business upon some necessary occasion was to be put off and omitted before it could be ended, he was ever found, when he went back to the matter again, the same man that he was before. He was accurate in examination of things and in consultations, and patient in the hearing of others. He would not hastily give over a search into any matter, as one easy to be satisfied with sudden notions and apprehensions. He was careful to preserve his friends; nor at any time would he carry himself towards them with disdainful neglect, and grow weary of them; nor yet at any time would he be madly fond of them. He had a contented mind in all things, a cheerful countenance, care to foresee things afar off, and to take order for the least, without any noise or clamour.

Readings

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Hammond (New York, 2006.)

A Companion to Marcus Aurelius, ed. Van Ackeren (New York, 2012.)

Discussion questions

What explains the great attraction of Marcus Aurelius to Stoicism and Epicureanism? Do those philosophies contain the potential for the kinds of insight Saint Augustine (as a Christian) will instinctively work from? Does the Stoicism of Seneca—you may want to research this—resemble that of Marcus Aurelius?

In what ways is Marcus Aurelius' *To Himself* a response to the immediate pressures of his own life? What were those pressures? What finally was his attitude toward them?

Would you call Marcus Aurelius a philosopher, or a practical man of considerable wisdom? To answer this you would need to establish a working definition of 'philosopher,' which is not so easy. In Greco Roman times the philosopher was sometimes the sage, sometimes—as in Plato—the brilliant dialectician. What does 'philosopher' mean to us today?