

# History and Religion at the Service of Politics in Augustan Rome: A General Approach

Vaios Vaiopoulos  
vvaiop@ionio.gr

State religion in Rome does not constitute the fruit or the refuge of any metaphysical or deep thinking; at least it had never been confined in that only aspect. Roman religion, plain and practical like Roman people, averse to ecstatic cult and mysticism, emphasizing on the right keeping of a ritual procedure performed at the right place and time, practically constituted one aspect of the state, the *ius divinum*, which preserved the *pax deorum* by means of appropriate ceremonial. In the whole structure tradition, *auctoritas maiorum*, inherited ancestral cult and belief, in one word past, played a principal role.

On the other hand the interest in past, history (and the development of historiography) can by no means be considered as an early indication of what we nowadays call “science”, nor even a manifestation of the early rationalism attested in Greek 5<sup>th</sup> B.C. century which prepared the way for Herodotus, Thucydides and “Hippocrates”. Roman historiography is from its birth interweaved with politics, and so it remained throughout its course in the history of philology: an *ancilla* to the political activities of ambitious generals who craved to pay a tribute to their activity in favour to Rome so that they could be established as political personas who justifiably enjoy high honors and offices, or as good-willing Roman patriots whose main concern had been the accomplishment of the mission of Roman global sovereignty. A (frequently moralizing Roman) historian or politician is characterized of a love for the past along with a tendency of rhetorical description of this past drawing his inspiration from examples

and displaying a historical interest of the utilitarian kind<sup>1)</sup>. Historiography is up to a certain degree developed because it often serves an immediate political edge; and history, as memory of the past, is often employed in order to serve specific political objectives with tangible results.

In the same way, religion is constantly serviced because it benefits the personal life of the individual and the public life of the state. In the light of the above, after the civil wars the divine mission of Rome for a boundless overall sovereignty is turned into an idea seeking theoretical foundations. It is then when the cooperation of religion and history, often of Roman prehistory or proto-history, will be called to satisfy this chiefly political demand.

In this spirit, when Rome reaches a high level of maturity with regards its self-awareness and the awareness of its eminent role within a global scenery, the need for religious amendment becomes obvious, since traditional ways for preserving *pax deorum* seem to have faded or become ineffective. The connection between Roman grandeur, religion and traditional Roman *pietas* has been, certainly, a standard Roman political practice (since the time of the *Res Publica*) which contributed, even in its more plain form, in a method of political analysis of the Roman phenomenon. Polybius had already noticed the eminent role of *deisidaimonia* in holding together the Roman state, without denying that this feeling was a useful means of controlling the masses; he believes that it is exactly this human fear of the gods as well as the Roman concept of the divine that makes the greatest difference toward making the Roman state better<sup>2)</sup>. This is not about formal features of the Roman constitution but habits fostered by Roman institutions and mentality, just like the

---

1) Cf. W. den Boer, "Religion and Literature in Hadrian's Policy", *Mnemosyne*, ser.4:8:2 (1955), pp.127-128.

2) Polybius, *Hist.* 6.56.6-8 (Büttner-Wobst): *Μεγίστην δέ μοι δοκεῖ διαφορὰν ἔχειν τὸ Ῥωμαίων πολίτευμα πρὸς βέλτιον ἐν τῇ περὶ θεῶν διαλήψει. [7] καὶ μοι δοκεῖ τὸ παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὀνειδιζόμενον, τοῦτο συνέχειν τὰ Ῥωμαίων πράγματα, λέγω δὲ τὴν δεισιδαιμονίαν.* Cf. 3.1.2 ff.

Roman love for glory which accompanies an incredible military courage<sup>3</sup>). On the other hand, Scipio in Cicero's *De Republica* 2.27 (Mueller) sees religion not as a type of fear imposed by the aristocracy on the ignorant masses but as a form of moral education that was designed to turn the Romans from savagery to "humanity and gentleness"<sup>4</sup>). In his *Natura deorum* Cicero points out, like Polybius, that it is exactly this Roman devotion to religion that makes them superior to other nations<sup>5</sup>), demonstrating a clear religious character of Roman political life<sup>6</sup>), while military disasters, like the one in Trasumenum, can be attributed to the neglect of religion by the Romans<sup>7</sup>). Two centuries later Plutarch will accentuate on the faith shown by the Romans towards religious oath and especially towards Dea Roma and Zeus in the hymn he incorporates in *Titus Flamininus' Life*<sup>8</sup>).

- 
- 3) Elizabeth Asmis, "A New Kind of Model: Cicero's Roman Constitution in *De Re Publica*", *AJPh* 126 (2005), pp.380-381.
- 4) *Quibus rebus institutis ad humanitatem atque mansuetudinem revocavit animos hominum studiis bellandi iam immanis ac feros*. See also Asmis, op. cit., p.398.
- 5) Cic., *N.D.* 2.8 (Ax): *quorum exitio intellegi potest eorum imperiis rem publicam amplificatam qui religionibus paruisent. et si conferre volumus nostra cum externis, ceteris rebus aut pares aut etiam inferiores reperiemur, religione id est cultu deorum multo superiores*. Cf. 3.5: *Romulum auspiciis Numam sacris constitutis fundamenta iecisse nostrae civitatis, quae numquam profecto sine summa placatione deorum immortalium tanta esse potuisset*. Also cf. *Har.* 19 (Peterson): *cum deos esse intellexerit, non intellegat eorum numine hoc tantum imperium esse natum et auctum et retentum? Quam volumus licet, patres conscripti, ipsi nos amemus, tamen nec numero Hispanos nec robore Gallos nec calliditate Poenos nec artibus Graecos nec denique hoc ipso huius gentis ac terrae domestico nativoque sensu Italos ipsos ac Latinos, sed pietate ac religione atque hac una sapientia, quod deorum numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnis gentis nationesque superavimus*. Also Sall., *Cat.* 12.3 (Kurfess): *operae pretium est, quom domos atque villas cognoveris in urbium modum exaedificatas, visere templa deorum, quae nostri maiores, religiosissimi mortales, fecere*.
- 6) Cf. Maurilio Adriani, "Dea Roma", *Studi Romani* 3 (1955), p.385.
- 7) Cic., *N.D.* 2.8. See also B. C. Dietrich, "The Triumph of Barbarism and Religion – The Early Christians in the Roman World", *Acta classica* 18 (1975), p.78.
- 8) Plut., *Flam.* 16.7 (Ziegler): *Πίστιν δὲ Ῥωμαίων σέβομεν/ τὰν μεγαλευκοτάταν ὄρκους φιλάσσειν/ μέλπετε κοῦραι/ Ζῆνα μέγαν Ῥώμιαν τε Τίτον θάμα Ῥωμαίων τε*

The idea that a decline of religious feeling took place as Rome was becoming a universal power was generally established. This diminution of religiosity could be attributed to the coming of foreigners to Rome, the decay of family life, and the people's skepticism about religion<sup>9)</sup>. It should be mentioned however that the religiosity of the ancient Romans represents the impression that the later Romans had for their ancestors. The idea that ancient generations, when Rome was still small, used to be more pious than Romans during the Late Republic and the *principatus*, may haunt the thoughts, speeches and works of politicians, poets and historians, but the truth is that what is certain about ancient generations' *pietas* is the importance attributed to it as a principal factor of Rome's grandeur; but this dimension of course has to do with politics and how the latter conceive past and history.

This connection of religion, history and politics is never realized clearer and more consciously than during the Augustan period. What is special about this period with regards to the enforcement, the reinforcement or the confirmation of the good relations between religion and the Roman state is (apart from repairing the fault of gods' neglect ascertained by both poetry and historiography<sup>10)</sup>) that this religious reformation announced by Augustus was chosen to comprise (at least in the appearances) the revival of old customs.

---

Πίστιν' ἰήϊε Πατῶν, ὧ Τίτε σῶτερ.

- 9) Cf. Eli Edward Burriss, "The Misuse of Sacred Things at Rome", *Classical Weekly* 22 (1928:Oct.-1929:May), p.105.
- 10) See for example Hor., *Carm.* 1.35.33-38 (lamenting the disregard of sacred things on the part of the new generation), 3.6 (the Romans rule an empire because they acknowledge that they are subordinate to the gods, so till the temples of the gods are rebuilt, Rome is in danger), Liv. 3.20.5 (Livius deplors the neglect of the gods in Rome of his days), Cic., *De Republica* 5.1-2 (complaints about the neglect of old *mores*). Cf. Spencer Cole, "Cicero, Ennius, and the concept of apotheosis at Rome", *Arethusa* 39 (2006), pp.532-533 and 533, note 6, Eli Edward Burriss, "The Misuse of Sacred Things at Rome", p.107, Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did, A Source Book in Roman Social History*, New York – Oxford 1988, pp.391-392, David Armstrong, *Horace*, New Haven and London 1989, pp.99-100.

In addition to this, the awareness of the importance of such a religion's revival project is extremely high: an evident proof of this dimension can be found in the fact that Augustus' program will function as a model for next religious reformations as that attempted by Hadrian many decades later<sup>11)</sup>. The recognition of Rome's divine mission is effectuated by a reconnection with the distant Roman past, by the appeal to or the exploitation of historical memory, or, when the latter appears to be deficient or weakened, by the reinforcement or even the shaping, the formation of historical memory. The outcome, as recorded in the history of literature, is that all the literary production of the era does not cease to ostensibly exhibit, more than any other time, its tight bonds with the Roman historical institutions, remaining implicated in the maintenance of an aristocratic hegemony<sup>12)</sup>, now connected more than ever with a specific personage, that of Rome's last benefactor.

Virgil will consent to the composition of a historical and mythological epic which will consistently bring back in its verse the solid affinities between Rome, its founders, its heroes, its last savior and new founder of course, and the divine element, fishing in the murky waters of its historical-mythological past. He never lets the reader forget that he/she is reading about customs and practices that during past generations have offered a great deal to Rome.

Horace, defining or re-defining the boundaries of Romanness, will not hesitate to "moderate" or to "distort" its contemporary "history"<sup>13)</sup>, while poets who have firmly claimed their right to remain at the service of a more private art, dedicated to the present and private affairs, like

---

11) Cf. Francis R. Walton, "Religious thought in the age of Hadrian", *Numen* 4:3 (1957:Sept.), p.166.

12) Cf. Thomas N. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature, Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome*, Princeton, New Jersey 1998, pp.35-36 and 102 on the necessity and function of Latin literature.

13) See for example Hor., *Carm.* 1.37, which contains many "false elements" along with admitting a role of Italy in Rome's military successes. See also Habinek, *op. cit.*, p.90.

Propertius and Tibullus, will not get away with it in the end; they will pay the due tribute to public affairs and Augustan cosmogony; they will take a break from their total occupation with their private matters and will take a poetic look at the Roman present that unfolds before their very eyes and travel to the Roman myths and the Roman proto-history, although, especially Propertius, did not avoid being accused of anti-augustanism: the presence of Augustan ideals in elegiac poetry of course, as the Roman echo of Virgil's and Horace's verses can by no means be considered as a plain compromise to political propaganda<sup>14</sup>.

The nostalgic account of traditional institutions will find its most complete form in the extended prose-epic by Titus Livius, apart from the *Aeneid*: appearing to advance the foundation of the city as the boundary between *fabula* and *historia*<sup>15</sup>), he dives in old and traditional institutions, narrates events of the ancient times, and this activity of his makes the author be under the influence of the ancient spirit, although, as he admits, modern times are characterized by religious indifference<sup>16</sup>); Livius will not omit to state that Roman nation is most entitled among other nations to claim its divine origin as a superiority trait vis-à-vis other nations as well as emphasizing on its "sanctity" in comparison with other peoples<sup>17</sup>.

Last but not least: Varro's work, which dives into forgotten or unexplored areas of the past, must be considered as a prerequisite to the work of renovation and religion revival. It is true that Augustus endeavored in his renovation project based on the latter work.

---

14) Cf. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Propaganda and Dissent? Augustan Moral Legislation and the Love-Poets", *Klio* 67:1 (1985), pp.180-184.

15) Liv. 1 pr. 6-7. See also D.C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic, Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*, Oxford 1993, p.257.

16) Liv. 43.13.1-2 (Weissenborn-Heraeus): *non sum nescius ab eadem neclegentia, quia nihil deos portendere uulgo nunc credant, neque nuntiari admodum ulla prodigia in publicum <ne>que in annales referri. ceterum et mihi uetustas res scribenti nescio quo pacto anticus fit animus, et quaedam religio tenet, quae illi prudentissimi uiri publice suscipienda censuerint, ea pro <in>dignis habere, quae in meos annales referam. Cf. 1 pr. 9.*

17) Liv. 1 pr. 1-12.

This reconnection of Rome back to its roots is effectuated by Octavian within the margins of a larger renovation and state religion revival project<sup>18)</sup> after the civil wars — an undoubtedly ambitious project. The stirring of authentic religious emotion, together with planned and meditated activities from the part of the government were the prerequisites for the success of this project<sup>19)</sup>. The revival of religion goes hand in hand with the reconnection to the past; Horace's appeal to the deified-personified notions of *Pax*, *Honos*, *Virtus*, *Pudor* and *Fides*<sup>20)</sup> in the poem which officially expressed the coming of the new era<sup>21)</sup>, preserves an insistent mention of the past along with revealing a solid connection of religion and politics, undoubtedly desired by the *princeps*: it is the past virtues (as adjective *priscus* indicates) those recalled, confirming this continuous connection of *sacrum*, *civile* and past; but these past virtues constitute the “now” of postwar Rome<sup>22)</sup>.

The renewal of the alliance with the divine element goes hand in hand with the enactment of new alliances with history and the memory of a past which had probably faded off: in some cases this obscurity of the remote past was convenient for its reshaping according to the new era's demands, so that the new ideas are better served and the new political credos are more efficiently projected. An extended and systematic project of restoration and reconstruction of temples which were in danger of dilapidation as a result of many years of negligence<sup>23)</sup> effectuates this

---

18) L.P. Wilkinson, *The Roman Experience*, London 1974, pp.100-101.

19) On the sincerity of religious sentiment, see for example Franz Altheim, *A History of Roman Religion*, Translated by Harold Mattingly, London 1938, pp.369 ff.

20) Hor., *Saec.* 57-60 (Klingner): *iam Fides et Pax et Honos Pudorque/ priscus et neglecta redire Virtus/ audet adparetque beata pleno/ Copia cornu.*

21) Maurilio Adriani, “Pax Romana: figura storica e valore religioso”, *Studi Romani* 5 (1957), p.378.

22) Michael C.J. Putnam, *Horace's Carmen Saeculare, Ritual Magic and the Poet's Art*, New Haven and London 2000, pp.81 and 84.

23) Livius praises Octavian as a founder and restorer of every temple in 4.20.7: *hoc*

connection between religion, politics and history in a tangible and visible way. After all, Roman altars and temples were historical monuments — may be more than places dedicated to gods' worship; the consecration of a temple was a political act exactly as the founding of a city (or of the City) must have been a fact of religious character<sup>24)</sup>.

Augustus himself boasts about the reliability and the effectuality of this restoration project<sup>25)</sup>, which also took care of the conservation of the once restored buildings<sup>26)</sup>. Suetonius saying, that Octavian received Rome as a

---

*ego cum Augustum Caesarem, templorum omnium conditorem aut restitutorem, ingressum aedem Feretri Iouis quam uetustate dilapsam refecit, se ipsum in thorace linteo scriptum legisse audissem, prope sacrilegium ratus sum Cosso spoliolorum suorum Caesarem, ipsius templi auctorem, subtrahere testem. Cf. Nep., Att. 20.3 (Marshall): ex quo accidit, cum aedis Iouis Feretrii in Capitolio, ab Romulo constituta, uetustate atque incuria detecta prolaberetur, ut Attici admonitu Caesar eam reficiendam curaret.*

- 24) Cf. Maurilio Adriani, "“Traditio” romana e culto della “Fides”", *Studi Romani* 4 (1956), p.387 on the consecration of Fides' temple.
- 25) Aug., *Res Gestae* 20 (Riccobono): *Capitolium et Pompeium theatrum utrumque opus impensa grandi retecti sine ulla inscriptione nominis mei. Rivos aquarum compluribus locis uetustate labentes refeci, et aquam quae Marcia appellatur duplicavi fonte novo in riuum eius inmisso. Forum Iulium et basilicam quae fuit inter aedem Castoris et aedem Saturni, coepta profligataque opera a patre meo, perfeci et eandem basilicam consumptam incendio, ampliata eius solo, sub titulo nominis filiorum meorum incohavi, et, si uiuus non perfecissem, perfici ab heredibus meis iussi. Duo et octoginta templa deum in urbe consul sextum ex auctoritate senatus refeci nullo praetermisso quod eo tempore refici debebat. Consul septimum uiam Flaminiam ab urbe Ariminum refeci pontesque omnes praeter Muluuium et Minucium. Cf. 6 (App.): *Refecit Capitolium sacrasque aedes numero octoginta duas, theatrum Pompei, aquarum riuos, uiam Flaminiam.* During his sixth consulship, in 28 B.C., 82 temples were rebuilt and no-one needing repair was neglected.*
- 26) Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 53.2.4-5 (Boissevain): *καὶ τὰ μὲν ἱερά τὰ Αἰγύπτια οὐκ ἐσεδέξατο εἶσω τοῦ πωμηρίου, τῶν δὲ δὴ νεῶν πρόνοιαν ἐποιήσατο· τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ὑπ' ἰδιωτῶν τιμῶν γεγενημένους τοῖς τε παισὶν αὐτῶν καὶ τοῖς ἐκγόνοις, εἶγε τινὲς περιῆσαν, ἐπισκευάσαι ἐκέλευσε, τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς αὐτὸς ἀνεκτέησατο. οὐ μὲντοι καὶ τὴν δόξαν τῆς οἰκοδομήσεώς σφῶν ἐσφετερίσατο ἀλλ' ἀπέδωκεν αὐτοῖς τοῖς κατασκευάσασιν αὐτούς.* The supervision of the temples' or *sacra's* conservation was entrusted to the descendants of those who had consecrated those temples in the first place: religious acts remain always within a tight connection to the past.

city of plinth and turned it into a marble city<sup>27)</sup> can be no truer than in the case of restored religious sacra. “Plinth” Roman past, clad in the resilience of marble, is no longer in danger of wearing out.

Still, this is not only about the remote past that is recalled through this ambitious reconstruction program. It is more than true of course, as mentioned before, that Roman temples served not only as the sites for ritual activity of Roman religion, but also as monuments in which glorious Roman past and Roman history was exposed to the new generations’ eyes. Let us remind that temples were vowed during the Republic at crucial historical moments, on the occasion of a war victory, as a means to gain a victory in the battle’s field or to avoid a state’s disaster. Inscriptions often played the role of memorizing the exact circumstances of the consecration and mainly the person — the general or the magistrate — who was responsible for this religious and political act. Consequently, the visitors of a temple or an altar are easily conducted to remember both the specific person who built the temple and the specific event it commemorates, and thus linked or re-linked to Roman past<sup>28)</sup>.

However, the rebuilding of a temple or a monument means that this same monument possesses a “second” past, a second anniversary, that of the reconstruction: the impact of the reconstruction, especially of an enormous reconstruction project, is so intense that it can create an almost brand new past, as the visitor does not need to know the history of the original building and is easy to recall the history of the new building<sup>29)</sup>; this is something perfectly realized when the *natalis dies* of the restored temple is different from that of the old monument, but is also effectuated even if the restorer, as Augustus wittily did in many cases, takes care that the words of old inscriptions were preserved at the new building, a

---

27) Suet., *Aug.* 28.3 (Ihm): *Vrbem neque pro maiestate imperii ornatam et inundationibus incendiisque obnoxiam excoluit adeo, ut iure sit gloriatus marmoream se relinquere, quam latericiam accepisset.*

28) Cf. the most useful and erudite article of Eric Orlin, “Augustan Religion and the Reshaping of Roman Memory”, *Arethusa* 40 (2007), pp.82-83.

29) See Orlin, *op. cit.*, pp.83-84.

practice adopted by Hadrian too, who had Augustus as his model in religious program, the Pantheon being the most famous example<sup>30)</sup>.

The choice by Augustus of specific temples to be reconstructed first may be indicative of his political goals: the first monuments to be restored were those which recalled a remote, sometimes pre-Roman past, not necessarily the most eminent and important edifices; Jupiter Feretrius', Victoria's, and Saturn's temples are eloquent examples of what became first Augustus' care. The aim could be that revealed by the persistent return to prehistory and proto-history effectuated by poets like Virgil as well. By evoking this era with the first temples to be rebuilt in Rome, Augustus was led himself and leading his contemporaries to a time when there were no specifically Roman connections to these temples, since Rome did not yet practically exist<sup>31)</sup>. The result may be that a new concept of Romanness and Roman identity is shaped (or reshaped), not tightly associated with the specific place of the *Urbs*, but connected to what could belong equally to all who inhabited the entire Italian peninsula<sup>32)</sup>.

The revival of sacred (also important from the point of view of history) places is coupled with the revival of customs and ceremonies: the ceremony of *auguratorium salutis* and, in general, an important part from the ancient sacred protocol makes a dynamic comeback<sup>33)</sup>. The reorganization of priests' *collegia*<sup>34)</sup> is a token of a religious involvement, with serious and clear political ramifications, since those hieratic "societies" were used to be a useful tool through which aristocracy could actively demonstrate its devout loyalty to the emperor. At the same time the *princeps* had the chance to remunerate the most distinguished supporters of his from those

---

30) Walton, op. cit., p.166.

31) See Orlin, op. cit., p.84.

32) See Orlin, op. cit., pp.84-85.

33) See, for example, Prop. 4.1.19-36, 4.6, 4.9, 4.10, Ov., *Fast.* passim.

34) Augustus used the *Fetiales* in order to declare war against Cleopatra, so the *bellum* against her was not only morally but also typically *iustum*. He also reorganized *Salii*, *Sodales Titi*, *fratres Arvales*.

of humble origin by introducing them in a “high society”: the aristocracy, the live representatives of Roman past, have the opportunity to pay homage to the new reality, to the present which is being shaped by the new founder of Rome, the person who guarantees a limitless Roman future. At the same time, the new, coming from a humble origin, *benefactores reipublicae* (and mainly Augustus’ followers), with their participation in the reborn institution of hieratic “societies” are equally connected with Roman past, making up for their own defect thanks to this sponsored by Augustus voyage of theirs into history<sup>35)</sup>.

The creation of new altars, like the one of *Pax Augusta* in 13 B.C., is accompanied by the representation of many scenes from the arrival of Aeneas in Italy and from the childhood of the founder Romulus, while the representation of deified–personified notions, like Peace and Victory, already since 27 B.C. and onwards, brings back into the light an aspect of Roman religiousness former to the Greek influence. The common parameter of all those active manifestations of revived Roman piety was that they all fed the traditional view that the evolution of Roman grandeur came gradually, from its dawn to the then present days, from the preservation of *pax deorum*.

The second element almost always obvious in all these cases is that the connection attempted is not simply to Roman past but especially to remote Roman past, to a period when there was not yet a narrowly defined sense of what it meant to be Roman<sup>36)</sup>. There is steadily a silent but visible association of Augustus’ era directly with the time of Romulus and the foundation of Rome, while elements from the period between these poles are not emphasized. The *pietas* owed to gods is related to the one owed to ancestors, Roman past in general, but mainly to the “deep” Roman origins; history becomes the substantial parameter for national self-identification and the feeder of religious piety, which had supported the progress during

---

35) Cf. Peter Garnsey–Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire, Economy, Society and Culture*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1987, pp.163-164.

36) Cf. Orlin, op. cit., p.85.

past centuries and which is hoped to support the new high peak promised by the “new founder”, the new “*oikistēs*”.

The latter will choose to be incorporated in history as a basic figure in the canvas woven by Virgil’s verse, continuing from the point where important historical Roman figures make their entry, assuming the role of the savior, equivalent to the roles credited by history to Decii and Marcelli, but mainly having, through his acts, an important effect on Roman developments, the same as Romulus, Aeneas or Camillus: Augustus in the *Aeneid* possesses the recognized historical weight and historicity of Camillus or Marcellus; on top of that, now, that the history of the city starts anew, he is also in possession of the gifts, the rights and the privileges of the maker and creator, the founder, a role usually constricted to mythological or divine personas.

If people’s belief that Romulus’ divine birth (as son of Mars) and his apotheosis was not due to ignorant credulity but was a reasonable interpretation of Romulus’ outstanding virtue<sup>37)</sup>, which had been demonstrated in the obscurity of a remote past, as we read in *De Republica*<sup>38)</sup>, this same reason exists for Augustus too. The connection of Augustus with the mythological and historically blurry times of the foundation of Rome, his connecting to the “beginning of history” will give him the chance to connect himself to an area where mortal, heroic and divine elements are considered to be in vicinity, closely related. On the other hand, it will give the chance for myth to come back into the visible world for Augustus’ contemporaries: in this way myth, legend, is established, beyond any doubt, as history.

Parallel to the religious reawakening, a kind of historical awakening is thoroughly and systematically pursued. This awakening is estimated to feed and boost up national pride, an essential element for every fresh start or launch of any important task, such as the re-foundation of Rome. As expected, after gods, it is now the turn of historical and mythological

---

37) Asmis, op. cit., p.398.

38) Cic., *De Republica* 2.4 and 17-19.

heroes to be paid homage to. Art, in all its forms is the means fittest for this purpose. A demonstration of those heroes' representations along with a brief epigraph informing the public about their braveries takes place near the temple of *Mars Ultor*, while at the same time the poets under the influence of the Augustan project have made sure that they have praised the heroes in question and that they have also presented them as *exempla* of heroic comportment in their verses.

Virgil<sup>39)</sup> will be the first to follow the standard set by Ennius; Horace will point out the power of literature with relation to the immortalisation of braveries and the good fame of the heroes<sup>40)</sup> and, finally, prose will take up this work, mainly Livius<sup>41)</sup>. The past *virtus* is praised and demonstrated in sites and citations which lay at the vicinity of Roman poetry's *loci* and the *loca* showing the traditional Roman *pietas*<sup>42)</sup>.

In the same way, the parade of personalities of Roman proto-history and mythology in *Aeneid's* 6<sup>th</sup> Book reaches a climax in Augustus' *principatus*<sup>43)</sup>, while the Virgilian Underworld will hold a place for *impia arma* in Hell<sup>44)</sup>. Even Livius<sup>45)</sup>, who is rather less loyal to the *princeps* than Virgil<sup>46)</sup>, at some point alludes to a similarity between the braveries of the

---

39) Verg., *Aen.* 6.824 ff. (a list of heroes' names). See the interpretation by Wendell Clausen, *Virgil's Aeneid. Decorum Allusion, and Ideology*, München – Leipzig 2002, pp.125-129 on the presence of particular figures in this passage.

40) Hor., *Carm.* 4.8.13 ff. (see a comment on the poet's self-consciousness in Michael C.J. Putnam, *Artifices of Eternity, Horace's Fourth Book of Odes*, Ithaca and London 1986, pp.147-151), 3.30. See also 1.12 (another list of heroes' names).

41) Kenneth Quinn, *Horace: the Odes, edited with introduction, revised text and commentary*, London 1980, p.314, comm. on 4.8.13-22.

42) Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford 1939, pp.446-449.

43) Verg., *Aen.* 6.791-805.

44) Verg., *Aen.* 6.612 ff. See Anton Powell, *Virgil the Partisan, A study in the re-integration of Classics*, Swansea 2008, pp.136 ff. for an interpretation involving traditional Roman *pietas* and Roman politics during the period of the civil wars.

45) Gary B. Miles, *Livy, Reconstructing Early Rome*, Ithaca and London 1995, p.97.

46) On a general characterization of Livius' stance towards Octavian see D.Z. Nikitas, "Augustus and 'non committed' literature", in *Literature and Politics in*

“founders” Hercules, Romulus, Numa, Camillus and Augustus<sup>47)</sup>, widening at the same time the limits of Romanness, a central and recurring problem in Roman culture in general<sup>48)</sup>: Hercules is a rather ecumenical figure, Romulus is the leader who used Tatius’ alliance in inaugurating the new *civitas*, Numa is a non-Roman<sup>49)</sup>.

Whatever was left unspecified by the *scriptura* of poets and writers, it was later specified, for those not initiated in poetry, by the *pictura* of sculptors and painters and vice versa. The emperor himself took care to build a magnificent temple of *Mars Ultor*<sup>50)</sup> in order to establish for good his connection with emblematic figures of the Roman past: the temple’s garden was decorated with statues of great Romans of the past. The objective was openly “educational”: every young Roman who served in the army for the first time should worship the god in this temple<sup>51)</sup>; it’s not difficult to imagine how impressed all those young men were by all those marble *exempla* surrounding the temple. The connection between religion and the Roman heroic past in that particular place was thus made felt with the most tangible way, as evident was also the inclusion of religion and Roman history in a national policy clearly connected to the emperor’s personal political strategy.

The revival of traditional Roman deities’ worship mentioned above, like the recurrence to the roots of Roman proto-history was only one aspect of the reformation plan, which aimed at connecting the new Rome to its past in an immediate and apparent way. However, the revival of religiousness

---

*the Age of Augustus, 1<sup>st</sup> Greek Colloquium of Latin Studies, Ioannina 5-6 November 1982, Ioannina 1984, p.159 (in modern Greek) .*

47) Liv. 1.7.9 (Hercules), 1.8.1 (Romulus), 5.49 (Camillus as *parens patriae conditorque alter urbis*).

48) Cf. Habinek, op. cit., p.86.

49) Camillus’ connotations are various. See for example Clausen, op. cit., pp.135-139.

50) Aug., *Res Gestae* 21.

51) Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 55.10.2-3.

takes place with its expansion in new fields and with the comprisal of new deities in its sphere. Augustus makes sure that he connects personally his position with the Roman state religion by conceding an outstanding place to the worship of gods who were indeed or were supposed to be connected to his career, for instance Mars and Apollo. It's not only about the long ago attempted enrichment of the Roman pantheon under the Greek influence; it was the figures in any way related to the *princeps* that were more emphatically projected.

The founding of the famous temple of Apollo on the Palatine hill in 36 B.C. and the construction of an exceptional library right next to it<sup>52)</sup>, which finished in 28 B.C., are accompanied by the spreading of the rumour that Apollo Phoebus himself makes an appearance in a crucial moment at the naval battle of Actium and intervenes in favour of Octavian's Roman *arma*, offering him the victory against the (also Roman) Antonius' *arma*<sup>53)</sup>.

Contemporary literature adds the final touch to this ideological "fresco" of political positions in the same way that the library on the Palatine hill supplements the constructional intervention of the establishment of the temple on the same hill. The literary production which is friendly to the regime, will swim in the waters of recent history in order to establish the new role of Apollo in the people's conscience, when the latter is called to bless the Roman weapons against other weapons, which are also Roman:

---

52) Suet., *Aug.* 29.3: *templum Apollinis in ea parte Palatinae domus excitavit, quam fulmine ictam desiderari a deo haruspices pronuntiarant; addidit porticus cum bibliotheca Latina Graecaque, quo loco iam senior saepe etiam senatum habuit decuriasque iudicum recognovit.*

53) Prop. 4.6.27-68. On Venus' (ambiguous) appearance in Pompey's dream before Pharsalus' battle and her association with Caesar as his *Genetrix*, see Appianus, *B.C.* 2.10.68-69, Plut., *Pomp.* 68.2. See also Mary Beard, John North, Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, Volume 1, *A History*, Cambridge 1998, p.145 and Frederick M. Ahl, "The Shadows of a Divine Presence in the Pharsalia", *Hermes* 102 (1974), pp.575 and 566-590, who comments on the rather implicit presence (a certain presence though) of the divine in Lucan's epic. The claim that a politician enjoyed the special bounty of a deity is not of course rare at all. See Ahl, op. cit., pp.575-576 on Sulla's cognomen "*Felix*" insinuating his close association with Venus. See also Plut., *Sulla* 34.1-3, cf. *Brut.* 37.1-7 (Cassius' "rational" words, trying to calm down Brutus), Sen., *De Clementia* 1.26.5, *De Providentia* 3.7.

the omission of the Roman origin or conscience of Octavian's opponents should be realized in silent and plausible manner and had to be efficiently disclosed under an appropriate pretext.

The "facts" provided a good opportunity for the defenders of the supposed Octavian's privileged relation with Apollo, already advertised in Virgil's fourth (the less bucolic<sup>54</sup>) poem of the *Eclogae*<sup>55</sup>, to prove their point: the 31 B.C. victory had taken place next to an Apollo's temple, so it was rather easy to support the claim that this god had favoured the later on called Augustus and that he led him to such a great success. Undoubtedly, the success first of all appertains to Rome: the victory of the Roman weapons, which happen to be identified to those belonging to Octavian, is a result of the faith in Apollo, as contemporary literature proclaims<sup>56</sup>. In this spirit, the narration concerning Actium becomes in the same degree national and religious, as from one hand we have Rome and all the gods of Italy and the civilized world, and on the other hand we have the terrifying deities of Egypt, as Virgil<sup>57</sup> but also the usually reluctant

---

54) Cf. Philip Hardie, *Virgil*, Oxford 1998 (Greek transl. by Irini Mitousi, ed. Vassilis Fyntikoglou, Thessaloniki 2005), p.30.

55) Verg., *Ecl.* 4.10 (Mynors): *tuus iam regnat Apollo* (40 B.C.). See Jacques Perret, *Virgile, Les Bucoliques, Édition, introduction et commentaire*, Paris 1961, p.49, comm. on v. 4.10. On the hint about the dominance of Octavian hidden in 4.10, and also on Apollo's links with both Julius Caesar and Octavian, see Powell, op. cit., pp.210 and 223-224, note 61. Cf. Henri Goelzer, *Virgile, Bucoliques*, Paris 1925, pp.45-46, and Antonio La Penna (introduzione) – Luca Canali (traduzione e note), *Virgilio Bucolico*, Milano 2000, p.93 for a different interpretation.

56) See for example Prop. 4.6.57 (Barber): *uincit Roma fide Phoebi*.

57) Verg., *Aen.* 8.698-706: *omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis/ contra Neptunum et Venerem contraque Mineruam/ tela tenent. saeuit medio in certamine Mauors/ caelatus ferro, tristesque ex aethere Dirae,/ et scissa gaudens uadit Discordia palla,/ quam cum sanguineo sequitur Bellona flagello./ Actius haec cernens arcum intendebat Apollo/ desuper; omnis eo terrore Aegyptus et Indi,/ omnis Arabs, omnes uertebant terga Sabaei*. See Powell, op. cit., p.140 on the support offered by Roman and Italian people and gods to Octavian, while no Roman support is mentioned for Antony. The polarity between the civilized world and the barbarians reminds of the Herodotean portrayal of Xerxes confronting the Greeks. See Charles Rowan Beye, *Homer, Apollonius, Virgil*, Ithaca and London 1993, p.241. Cf. L.P. Wilkinson, *Horace and his Lyric Poetry*, London 1968, pp.67 ff.

vis-à-vis warfare and relevant history Propertius<sup>58)</sup> both confirm<sup>59)</sup>.

The recent “fact” of the victory in a “non-battle” is embellished by different narrations concerning the divine intervention in favour of the “Chosen one”, who acts in favour of the “Chosen State”, in such a degree, so that this divine intervention, through the simple presence of a nearby Apollo’s temple in Actium (undoubtedly present, visible and tangible of course), acquires the same historicity as the actual military activity of the protagonists. At the end of the day, god was no less absent from Actium than Octavian himself!

Phoebus was certainly a deity of Greek origin and its name of Greek etymology; he had been however quite Romanized, even though he hadn’t been so emphatically worshiped, at least earlier on, as a devout supporter of Roman state. Even though in ancient times the national spirit of Rome used to acquire its substance through its opposition to the Greek element, invoking the biggest Greek deities to be supportive to justice and morality was to the benefit of the Roman case. In this light, war in Actium acquires the meaning of the ultimate and highest conflict between East and West, an encounter between civilisation and barbarism. Rome becomes from occupier of the Greek spirit, its protector; in this way, *aeterna Urbs*

---

The representation of Augustus on the great shield of Book 8 is designed of course to promote an analogy between Octavian and Aeneas, as elsewhere in the epic. See A.J. Boyle, “The canonic text: Virgil’s *Aeneid*”, in A.J. Boyle (ed.), *Roman Epic*, London and New York 1996, p.83. This same scheme of antithesis is often used by Horace, as in the case of *Carm.* 1.37 (a conflict between Octavian and Cleopatra but also between Rome and Egypt, West and East, new and old). See Helen Caramalengou, “Lyricism and political discourse in Horace”, in *Literature and Politics in the Age of Augustus*, 1<sup>st</sup> Greek Colloquium of Latin Studies, Ioannina 5-6 November 1982, Ioannina 1984, p.84 (in modern Greek).

58) Yet, the seriousness of this Propertius’ attempt to write on Actium has been largely doubted by scholars. Cf. Prop. 3.11.41-46: *ausa Ioui nostro latrantem opponere Anubim,/ et Tiberim Nili cogere ferre minas,/ Romanamque tubam crepitanti pellere sistro,/ baridos et contis rostra Liburna sequi,/ foedaque Tarpeio conopia tendere saxo,/ iura dare et statuas inter et arma Mari!*

59) Cf. W.A. Camps, *An Introduction to Virgil’s Aeneid*, Oxford 1969, p.99.

(according to Tibullus' characterization<sup>60</sup>) bolsters its own global character and civilisation to an important degree. A god of indelible Greek origins, who until then was rather known and mainly recognised as doctor<sup>61</sup>, becomes a god-protector of Augustus<sup>62</sup> and the whole Roman *civitas*, a representative of peace<sup>63</sup>, of civilisation<sup>64</sup>, of the new regime and of the new reality in Rome and the whole world.

The Roman Empire is part of a divine project, according to Virgil<sup>65</sup> (and

---

60) Tib. 2.5.23.

61) Liv. 4.25.3 (Conway–Walters): *pestilentia eo anno aliarum rerum otium praebuit. aedis Apollini pro ualetudine populi uota est*. Cf. Powell, op. cit., p.223, note 61, who points out that Apollo, before Augustus, had been worshipped in the specialized role of Apollo Medicus. See also Putnam, *Horace's Carmen Saeculare...*, pp.69 ff.

62) Augustus seemed to believe sincerely that Apollo was his personal tutor; this belief of his was reinforced by the fact that Vediovis (who had often been identified with Apollo), was worshipped by the *Gens Iulia* (cf. Mary Beard, John North, Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, Volume 2, *A Sourcebook*, Cambridge 1998, p.17). A particular cult in regard to this god had been undertaken by Octavian not later than 38-37. See Virginio Cremona, "L'ode seconda del libro primo di Orazio: analisi storica e strutturale", *Aevum* 50:1/2 (1976:genn./apr.), p.93, note 5. Later on (17 B.C.), Horace will evoke Apollo again in the *Carmen Saeculare* (34), poetically using the fact that the Palatine deities were both Greek and Roman, while Suetonius will write that Augustus was considered as god's son. See also Gordon Williams, *Horace*, Oxford 1980, p.43 and Caramalengou, op. cit., p.90 on Apollo's presence in *Carmen Saeculare*.

63) Cf. Hor., *Carm.* 1.31.17-20: *frui paratis et valido mihi, / Latoe, dones et precor integral cum mente nec turpem senectam / degere nec cithara carentem*. The poet, instead of asking for wealth or power, as a genuine Epicurean, he prays to be healthy and in good mental condition when he gets old so that he can continue on working with his poetry. But the ideal of peace corresponds to what the *princeps* was expected to offer to people's demands. See Caramalengou, op. cit., p.91.

64) Tib. 2.5.79-82 (Lenz–Galinsky): *Haec fuerunt olim, sed tu iam mitis, Apollo, / Prodigia indomitae merge sub aequoribus, / Et succensa sacris crepitet bene laurea flammis, / Omine quo felix et sacer annus erit*.

65) Verg., *Aen.* 1.254 ff. Aeneas' eventual foundation of his line in Italy is totally secured by Jupiter's prophecy. See for example C.J. Mackie, *The Characterisation of Aeneas*, Edinburgh 1988, p.31 and Feeney, op. cit., p.153 referring to Jupiter's calming power along with his role as the beneficent controller of the elements.

Horace<sup>66</sup>), especially in the *Odes*<sup>67</sup>), who claims that Jupiter was the founder of Roman religion<sup>68</sup>), admitting the role of prophetic utterances to Roman religious system<sup>69</sup>). These poets have often fished their arguments from the recent facts of political history which had been sometimes formed in a way to facilitate the creation of symbols — a perennial resource for poetry in general after all. Propertius will follow, at least in the appearances, his most famous colleagues by composing el. 4.6. The poem, which as a result of Callimachean influence starts with the praise of a temple<sup>70</sup>) and, as a token of aetiological poetry moves on to focusing on a central point for Roman history (the victory in Actium) is completed with the prediction and the expression of hope on behalf of the poet concerning the global domination of Rome<sup>71</sup>) even beyond the borders initially set by the prudent leader, Augustus himself; according to ancient historiography, the latter is said to exhibit a preference to internal reconstruction rather than the military conquest of new areas<sup>72</sup>). Towards the end of the poem in

---

66) See J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion*, Oxford 1979, pp.87-90.

67) See for example Hor., *Carm.* 1.12.13-19.

68) Verg., *Aen.* 12.830-840.

69) Cf. Orlin, op. cit., p.74. Cf. also Cic., *De divinatione* 1.1 and especially 25. See also for example Eli Edward Burriss, "Cicero's Religious Unbelief", *Classical Weekly* 17 (1923:Oct.-1924:May), pp.101-103 on Cicero's probable skepticism about divination.

70) On the above mentioned Apollo's temple on the Palatine, on the occasion of its inauguration in 16 B.C. see Prop. 4.6.11-12.

71) Prop. 4.6.79-84: *hic referat sero confessum foedere Parthum:/ 'Reddat signa Remi, mox dabit ipse sua:/ siue aliquid pharetris Augustus parcat Eois,/ differat in pueros ista tropaea suos./ gaude, Crasse, nigras si quid sapis inter harenas:/ ire per Euphraten ad tua busta licet.'*

72) See for example M. Rostovtzeff, *A History of the Ancient World*, Vol. II: *Rome*, translated from the Russian by I.D. Duff, Elias J. Bickerman, Oxford 1960 (Greek translation by B. Kalfoglou, Athens 1984), pp.206-207, Lucien Jerphagnon, *Histoire de la Rome antique, Les armes et les mots*, Paris 1987, pp.218 ff. See also Suet., *Aug.* 25.4: *nihil autem minus [in]perfecto duci quam festinationem temeritatemque conuenire arbitrabatur. crebro itaque illa iactabat: σπευδε βραδέως: ἀσφαλής γάρ ἐστ' ἀμείνων ἢ θρασὺς στρατηλάτης* et: 'sat celeriter fieri quidquid fiat

question, which, even if it flirts with misunderstanding and irony<sup>73)</sup>, deals with contemporary facts of Roman history, the usually reluctant to set himself at the service of the political Roman propaganda elegiac poet finally chooses to inject in his verses a prophetic mood reminiscent of the prophecies by Anchises<sup>74)</sup> in the national epic of the Augustan era.

The emphasis on the worship of Mars during the same period is explained through the same line of thinking. The virtues attested by the historical course of the god at the side of Rome go beyond the battle field: Mars had been established as giving life to Rome, additionally, thanks to the protection he provided to agriculture, i.e. he was related to both basic elements of the character of the ancient Romans, their agricultural and military nature. The recurrence to the distant and more recent past offered an already ready material for the utilisation of his persona in the political field, both that of national and that of strictly personal Augustan politics. The enrichment of the personality of this god with an avenger trait (*Ulltor*) in order to stress out the necessity of punishment of the murderer of Octavian's step father, Julius<sup>75)</sup>, but also the need to satisfy the public indignation about the disasters inflicted on Rome by external enemies<sup>76)</sup>,

---

*satis bene'. proelium quidem aut bellum suscipiendum omnino negabat, nisi cum maior emolumentum spes quam damni metus ostenderetur. nam minima commoda non minimi sectantis discrimine similes aiebat esse aureo hamo piscantibus, cuius abrupti damnum nulla captura pensari posset. Cf. Tac., Ann. 1.11.*

- 73) See for example Gordon Williams, "Poetry in the moral climate of Augustan Rome", *JRS* 52 (1962), p.43.
- 74) The elegiac's prophecies, of course, cannot have the weight and the solemnity of Anchises' predictions in the 6<sup>th</sup> Book of the *Aeneid*; Propertius' limits in what has to do with national verse's composition become visible.
- 75) Cf. Hor., *Carm.* 1.2.43-44: *patiens vocari/ Caesaris ultor*. This young man who showed up to revenge his step father's death is the one whom Jupiter has chosen as Rome's savior. See Quinn, op. cit., p.125, comm. on 1.2.41-44.
- 76) Mainly Parthian offences and attacks. Augustus knew well how to take advantage of people's sentiments asking for revenge against the Parthians. See G.P. Savantides, "Political Antinomies in Propertius", in *Literature and Politics in the Age of Augustus, 1<sup>st</sup> Greek Colloquium of Latin Studies, Ioannina 5-6 November 1982*, Ioannina 1984, p.101 (in modern Greek).

the emphasis on Romulus' (Rome's founder) origin from Mars (the paternity of Mars to Romulus), and — last but not least — Mars' relationship to Octavian<sup>77)</sup>, compose a mixture comprised of historically ascertained uses of this specific divine symbol, of rich mythological, traditional or newly formed, material in order to answer to new political demands, and from recent national and political historical facts.

A new reality is formed, by the use of religion as a means of pursuing various political and national goals; religiousness functions as a means ancillary to a national objective: the retaliation for the death of a deified politician and the restitution of order abroad with the punishment of Parthian arrogance are under the aegis of Mars-avenger, who inspires Romans in their endeavour to triumph and impose their rule and order on other peoples, compensating for their older failures or misfortunes and re-establishing Order and Justice within a global scenery<sup>78)</sup>, although this diminution of Roman mission into ruling the whole world is at odds with its own context: *Aeneid* itself is a proof that the power of the Romans will finally include peace's *artes*, like poetry<sup>79)</sup>. Apollo and Mars are invoked to represent Roman dominion which is supposed to be based on peace and fare wars, the secured by the gods *pax* and the based on godly approval *bellum iustum*, i.e. they comprise two aspects of the same traditional *pietas* which Augustus strived so hard to bring back<sup>80)</sup>.

---

77) See Aug., *Res Gestae* 21 on a vowing of a Mars' temple by Octavian in 42, which was consecrated 13 years later and ornamented with the *rostra* conquered in Actium. See also Cremona, op. cit., p.93, note 5.

78) Cf. the famous Anchises' prophecy on Romans' role in history: to govern and confer Justice and Order in the whole world. See Verg., *Aen.* 6.847-852: *excudent alii spirantia mollius aera / (credo equidem), uiuos ducent de marmore uultus, / orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus / describent radio et surgentia sidera dicent: / tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*

79) Cf. Hardie, op. cit., p.150.

80) It is quite probable that Augustus considered Mars and Apollo as supplementary deities: the latter favoured the creation of a new world order, while the first could take care of the correction of the old order's errors.

In all this, Apollo and Mars utilise the picture which had been formed for their persona through the legendary so-coined in the public sub-consciousness activity in favour of the Roman hypothesis or the civilized world in general. If history and mythology legitimatise the projection of the Roman vigour as a result of a historical and mythological, attested by *exempla*, morality and the assumption of the new role of the guard of moral order in the world, a mission approved and sanctioned by the divine, then the eternal survival of this power may be considered secured. According to the Stoic ideas, which was the only line of thought able to support philosophically a global empire such as the Roman *imperium*<sup>81)</sup>, causality is absolute in the universe<sup>82)</sup>, so, if the given prerequisites are fulfilled — in the given case the preservation of the alliance with the divine factor — nothing else is possible to happen. Under this view all what is going to happen is predictable, as long as historic lessons are indeed taken and the past is also followed as an example, that is if the ancient demand of Roman historiography (or any discussion about past in general) is satisfied: *movere* and *docere*. The writer of the time, either as a genuine historian or a poet who merges into the deep waters of history and the past, is able to assume the duties of a reliant prophet: *scriptor* or *poeta* may safely become a *vates*.

---

81) Cf. Robert Sharples, *Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics, An Introduction to Hellenistic Philosophy*, London and New York 1996 (Greek transl. by Marina Lypourlis and Yannis Avramides, Thessaloniki 2002), pp.18-19 and 207-208.

82) Cf. A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, London and New York 1974 (Greek transl. by St. Demopoulos–M. Dragona-Monahou, Athens 1990), p.263, Mario Vegetti, *Filosofie e società*, vol. 1, Bologna 1992 (Greek transl. by Yannis Dimitrakopoulos, Athens 2000), pp.286 ff.

**Abstract**

This paper is a short and general approach of the Augustan religious reform project, which goes hand in hand with the effort to reinforce historical memory in combination with the conservation or the shaping of a Roman identity concerning not only Rome but the entire Italian peninsula. Revival of old customs and religious ritual, reparation, renovation and conservation of old temples and shrines, restitution of priests' *collegia*, cult of traditional deities or emphasis on new ones, are developments working in parallel with the enlightenment of specific aspects of Roman past more or less clearly demonstrating the importance of the *princeps*' role.