

clear-cut than Cicero presents it that the Epicureans would have rejected the charge of equivocation as unjustified.

In the third part, which I shall not discuss in more detail, L. looks at the so-called *Carneadea divisio* and related divisions, and considers the question of how employing such a template for discussing possible views on the *summum bonum* creates certain distortions of the views it is applied to, not only in Cicero but in other texts, too; here the reader may want to compare K. Algra's article on the same topic in B. Inwood, M. Mansfeld (edd.), *Assent and Argument—Studies in Cicero's Academic Books* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne, 1997), which was published too late to be taken into account by L.

An eminent Latinist once remarked to me that Cicero's philosophical writings are boring, and that only in the speeches do we see Cicero at his best—he was relying on a distinction L. effectively explodes.

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## GERMANIA

J.-W. BECK: *'Germania'—'Agricola': Zwei Kapitel zu Tacitus' zwei kleinen Schriften. Untersuchungen zu ihrer Intention und Datierung sowie zur Entwicklung ihres Verfassers*. Pp. 190. Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1998. Paper, DM 39.80. ISBN: 3-487-10742-2.

In March 1990 the last general election was held in the German Democratic Republic. This election was one of the prerequisites for German reunification in so far as the 'Volkskammer' (People's Chamber) voted on joining the Federal Republic of Germany. Just at that moment, Margaret Thatcher, then prime minister of the United Kingdom, invited leading historians to a conference at Chequers, her country seat, desiring information about Germany and the Germans (p. 61). Jan-Wilhelm Beck raises the question of why Tacitus' *Germania* should not have had a 'similar function for the leading circles in Rome', i.e. to supply 'the natural desire for information' (sc. as in the case of the British premier), 'when all eyes were on the new Emperor (sc. Trajan), who remained on the Rhine, and when, astonished that he would not move, they discussed whether it was feasible and reasonable to launch a German campaign' (p. 61). B. asks further why, then, the *Germania* should not, even against the *communis opinio*, have been composed as a political memorandum early in A.D. 98 (p. 34), i.e. before the *Agricola*, usually held to be Tacitus' first work (more likely to have been written late in 98 or early in 99, according to B. [pp. 99–100]).

These and similar questions are posed in two chapters dealing with the *Germania* (pp. 9–62) and the *Agricola* (pp. 63–123). In two appendices on *Germ.* 33.2 (pp. 124–46) and 37.4 (pp. 147–85) B. makes extensive use of the secondary literature, but fails, however, to explore new sources. In the chapter 'Literary Work or Tendentious Pamphlet' B., after an introduction (pp. 9–13), examines the purpose of the *Germania* (pp. 14–41) and, with carefully discrimination, Tacitus' attitude towards the Germanic question (pp. 42–59), which is disputed especially in 33.2. He thus concludes that the *Germania* is neither a political pamphlet aimed at Domitian's anti-Germanic propaganda (p. 24), nor a portrayal of customs and manners (*ibid.*),

nor an ethnographic monograph (p. 19)—to mention some major approaches. Assuming the work is to be dated to the first half of 98, it was above all designed to provide the Roman public with information on the (Germanic) people (p. 38). Moreover, as a subsidiary motive, the work is intended to dissuade Trajan from declaring war on the Germans—as he might do (pp. 32–3, 52, 59), and this not so much because the Rhine army and Domitian only achieved pseudo-victories, but because the Imperium Romanum needed the new *princeps* at Rome for consolidation after the precarious change of policy from the Flavians to the ‘adoptive Emperors’ Nerva and Trajan (pp. 53–4).

It is a benefit of this complex fabric of hypotheses that the above-mentioned subsidiary motive not only offers an explanation for the phrase *urgentibus . . . imperii fatis* (pp. 54, 55), which, referring to domestic politics, is not indicative of a pessimistic view of history; it also explains why, against his better judgement, Tacitus tends to play down the Germanic threat (p. 44). Yet the question remains whether it was (or could be considered to be) necessary and politically wise for Trajan to be present at Rome in order to consolidate his power; whether the Rhine army, no less than the fourth or fifth part of the Roman armed forces, was not more likely to guarantee the survival of the new regime in accordance with the fundamental experience of the Year of the Four Emperors: only a commander who, in times of crisis, does not stay in the former centre of power (Galba, Otho) nor even heads towards it (Vitellius) actually stays in power, by directing the destiny of Rome and the Imperium Romanum through intermediaries from his headquarters on the periphery (Vespasian).

Considering the question ‘First work or just a first literary attempt?’, B., after an introduction (pp. 63–72), discusses the date of the encomiastic biography of Agricola (pp. 72–101), who died in 93, and how Tacitus’ conception of history developed in the time that followed (pp. 102–23). B. is right to call to mind that Trajan’s accession is *terminus post quem* of both the *Agricola* and the *Germania* (pp. 31, 74), so that further evidence is required in order to decide priority. He might also be right to reject, on careful examination, all evidence in favour of an early date of the *Agricola* (pp. 74 ff.), thus proving the priority of the *Germania* through the (hypothetical) significance an early date might have for its presumed purpose and, as a subsidiary argument, through the chronology of the minor works, which is derived from the letters by the humanist scholars (p. 101). However, the following factors still appear to argue for the priority of the *Agricola*: (i) Nerva (no matter if *divus* or not) as well as Trajan is mentioned in the prooemium of the *Agricola* (3.1), so that the reader’s attention is focused on the period before the change of government and on the change of government itself, which means the beginning of Trajan’s reign; (ii) in the same prooemium Tacitus mentions a period of silence (and thus the concomitant lack of literary productivity), which is ended with this very work but has not been brought to an end with an earlier work; and (iii) since Agricola died as long as five years before, this memorial work has been his debt of *pietas* to his father-in-law, hence he has long been prepared for it.

In short: a good deal of primary evidence in favour of an early date for the *Agricola* which directly emerges from the text is opposed by hypothetical indications, suggesting that, without cogent arguments in favour of the priority of the *Germania*, we can draw no more conclusions concerning the early (or late) works of Tacitus than the British premier apparently did from the conference at Chequers concerning her European policy.

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