Varro's Divine Antiquities: Roman Religion as an Image of Truth
Author(s): Peter Van Nuffelen
Reviewed work(s):
Source: *Classical Philology*, Vol. 105, No. 2 (April 2010), pp. 162-188
Published by: The University of Chicago Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/651716
Accessed: 02/04/2012 07:13

VARRO'S *DIVINE ANTIQUITIES*: ROMAN RELIGION AS AN IMAGE OF TRUTH

PETER VAN NUFFELEN

THE LOSS OF VARRO'S *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* (*ARD*) is justifiably lamented. Of the sixteen books of his impressive survey of Roman religion, conceived as part of a diptych with the twenty-five books of *res humanae* and generally dated in the 40s B.C.E.,[1] only disconnected bits and pieces survive, mainly culled from Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. This state of affairs has not favored comprehensive interpretations. Most studies focus on a few fragments and well-known themes of the work, like the *theologia tripertita* (*naturalis*, *civilis*, and *mythica*),[2] or the aniconism attributed by Varro to the earliest Romans.[3] Usually the work is read against the cultural and political background of the Late Republic, when political revolution and the influx of new, mainly Greek, ideas caused rapid changes in society and culture. Varro's *Divine Antiquities*, and Roman antiquarian literature of the Late Republic as a whole, is then understood as an attempt both to cope with the fast-changing society and to preserve the ancient heritage in the face of imminent loss.[4] Varro himself becomes the defender of Roman religious traditions, which he wants to reclaim from oblivion. Motivated by an instinctive conservative reaction in the face of rapid changes, he intends to safeguard tradition, rites, and customs, without any regard for their possible deeper meaning. As Claudia Moatti sums it up, for Varro religion was essentially an affair of tradition, not truth.[5]

As saving ancestral knowledge is the aim Varro explicitly sets out in the introduction to the work,[6] there is indeed much truth in this interpretation. In this article, however, I will propose an alternative reading, which focuses on the philosophical background of the *ARD* rather than on its cultural context. It has already been shown that the antiquarian method itself refers back

I wish to thank Professors G. Clark, P. Wiseman, and C. Gill for reading an earlier version of this article, as well as audiences in Liverpool and Exeter, and the anonymous readers, for their comments.

1. Horsfall 1972, 122; Cardauns 1976, 132–33 (47 B.C.E.); Momigliano 1984, 199; Tarver 1997, 135. This date is contested by Jocelyn 1982, 164–77, 203–5.

2. Lieberg 1982, 25–53; Dörrie 1986, 76–82; Geerlings 1990, 205–22; Lehmann 1997, 193–225.

3. Ross Taylor 1931, 305–14; Lehmann 1997, 182–93; Cancik and Cancik-Lindemaier 2001, 43–61.

4. Moatti 1991, 31–46; Beard et al. 1998, 150; Cardauns 2001, 54; Mora 2003.

5. Moatti 1997, 181, echoing Momigliano 1984, 205.

6. August. *De civ. D.* 6.2, p. 248 lines 6–13 Dombart-Kalb = Varro *ARD* frag. 2 Cardauns. References to August. *De civ. D.* and the fragments of Varro *ARD* are to these editions throughout.

Classical Philology 105 (2010): 162–88
 0009-837X/10/10502-0003$10.00

to a philosophical tradition.[7] I will go a step further and argue that Varro's views on Roman religion and its history as expressed in *ARD* depend upon an originally Greek philosophical idea, possibly of Stoic origin, according to which religion contains primitive wisdom, that is, the truthful knowledge about the cosmos that earliest man possessed. This new hypothesis will allow us to probe beyond Varro's self-confessed pragmatic aim, and will correct the conclusion, drawn by those who study the *ARD* mainly in relation to its cultural environment, that Varro was interested in tradition for tradition's sake. On the contrary, not only was philosophical truth not absent from *ARD*, it was one of its central concerns. Indeed, according to my reading, the *ARD* was meant to show that the rituals, images, and priesthoods that make up Roman religion were an image of the knowledge of the ancients.

This reading of *ARD* implies that a unified philosophical project underlies the work, much more than is usually assumed. As the work is preserved in a highly fragmentary state, I will have to argue in detail for many of the interpretations proposed in this paper. To make sure that my general point will not be lost to the reader, I will now give a general outline of my interpretation of Varro's work. The fundamental characteristic of Varro's view on the religious past of Rome is the integration of a Greek philosophical view on mankind's religious development into a standard account of the Roman past. The Greek view originated with the early Stoics but was cast in a new form by Posidonius (c. 135–51 B.C.E.). His main point was that the earliest people were directed by philosopher-kings who had perceived the most fundamental truths about the world, and had expressed those on purpose in a veiled, symbolic language, like myths or poetry.[8] Middle-Platonist and Stoic philosophers of the Roman Empire would, however, stress that not only myth but also religion, both Greek and foreign, is a source for primitive wisdom, and in particular mystery cults.[9] Contrary to early Stoic theory that stressed that only bits and pieces of philosophy had crept into religion, poetry, and myth, this theory considered religion as a willfully created, encoded form of philosophical knowledge.

Detailed discussion will show that Varro accepted the main tenets of this view, but that he had to cope with a specific problem. Rome could not pretend to be a people existing from the dawn of time—Varro himself having calculated the exact date of the foundation of Rome. Its religion was created in historical time. He consequently needed to link Roman religion to one of the earliest peoples who had had access to primitive wisdom. He chose the mystery cult of Samothrace, which became the linchpin linking Roman religion to Greece. Varro identified the Samothracian deities with the highest philosophical principles, with the Penates, and with the Capitoline triad. Illustrious figures of the Roman past, like Aeneas and Tarquinius Priscus, were brought on stage to explain the transfer of philosophical knowledge through religion from Samothrace to Rome. He credited these central figures of early

7. Tarver 1997, 135; Peglau 2003.

8. I follow here the interpretation of Sen. *Ep.* 90.4–6 by Boys-Stones (2001, 28–43).

9. The turn toward religion in the Roman Empire, not explicitly discussed by G. R. Boys-Stones, is sketched in Van Nuffelen 2007.

Roman history with the conscious creation of Roman religion, in particular of its cult images, in line with the philosophical truths they found among the ancient Samothracians. Roman cult consequently reflected the truth in a detailed way. This integration of the history of Rome into a Greek history of mankind provides the foundation for the extensive allegories of the gods Varro proposed in the last books of the *ARD*. Thus, Roman religion was a depository of philosophical knowledge and its disintegration, or the deviation from established rites, would imply a loss of truth about the cosmos. It is this philosophical attitude, I will argue, that underpins and drives Varro's antiquarian program.

Anyone arguing for the presence of coherent ideas in the *ARD* is faced with two methodological problems: the fragmentary state of the work and Varro's apparent lack of consistency. Both are obviously related: the fragments may give the impression that he is borrowing ideas without any concern for the ultimate coherence of his work.[10] I do not want to claim that the reading proposed here will solve every single problem within the *ARD*, but I hope that my hypothesis has sufficient explanatory power to make at least plausible the contention that there is a unified concept that guides the work. Moreover, it can be shown that Augustine, our major source for Varro, read the *ARD* from a specific angle, which has led to a distorted image of some parts of the work. A correct appraisal of his attitudes may provide better access to Varro's ideas.

I argue first that it is possible to detect some philosophical coherence in Varro's allegories, which are sometimes derided for their arbitrariness and obscurity.[11] This is partially due to his censure by Augustine, who especially in Books 6 and 7 of the *De civitate Dei* aims at playing up the apparent inconsistencies in Varro's interpretation of Roman religion.[12] We unavoidably will continue to look at Varro through the Augustinian mirror. The first part of the article attempts to come closer to grasping Varro's original intentions by understanding how his allegories were read by Augustine. The second part asks if we can trace the metaphysics that underpin Varro's allegories to a known source. I will suggest that, of the two possible candidates, Posidionius and Varro's teacher Antiochus of Ascalon (died 69/8 B.C.E.), the latter is more likely, even though this is by no means certain. The third part reconstructs the historical narrative Varro develops in *ARD* to explain the transfer of ancient Greek knowledge to the more recent Romans and analyzes it as a Roman version of the Posidonian view on ancient wisdom. The last part explores how that narrative explains some of the peculiarities of the *ARD*: the stress on the willful creation of images by ancient lawgivers and the importance attributed to philosopher-kings. My argument will draw unevenly on the various books of the *ARD*, for obvious reasons. Most of the

10. The commentary by Cardauns (1976) studiously inventorizes these apparent contradictions.

11. Pépin 1976, 334. Varro is largely absent from two recent comprehensive surveys: Ramelli and Lucchetta 2004 and Brisson 2004.

12. General guidance on Augustine's intentions in using Varro is provided by Lieberg 1972; Pépin 1976, 367–87; O'Daly 1999, 101–12; Burns 2001, 37–64.

extant fragments derive from Books 1 and 14–16 (only 35 out of a total 284 stem from the other books). The longest fragments, which also focus most on allegory, are to be found in the last two books (*De dis incertis* and *De dis praecipuis et selectis*), the main reason being the polemical interest shown by Augustine in these books.

VARRO ON SATURN

Varro's Book 16 was dedicated to the *di selecti*, grouping twenty gods, some well known and others rather obscure like Orcus. His criteria for selecting precisely those twenty are not very clear. Before asking why he chose these deities, we should ask how this group was held together. From Augustine's account it is clear that Book 16 of *ARD* offered a physical allegory of the *di selecti*,[13] which implies that the gods were seen as symbolizing elements or parts of the cosmos.[14]

Several strands of interpretation run through the allegories propounded in Book 16. As my aim is not to provide a full overview of Varro's philosophy, but to show how his allegories work, I will analyze only one of these in great detail,[15] before adducing additional evidence to show that the ideas found there can be generalized. Already the first three chapters of Book 7 of the *De civitate Dei* make clear that a very prominent line of exegesis is related to seed (*semen*). While discussing whether the selected gods administer a more important realm of life, Augustine uses the example of seed. He highlights that many of the *di selecti* seem to be related to seed and reproduction, for instance, Janus, Saturn, Liber, Venus, Juno, and Ceres.[16] Indeed, seed recurs in later chapters, for example, in the interpretation of Jupiter,[17] Genius,[18] Liber and Ceres,[19] and Saturn. Moreover, we encounter it also in other works by Varro. In the *Curio de cultu deorum*, a line of Valerius Soranus (second century B.C.E.), calling Jupiter *progenitor genetrixque*, is explained with reference to the fact that Jupiter, being the world, both emits and receives seed—assuming at once a male and female role.[20] Also, in the allegorical interpretation of the deities in Varro's *De lingua Latina*, seed is identified as a spark of the cosmic fire.[21] *Semen*, thus, is a key theme in Varro's allegory. Although this point relates to most of the *di selecti*, Saturn is particularly important in this respect. Augustine comments on Varro's interpretation in the following terms: *omnium seminum Saturnum et ideo seminationem quoque hominis non posse ab eius operatione seiungi*

13. In particular August. *De civ. D.* 7.5–26.

14. Cf. Cardauns 2001, 59–60.

15. Other strands include: the logical structure of action (beginning, end, cause): August. *De civ. D.* 7.7, 7.9; the world and its parts: August. *De civ. D.* 7.8, 7.16, 7.23, 7.28; male and female: August. *De civ. D.* 7.23, 7.28.

16. August. *De civ. D.* 7.2, p. 274 lines 19–27, 7.3, p. 275 lines 15–18, p. 275 line 30–p. 276 line 1, p. 276 lines 6–9.

17. August. *De civ. D.* 7.9, p. 287 lines 1–13.

18. August. *De civ. D.* 7.13, p. 291 lines 3–5.

19. August. *De civ. D.* 7.16, p. 294 lines 7–9.

20. August. *De civ. D.* 7.9, p. 287 lines 1–13 = Varro *Curio* frag. II Cardauns.

21. Varro *Ling. Lat.* 5.59, 5.61, 5.63–64.

("Saturn [has power over] all the seeds, and therefore the sowing of human seed cannot be considered apart from his activity").[22]

It is to this allegory of Saturn that we now turn to gain a better understanding of Varro's technique of allegorization. This, as we will see, is characterized by two elements. Firstly, Varro offers a piecemeal allegory: he freely selects individual elements of myth, ritual, and imagery as representing aspects of a philosophical principle, without trying to offer a coherent interpretation of a myth or ritual. Secondly, the philosophical and cosmological principles he sees expressed in religion can manifest themselves on different levels of being. In the allegory of Saturn, we can identify three of them: the level of the divine, next, the human level, including human history, and, finally, the level of nature. Augustine, from his side, tends to ignore these characteristics. He seems to presuppose that an allegory needs to safeguard the coherence of the myth and that Varro is merely offering an agricultural interpretation of Saturn.

From the outset, Augustine's comments tend to make us misunderstand Varro's interpretation of Saturn. In 7.18 the bishop says he prefers a euhemeristic interpretation of Jupiter's revolt against Saturn over Varro's "physical" one, which pretended that *ideo Saturnum patrem a Iove filio superatum, quod ante est causa quae pertinet ad Iovem, quam semen quod pertinet ad Saturnum* ("Saturn was overthrown by his son Jupiter because cause, which belongs to Jupiter, comes before seed, which belongs to Saturn").[23] Augustine is quick to point out that Varro is disregarding the mythological genealogy. If Jupiter is the cause, Saturn cannot have been his father, because the father is the cause of the son. Upholding the mythological family relations may have had some importance in Stoic[24] and, later, Neoplatonic allegoresis,[25] and Augustine may indeed be criticizing Varro with Neoplatonic examples in mind. But Varro clearly proceeds differently. He stresses the interaction between the characters, not the genealogy. The depiction of Saturn, the lord of the seed, being overthrown by Jupiter, the first cause, constitutes a mythical representation of the precedence of cause over seed.

In the next chapter (7.19), Augustine gives an incomplete summary of Varro's interpretation of Saturn,[26] and does so in relation to myth, ritual, and the etymology of the god's name. As we will see now, this is a not a single coherent interpretation of Saturn, but rather a string of six allegories that single out individual points in the three areas just mentioned. The first two concern the myth of Saturn:

(1) Saturn devouring his own children reflects the fact that seeds return to the place from which they spring. Augustine understands this as the natural

22. August. *De civ. D.* 7.3, p. 276 lines 6–9, 7.18, trans. Dyson 1998, 270. See also 7.12, p. 290 lines 28–29 = Varro *ARD* frag. 239.

23. August. *De civ. D.* 7.18, p. 296 lines 25–27 = Varro *ARD* frag. 241, trans. Dyson 1998, 289.

24. Cornutus (*Theol. Graec.* 17, p. 27 line 21 Lang), a century younger than Varro, explicitly pretends to uphold the classical Hesiodic genealogies. Goulet (2005, 102) argues that this is the case in all or most Stoic allegory.

25. See, e.g., Pépin 1976, 203–6, on Plotinus.

26. As he admits himself: August. *De civ. D.* 7.19, p. 298 lines 15–16.

cycle of conception and decay: the seeds of plants fall in the earth and give birth to new plants. But, in that case, he objects, Saturn should have been the earth.[27] Augustine's interpretation, followed by some modern scholars,[28] is clearly wrong on two accounts. Firstly, Varro does not think Saturn is the source or receptacle of seed. Just as in his interpretation of Saturn's overthrow by Jupiter, Varro is stressing the process of insemination, which is symbolized by the god. Secondly, Varro is not simply thinking of the natural cycle of insemination, but also of the cosmic cycle. In Fragment 2 of the *Curio de cultu deorum*, quoted by Augustine in 7.9, Varro says of Jupiter that he is the world, who both emits all seeds and receives them into himself.[29] Insemination is a process not only involving nature but also heaven and earth, heaven producing seed, earth receiving it. If one were to take Saturn as the heaven, which emits the seeds, one would have a contradiction between the *Curio* and *ARD*,[30] and this is what Augustine wants us to believe.[31] But this does not have to be the case. Saturn is not the source of seed but symbolizes the cycle of seeds, the general process of insemination, both on the natural and the cosmic level. There is no contradiction between Jupiter interpreted as the world, which emits and receives all seed, and Saturn who symbolizes this process of insemination.

(2) As the second item of Saturn's myth, Varro allegorized the story that the god was given a lump of earth to swallow in place of Jupiter. He interpreted this as the fact that "before the usefulness of plowing was discovered, seeds were buried in the earth by human hands for sowing."[32] This interpretation presents a shift from the first one: Varro has moved from a more general level to agriculture specifically, and in doing so has disconnected the elements of the myth. Whereas in the myth the swallowing of Saturn's children and the lump of earth are related, in Varro's interpretation all direct connection is lost, except for the framework of insemination.

(3) This rather obscure interpretation can only be understood with reference to the third allegory, which stays on the theme of agriculture. Varro leaves myth and turns to the image of Saturn. "He has a sickle, because of agriculture." He explains this with reference to the Saturnian age: "His times were regarded as the earliest for the reason that the first men lived on such seeds as the earth bore untilled."[33] This interpretation and the previous one indicate that Saturn symbolizes the period of human history when agriculture did not exist. It seems to suggest that primitive man used a sickle, but not a plow. But the interpretation is not entirely unambiguous. The previous allegory seems to imply some kind of primitive tillage, with mankind burying the seed by hand, whereas this one excludes tillage from the Saturnian age. Possibly, we should distinguish two stages: one when the fruits of the earth

27. August. *De civ. D.* 7.19, p. 297 lines 4–6 = Varro *ARD* frag. 242.
28. Pépin 1976, 376.
29. August. *De civ. D.* 7.9, p. 287 lines 1–13, and 7.16, p. 294 lines 9–12 = Varro *Curio* frag. II.
30. Pépin 1976, 334; Wifstrand Schiebe 1994, 170.
31. August. *De civ. D.* 7.13, p. 290 line 30–p. 291 line 3.
32. August. *De civ. D.* 7.19, p. 297 lines 6–7 = Varro *ARD* frag. 242.
33. August. *De civ. D.* 7.19, p. 297 lines 21–22 = Varro *ARD* frag. 243.

were simply reaped, and the next one when a primitive form of agriculture was practiced, with manual burial of the seeds.

To add to the difficulties, this model of human history seems to conflict with that of the *Res rusticae*, where Varro distinguished, in the wake of Dicaearchus of Messene (c. 340 B.C.E.), three stages in mankind's evolution: hunting and reaping, breeding, and tillage.[34] Varro's views seem more refined in *ARD*, as he here apparently accepts a primitive form of agriculture already in the earliest stage of mankind. A later fragment from *ARD*, which shows that for Varro the attributes of the Mother of the Gods indicate that mankind passed from bronze tools for tillage to iron ones,[35] confirms indeed that he did elaborate a very detailed view on the agricultural evolution of mankind in the *Antiquitates*. Whatever the solution to these problems, it seems clear that we should be aware of the fact that Varro may have proposed different schemes of agricultural evolution in different works.[36] This issue is, however, of minor importance here. It is essential to note that Varro moves freely from one level of interpretation to another in his allegory. In this instance, he has left the cosmic and natural level for that of mankind's history.

(4) Next Varro explains the existence of human sacrifice to Saturn among the Carthaginians and the Gauls. The reason is that "the human race is the best of all seeds."[37] This is too horrendous for Augustine to comment upon. It shows, however, that Varro's interpretation extended to all historical manifestations of the cult of Saturn. Even the most perverted of rituals may conceal some philosophical truth—in this case, that humans are on a higher level than other beings.

(5) Varro now returns to myth. Caelus' castration by Saturn is interpreted as meaning "that the divine seed belongs to Saturn and not to Caelus." This is explained by the fact that "nothing in heaven is produced by seed."[38] This can be taken to mean two things. Firstly, none of the heavenly bodies is born from *semina*. The stars, sun, and moon are excluded from the process of insemination, as it is symbolized by Saturn. Indeed, Varro seems to have considered them as deities, which implies that they are not generated by *semen*.[39] Secondly, heaven is the source of *semen*, an idea found both in *ARD* and the *De lingua Latina*.[40] This may also explain why Varro speaks about "divine seed," as it has a heavenly origin. However, although the cosmic seed does stem from heaven, Caelus is not explicitly identified here as the source of the seed. Varro rather stresses the fact of his castration, understanding it as showing that seed does not play a role in the heavens. This shows that Varro is going beyond a simple identification of gods with

34. Varro *Rust*. 1.2.16, 2.1.3–5.
35. August. *De civ. D.* 7.24, p. 304 lines 21–23 = Varro *ARD* frag. 267.
36. Reischl (1976, 82–142) tends to attribute a single view to Varro's different works.
37. August. *De civ. D.* 7.19, p. 297 lines 28–31 = Varro *ARD* frag. 244.
38. August. *De civ. D.* 7.19, p. 298 lines 5–7 = Varro *ARD* frag. 245. I consider the last sentence to be also part of the fragment.
39. August. *De civ. D.* 7.6, p. 282 lines 12–17 = Varro *ARD* frag. 226.
40. Tert. *Ad nat*. 2.12.18 = Varro *ARD* frag. 240; Varro *Ling*. 5.63–64.

elements or parts of the world, but is freely interpreting their myth and rites in function of an underlying philosophical system.

(6) Augustine concludes the chapter by referring to Saturn's identification with the Greek god Cronus, which according to Varro refers to the time needed by a seed to carry fruit.[41] It was not the only etymology reported by Varro. According to Tertullian, he also said that Saturn is derived from *satio*, meaning that through Saturn the heavenly sperms (*seminalia caeli*) were brought to the earth—making clear that Saturn represents the general process of generation.[42] Varro clearly distinguishes his view from the traditional interpretation of Cronus as *chronos*, time, by specifying it as the time needed for germination.[43] That Augustine reports only one etymology relating to agriculture can be adduced as additional evidence for the fact that he restricts Varro's allegories to an agricultural interpretation.

Augustine concludes the chapter by admitting that he has discussed only a few of Varro's interpretations: *haec et alia de Saturno multa dicuntur, et ad semen omnia referuntur* ("These and many other things are said about Saturn, and they all refer to seed").[44] Indeed, Varro consistently interprets all aspects of the myth, cult, and name of Saturn with regard to seed.

The foregoing analysis reveals a discrepancy between what Augustine expects of an allegorical reading and what Varro offers him. Whereas Augustine expects a coherent interpretation of the myth of Saturn, Varro interprets its myth, ritual, and etymology in a piecemeal fashion. Augustine also seems to think that Varro interprets Saturn as a symbol of agriculture, but the fragments from *ARD* and other works clearly suggest that Saturn represents a wider phenomenon. Even though we will never be able to reconstruct Varro's allegories in full detail, it is clear that in these two respects Augustine is misguiding our understanding of *ARD*.[45] Modern accounts of Varro's allegory of Saturn still often adopt the Augustinian reading.[46] From what I have said, it must be clear that Saturn is not interpreted as the lord of vegetal seeds. He symbolizes all processes of insemination, covering all kinds of seeds, from the cosmic cycle of the *seminalia caeli* to human sperm.[47] He is not seed itself, nor the source of the seed: "He has lordship over the sowing of all

41. August. *De civ. D.* 7.19, p. 298 lines 12–15 = Varro *ARD* frag. 246.

42. Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.12.18 = Varro *ARD* frag. 240.

43. This is underscored by Wifstrand Schiebe 1994, 171. Pépin (1976, 329, 333) attempted to ascribe Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.12.17 and also Macrob. *Sat.* 1.8.6–10 to Varro, two passages that contain the traditional identification of Cronus with time (see already Agahd 1898, 207). He is followed by Champeaux 1994, 336–37. Wifstrand Schiebe (1994, 171) is correct in doubting the Varronic origin of the passage from Tertullian. Moreover, Macrob. *Sat.* 1.8.8 gives quite a different interpretation of the role of Saturn from that given by Varro in Augustine: see Syska 1993, 58–62. Consequently, both passages do not stem from Varro.

44. August. *De civ. D.* 7.19, p. 298 lines 15–16.

45. I leave aside the question whether Augustine willfully distorted Varro for polemical purposes or not. His way of reading Varro may have been conditioned by the Neoplatonic allegories he was familiar with. On the other hand, the way Augustine distorts Varro is not unusual in philosophical polemic.

46. Pépin 1976, 334: "une interprétation rustique de Saturne."

47. This is also brought out by Varro *Ling.* 5.64, with the interpretation of Guittard (1978, 53–56), who shows that *satus* does not mean "seeds" or "sowing" in the agricultural sense but 'l'idée plus générale de "génération," "paternité," "source première," "principe générateur." He suggests (56) that the use of *satio* by Augustine and Tertullian may be due to their polemical intentions.

seeds."[48] The general character of Saturn's allegory is clearly brought out by interpretations (1) and (6) above, which are statements about insemination in general. Some elements of Saturn represent more specific instances of insemination, which relate to three areas. Firstly, there is nature and the natural cycle of germination and growth of plants and animals (possibly [1], and also [2] and [3]). In the second place, mankind is explicitly set apart: it is the best kind of seed (4). Varro also discusses mankind's agricultural evolution ([2] and [3]). It finally relates to divinity, but in a negative way: the heavenly bodies, traditionally seen as gods, are not born from sperm (5).

It is also usually assumed that Varro is reporting or construing a Stoic exegesis.[49] Although Varro must have known of Stoic allegories, some major differences with traditional Stoic allegory must be noted (apart from the fact that he invented some Latin etymologies for which he evidently did not have Greek precedents). We have already noted his peculiar interpretation of Cronus, not simply as time but as time necessary for germination. His method is also quite different from a traditionally Stoic one. Cornutus, who wrote a handbook of Stoic exegesis in the second half of the first century C.E., described the goal of his allegories as follows: "To relate what is transmitted by myths about the gods to the elements (*stoicheia*)."[50] Even though Cornutus may occasionally refer to rites,[51] his main interest is in translating the mythical narrative into an account of the physical elements. Varro is doing something different. From Augustine it is clear that he draws not only on myth and etymology but also on ritual and cult images. Contrary to the Stoic interest in following the mythical narrative and linking the logic of the narrative to a philosophical logic,[52] Varro develops his allegory through a piecemeal interpretation of elements of the myth, ritual, and name of Saturn. He does not attempt to translate the myth as a whole into a philosophy; he selects individual elements in myth, ritual, and name and relates them to one of the different areas where the fundamental principle of insemination manifests itself (and not to physical elements).[53]

VARRO, POSIDONIUS, OR ANTIOCHUS OF ASCALON?

With the Augustinian distortions pruned away, Varro's allegory of Saturn reveals two specific philosophical ideas. On the one hand, Saturn is not simply a symbol of agriculture, but personifies the general principle of in-

48. August. *De civ. D.* 7.13, p. 290 line 29 = Varro *ARD* frag. 239: *penes quem sationum omnium dominatum est*.

49. Pépin 1976, 332. See also Boyancé 1972, 273–75; Lieberg 1972, 192; Cardauns 1976, 229 (who reduces Varro's allegory of Saturn to Greek examples); Wifstrand Schiebe 1994, 169, 175; Lehmann 1997, 231–32; Burns 2001, 60; Ramelli and Lucchetta 2004, 101.

50. Cornutus *Theol. Graec.* 35, p. 75 line 18–p. 76 line 1.

51. E.g., Cornutus *Theol. Graec.* 6, p. 6 lines 5–6, and 21, p. 41 lines 9–11.

52. Cf. Goulet 2005.

53. This is hardly surprising given that Varro elsewhere explicitly rejects mythical stories and divine genealogies as poetic inventions: August. *De civ. D.* 4.32, p. 187 lines 20–23 = August. *De civ. D.* 6.6, p. 257 lines 14–17 = Varro *ARD* frag. 19.

semination and generation. On the other, Varro relates elements of the cult and myth of Saturn to different levels of reality. Both elements can be paralleled in other allegories as well and point the way to the identification of some coherent philosophical ideas.

The latter idea surfaces in a well-known fragment on the world soul. The world soul runs through both parts of the cosmos, and is, qua structure, identical to mortal souls, both being tripartite.[54] The vegetative level, without *sensus*, is exemplified for the mortal soul by human bones or plants and trees, and for the immortal soul by stones. The next level groups what has *sensus*. Examples of this are animals, and also humans with their senses, or the sun, moon, and stars for the immortal soul. The highest part of soul is intelligence, which is the divine part of the world soul and in which man also takes part.[55] The idea of general principles that assume different guises on different levels of reality also explains why Varro can offer three different interpretations of the Capitoline triad—Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva—as heaven, earth, and Forms;[56] as *ratio*, *calor*, and *spiritus*;[57] and finally as *medius aether*, *aer cum terra*, and *aetheris cacumen*.[58] Each time we encounter the same fundamental triad of metaphysical principles, but identified on different levels of being.[59] The universe disclosed by Varro's allegories is thus governed by principles and entities (heaven, earth, Forms; insemination; soul) that assume various guises depending on the level on which they manifest themselves.

The prominence of insemination in the allegories of Book 16 of *ARD* (not just Saturn but, as indicated above, eight more deities are linked to it) suggests that it was an important element in the physics expounded there. Varro's allegory of Saturn identifies it as a general principle that expresses itself both on the cosmic and the natural level. By stressing that nothing in the heavens is born from seed, Varro makes clear that generation is a sublunary process. This is evident for the natural cycle and for agriculture. Also, the seeds from heaven inseminate only the earth, not heaven itself. On the cosmological level, insemination probably indicates the way that heaven (god) acts on passive matter. We have seen above that this was how Varro interpreted Soranus' description of Juppiter as *progenitor* and *genetrix*, indicating at once the active and passive principle of the universe. The fundamental role of *semen* in this account seems identical to that of the Stoic *spermatikos logos*,[60] which is also the mode of action of the active principle on the passive, of god on matter. The Stoics also considered the *spermatikoi*

54. Fladerer 1996, 106–9.

55. August. *De civ. D.* 7.23, p. 301 line 21–p. 302 line 9 = Varro *ARD* frag. 227. I follow the interpretation of Fladerer 1996, 108.

56. August. *De civ. D.* 7.28, p. 311 lines 7–15 = Varro *ARD* frag. 206.

57. Arn. *Adv. nat.* 3.40.3–5, with Champeaux 1994, 347–51, whose interpretation is superseded by Fladerer 1996.

58. Macrob. *Sat.* 3.4.8 = Varro *ARD* frag. 205.

59. Varro's tripartitions are often attributed to a Pythagorean influence, as was most forcefully argued by Collart (1954, 36–39, 275–78). I consider Antiochus of Ascalon a more likely source.

60. Wifstrand Schiebe 1994, 169. Cf. Hahm 1977, 60–62, 75–76.

logoi, like Varro,[61] to be of a fiery nature.[62] Clear differences with the Stoics exclude, however, the hypothesis of Varro simply borrowing their views. The Stoic *spermatikoi logoi* lie at the basis of everything in the universe, from the four elements to living beings; in Varro the action of *semen* seems to be limited to the "lower" world, and nothing in heaven is created by seeds. This may be due to a Platonic influence. In the *Timaeus* the demiurge sows the souls of man on the earth, stars, and moon.[63] The same image of souls falling as seeds on earth can be found in the *Statesman*.[64] Combining different passages from the *Timaeus*, later Platonist philosophers such as Plutarch widened the demiurge's action of sowing and ascribed to Plato the view that the demiurge sowed a portion of vitality and divinity in matter,[65] an idea that comes close to the view found in Varro's allegories. An additional argument for a Platonist origin of Varro's view on insemination is that the term "divine seed" may be drawn from Plato's *Timaeus*.[66]

Varro thus seems to have identified insemination as a fundamental principle explaining the action of the active principle on the passive. Those two principles undoubtedly must be identified with heaven and earth or god and matter. Indeed, some passages indicate that he thought that the various principles of the cosmos could be reduced to a simple dualism of heaven and earth, god and matter, male and female. In *De lingua Latina* (5.57) Varro identifies *Terra* with *Ops* and *Caelum* with *Saturnus*. This seems to identify Saturn with the highest principle and contradicts the distinction between Saturn and Caelus, and between Saturn and Jupiter, defended in *ARD.* However, seeds being the action of god on matter, Saturn can be taken to exemplify divine action itself, and hence the divinity, which is identified with heaven. Such a metonymic interpretation is probably also what lies behind Augustine's muddled report of Varro saying that all the male gods can be reduced to heaven, and all the female to earth.[67] Such a dual basic principle is hardly original: it is obviously found in Stoicism, but it has been argued by David Sedley that Polemo (c. 350–276/5 B.C.E.), the successor of Xenocrates at the head of the Academy, already taught that god and matter were the basic principles of the cosmos.[68]

61. Varro *Ling.* 5.59, with a quotation of Zenon (*SVF* 1 frag. 126).

62. Zenon, *SVF* 1 frag. 87 = Stob. *Flor.* 1.11.5a; Zenon, *SVF* 1 frag. 98 = Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 15.13.5; Zenon, *SVF* 1 frag. 102 = Stob. *Flor.* 1.17.3; Chrysippus, *SVF* 2 frag. 1009 = Aetius *Placita* 1.6; Chrysippus, *SVF* 2 frag. 1022 = Diog. Laert. 7.148; Chrysippus, *SVF* 2 frag. 1132 = Diog. Laert. 7.198–99; Chrysippus, *SVF* 2 frag. 1027 = Aetius *Placita* 1.7.33; Chrysippus, *SVF* 2 frag. 1074 = Origen *C. Cels.* 4.48. See Long and Sedley 1987, 266, 277; Steinmetz 1994, 538–41.

63. Pl. *Ti.* 42cd.

64. Pl. *Plt.* 272e, 274d.

65. Plut. *Quaest. Plat.* 1001a, combining Pl. *Ti.* 36de and 41ed; Philo *De aeternitate mundi* 95–103. Numenius (frag. 13 des Places) also attributes the action of sowing to the demiurge, but seems to restrict it to man. But Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.37, a passage that Edwards [2002, 20 n. 59] ascribes to Numenius) gives a wider interpretation of the role of insemination.

66. Pl. *Ti.* 73c. Antiochus drew on the *Timaeus* while developing his cosmology, as is clear from Cic. *Acad. post.* 1.24–43 (cf. Dillon 1996, 82–83; Görler 1990).

67. August. *De civ. D.* 7.28, p. 310 = Varro *ARD* frag. 263; cf. 7.23, p. 303 lines 13–14 = Varro *ARD* frag. 265; 7.30, p. 313 line 20 = Varro *ARD* frag. 280.

68. Sedley 2002, 52. Frede (2005, 217–18) disputes the precise attribution to Polemo but accepts it as a teaching of the Old Academy.

Although we can only identify some general elements, it is safe to conclude that a set of coherent ideas about physics underlies Varro's allegories, notwithstanding what is suggested by Augustine's polemic and the fragmentary state of the work. His cosmos is governed by the action, called insemination and probably mediated through the Forms, of an active principle on a passive one—a basic process that can be identified on the various levels of being. A last question in this regard must be asked: are these ideas originally Varro's, or is he dependent on another author? It is evident that we must accept Varro's originality in elaborating the allegories, but that does not prove that the underlying philosophical ideas are also his. There are two possible candidates as the source of Varro's physics, Antiochus of Ascalon and Posidonius, of which the former is the more likely.

As is well known, Varro had studied with Antiochus of Ascalon (died 69/8 B.C.E.),[69] the Academic philosopher who abandoned the skeptical tradition of his school. He pretended to return to the true positions of Plato, bypassing later accretions and distortions. He was convinced that Stoics and Platonists shared the same core truths in many areas, and this explains the apparent adoptions of originally Stoic concepts into his Platonist philosophy. Varro's allegiance to Antiochus is beyond doubt, as can be shown by his *De philosophia*. In this work Varro supported his master on the question concerning the highest good, a key theme in Antiochus' thought.[70]

We know tantalizingly little about Antiochus' physics, apart from a brief outline in Cicero's *Posterior Academics* (1.24–30). It can only be supplemented by Varro's *ARD*, on the supposition that it reflects Antiochean thought.[71] Scholarship is divided on this issue. Antiochean provenance of the ideas in *ARD* is often rejected with the argument that he is not mentioned by Varro. On the other hand, we do find a blend of Stoic and Platonic material in the *ARD* and it is possible to reconcile it with Cicero's evidence.[72] The choice between both options has profound implications for our understanding of Antiochus' physics. Those opting for the inclusion of Varro's fragments tend to stress more the Platonic background of Antiochus.[73] Indeed, in fragment 206 of *ARD*, as we will see, Varro accepts the existence of the Forms, which clearly points to a Platonic influence. Scholars who exclude the Varronic fragments rather stress the purely Stoic character of Antiochus' physics and tend to doubt that he accepted the existence of the Forms at all.[74] On such an interpretation of Antiochus' physics, Varro's physics can only be attributed to Posidonius or to his own originality.[75]

69. Cic. *Att.* 13.12.3, 13.16.1, 13.19.3, *Fam.* 9.8.1, *Acad. Post.* 1.12. See Glucker 1978; Barnes 1989.

70. August. *De civ. D.* 19.3. This remains a clear indication of Varro's philosophical allegiance, even if one assumes with Tarver (1997, 152) that Varro wanted to survey all views on the highest good.

71. But note that Lehmann (1997, 147) ascribes Sen. *Helv.* 8.3 to Varro, and through him, to Antiochus.

72. To have shown that a reconciliation of Varro and Cicero is possible is the main virtue of Fladerer 1996, even though some of his solutions cannot command universal approval: see Glucker 2002; Karamanolis 2005, 62 n. 56.

73. Theiler 1930, 15, 17, 30; Boyancé 1972, 74; Jocelyn 1982, 163; Dillon 1996, 81–90; Lehmann 1997, 142.

74. Dörrie 1987, 472–77; Görler 1990, 127–29.

75. Cf. Glucker 2002, 293–94.

Although I am fully aware of the absence of conclusive evidence, I tend to accept that the fragments from Book 16 of *ARD* do reflect Antiochus' ideas. That would imply that my reconstruction of Varro's physics can be traced back to Antiochus.[76] It is unlikely that the metaphysical system we find in *ARD* is made up by Varro himself, who is hardly known for his original philosophical ideas but rather as a transmitter of Greek philosophy.[77] Even though Posidonius was influenced by Plato as well, we know very little of his possible influence on Varro, whereas Antiochus was the latter's teacher. Moreover, there is no evidence that Posidonius attributed a role to the Platonic Forms. In addition, the mix of Stoic and Platonic elements fits the general character of the philosophy of Antiochus, who is known to have harked back to the Old Academy. It would be surprising if that influence was not felt in his physics. Antiochus is known to have particularly approved of Polemo and may have drawn on his work.[78] This could explain the Platonic elements in Varro's physics. None of these arguments can pretend to decide the issue and I want to stress that my reading of Varro does not depend on an Antiochean provenance of his ideas. If one rejects it, it simply will be less easy to situate Varro in the general development of ancient philosophy.

ROMAN RELIGION AND PRIMITIVE WISDOM

Whatever the precise origin of the physics expressed in them, Varro's allegories imply that in his eyes philosophical knowledge could be found in Roman religion. The obvious question is how this came about. How does it happen that philosophical truth is transmitted through religion? The issue was clearly important enough to be addressed in Varro's introduction to Book 16 of *ARD*. It is worth quoting its first fragment in full:

> primum eas interpretationes sic Varro commendat, ut dicat antiquos simulacra deorum et insignia ornatusque finxisse, quae cum oculis animadvertissent hi, qui adissent doctrinae mysteria, possent animam mundi ac partes eius, id est deos veros, animo videre; quorum qui simulacra specie hominis fecerunt, hoc videri secutos, quod mortalium animus, qui est in corpore humano, simillimus est immortalis animi; tamquam si vasa poneretur causa notandorum deorum et in Liberi aede oenophorum sisteretur, quod significaret vinum, per id quod continet id quod continetur; ita per simulacrum, quod formam haberet humanam, significari animam rationalem, quod eo velut vase natura ista soleat contineri, cuius naturae deum volunt esse vel deos.
>
> First of all, Varro commends these interpretations so highly as to say that the men of old invented the images, attributes and adornments of the gods precisely so that, when those who had approached the mysteries of the doctrine had seen these visible things with their eyes, they might also see with their mind the soul of the world and its parts; that is, the true gods. He also says that those who made the images of the gods in human form seem to have believed that the mortal mind that exists in the human body is very similar to the immortal mind. It is as if vessels were placed to represent the gods: as, for

76. See Cic. *Acad. post.* 1.24.

77. As suggested by, e.g., Kleywegt 1972, 39–45. See Tarver 1997, for Varro as an intelligent transmitter.

78. Cic. *Luc.* 131; Sedley 2002, 52. In view of Antiochus' reconciliation of Stoicism and Platonism, it is significant that Polemo was the teacher of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism (Diog. Laert. 7.1).

> example, a wine-jar might be placed in the temple of Liber, to signify wine, that which is contained being signified by that which contains. Thus, the rational soul was signified by an image which had a human form, because the human form is, so to speak, the vessel in which that nature is wont to be contained which they wish to attribute to God, or to the gods.[79]

Varro offers a twofold basis for the presence of truth in religion. In the first place, religion was invented by the *antiqui*, who clothed the true gods (the world soul and its different manifestations) in what had become for Varro's contemporaries traditional imagery. The role of these ancients is important and remarkable. Contrary to early Stoic theory,[80] this fragment gives the impression that names and images of the gods did not come into being naturally or by accident, but were intentionally created (*finxisse*) by the "ancients." Secondly, the use of anthropomorphic images is grounded in the fundamental likeness of the mortal soul and the immortal one, which must be identified with the world soul.[81] This refers back to what we have said on the parallel tripartition of the world soul and its mortal counterpart,[82] and also to man's special position as the only being that partakes in intelligence. Obviously, not only the symbolic content of the image refers to the structure of the cosmos, but also the type of image—an idea one often finds in later texts.[83] Both elements guarantee that the figurative aspect of religion does not disfigure the truth contained in it.

A related problem is how the truth can be retrieved from religion. First, Varro implies that the choice of images is a deliberate and precise process, which is based on the essential likeness between the *signifiant* and *signifié*. On the other hand, he does admit that only the wise, those "who have approached the mysteries of the doctrine," can recognize the truth. With the creation of images, religion can be read on two levels: an immediate level that is simply visual, and a higher philosophical level that goes beyond the images. It is obviously implied that the second way of reading is the better, and, moreover, that philosophical knowledge is a precondition of recognizing the real meaning. So even though religion may contain the same truth as philosophy, the latter discipline is essential for finding the wisdom hidden in religion. Thus, the priority of philosophy, not only theoretical but also historical, grounds the allegory: the knowledge that allegory retrieves from figurative images was originally "hidden" there by wise philosophers (the *antiqui*), but philosophy is also needed to come to a correct allegory. It takes wisdom to decode primitive wisdom. This recalls what we have earlier said about Varro's allegories of the *di selecti*, where coherence was indeed provided by the underlying philosophical ideas.

79. August. *De civ. D.* 7.5, p. 280 lines 8–21 = Varro *ARD* frag. 225, trans. Dyson 1998, 274.

80. See Boys-Stones 2001; Goulet 2005.

81. As the following quotation of Varro in Augustine shows: August. *De civ. D.* 7.6, p. 281 line 31–p. 282 line 17 = Varro *ARD* frag. 226.

82. Boyancé (1962, 471) considered this to be a very "modern" parallel that would become central to Neoplatonism. He even entertained the possibility that Varro believed in an "efficacité télestique" of statues. Varro is, however, probably using a principle of Antiochus' philosophy.

83. E.g., Dio Chrys. *Or.* 12.59; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 2.3.

Fragment 225 focuses on Roman religion and images, but the allegory of Saturn, as analyzed above, allows one to extend the topic to other religions and types of evidence as well. As we have seen, in this allegory, Varro drew on foreign rituals, such as the sacrificial rites of the Carthaginians and the Gauls. Varro thus probably considered Roman religion as just one example of a worldwide process of transition from a philosophical to a "traditional" religion. All religions and their different expressions, he suggests, contain philosophical truth. References to Judaism in the first book imply the same attitude.[84] Moreover, he also allegorized myth, ritual, and names, and not only cult statues. This implies that the *antiqui* did not only create images, but were probably also responsible for the truth hidden in other religious expressions.

Notwithstanding the general idea of all religions as loci of truth, there seems to be one specific Greek cult that is more highly valued: the Samothracian mysteries, which are taken to have preserved knowledge of the highest philosophical principles. The number of fragments of the *ARD* referring to this cult is remarkable,[85] especially given the fact that it actually falls, as a Greek cult, outside the scope of the work. Samothrace is central to Varro's argument for two main reasons: he identifies it at once as the symbolic representation of the highest philosophical principles and as the origin of the most important Roman deities. In that way, he succeeds in linking Rome to Greece, and more specifically to one of its most ancient cult centers.

A fragment from Book 15 explicitly attributes the knowledge of the highest philosophical principles to the Samothracian mysteries.

> hinc etiam Samothracum nobilia mysteria in superiore libro sic interpretatur eaque se, quae nec Sais nota sunt, scribendo expositurum eisque missurum quasi religiosissime pollicetur. dicit enim se ibi multis indiciis collegisse in simulacris aliud significare caelum, aliud terram, aliud exempla rerum, quas Plato appellat ideas; caelum Iovem, terram Iunonem, ideas Minervam vult intellegi; caelum a quo fiat aliquid, terram de qua fiat, exemplum secundum quod fiat.
>
> Hence also, in the preceding book, Varro similarly interprets the celebrated mysteries of the Samothracians, and promises, almost with religious fervor, that he will expound in writing things unknown to the local priests and send those to them. For he says that he had discovered in Samothrace, from many indications, that one of the images there signified the heaven, another the earth, and another the model of things which Plato calls Forms. Varro wishes it to be understood that Jupiter is the heaven, Juno the earth, and Minerva the Forms: heaven being that by which anything is made; earth being that of which it is made; and the ideas being the form according to which it is made.[86]

Although clearly different in kind, this interpretation works on the same principles as Varro's allegory of the cult of Saturn. But the mysteries of Samothrace are clearly of a higher order. The images kept there symbolize

84. Varro *ARD* frag. 15–17.

85. See frags. 205, 206, and XVa. See also *Curio* frag. I and *Ling*. 5.57–58. Athens, for example, only occurs once (frag. 271).

86. August. *De civ. D.* 7.28, p. 311 lines 7–15 = Varro *ARD* frag. 206, trans. Dyson 1998, 303, slightly corrected. The manuscripts read *nec suis nota sunt*, which Wissowa (1904, 117) emended to *Sais*, the Sai being the priests of Samothrace (Serv. ad *Aen.* 2.324). Cardauns (1976, 90) follows Wissowa, as I do. My interpretation of the passage is not affected by this point of textual criticism.

the basic principles of the cosmos, heaven, earth, and ideas, or god, matter, and Forms. These are, as I have argued, the fundamental metaphysical principles of Varro's physics (and possibly also those of Antiochus of Ascalon), to which almost all other principles can be reduced.

Varro seems to have attached great importance to the correct interpretation of the Samothracian deities. Augustine describes his tone as *quasi religiosissime*, and reports that Varro pretended to know better than the priests of the island themselves who their gods were and what they symbolized. Moreover, in *De lingua Latina* Varro explicitly rejects the usual identification of the Samothracian gods with Castor and Pollux.[87] In this last passage, Varro identifies the Samothracian deities only with *terra* and *caelum*, taking the one as *anima* and the other as *corpus*.[88] This apparent contradiction has puzzled many scholars,[89] but Ludwig Fladerer has argued that Varro, in the wake of Antiochus, sees Minerva as part of Jupiter.[90]

Varro's claim of knowing better than the Samothracians themselves what their statues signify, is fully in accordance with the principles of allegorization he laid out in fragment 225. He possesses the necessary philosophical knowledge to come to the correct interpretation—a knowledge apparently lost to the priests of the island. He even goes so far as to disregard the traditional convention that there were only two Samothracian deities: his philosophy tells him there must be three.[91]

The reasons for Varro's insistence on the correct identification and number of these gods become clear in fragment 205, also from Book 15, where the Capitoline triad is identified with the Penates and linked to Samothrace:

> Penates esse per quos penitus spiramus et corpus habemus et animi rationes possidemus: eos autem esse Iovem aethera medium, Iunonem imum aera cum terra, summum aetheris cacumen Minervam. quos Tarquinius Demarati Corinthi filius, Samothraciis religionibus mystice imbutus, uno templo et sub eodem tecto coniunxit.
>
> The Penates are the gods through which we breathe, have a body, and possess reason in the soul. They are Jove, middle aether, Juno, the lower air with earth, and the highest part of the aether, Minerva. Tarquinius, son of Demaratus the Corinthian and initiate of the Samothracian mysteries, joined them in one temple and under one roof.[92]

The Samothracian deities are identical to the Capitoline triad, who are in turn identified with the Penates, the mysterious but all-important Roman deities whose identity was much discussed at the time.[93] By dint of this identification, Roman religion matches philosophy very closely: not only do the Roman gods and cults symbolize the true structure of the cosmos, as suggested

87. See, e.g., Diod. Sic. 4.43.1–2, 5.49.6.

88. Varro *Ling*. 5.57–58.

89. Wissowa 1887, 49; Boyancé 1975, 102. Kleywegt (1972, 33–36) develops an extensive hypothesis involving different inscriptions read by Varro in order to explain this apparent contradiction. In my opinion, there is no need for this.

90. Fladerer 1996, 108–9.

91. In this he follows earlier authors like Acusilaos (*FGrH* 2 F20) and Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3 F48).

92. Serv. ad *Aen.* 2.296 = Macrob. *Sat*. 3.4.7 = Varro *ARD* frag. 205. See also August. *De civ. D.* 4.10, p. 157 lines 17–19, p. 158 lines 10–19.

93. See Wissowa 1887.

in fragment 225, but the three oldest and central Roman deities also symbolize the highest principles of philosophy.

Varro does not simply affirm the identification of the highest Roman gods with the gods of Samothrace; he is also at pains to provide historical evidence for how the transfer of the gods (and of philosophical knowledge) came about. In the fragments of his works we find a double historical link. The original link is Aeneas. According to Varro, Dardanus, the forefather of the founder of Troy, had brought the Penates from Samothrace to Troy, and later Aeneas carried the Penates from Phrygia to Italy.[94] Although this version is original to Varro,[95] he was able to draw both on an earlier Greek tradition and a Roman one to concoct it. Already Hellanicus (early fifth century B.C.E.) had said that Dardanus came from Samothrace before going to Troy.[96] Callistratus (first century B.C.E.), who wrote a history of Samothrace, and is quoted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, provides an even more impressive pedigree. Chryse, daughter of Pallas, when married to Dardanus brought as dowry the gifts of Athena: the Palladia and the sacred symbols shown in the mysteries of the Great Gods. Dardanus, fleeing the deluge, settled on Samothrace, built a temple, and created the mysteries. He left the mysteries on the island but took the Palladia and the images of the gods with him.[97] It is not impossible that Varro knew Callistratus' account, linking Samothrace to Athens, and referred to it. In the Roman tradition, already Cassius Hemina (middle second century B.C.E.) thought that the Penates came directly from Samothrace.[98] Varro seems to have combined the Greek account, linking Samothrace and Troy, and the Roman account, identifying the Penates with the mysterious divinities of the island.

The second historical link was Tarquinius Priscus (traditionally dated to 616–578 B.C.E.), who, according to the fragment quoted above, had been initiated in the mysteries of Samothrace, and constructed the temple on the Capitol. It is clearly implied that Tarquinius, through his initiation, had knowledge of the philosophical principles hidden in the Samothracian mysteries (a knowledge that apparently was not yet lost at that time). Consequently, he united in one temple the Capitoline triad, who were the oldest Roman gods according to Varro,[99] and in that way visualized the central role these principles had in the cosmos. The temple, created through inspiration from Samothrace, affirmed visually that the highest gods of Roman religion were indeed the highest principles of philosophy.

Varro's interest in Samothrace is too pervasive to be accidental. No other foreign cult figures so prominently in *ARD* and in the narrative of cultic transfer that Varro develops in it. On a theoretical plane he identifies the

94. Serv. ad *Aen.* 1.378, 2.325, 3.148; Macrob. *Sat.* 3.4.7. Kleywegt (1972, 5–7) gives all the texts. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.66.5 contains a similar version and probably stems from Varro.

95. Wissowa 1887, 40; Kleywegt 1972, 4–19; Schilling 1980. Cole (1984, 100–103) sketches the different traditions.

96. *FGrH* 4 F23.

97. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.68.2 = Callistratus, *FGrH* 433 F10.

98. Frag. 7 Chassignet. Critolaus (*FGrH* 823 F1, dated before Varro by Jacoby) says the same.

99. Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.12.5 = Varro *ARD* frag. 207.

Capitoline triad, the Penates, and the Samothracian deities with the three highest philosophical principles. The stories about Aeneas and Tarquinius Priscus in turn provide a historical narrative that explains how the knowledge present in Samothrace was transferred to Rome. In that way Varro turns Samothrace into the major ancestor of Roman religion.

It is unclear why Varro chose Samothrace to fulfill that particular role. Why did he not choose, for example, Athens, for many the center of Greek culture? It is usually pointed out that Samothrace already enjoyed notoriety in Roman society and was probably the best-known Greek mystery cult in Rome besides Eleusis. Indeed, many Romans were initiated there from the second century B.C.E. onward,[100] and Varro himself had visited the place in 67 B.C.E.[101] But there is an additional element to be taken into account. Varro may have been aware of a Greek tradition, reported in Diodorus, that tends to make Samothrace the origin of all mystery cults.[102] In *ARD* Varro may have championed similar ideas. In a passage that may draw on Varro, because of its similarities to Varro's account of the origins of Troy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus links Samothrace to yet another mystery cult. He tells how the Trojans, having come from Arcadia, lived in Samothrace, before moving on to Phrygia, where they founded the cult of the Mother of the Gods.[103] This is probably no accident. The Mother of the Gods is, with Eleusis and Samothrace, the only foreign cult discussed at length in the *ARD*, where she is identified with Tellus and explained as a representation of insemination.[104] It is impossible to prove, but in the light of the present discussion not unlikely, that the link with Samothrace provided for Varro a justification of the introduction of this cult in 204. Being a direct offspring of the source of truth, Samothrace, the cult of the Mother of the Gods, just like the Penates or the Capitoline triad, may have been considered to be in line with the underlying philosophical principles of Roman religion, and, consequently, could be safely adopted in Rome.[105]

As Samothrace was a mystery cult, the previous conclusion brings up the question whether Varro attributed any special status to mystery cults in general. Given the fragmentary nature of the work, any answer remains fraught with doubts. Probably the idea did not figure very prominently in *ARD*, which studies the earliest phase of Roman religion at a time when mystery cults did not play any role. However, Varro seems to be aware of a Greek idea that mystery cults contain a higher degree of truth. Fragment 21 bears witness to this:

100. See, e.g., Cic. *Nat. D.* 119, or, later, Galen, *De usu partium* I, p. 418 lines 20–27, II, p. 448 lines 5–9. Cf. Cole 1984, 87–97; 1989, 1589–93 (who sees political motives in the Roman interest in Samothrace); Dubourdieu 1989, 125–50.

101. Varro *Rust.* 2 praef. 6.

102. Diod. Sic. 5.47–49, 64, a claim that did not go undisputed, for example, by the Cretans (5.77.3).

103. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.61.3. None of the existing collections include this passage among the fragments of *ARD.* The source may also be Callistratus, quoted by Dionysius a few chapters later (1.68.2). We have observed above the similarities between Varro and Callistratus.

104. August. *De civ. D.* 7.24, p. 305 line 17 = Varro *ARD* frag. 267.

105. In his Menippean satires, Varro criticized oriental cults, but this relates rather to the improper behavior of the devotees. This does not exclude them from representing the truth. Lehmann (1997, 267–68) surveys the material.

> ipse diceret de religionibus loquens multa esse vera, quae non modo vulgo scire non sit utile, sed etiam, tametsi falsa sunt, aliter existimare populum expediat, et ideo Graecos teletas ac mysteria taciturnitate parietibusque clausisse.
>
> Talking about religions, he said himself that there are many truths which it is not useful for the common people to know, and, moreover, that there are many false views which it is expedient that people should take to be true. This, he says, is why the Greeks held their initiations and mysteries in secret and behind closed doors.[106]

Apart from its elitist tendency, the fragment implies that mystery cults contain a higher philosophical truth than other cults. Varro indeed says that many *vera* are hidden from the common people in mystery cults: mystery cults shield the truth from the uninitiated. He was thus aware of a Greek view that mystery cults contain a higher degree of truth than ordinary cults.

This fragment suggests that outside mystery cults many lies are presented as truth to the people, which may be useful if believed. It seems to imply that other religious cults contain some untruth. The original philosophical religion may have been slightly distorted with impure accretions. One might think that this is due to misinterpretations of cult images by people who lack the right philosophical knowledge. It is an idea, however, that does not surface often in other fragments of *ARD*. Only fragment 47 distinguishes between *superstitio*, identified with the attitude *timere*, and *religio*, expressed in *vereri*. The element of untruth in religion may be the fact that it inspires fear for divine punishment in man, and consequently is morally useful. Again one cannot be certain that superstition is not a major theme in *ARD*, but its relative absence may be due to the fact that the work is concerned with the earliest phase of Roman religion that was the most pure.

Apart from the special position attributed to Samothrace, the idea of mystery cults as loci of truth does not play an important role in the *ARD*. Varro does not give a prominent place to Eleusis, the only other Greek mystery cult mentioned: Proserpina is simply seen as symbolizing the *seminum fecunditatem*, and the entire cult is interpreted *ad frugum inventionem*.[107] A very brief reference, however, to the fact that the Chaldaeans, "in their mysteries," use the name Iao for the Jewish god, who is identical to the highest god, can be taken to show that Varro stressed on at least one additional occasion the link between mysteries and the highest truth.[108]

As yet I have identified in this part of my paper three elements of Varro's view on the origins of Roman religion. First, as shown by fragment 225, he attributes the creation of cult images (and, I have argued, probably of all elements of traditional religion) to the deliberate intention of "ancients." Second, the mysteries of Samothrace are identified as the source of the major Roman deities, which Varro identifies with the highest philosophical principles. This thesis is embedded in a historical narrative explaining how

106. August. *De civ. D.* 4.31, p. 186 lines 1–5 = Varro *ARD* frag. 21, trans. Dyson 1998, 182.

107. August. *De civ. D.* 7.20, p. 299 line 4 = Varro *ARD* frag. 271.

108. August. *De civ. D.* 4.9, p. 157 lines 5–6 = Varro *ARD* frag. 15; August. *De consensu evangeliorum* 1.22.30 = Varro *ARD* frag. 16; Lydus *Mens.* 4.53 = Varro *ARD* frag. 17.

that knowledge was transferred to Rome. Finally, Varro seems to accept a close link between mystery cults and truth, an idea that he traces back to Greece. It may seem obscure at first sight how these various elements belong together, and one might be tempted to attribute it to the confused mind of a *collectioneur* who got embroiled in too wide a range of material. In my opinion, however, these three ideas are part of a coherent narrative on the origins of Roman religion, which must be analyzed as the result of Varro's conflation of the Greek philosophical view about primitive wisdom and a traditional history of early Rome.

Varro accepts the basic tenets of the Greek view, which I earlier identified as of possibly Posidonian origin before it passed on to the Middle Platonists. Summarized briefly, it held that the kings of the ancients, being wise philosophers, deliberately created the images, rituals, and names of the gods, with their eyes fixed on philosophical truth. Mystery cults contain a higher degree of truth than other cults; being closed to non-initiates, they apparently preserve primitive wisdom better than other religious expressions.[109] Contemporary philosophers considered ancient wisdom lost as common knowledge in their time, when one now needed philosophical training to be able to interpret cult images and myths correctly.[110] All of this is present in Varro: the deliberate creation of religion by ancients in line with philosophy, the identification of philosophical truth in ancient cults like Samothrace, and the close link between mystery cults and truth. It is interesting to note that Varro is actually the first to adopt the idea of primitive wisdom in a Platonist context, and to identify religion as the major source for this wisdom.[111] If one accepts that Varro is dependent on Antiochus of Ascalon in *ARD*, as I suggested above, it is even possible that Varro encountered this idea in the writings of his master.

Posidonius' philosopher-kings lived in an undefined period before historical time.[112] In adopting this view, Varro was confronted with a particular problem. Rome could not pretend to be one of the peoples that had existed from the origin of time, as it was founded at a specific moment in history. Varro thus had to link Rome's religion to that of the more ancient peoples. This was done by identifying the Samothracian mysteries (in a later Platonist author listed among the most ancient peoples[113]) as the fountain of wisdom, and then by providing historical links with important Romans like Aeneas and Tarquinius Priscus. The Samothracian cult functions as the main foreign contributor to Roman religion: the Penates, the Capitoline triad, and, in a derived way, also

109. This may enhance our understanding of fragment 225, where it is said that only *hi, qui adissent doctrinae mysteria* can have a full understanding of the truth of the images. It does not have to be more than a traditional comparison of the acquisition of philosophical knowledge to initiation in the mysteries. But in the light of the prominent role played by the Samothracian mysteries, it can also be an oblique reference to the mystery cults as loci of truth.

110. Detailed discussion of this Greek view can be found in Boys-Stones 2001, for the philosophical background, and Van Nuffelen 2007, for its application to religion.

111. According to Boys-Stones (2001, 99–122), Cornutus (first century C.E.) is the first author in whose work we can grasp the view of primitive wisdom after Posidonius. But Varro clearly precedes him.

112. Sen. *Ep*. 90.5–6.

113. Celsus, in Origen *C. Cels.* 1.14. See already Hdt. 2.2.

the Mother of the Gods stem from Samothrace. Even though Rome may have been a latecomer, Varro managed to attribute a degree of truth to its religion that was as high as that of any Greek cult. He even suggests, by criticizing the Samothracians for having forgotten the true meaning of their statues, that Rome is now a better place to look for philosophical truth in religion.

PHILOSOPHER-KINGS AND ANICONISM

If one accepts my analysis of Varro's views on the history of Roman religion, some of its other peculiar features can be more easily understood. A consequence of Varro's attempt to integrate a Greek philosophical view and Roman history is that he situates the changes in religion, which Posidonius tended to put beyond the scope of history, in historical time. Religion is for Varro a historical creation[114] that can be precisely dated. This is particularly clear in two areas: Varro attributes an important role in this process to inspired philosopher-kings and he stresses the deliberate creation of cult images at a certain point in time.

Both in fragment 225 and in the fragments concerned with the Samothracian cult, images are at the centre of Varro's interest. In the former, Varro describes how the *antiqui* made anthropomorphic images of the gods as a figurative representation of the structure of the cosmos, whereas in the latter he gives the true interpretation of the images preserved in this mystery cult. This must be connected with the famous fragment 18, from the first book of *ARD*, where Varro states that the Romans worshipped the gods without figurative images (*sine simulacro*) for 170 years.[115] As shown by the remarks of Augustine preceding the fragment, this implies that in the earliest period the Romans worshipped philosophical principles directly or through nonfigurative images.[116] The period of 170 years allows the dating of the introduction of anthropomorphic images in Rome in the reign of Tarquinius Priscus.[117] This is probably no coincidence: as seen in our discussion of the Samothracian cult, Tarquinius was an initiate of this cult and had constructed the temple on the Capitol. He was well placed to organize the earliest Roman cult and its imagery according to the highest philosophical principles.

This suggests that Varro's *antiqui* are not unknown ancestors, but important figures of Roman history. He seems to attribute a role of paramount importance to inspired legislators in the development of Roman religion[118]—inspired not in the sense that they had received direct divine revelation, but

114. As he affirms explicitly in *ARD* frag. 5 = August. *De civ. D.* 6.4, p. 250 lines 17–20.

115. August. *De civ. D.* 4.31, p. 186 lines 21–29; cf. Plut. *Num.* 8.65bc = Varro *ARD* frag. 18.

116. August. *De civ. D.* 4.31, p. 186 lines 11–14 = Varro *ARD* frag. 13.

117. Cf. Plin. *HN* 35.157. Cf. Cardauns 1976, 147.

118. This may also reflect upon a much-discussed passage of *De lingua Latina* (5.7–8), where Varro distinguishes four levels of explaining language, the third being that of the philosopher and the fourth that of the king. In relation to the level of the king, there is also a reference to mystery cults. This strongly recalls the position of philosopher-kings like Tarquinius Priscus, initiate of Samothrace, in relation to the creation of Roman religion. The major difference is, however, that in this passage the king is on a higher level than the philosopher, whereas in *ARD* king and philosopher are identified. For a bibliography and discussion of this passage, see Lehmann 1997, 307; Cardauns 2001, 56.

that they were fully conscious of the truth hidden in religion. It is probably no accident that the figures that are explicitly mentioned all have a clear link with Greece. This is evident for Aeneas, and also for Tarquinius Priscus, initiate in the mysteries of Samothrace. The same is true for Numa, whom Varro explicitly linked with Pythagoras. On his orders, the Penates were deposited in the newly constructed temple of Vesta. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who tells the story, gives as one of the explanations for the continuously burning fire in the temple that fire was the most pure element.[119] He may be reflecting Varro here, who indeed held the world soul to be of a fiery nature,[120] and who considered, as we have seen, the heavenly *semina* to be little sparks of fire. Moreover, Varro also identified Vesta with fire for human use.[121] The action of Numa, then, linked the essential element of fire to the fundamental principles of the cosmos—god, matter, and ideas—represented by the Penates. Although we have seen that he ascribes awareness of ancient truth to other peoples as well, such as the Jews, such stories suggest that for Varro Roman religion was directly inspired by Greek philosophy.

In Varro's view, aniconism was related to the earlier and better stages of human history and he consequently valued it higher than the image worship of his time. His preference returns often in his work. Fragment 254 of *ARD* identifies Mars with a lance; in the *Res humanae* the Penates are described as *sigilla lignea vel marmorea*,[122] even though contemporaries pretended they were represented by the images of two young men.[123] Ancient aniconism was not limited to the Romans. From *De gente populi romani*, which dates the creation of the first cult to after the deluge, we can gather that indeed all ancient peoples worshipped originally without figurative images, and also that before the deluge there were no images at all.[124] In *ARD*, Varro praises in particular the Jews and some unspecified barbarians for having maintained their aniconic cult up to his day;[125] they still stick to a purer stage of worship.

The fact that Varro sees figurative images as conscious creations from the time of Tarquinius and not as the result of a natural development raises the question why they were created at all. To this the extant fragments do not give an answer. Scholars have surmised that images were created for the plebs, whereas the elite could worship the philosophical principles directly.[126] Some fragments do indeed indicate the dangers of idol worship: it can deflect the attention from the true focus of worship[127] and inspire fear and error,[128] and in that way give rise to superstition. Obviously, then, the aniconic stage of Roman religion is more highly valued, as it is worship without other means

119. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.66.2–5.

120. Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.219 = Varro *ARD* frag. 23. Servius (ad *Aen.* 2.294) speculates that Vesta was part of the Penates. A Varronic origin is not to be excluded.

121. August. *De civ. D.* 7.16, p. 294 line 20 = Varro *ARD* frag. 281.

122. Varro *Antiquitates rerum humanarum* frag. 8 (Mirsch) = Serv. ad *Aen.* 1.378.

123. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.68.1–2.

124. Varro *De gente populi romani* frags. 9, 13 = August. *De civ. D.* 18.2. Briefly commented on in Della Corte 1976, 131–32; Cancik 2001, 1.

125. Varro *ARD* frag. 15–17.

126. E.g., Lehmann 1997, 192.

127. August. *De civ. D.* 4.31, p. 185 lines 18–29 = Varro *ARD* frag. 12.

128. August. *De civ. D.* 4.31, p. 186 lines 21–29 = Varro *ARD* frag. 18.

and without the dangers of images.[129] It is tempting to link this with fragment 20, which, as we have seen, stresses that some things should be better hidden from the general public.[130] Anthropomorphic images would then be the religion for the people, a religion created on purpose. I am not convinced that this link can be made. None of the fragments says, strictly speaking, that *simulacra* were created specifically for the common people, even though they do indicate the dangers of statues and stress that they can make people deviate from the right worship.[131] Incorrect worship is a possible consequence of cult images, stresses Varro, for people unable to perceive their true meaning. He does not say that figurative images were created with the purpose of providing a religion for the people. By seeing the creation of such images as the willful creation of a "popular religion," we may be substituting cause for consequence. The truth is that Varro nowhere gives an explicit justification for the creation of figurative images. Instead of adding more speculation to the topic, I want to sketch how their deliberate creation was essential for Varro's views about Roman religion and his use of allegory.

Varro's view on images is not simply negative. He is indeed aware of their dangers, but, on the other hand, Varro does not seem to consider any image or ritual inappropriate. As the allegory of Saturn shows, they all reflect a particular aspect of a philosophical principle. Even immoral rituals such as human sacrifice at Carthage do contain philosophical knowledge. Moreover, fragment 225 clearly states that the choice of anthropomorphic images is due to the fact that human intelligence is an earthly image of the world soul, and is, consequently, not accidental. Varro does not seem to assume that some rituals or cult images are mere accretions to the philosophical core, and should be cut out of religion. All images and rituals seem to be conscious creations reflecting philosophical knowledge.[132] This attitude can be explained in the light of Varro's wide-ranging allegories, which apparently salvage all cult images and ritual. They can only work on the assumption that no rituals or images are the result of superstition or of a lack of knowledge, but are all created by wise leaders who are aware of the philosophical knowledge. Moreover, this creation needed to happen in historical time, as Roman religion in its entirety was created in historical time. Varro consequently had to situate the creation of anthropomorphic images at a specific point in time. Thus, his affirmation that philosophical kings such as Tarquinius created statues is the necessary foil for his allegorical reading of images, as it provides a justification for his allegories.[133] A preceding aniconic stage is the logical consequence.[134] Rather than being a real his-

129. Arn. *Nat*. 7.1 = Varro *ARD* frag. 22.

130. Cancik and Cancik-Lindemaier 2001, 43–44.

131. Tert. *Apol*. 25.12 = Varro *ARD* frag. 38 links the creation of images to superstition, but Cardauns (1976, ad loc.) is right in thinking the reference to superstition an addition of the Christian apologist.

132. There is consequently no contradiction between Varro's earlier praise of aniconism (*ARD* frags. 18 and 22) and his positive appraisal of cult images in fragment 225, as Cardauns (1976, 226) thinks.

133. If we take the agricultural development as sketched in the *Res divinae* as an example, one can also think of the creation of images as merely a necessary stage in the gradual development of mankind (no images, aniconic images, traditional images). Varro was clearly fond of distinguishing stages.

134. There is no contradiction between aniconism and allegory (contra Cardauns 1976, 147).

torical stage in Roman religion, as used to be thought by scholars,[135] early Roman aniconism is a result of the philosophical framework of the *ARD.*

CONCLUSION

My interpretation of Varro's *ARD*, which has stressed his dependence on the Posidonian concept of primitive wisdom, implies that we should reconsider the traditional interpretation according to which he preferred tradition over truth and traditional religion over philosophy. On the contrary, for Varro tradition is an image of philosophical truth. This will become clear with a brief discussion of the most famous doctrine of the *ARD*: the three types of theology (*mythica*, *civilis*, and *naturalis*). Throughout the fragments, it is clear that he rejects the *theologia mythica*, a product of poets, who want to please the audience, not to tell the truth.[136] Varro's opinion on their untruth becomes clear in his consistent rejection of the mythical genealogies in his allegories,[137] as we have seen in our discussion of Saturn. The myths may contain some truth, but poets have tried to make a nice story out of it, and, consequently, have distorted the truth. Contrary to the pontiff Scaevola,[138] however, Varro does not reject *theologia naturalis* in favor of *theologia civilis*. His only "critique" of the former is that it is too highbrow for most people,[139] and that the philosophers do not succeed in agreeing.[140] A return to the pure *theologia naturalis* is impossible, admits Varro, and consequently we must stick to the historically formed tradition.[141] But *theologia civilis* is not without its problems either. As indicated above, cult images may induce people into error and lead them to superstition. This is, however, not due to the fact that images would be wrong representations of the ancient wisdom.[142] Rather, as ordinary people lack the necessary philosophical knowledge, they easily start to believe that the cult image is the true form of the god.

Apparently, we witness two conflicting loyalties in Varro's mind: one toward pure worship of philosophy, and another toward Roman tradition. Scholarship has traditionally stressed his final preference for the latter over the former.[143] Without wishing to underestimate the differences between the two theologies,[144] I think, however, that it would be a mistake to overstress

135. Cf. Dumézil 1970, 25–28; Martin 1987, 11–53; Beard et al. 1998, 11.

136. Esp. August. *De civ. D.* 6.5, p. 252 line 17–p. 253 line 4 = Varro *ARD* frag. 7.

137. Explicitly rejected in August. *De civ. D.* 4.32, p. 187 lines 20–23 = Varro *ARD* frag. 19.

138. August. *De civ. D.* 4.27, p. 179 line 21–p. 180 line 20 = Varro *Curio* frag. V.

139. August. *De civ. D.* 6.6, p. 257 lines 2–18 = Varro *ARD* frag. 11.

140. August. *De civ. D.* 6.5, p. 253 lines 10–22 = Varro *ARD* frag. 8. This is, possibly, another indication that Varro, and through him Antiochus, adhered to the above-sketched view on primitive wisdom, as in it the quarrels between philosophical schools were seen as a sign of the loss of this wisdom. Antiochus wanted to lift himself above these controversies. Quarelling philosophers are consequently not a sign that the *theologia naturalis* is flawed, but a statement by Varro that he will deliver the only truthful view and transcend the errors of the others. See Boys-Stones 2001, 123–50.

141. August. *De civ. D.* 4.32, p. 185 lines 18–29 = Varro *ARD* frag. 12.

142. Cardauns (1976, 145) seems mistaken in thinking that according to Varro the images of the *theologia civilis* were inspired by the poetical narratives. None of the fragments he refers to (12–19) imply this.

143. Lehmann (1997, 223–24). I do not notice the suspicion of Varro towards the *theologia naturalis* he sees.

144. See the works in n. 2 above for detailed assessments of the various theologies.

them: ultimately they are two different forms of the same truths. In content *theologia civilis* and *naturalis* are identical. It is consequently wrong to suppose that Varro preferred *theologia civilis* to *theologia naturalis*, as many modern scholars do, or to think, like Augustine, that it was through fear for popular reactions that he did not reveal the untruth of *theologia civilis*.[145] Both theologies represent the same truth, only their forms are different, *theologia naturalis* possessing a purer one than *theologia civilis*. The close link between both theologies also becomes clear from the fact that they both represent a historical stage: *theologia naturalis* was clearly the earliest form of religion, and it was succeeded by *theologia civilis*. The mythical theology, however, never represented a historical stage, and is only partially an image of truth. *Theologia naturalis* and *theologia civilis* also share a similar set of problems: both are not readily present in pure form. A clear perception of philosophical truths is obscured by disagreement among philosophers, whereas the visual nature of the *theologia civilis* makes the truth only indirectly accessible (not to mention the possibility of superstitious additions to the forms created by the ancients). Once we understand the relationship between both theologies in this way, it is hardly surprising that Varro concluded a work apparently aimed at collecting all that is known about the *theologia civilis* with an extensive discussion of the *theologia naturalis* that lies behind it. *ARD* does not only propose to inventorize the *theologia civilis*, but to show that it is formed in accordance with the philosophical truth. In Roman religion, as reconstructed by Varro in *ARD*, tradition was just another expression of the truth.

The fragmentary state of *ARD* does not allow us to grasp all details of Varro's ideas. From the preceding pages, however, it must have become clear that it is possible to discern a philosophical framework behind Varro's antiquarianism, both in terms of the physics behind the allegories of Book 16 and in terms of the historical narrative about Roman religion. As I have argued, both are closely linked, the historical narrative providing the justification of the allegories. Roman cult images can only be read as containing truths about the cosmos because Roman legislators have created their religion in line with the ancient truth found in Greece. This strongly suggests that *ARD* is more than a simple collection of evidence about Roman religion, but a work written with a philosophical program behind it. I do not wish to deny the antiquarian character of *ARD* nor to suggest that antiquarianism is just the vehicle for Varro's philosophical convictions. On the contrary, tradition was the embodiment of truth for Varro. *ARD* is not just an inventory of Roman religion but also an extended argument in favor of its truthfulness. Philosophy and antiquarianism are consequently not two contradictory intellectual impulses, nor do tradition and truth contradict each other: antiquarian research helps to uncover the philosophical truth hidden in religion.

University of Ghent

145. August. *De civ. D.* 6.6.

LITERATURE CITED

Agahd, R. 1898. *M. Terenti Varronis "Antiquitatum rerum divinarum" libri I XIV XV XVI*. Leipzig.

Barnes, J. 1989. Antiochus of Ascalon. In Philosophia Togata I: *Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*, ed. M. Griffin and J. Barnes, 51–96. Oxford.

Beard, M., J. North, and S. Price. 1998. *Religions of Rome*. Vol. 1. Cambridge.

Boyancé, P. 1962. Sur les mystères d'Éleusis. *REG* 75: 460–82.

————. 1972. Sur la théologie de Varron. In *Études sur la religion romaine*, 253–82. Paris.

————. 1975. Etymologie et théologie chez Varron. *REL* 53: 99–115.

Boys-Stones, G. R. 2001. *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen*. Oxford.

Brisson, L. 2004. *How Philosophers Saved Myths*. Chicago.

Burns, P. C. 2001. Augustine's Use of Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* in His *De civitate Dei*. *Augustinian Studies* 32: 37–64.

Cancik, H. 2001. Historisierung von Religion: Religionsgeschichtsschreibung in der Antike (Varro—Tacitus—Walahfrid Strabo). In *Historicization = Historisierung*, ed. G. Most, 1–15. Göttingen.

Cancik, H., and H. Cancik-Lindemaier. 2001. The Truth of Images. Cicero and Varro on Image Worship. In *Representation in Religion: Studies in Honor of Mosche Berasche*, ed. J. Assmann and A. I. Baumgarten, 43–61. Leiden.

Cardauns, B. 1976. *M. Terentius Varro: "Antiquitates rerum divinarum."* Mainz.

————. 2001. *Marcus Terentius Varro*. Heidelberg.

Champeaux, J. 1994. Arnobe lecteur de Varron. *REAug* 40: 327–52.

Cole, S. G. 1984. *Theoi Megaloi: The Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace*. Leiden.

————. 1989. The Mysteries of Samothrace during the Roman Period. *ANRW* 2.18.2: 1564–98.

Collart, J. 1954. *Varron, grammairien latin*. Paris.

Della Corte, F. 1976. L'idea della preistoria in Varrone. In *Atti del congresso internazionale di studi varroniani* 1: 111–36. Rieti.

Dillon, J. 1996. *The Middle Platonists*. London.

Dombart, D., and A. Kalb. 1928–29. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini episcopi "De civitate Dei" libri xxii*. 2 vols. Leipzig.

Dörrie, H. 1986. Zu Varros Konzeption der theologia tripertita in den Antiquitates rerum divinarum. In *Beiträge zur altitalischen Geistesgeschichte: Festschrift Gerhard Radke zum 18. Februar 1984*, ed. R. Altheim-Stiehl and M. Rosenbach, 76–82. Münster.

————. 1987. *Der Platonismus in der Antike*. Vol. 1. Stuttgart.

Dubourdieu, A. 1989. *Les origines et le développement du culte des Pénates à Rome*. Paris.

Dumézil, G. 1970. *Archaic Roman Religion*. Chicago.

Dyson, R. W. 1998. *The City of God against the Pagans*. Cambridge.

Edwards, M. 2002. *Origen against Plato*. Aldershot.

Fladerer, L. 1996. *Antiochos von Askalon: Hellenist und Humanist*. Graz.

Frede, M. 2005. La théologie stoïcienne. In *Les stoïciens*, ed. G. Romeyer Dherbey and J.-B. Gourinat, 213–32. Paris.

Geerlings, W. 1990. Die "Theologia Mythica" des M. Terentius Varro. In *Mythos: Erzählende Weltdeutung im Spannungsfeld von Ritual, Geschichte und Rationalität*, ed. G. Binder and B. Effe, 205–22. Trier.

Glucker, J. 1978. *Antiochus and the Late Academy*. Göttingen.

————. 2002. Review of Fladerer 1996. *Gnomon* 74: 289–95.

Görler, W. 1990. Antiochos von Askalon über die "Alten" und über die Stoa: Beobachtungen zu Cicero, *Academici posteriores* 1.24–43. In *Beiträge zur hellenistischen Literatur und ihrer Rezeption in Rom*, ed. P. Steinmetz, 123–39. Stuttgart.

Goulet, R. 2005. La méthode allégorique chez les Stoïciens. In *Les stoïciens*, ed. G. Romeyer Dherbey and J.-B. Gourinat, 93–119. Paris.

Guittard, C. 1978. L'étymologie varronienne de Saturne. In *Varron, grammaire antique et stylistique latine*, ed. J. Collart, 53–56. Paris.

Hahm, D. 1977. *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology.* Columbus, Ohio.

Horsfall, N. 1972. Varro and Caesar: Three Chronological Problems. *BICS* 19: 120–28.

Jocelyn, H. D. 1982. Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* and Religious Affairs in the Late Roman Republic. *BRL* 65: 148–205.

Karamanolis, G. 2005. *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?* Oxford.

Kleywegt, A. J. 1972. *Varro über die Penaten und die "grossen Götter."* Amsterdam.

Lehmann, Y. 1997. *Varron: Théologien et philosophe romain*. Brussels.

Lieberg, G. 1972. Varros Theologie im Urteil Augustins. In *Studi classici in onore di Quintino Cataudella* 3: 185–201. Catania.

————. 1982. Die theologia tripertita als Formprinzip antiken Denkens. *RhM* 125: 25–53.

Long, A. A., and D. Sedley. 1987. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Cambridge.

Martin, H. G. 1987. *Römische Tempelkultbilder: Eine archäologische Untersuchung zur späten Republik*. Rome.

Moatti, C. 1991. La crise de la tradition à la fin de la République romaine à travers la littérature juridique et la science des antiquaires. In *Continuità et trasformazioni fra Repubblica e Principato*, ed. M. Pani, 31–46. Bari.

————. 1997. *La raison de Rome*. Paris.

Momigliano, A. 1984. The Theological Efforts of the Roman Upper Classes in the First Century B.C. *CP* 79: 199–211.

Mora, F. 2003. "Irrazionalismo" nazionalistico nel pensiero teologico di Cicerone. *BStudLat* 33: 3–26.

O'Daly, G. 1999. *Augustine's "City of God": A Reader's Guide*. Oxford.

Peglau, M. 2003. Varro: Ein Antiquar zwischen Tradition und Aufklärung. In O tempora, o mores! *Römische Werte und römische Literatur in den letzten Jahrzehnten der Republik*, ed. A. Haltenhoff et al., 137–64. Munich.

Pépin, J. 1976. *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*. Paris.

Ramelli, I., and G. Lucchetta. 2004. *Allegoria*. Vol. 1, *L'età classica*. Milan.

Reischl, B. 1976. *Reflexe griechischer Kulturentstehungslehren bei augusteischen Dichtern*. Augsburg.

Ross Taylor, L. 1931. Aniconic Worship among the Early Romans. In *Classical Studies in Honor of John C. Rolfe*, ed. G. D. Hadzsits, 305–14. Philadelphia.

Schilling, K. 1980. Penatibus et Magnis Dis. In Philias Charin: *Miscellanea di studi classsici in onore di Eugenio Manni*, 6: 1965–78. Rome.

Sedley, D. 2002. The Origin of Stoic God. In *Traditions of Theology*, ed. D. Frede and A. Laks, 41–83. Leiden.

Steinmetz, P. 1994. Die Stoa. In *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie: Die Philosophie der Antike*, vol. 4, *Die hellenistische Philosophie*, ed. H. Flashar, 495–716. Basel.

Syska, E. 1993. *Studien zur Theologie im ersten Buch der "Saturnalien" des Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius*. Stuttgart.

Tarver, T. 1997. Varro and the Antiquarianism of Philosophy. In Philosophia Togata II: *Plato and Aristotle in Rome*, ed. J. Barnes and M. Griffin, 130–64. Oxford.

Theiler, W. 1930. *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*. Berlin.

Van Nuffelen, P. 2007. Words of Truth: Mystical Silence as a Philosophical and Rhetorical Tool in Plutarch. *Hermathena* 182: 9–39.

Wifstrand Schiebe, M. 1994. Lactanz und Varro. *RhM* 137: 162–86.

Wissowa, G. 1887. Die Überlieferung über die römischen Penaten. *Hermes* 22: 29–57.

————. 1904. *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zu römische Religions- und Stadtgeschichte*. Munich.