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ADVERSA DIVI AUGUSTI
PLINY THE ELDER: *NATURALIS HISTORIA* 7. 147–150

Summary: The life-work of Augustus and its memory is usually illustrated by the *Res gestae* as well as the historical pieces of Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. This cultural memory omits the Augustus-portrait of the chapters 147–150 of Book 7 of the *Naturalis Historia*, which summarize the life or more exactly the misfortunes of the life of Rome's first emperor. This anti-*Res gestae divi Augusti* is unique not only in ancient literature but in the context of the *Naturalis Historia* as well. Critics have advocated different explanations. This paper is devoted to an analysis of these chapters in the context of the textual unit that organically contains them, and which culminates in them.

Key words: Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Augustus

Pliny the Elder gave the following title to the chapters (147–150) of Book 7 of the *Naturalis Historia*, which summarize the life of Rome's first emperor: *adversa divi Augusti* – the misfortunes of the divine Augustus. The four chapters do not contradict this summary of the emperor's biography: the text recapitulates the private and public life of Augustus focusing solely on his misfortunes, even when talking about his successes. It is no surprise that Rudolf Till describes these passages as the antithesis of Augustus' successful life and great deeds.¹ This anti-*Res gestae divi Augusti* is unique in ancient literature in every respect. Not only does the story contradict the seemingly flawless Augustus-portraits of earlier authors,² but with his dark tones Pliny paints a very one-sided picture of the life of the *princeps*. Furthermore, it gives such a glimpse into the private life of the emperor which makes it a unique historical source. The life-work of Augustus and its memory – verbal memories for now – is usually illustrated by the *Res gestae* as well as the historical pieces of Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius

¹ TILL, R.: Plinius über Augustus (*nat. hist.* 7. 147–150). *Würzburger Jahrbücher für Altertumswissenschaft*, N. F. 3 (1977) 137: “Überrascht doch der Gesamttenor des Exzerptes, der wie eine Gegen-darstellung zu Autobiographie und Tatenbericht des Augustus wirkt.”

² Pliny also refers to this with his first sentence (7. 147).

Dio, which sources still contribute to the Augustan monument. This cultural memory systematically omits the Augustus-portrait of the *Naturalis Historia*, which is worth quoting here in detail:

147. *In diuo quoque Augusto, quem uniuersa mortalitas in hac censura nuncupat, si diligenter aestimentur cuncta, magna sortis humanae repellantur uolumina: repulsa in magisterio equitum apud auunculum et contra petitionem eius praelatus Lepidus, proscriptionis inuidia, collegium in triumuiratu pessimorum ciuium, nec aequa saltem portione, sed praegraui Antonio, 148. Philippensi proelio morbi, fuga et triduo in palude aegroti et (ut fatentur Agrippa ac Maecenas) aqua subter cutem fusa turgidi latebra, naufragia Sicula et alia ibi quoque in spelunca occultatio, iam in nauali fuga urgente hostium manu preces Proculeio mortis admotae, cura Perusinae contentionis, sollicitudo Martis Actiaci, Pannonicis bellis ruina e turri, 149. tot seditiones militum, tot anticipes morbi corporis, suspecta Marcelli uota, pudenda Agrippae ablegatio, totiens petita insidiis uita, incusatae liberorum mortes luctusque non tantum orbitate tristis, adulterium filiae et consilia parricidae palam facta, contumeliosus priuigni Neronis secessus, aliud in nepte adulterium; iuncta deinde tot mala: inopia stipendii, rebellio Illyrici, seruitiorum dilectus, iuuentutis penuria, pestilentia urbis, fames Italiae, destinatio expirandi et quadridui inedia maior pars mortis in corpus recepta; 150. iuxta haec Variana clades et maiestatis eius foeda suggillatio, abdicatio Postumi Agrippae post adoptionem, desiderium post relegationem, inde suspicio in Fabium arcanorumque prodicionem, hinc uxoris et Tiberii cogitationes, suprema eius cura. In summa deus ille caelumque nescio adeptus magis an meritis herede hostis sui filio excessit.*

These four chapters summarize Augustus' whole career: the time frame begins with the first political role (*magister equitum*) that the emperor fulfilled, and ends with his death – the concluding word is *excessit* –, thus it ranges from 44 BC to 14 AD. Or, to be more precise, the biography is framed by the failures of the beginning and the end of the career, which sets the main tone of the whole biography. In 44 BC Octavianus applied for the position of a cavalry commander (147: *magister equitum*), which Caesar gave to Lepidus instead – the biography's first word (147: *repulsa*) refers to the injury of rejection. Augustus could not conclude his reign in a reassuring way, because the tragedies in the family prompted him to name Tiberius as his successor, whose father, Tiberius Claudius Nero, fought on the side of Lucius Antonius in the Perusine war, and later on the side of Sextus Pompeius, the enemies of Augustus (150: *herede hostis sui filio excessit*).

This framed text is comprised of two parts, the events of which converge around two points in Augustus' career: the rise to power and its transmission.³ This explains

³ This structural aspect of the text was uncovered by Burkhard Tautz: TAUTZ, B.: *Das Bild des Kaisers Augustus in der Naturalis Historia des Plinius*. Trier 1999, 364–370.

why the biography's events do not perfectly follow the historical chronology. Chapters 147 and 148 summarize the rise to power; by reading the story we witness how Augustus defeats the Republicans, and how he subsequently gets rid of his subjection to the triumvirate, especially Antonius; we arrive from Philippi to Actium (148: *Philippensi proelio ... sollicitudo Martis Actiati*). The chapters that follow (149 and 150) are devoted to the questions of succession. The enumeration of conspiracies, suspicions, friendships and family relationships gone wrong, of the deaths of his heirs serves the purpose of focusing on the dynastic hardships of Augustus' reign. The pillars of this part are his daughter Iulia's marriage to Marcellus, to Agrippa and finally to Tiberius.⁴ This narrative feature also lets us get a closer look into the private life of the *princeps* and demonstrates how all his deeds go wrong. The closing act of the misfortunes is how Augustus needs to transmit his power to Tiberius, the adopted son of his former enemy (150: *suprema eius cura*).

The main tone of the text is that of an enumeration devoid of emotions. Pliny recites the events without any subjective opinion or comments. This type of narration is used to evoke the semblance of objectivity. However, this claim of objectivity is refuted by the apparently one-sided narration which concentrates only on the failures, as well as the silences, the only partly narrated stories and the rewritings. The first part of Augustus' biography mentions his failure to gain the title of cavalry commander, yet Pliny never relates that in 44 BC Caesar also appointed Octavianus as the one who would fulfill this role the following year.⁵ Pliny's narrative strategy is similar in the case of Philippi. He only writes about Augustus' flight (*fuga*), hiding (*latebra*) and illness (*Philippensi proelio morbi ... triduo in palude morbi*), and never mentions what all the historians relate: his wondrous escape. When Brutus' army took over the camp, Octavianus' tent was found empty, because a dream prompted him to leave the camp.⁶ Furthermore, Augustus had an accident during the Dalmatian conquest, and not in the Pannonian war, and he did not fall from a tower, but got injured when a bridge collapsed.⁷ This deheroizing way of narration is unique among ancient sources. Pliny almost comically over-emphasizes Augustus' military failures, and this tendency can be felt if we take into consideration Appianus' – no less tendentious – narrative, which presents Augustus as the example of intrepid bravery worthy even of Heracles. Augustus' otherwise well-known illnesses,⁸ which surface many times in Pliny's narrative, as well as his emphasis on the emperor's weak health serves the purpose of sketching the portrait of a wretched person.

Just as the Plinian narrative about Augustus' Pannonian accident can be regarded as fiction, there are other parts in the narrative of the *Naturalis Historia* which do not appear in any other sources, for example Octavianus' begging the respected politician and friend Proculeius to kill him (148), his suicide attempt (149), or the

⁴ TAUTZ (n. 3) 369.

⁵ Cassius Dio 53. 49. 1; Appianus 13. 2. 107; 3. 9.

⁶ Val. Max. 1. 7. 1; Plut. *Brutus* 41. 4; Suet. *Aug.* 91. 1; Appianus 16. 4. 463; Cassius Dio 47. 41.

⁷ Suet. *Aug.* 20; Appianus 9. 20; Cassius Dio 49. 35. 2.

⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 80–82 gives a very detailed description of Augustus' conditions and illnesses.

claim that he would betray emperor Marcellus,⁹ whom Augustus adored and who was very popular among the people (149). Historians recorded the name of Roman citizens who planned to assassinate Augustus, but no sources accuse his daughter Iulia as being one of them.¹⁰

Just as the *Res gestae* formulated the memory of Augustus' reign the way the *princeps* wanted to represent it, Pliny's one-sided, negative view deliberately paints a somber portrait of Rome's first emperor, one that stands in sharp contrast to the *virtus* of the *princeps*, as well as to his reign traditionally referred to as an *aurea aetas*.¹¹

The first scars in the flawless Augustan monument show in the descriptions of Pliny's elderly contemporary, Seneca, then reappear in the historical works of Tacitus and Suetonius. Even though Suetonius gives a whole list of misfortunes that happened to Augustus,¹² and Tacitus mainly shows the darker side of the emperor's career,¹³ on the whole these texts cannot be accused of being one-sided, let alone of painting a biased portrait. Seneca's treatise,¹⁴ which only deals with the hardships of the emperor's public and private life, comes closest to Pliny's portrait of Augustus. Yet Seneca's narrative is not about an endless series of failures, but the burdens of every man of great power, including Augustus: how their lives become a series of battles against various kinds of difficulties. When the emperor solved a conflict, another one popped up. Seneca relates the greatest hardships during the *princeps*' rule in a moralizing context, as an *exemplum* which can be summarized with the help of the following thesis statement: *Potentissimis et in altum sublatis hominibus excidere voces videbis, quibus otium optent, laudent, omnibus bonis suis praeferant*.¹⁵ At the end of the chapter, when Augustus, who always wanted to find peace in his life, yet never found it, sees this Senecan claim justified, he says: *Itaque otium optabat, ... hoc votum erat eius, qui voti compotes facere poterat* (4. 6).

Seneca evokes the life of Rome's first emperor when pondering the importance of *otium* and he illustrates with this *exemplum* one of the paradoxes of life. This is his intent when he mentions only the most pressing difficulties of Augustus' life: the civil war, the wars abroad, the assassination attempts, as well as the scandalous life of his daughter Iulia. This is indeed a dark picture, and not because Augustus failed in these situations, but because another difficulty arose right after he had resolved a conflict.

Pliny's negative portrait of Augustus is unique not only when compared to the narratives of his younger contemporaries, but in the context of the *Naturalis Historia*

⁹ Maybe Pliny's obscure reference can be connected to the year 23 BC when Augustus became very ill, which brought up the questions about succession.

¹⁰ One of her lovers, Iullus Antonius, the son of Marcus Antonius was accused of trying to assassinate Augustus, and subsequently he was sentenced to death.

¹¹ Especially the lack of money, the plague and the famine mentioned in chapter 158 stands in sharp contrast to the propaganda of Augustus' reign being a golden age of the Roman Empire.

¹² Suet. *Aug.* 65.

¹³ Tac. *Ann.* 1. 1–10

¹⁴ Sen. *Brev. vit.* 4.

¹⁵ Sen. *Brev. vit.* 4. 1.

as well. The encyclopedia mentions Augustus in different contexts,¹⁶ and on the whole the image we get of the emperor is not entirely negative, sometimes it is even positive,¹⁷ or, rarely, ironic.¹⁸ Furthermore, beside the direct references, Pliny's text is full of the praise of the values that formed the ethical basis of Augustus' age and which reappeared in a new Augustus, Vespasianus, who restored peace (*pax*) and concord (*concordia*). Pliny often refers to Vespasianus with a title evoking Augustus (*imperator Augustus*), which he never uses when talking about Tiberius.¹⁹ When Book 36 of the *Naturalis Historia* praises the *templum Pacis* (66), which was built by Vespasianus, as Rome's architectural wonder, he refers to Augustus' Rome, and verbally to the emperor's memoir, *Res gestae*.²⁰

Critics have advocated different explanations to resolve this contradiction that is evident between the 1st-century auctors and the appreciative approach of the *Naturalis Historia*, which in Book 7 turns into a devastating portrait of Augustus. Exemplifying critical views fashionable even in the 1970s which claimed that the *Naturalis Historia* was entirely dependent in every aspect on suspected or known sources, Rudolph Till explains the negative portrait found in Book 7 of the *Naturalis Historia* with the fact that Pliny relied on an unknown source, which was similar to, or was the same text used by Tacitus or Cassius Dio.²¹ Burkhard Tautz explains the case with the political context: he believes that the dark tone of the portrait we find in Book 7 serves the purpose of emphasizing the greatness of Vespasianus, the most brilliant emperor in the *Naturalis Historia*. The failures of Augustus' life function as a point of reference or a dark background against which the successes of the Flavian dynasty shine very brightly.²² Mary Beagon, the creator of the new edition of Book 7 of the *Naturalis Historia* locates Augustus' Plinian representation in the moralizing tradition that began with Seneca's moral philosophical treatise, and which found echoes in Suetonius' Augustus-*vita* as well.²³

As we have seen, Seneca turned Augustus' life into an exemplum of the importance of *otium*: the lack of *otium* cannot be compensated by anything. Suetonius introduces the misfortunes of the *princeps*' life with the following sentence: *Sed laetum eum atque fidem et subole et disciplina domus Fortuna destituit*.²⁴ Pliny's narrative can be inserted into this moralizing tradition as well, because he is also pondering the vicissitudes of luck/happiness, *fortuna/felicitas*, when he is introducing the bigger

¹⁶ The *Naturalis Historia* mentions Augustus' name in more than a hundred passages, in various contexts. Burkhard Tautz collected and evaluated all these textual *loci* in his monograph: TAUTZ (n. 3).

¹⁷ TILL (n. 1) 137; BALDWIN, B.: Roman Emperors in the Elder Pliny. *Scholia* 4 (1995) 62.

¹⁸ One such example is when the inhabitants of the Balearic Islands asked the godly Augustus to help them with his army against the rabbits who proliferated and destroyed the crops, which resulted in a famine (*NH* 8. 217–218). Barry Baldwin wittily called this „almost a Monty Python situation”: BALDWIN (n. 17) 63.

¹⁹ BALDWIN (n. 17) 59.

²⁰ *Res gestae Divi Augusti* 19–21, as well as Suet. *Aug.* 29.

²¹ TILL (n. 1) 137.

²² TAUTZ (n. 3) 64, 82–83.

²³ BEAGON, M.: *The Elder Pliny on the Human Animal: Natural History, Book 7. Translation with Introduction and Historical Commentary*. Oxford 2005, 345.

²⁴ Suet. *Aug.* 65.

narrative unit that revolves around this topic, the one that contains, among others, the portrait of Augustus. Consequently this biography cannot be regarded as an anti-*Res gestae*, or a text whose supposed narratorial ambition would emphasize the brilliance of the Flavii. We should interpret the text in the context of the textual unit that organically contains it, and which culminates in it.

With chapter 130 Book 7 introduces a new thematic unit: the examples of *Fortuna* (the ups and down in luck, that is, fate) and *felicitas* (happiness).²⁵ This new unit is introduced by three moralizing chapters (130–132), in which – just like in the introduction to Book 7 when he ponders the ambivalent nature of human life – Pliny shows the double nature of luck and happiness: *Felicitas cui praecipua fuerit homini, non est humani iudicii, cum prosperitatem ipsam alius alio modo et suoapte ingenio quisque determinet. Si verum facere iudicium volumus ac repudiata omni fortunae ambitione decernere, nemo mortalium est felix.* (130). After giving one or two rare examples of lifelong luck (133), he starts to focus on the alternation of fortune and misfortune in human life (134–136) in the three *exemplums* directly preceding the Augustus-vita (137–146).

Sulla (137–138), Lucius Metellus (139–141), and Metellus Macedonicus (142–146) are outstanding figures in Roman history both as *consuls* and *imperators*. However, their political and military achievements are not of the same quality. Pliny presents their lives as examples of *fortuna* and *felicitas*, in a way that *felicitas* gains more emphasis than *infelicitas*. Even though Sulla (whose cognomen was *Felix*, that is, lucky) had countless victories, he gained them in the civil war by attacking his country and shedding the blood of Roman citizens. He did not gain the adjective *Felix* because of public respect, but gave it to himself. He died in pain, admitting that he was unhappy.²⁶ Sulla's life is the *exemplum* of the unhappiness that hides behind surface successes and happiness.

Fortuna's two-faced nature and the ambivalence of human life are best exemplified by the fates of the two Metelli, Lucius (139–141) and Macedonicus (142–146). Their lives are similar in a certain sense: they both had public respect and they both gained the positions of *consul* and *imperator*. Their political and military achievements were widely recognized, their prestige was also backed up by their happy private lives: they were members of a well-known family, which had many members with successful public careers. Their lives are parallel not only because of the functioning of *fortuna*, as well as the fragile nature of *felicitas*. The lives of both were ravaged by misfortune: Lucius Metellus lost his eyesight when he brought out the *Paladium* from the burning Vesta-sanctuary. Because of this selfless deed the people of Rome graced him with something unprecedented: he was taken to the *Curia* on a cart. The price of this exceptional esteem, however, was his eyesight. Metellus Macedonicus' life turned out to be more tragic. His brilliant career was broken by a derogatory

²⁵ For a thorough analysis of the religious roots, semantic field and changes of *Fortuna/fortuna* and *felicitas* in Roman culture, see KÖVES-ZULAUF, TH.: *Bevezetés a római monda és vallás történetébe* [Introduction to the History of Roman Myth and Religion]. Budapest 1995, 132–138.

²⁶ Plin. *NH* 7. 138: *hoc tamen nempe felicitati suae defuisse confessus est.*

and unjust event, a tribune nearly ending Metellus' life. He spent the rest of his life in poverty, living on other people's gifts.²⁷

In Pliny's narrative the two Metelli are the prominent *exemplums* of Roman virtues. They embody the Roman aristocratic ideal which is made up of three *virtutes* contributing to an exemplary life. *Dignitas* (dignity), a prominent public role fulfilled in military and political life. *Auctoritas* (authority) in the eyes of the community brought about by the honesty and wisdom with which they attend to their positions. And lastly *memoria* (memory), which is the result of the previous two, and whose ethical function is to set an example: the descendants cultivate and emulate the exemplary memory of their ancestors.

Pliny's aim is obvious. The *felicitas* of Lucius Metellus and Metellus Macedonicus, which is broken by an unfortunate turn of events, stands in sharp contrast to the absolute *infelicitas* of the Augustus-biography. The opposition that is presented here seems to be well thought out, as Pliny in the beginning of Book 7 already juxtaposed Augustus and Metellus Macedonicus from the perspective of fertility and potency. The marriage of Augustus and Livia is an example for what we would call genetic incompatibility today: they both had a child from their previous wedlocks, but their marriage remained childless (57). Whereas Metellus Macedonicus had six children and eleven grandchildren, but considering his daughter-in-laws, son-in-laws and other people calling him 'father', he had twenty-seven relatives (59). The two families are juxtaposed in terms of childbirth, and this opposition between *felix* and *infelix* is further reinforced in the Augustus-portrait by Iulia's scandalous life, her alleged plan of trying to assassinate her royal father, the banishment of the two Iuliae and Postumus Agrippa, the death of the grandchildren, as opposed to the nearly idyllic picture of the big family surrounding Macedonicus. Even the *divus* nature of Augustus is questioned or represented in an ironic light. If we take a closer look at the life of the *princeps* (150: *diligenter aestimentur cuncta*), we can conclude (*in summa*) that he is an example for *infelicitas*, which puts his merits (*an meritis*) leading to his apotheosis (*ille deus*) into doubts (*nescio*).²⁸

The double nature of human life, success and unhappiness, gains its most memorable representation in the ambivalent biography of Augustus. Even though the text opens with the widespread notion that Augustus is regarded as a fortunate and happy person, Pliny paints quite a gloomy and oppressive picture of the public and private life of Rome's first emperor. As opposed to the other *exemplums* of Book 7, the public and private life of the *princeps* does not exemplify the laws of "ups and downs", but the reality of *infelicitas* lurking behind the surface of *felicitas*. Pliny adored Vespasianus and Titus, who both regarded Augustus' peace-making politics as their role

²⁷ Pliny's deliberately polarizing narration probably has a say in this: Macedonicus' beggarly poverty is not mentioned in any other sources, and it is very hard to imagine, because – as it becomes obvious from Pliny's narrative – he had sons fulfilling important public roles.

²⁸ Even though in 90% of the cases when *Naturalis Historia* mentions Augustus' name, it uses the adjective *Divus* like an *epitheton ornans*: OLIVEIRA, F.: *Les Idées Politiques et Morales de Pline l'Ancien*. Coimbra 1992, 99.

model in their political career, and defined themselves as his successors.²⁹ That is why it is unjustified to claim that the Augustus-portrait of the *Naturalis Historia* is a distorted point of reference constructed only to emphasize the greatness of the Flavii.

Pliny lived under the reign of nine of Rome's first eleven emperors, including Domitianus and Titus. There is no doubt that Augustus and Vespasianus are outstanding figures in this series. Their reigns were similarly significant, and there are analogies between their lives as well: they both gained their power during a civil war, and created peace for Rome. The most striking difference between the two lives can be seen in the transmission of power. Augustus' misfortunes in this respect are juxtaposed to how his sons stood by Vespasianus, especially Titus, who already acted as co-emperor. Not only in life, but in the *Naturalis Historia* as well, where the *praefatio* dedicated to Titus calls him Vespasianus Caesar and *imperator* (1. 6).

Augustus appears in the *Naturalis Historia* in a similar historical role as Aeneas does in the *Aeneis* and in the whole propaganda of Augustus' age: Aeneas had to struggle and suffer so that Augustus' reign, the new Golden Age could come about. The hero of the *Aeneis* fulfilled his historical mission, which ensured his personal fame and sustained the continuity of history that goes from a golden age to a new golden age. The price of this was that he had to abandon the desire to have a peaceful private life: Vergilius never calls Aeneas happy.³⁰ It is therefore not surprising that in the last book of the epic, Aeneas says farewell to his son Ascanius in the following way: *disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem, / fortunam ex aliis* (432–440).³¹ Aeneas' life is an eternal example for heroic virtue (*virtus*), struggle and self-sacrifice (*labor*). Peace (*otium*) and happiness (*fortuna*) – as Seneca and Pliny make it clear – is not part of the fates of heroes fulfilling a historical role.

The *infelicitas* of the life of the first Roman emperor, the *adversa divi Augusti* – beside the narrower moralizing context – gains its true significance in this historical frame. It does not function as a contrast to make Vespasianus even greater, but lays the foundation for the new golden age to come about. The portrait of the two emperors should not be seen as antitheses, rather as two processes that presuppose each other: beginning and fulfillment. Augustus Caesar acts as an Aeneas to lay the foundation for everything that will be fulfilled and reinforced by Vespasianus Augustus as a new Augustus. The divination in Vergilius' *Aeneis*³² refers to Augustus as *divi genus*, the divine Caesar's son, the founder of the new golden age, and who (together

²⁹ MELLOR, R.: The New Aristocracy of Power. In BOYLE, A. J. – DOMINIK, W. J. (ed.): *Flavian Rome. Culture, Image, Text*. Leiden–Boston 2003, 80–84; BEAGON (n. 23) 6.

³⁰ RITOÓK, ZS.: Terque quaterque beati. In TAR, I. (ed.): *Symposium Vergilianum*. Szeged 1984, 80–82.

³¹ If we interpret this line from *Aeneis* retrospectively from Pliny's Augustus-portrait and its *infelicitas*-concept, the real meaning of *disce ... fortunam ex aliis* becomes clear. One cannot learn luck/happiness, it is either part of one's life or not. Aeneas' words could refer to the exemplary nature of his life, which lies in his *virtus* and *labor*. But for this he sacrificed his personal happiness (he had to forsake Dido), so he cannot be an example Ascanius could follow.

³² Verg. *Aen.* 6. 789–793: *hic Caesar et omnis Iuli / progenies, magnum caeli ventura sub axem. / hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis, / Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet / saecula qui rursus Latium regnata per arva / Saturno quondam.*

with the Iulius dynasty) will take his place among the gods. The *Naturalis Historia* extends this apotheosis to Vespasianus (and his sons, that is, the Flavii), his future deification is beyond doubt: *Deus est mortali iuvare mortalem, et haec ad aeternam gloriam via. Hac procures iere Romani, hac nunc caelesti passu cum liberis suis vadit maximus omnis aevi rector Vespasianus Augustus fessis rebus subveniens. Hic est vetustissimus referendi bene merentibus gratiam mos, ut tales numinibus adscribant.*³³

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³³ Plin. *NH* 2. 18–19: *Iuvare mortalem* and *utilitas* are among the most important values in *Naturalis Historia*, see for example CITRONI MARCHETTI, S.: *Iuvare mortalem*. L'ideale programmatico della *Naturalis Historia* di Plinio nei rapporti con il moralismo stoico – diatribico: *Atene e Roma* 27 (1982) 124–149; GESZTELYI, T.: Plinio il Vecchio: il rapporto tra vita pubblica e morale per un intellettuale politico nel primo impero. In SORDI, M. (a cura di): *L'immagine dell'uomo politico: vita pubblica e morale nell' antichità* [Scienze Storiche 46]. Milano 1991, 215–226.