

Abstract

In this thesis the 'simple life' is interpreted to mean the right life. The pattern of living in the early Roman society was the focal point of this interpretation. Writers of antiquity had generally depicted the early Romans as having lived in a simple manner which was in keeping with their simple social structure. In this way, they had lived the right life. The Roman Satirists, especially, showed that the majority of later Romans had rejected many former customs in preference for the less rigid existence of their time. The Satirists appealed to their contemporaries to adopt the 'simple life' as an ideal in order to revive in them the awareness of the need to live in accordance with a cultural and moral standard.

This thesis proposes to examine the philosophical and non-philosophical guides on which the Satirists based the process of moral preparation. This process was meant to ease their society's choice and adoption of the ideal of the 'simple life'. The investigation also involves the attitude of the Satirists towards their society: whether or not they understood human limitations.

The introduction establishes the background to the study. It shows the demands which the social and political organization of early Rome made on its inhabitants. Qualities such as pietas, severitas, disciplina, frugalitas and virtus formed the core of the traditional standard. Education, institutional measures, and practical experience

had fostered these qualities. Early Greek society is used as a parallel. The habits and precepts of Greek philosophers revealed their approval of the right and simple life; for some of them it signified life in accordance with a pre-regulated order. Chapter 1 discusses the Satirists' recognition of the social value of traditional occupations, their disapprobation of the prevalence of departures from time-honoured customs during their period, and their recommendation of the use of practical guides in the process of moral preparation. Chapter 2 shows the stages whereby philosophers analyzed human activities and abstracted principles on which they based their precepts for human conduct. The Roman Satirists incorporated these doctrines. Chapter 3 discusses the role of the Satirists as moralists and artists. It is shown how they adhered to the Classical theory of imitation while displaying originality of thought. Chapter 4 reveals that in later Roman society members such as Pliny the Younger, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca and Horace kept on trying to live up to the ideals of the 'simple life'.

The Satirists suggest areas of everyday living, such as diet, and dress, in which this ideal could be realized by many. The conclusion shows that the Satirists, especially Horace, made allowance for human limitations in their efforts to face the social evils then existing with a pragmatic outlook.