trying to understand the *Philebus* after a single reading. This is Oxford Platonism at its best; we look forward to more.

*R.S.W. Hawtrey*


This important book consists in substance of the six lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge in May 1973 in honour of G.M. Trevelyan and given, in a revised form, as the Flexner lectures in Bryn Mawr College early in 1974. To these lectures the author has added a most valuable bibliography of some 450 titles, arranged chronologically by chapters.

During the past 45 years Professor Momigliano (M.) has devoted several books and a vast number of articles — his *Contributi* now fill seven substantial volumes — to the interpretation of the history of the Jews, Greeks and Romans. The present volume is a further contribution to that central theme. It is, in his own words (p.6), ‘a study of the cultural connections between Greeks, Romans, Celts, Jews, and Iranians in the Hellenistic period’, but the Celts and Iranians are clearly less important. In this field, as in many others, the conquests of Alexander marked a turning point and it was in this period that Greek intellectuals — and the author reminds us that Hellenistic civilisation remained in essence Greek — first became aware of the importance of the Romans, Jews and Celts, and changed their attitude to the Iranians. It should be said that, although M. is particularly concerned with the Hellenistic age, he outlines previous contacts between Greeks and the other civilisations.

In Chapter 1 (‘The Greeks and their neighbours’) M. gives us his reasons for omitting the Egyptians and Carthaginians, touches on the character of the Hellenistic age, then devotes the remainder of this chapter and all of Chapter 2 (‘Polybius and Posidonius’) to an examination of the unique relationship of Greeks and Romans. Significantly, it was only after the war with Pyrrhus showed Rome to be a first-class power that Greek writers began to concern themselves with her history. M. stresses the readiness of the Romans to assimilate Greek culture and language and points out the advantage this gave them in their dealings with the Greeks, who did not care to learn Latin or indeed the languages of other peoples. M. repeatedly (see, e.g., pp.148-9) comes back to this ‘insularity’ on the part of the Greeks and to the far-reaching effects of their lack of languages. Much later, even so learned a man as Plutarch had an imperfect command of Latin. However, M. perhaps exaggerates if he suggests, as he seems to do (p.21), that a knowledge of Latin might have preserved Greek independence.
In Chapter 2 M. concentrates on the histories of Polybius and his continuator Posidonius and has some trenchant criticism to make of Polybius’ picture of Roman society. In particular, Polybius failed to appreciate that Rome’s strength lay in her relations with her Italian allies and was led to formulate the myth of her ‘mixed constitution’. Neither historian, apparently, was concerned with the development of Italian culture, with the assimilation of Greek language and manners and the creation of a national literature. However, while it is doubtless true that Polybius did not question the Roman impulse to rule, M. is mistaken in thinking (p.28) that he did not connect the occupation of Sardinia with the origins of the second Punic war. M. refers to Pol. 3.28,2, but at 3.30.4 Polybius writes, ‘If, however, we take the cause of the war to have been the robbery of Sardinia and the tribute then exacted, we must certainly confess that they (i.e. the Carthaginians) had good reason for entering the Hannibalic war, ...’ On pp.44-45 M. appears to suggest that Rome attacked Macedon in 200 B.C. because of the need to keep her allies busy by war. This I find hard to credit.

Chapter 3 (‘The Celts and the Greeks’) reveals just how limited was Greek knowledge of the Celts, despite the existence of the Greek colony of Massalia from the end of the 7th century, until the Romans, particularly Cato in his *Origines*, made a serious attempt to study Celtic society. Later Polybius and Posidonius — their names keep cropping up — provided detailed first-hand information. M. makes the interesting, and surely valid, point that the chief importance of the Celts lay in advancing the prestige of their conquerors (this gained the throne of Macedon in 277 B.C. for Antigonus Gonatas) and in leading threatened peoples to seek the protection of a more powerful neighbour, as the Latins sought the protection of the Romans in c.350 B.C. and made them the most powerful state in Italy. M. might perhaps have instanced the boost given to the Aetolian League by the successful defence of Delphi in 279/8 B.C.

Chapter 4 (‘The Hellenistic Discovery of Judaism’) and Chapter 5 (‘Greeks, Jews and Romans’) are concerned principally with Jewish history. M. firmly rejects claims that the Jews are mentioned in pre-Hellenistic Greek texts or that they worshipped any Greek god before Alexander; it was the conquests of Alexander which brought the Jews into a Greek-speaking world and made Judaism familiar — and respectable. The transition from Persian to Macedonian rule in Palestine may in general have been smooth, as M. says, but Curtius Rufus (4.8.9) tells us that the inhabitants of Samaria burnt to death Andromachus, Alexander’s governor. The growth of Hellenization and the transfer of Palestine from Ptolemaic to Seleucid control apparently caused no serious trouble and it was not until Antiochus IV about 168 B.C. turned the temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem into a temple of Zeus Olympios and tried to extend Hellenization that the Maccabees rebelled and the Jews sought, unsuccessfully, for independence. But the Jews were sustained ‘by sheer obstinancy of faith’; Judaism did not fragment, and Hellenization remained on the surface. M. has a lengthy discussion...
(pp. 103-112) of the value of the first and second books of *Maccabees* as a source for the rebellion. He concludes that they are not a contemporary witness and that the prevailing view, that the Hellenizing party at Jerusalem was responsible for the revolt, is not the whole truth. Once again we see how the Romans in Palestine, as in other areas, were aided by Greek scholars to understand the natives, so that in the 60's Pompey was able to exploit Jewish factions.

In Chapter 6 ('Iranians and Greeks') M. points out that although the Greek cities of Asia came under direct Persian rule about 545 B.C. we have no contemporary evidence for the Greek reaction to it. He discusses (pp.126-9) with caution the supposed influence of Persian thought on early Greek philosophy and makes the point that the pre-Socratics were all different, something which we would not expect if they had been influenced by the Magi. The most striking feature of the relationship between Greeks and Persians is the change from genuine interest in the Persian imperial system in the fifth century to concern in the fourth with, so far as we can see, mere trivialities. The historians of Alexander, for example, tell us little about imperial administration, and neither Plato nor Aristotle dealt with the Persians. We have some good remarks (pp.136-7) on the genuineness of Aristotle's *Letter to Alexander* extant only in an Arabic version. To accept it as genuine we would have, as M. well says, to suppose an unexampled change of view in Aristotle. After the establishment of the Parthian kingdom Greek writers outside Parthia appear to have preferred to concern themselves with 'a disembodied Persian thought' (p.141) in which Zoraster and the Magi bulked large, leaving it to the Romans to find out about the Parthians from Greeks living inside the country.

This short book contains a vast amount of information and few scholars could have written it. It is not easy reading, but those who persevere will be in a much better position to appreciate the intellectual side of the Hellenistic age, 'warts and all'. The author's aim is 'to stimulate discussion on an important subject without indulging in speculations.' I am sure he will achieve it.

*J.R. Hamilton*


'The Truth about Tacitus' almost sounds as if the author had something scandalous to reveal. It is rather a case of *facit indignatio librum*, the indignation being that of a sincere admirer of Tacitus the literary artist (twice compared with Aeschylus) but repelled by Tacitus the historian and especially by his lack of human dignity as it appears in his treatment of Jews, Christians and slaves.