

Aurelius and Verus: an Imperial Friendship

The first Roman co-emperorship traditionally has been marked as a struggle between the realized philosopher king and vices of his subordinate. This contrast between a stoic Marcus Aurelius a hedonistic Lucius Verus originates from each emperor's respective *Vita* in the *Historia Augusta*, in which the author's infatuation with Aurelius can only be matched with his contempt for Verus. This image of the co-emperorship of 161-169 has, to an extent, carried itself into modern scholarship, due to the fragmentary nature of Cassius Dio for the time period and in spite of the regularly questioned validity of the *Historia Augusta*. Resulting in common portrayal of Verus as a neutral or negative force in his interpersonal relationship with Aurelius.

I shall contend that, an analysis of the Fronto's epistles and *ad se ipsum* i.e. *the Meditations*, bolstered with other supporting evidence demands a rejection of the value judgements perpetuated by the *Historia Augusta* in regards to the co emperorship of 161-169. Furthermore, I shall offer the opinion that, these sources not only bring to light a beneficial relationship between Auerlieus and a fully competent Verus, in which each man weakness are complemented by the other's strengths, but also a genuine cooperative friendship.

Further support for and application of Aurelius' and Verus' cooperative friendship manifest within historical events. Fronto, for example suggests Verus as a superior speaker to Aurelius, thus upon the inauguration of the emperors it is Verus, who addresses the Praetorian Guard and ensures their loyalty. The dynamic of the imperial friendship allowed each emperor to focus his attention on tasks for which he was best suited, resulting in more effective governance of state and for each man to better bear the burdens of governance.