Translation: The Mythologies

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Book 1

Prologue

Although a subject which lacks immediate purpose may produce little real enthusiasm and, where there is no material advantage, may well cease to be pursued for practical reasons (on the ground, that is, that the calamitously wretched state of our times invites no enthusiasm for putting such a subject into words, and has only pity for a drudgery which cannot be justified in poetic fame but serves only for personal edification), I now take up a subject the loss of which you may regret, the statement of which you may need or discover to be necessary, and one which in this age of ours it is pointless for those in power to suppress, or our leaders to commandeer, or private individuals to destroy, or the oppressed to bewail.

For you, Master, are accustomed to treating with indulgence those sad dirges of mine so often ridiculed with the kind of satirical pleasantry that Thalia, the Muse of comedy, flourishing her humor with theatrical epigram, is in the habit of pertly rapping out. Moreover, you will remember, you recently commissioned me to try to soothe your moments of leisure with some agreeable murmuring. For a short space, then, listen while I unfold for you a tale, wrinkled like the furrows of an old woman, which, performing by night lamp and mocking the pretense of sleep, I have just concocted with
a salty Attic flavor. In this you will not see a poet seized with frenzy, but you may be diverted by dreamlike nonsense expounding trifles suited to sleep. In these books of mine you will see neither those lamp-light performances of Ovid's *Heroides*, in which either the shamelessness of someone like Sulpi­cia or the exotic feelings of Psyche are revealed, nor what forcibly led Theseus, the husband of Phaedra, into the underground cave or carried off Leander as he swam. It will be such things as those of which our Academic orator Cicero has given a lively account, almost making the sleeping Scipio into a citizen of heaven—but what Cicero achieved his own *Republic* may show.

Meanwhile, since the inactivity of rural leisure has committed me to separation from you, Master, and to a kind of exile from city affairs, I could at least avoid those calamitous upheavals of disasters by which public events are endlessly disturbed and think how to secure my rustic ease, so that, remote from the storms and stresses whereby the maelstrom of city life breaks into turbulence, I might devote myself to the calm peace of my little halcyon nest, at rest in the seclusion of a country estate. With the harsh-sounding altercation of conflicts slumbering in the ashes of silence, conflicts in which the barbarian onsloughts had violently disturbed me, I was hopeful of leading a life purified by silence; and yet even there the perverse stab of memories pursued me, and my contrasted state of happiness, which always implants some bitterness in human affairs, shadowed me like a faithful slave. For the tax assessment, producing novel and momentous kinds of impositions, had each day worn down my very doorstep with the feet of those who would accost me, so that, had King Midas been transformed from a human being to pursue riches as he stiffened what he touched into gold, I verily believe I could have dried up the streams of Pactolus itself for the crowds of visitors I mentioned.

Nor was that a sufficient load of miseries. Add to it the aggressive on­slaughts which had the very soles of their feet thrust into my house, so that one could not even see the bolts of our doors, blocked as they were with spiders' webs. For these people had taken control of the estates, as we had done of our houses; we could look out on our crops, but not have the benefit of them; it would have been a noble recompense if they had left the places closed for whoever had to remain. But, since for mortal men, evil is never immortal, at last the joy of my lord the king's return dispelled my fears, as the shadows are split apart by the first rays of the sun upon the earth. After those numbing attacks which brought the rust of war's restrictions, one could
look out on the fields and walk round the boundaries. We stepped out in the fashion of sailors whom the longed-for shore has welcomed back after they have been overwhelmed by the violence of storms; and, after our confinement in the house, we not so much stepped out as taught ourselves to walk like outcasts from the surrounding walls. As in that line of Virgil, "Free at last, the stallion gains the open plains," we gaze upon the fields, in which the footprints of the soldiers, as they call them, still mark our walled paths. And with the fear in our minds not yet erased, we have shuddered at these traces of our enemies; in our memory of them the enemy soldiery had left a legacy of fear.

So in the fashion of the Trojans of Aeneas we pointed out to one another the places where their more evident destructiveness or plundering had left its mark. And so, among the thorny briers of the glades, once kept in order by the hand of the countryman (because of the stoppage and long neglect caused by that fear, the ploughs, a sorry sight and thick with soot, were hung up on the walls; and the necks of the oxen, once fit for hard toil, had now reduced the tough skin of their yoking to a cowlike softness), the neglected land stood with its furrows overgrown and threatened to choke the tops of the olive trees with its thick briers. The wild vine was collecting with its binding, winding, and trailing growth, as if the earth held down by its matted roots would stubbornly refuse the tooth of Triptolemus.

As in this fashion I forced my footsteps across the fields through the advancing thorn and paced through the mounds with their bright and spreading tufts, my enthusiasm for walking began to falter, and eagerness gave place to toil. I turned aside, anticipating the benefit of the shady tree with its interwoven leaves to protect the wanderer from the fiery glances of Phoebus, and in the entwining of its bending branches I gained the shady spot which at its very roots it provided and let me share. Whereupon a certain liveliness of the birds, as with a kind of delicate softness they produced their rapid whistlings through their horny beaks, lured me back to this present task of mine, and the unexpected respite from toil inspired a kind of melodious verse:

Thespian maidens, ye whom, moistened with a foam of sounding spray, Hippocrene's draught refreshes, from your mountain come away, Haste to leave the grassy hillsides, where each dawn the icy dew, Breath of stars on nights unclouded,
lays its drops of sparkling blue;
Open wide to me your baskets,
filled with flowers and words of song.
All the stream of Tempe carries,
flowing grassy slopes among,
Cleansing what the hoof of war-horse
struck out, neighing through the air,
All that did the Ascrean shepherd
to the heartless rocks declare,
All the riches to be gathered
from your emptied treasure-trove,
All that Virgil the Mantuan
sang within the shepherd's grove,
All that Homer the Maeonian
laughed at in the frogs' affray,
All such with its gleaming plectrum
may the Arcadian lyre display—
May the wealth of all the ages
flow together for my lay.

This with its dedicatory verse, enticed the daughters of Pierus, the Muses, wet with spray from the Gorgonean fountain and weeping in the stream of the winged horse. The maidens had been standing in groups of three, shimmering in their long, gossamerlike robes, amply begirt with ivy; and among them the friendly Calliope, the epic Muse, warming this poor heart of mine with a playful touch of her palm branch, stirred the sweet itch of poetry. At her appearance she was heavyhearted, her negligent hair held by a diadem gleaming with pearls, as she gathered up her bicolored robe to the ankle, I suppose because of her travels and to avoid the flowing hem of such fine-woven material being torn in any way by the prickly swish of the grass. She stood close by me; and, prostrating myself, I worshipped the queen of eloquence, in time past made very familiar to me by the testimony of poets and memorable for the wordy stories I relayed with hands swollen from canings in my first steps at school. But, because it was not clearly apparent to me who she was, I asked why she had come.

She replied, saying: "I am one of the maidens of the group on Mount Helicon, enrolled in the family of Jove; and as a citizen of Athens, I was once welcomed in the councils of the Romans, where I brought forth fresh bushes, the tops of which I might implant among the highest stars, thus bequeathing a legacy of lifelong fame, whereby they might the more readily gain a
renowned death. But the inroads of war deprived me of assembling in the citadel of Romulus, and in exile I took up my place of assembly in the city of Alexandria, filling the light hearts of the Greeks with various injections of philosophical notions. After the severities of the Catos, the stern invective of Cicero, and the scholarship of Varro, I indulged my light spirits among the Pellaean peoples with satirical plays, diverted myself with fantastic comedy, delved into serious tragedy, or put together short epigrams. My captivity pleased me, and I am pleased now that the industrious labors of us two should be in holiday mood, for the mind has found things to smile at even among the evils, had it not been that I was shut out by something more cruel than wars, namely the assemblage of Galen, which is linked to almost all the narrow streets of Alexandria, where more surgical hangman’s butcherings could be counted than there were houses. For unless one is presented to that guild, they consign to a violent death whomever they claim Charon will soon have dealings with.”

A pleasant smile ended this speech, and I reached my roof, where she considered making her stay. Then she said: “Do not be afraid to receive the teaching of the Muses in your own home, for I have heard of the custom of barbarians to ban the business of literature in their houses, whereby those who wrote even their own unspoken name with the first shapes of their letters could reckon on a violent interrogation and the torture chamber.”

Then I said: It is not as ‘you had heard, but the report was so,’ for ‘our songs serve as well,’ O Muse, ‘among the weapons of Mars’ as to quench one’s thirst from a rivulet of sweet leaping water.’ ” Then to encourage her friendship all the more, I added this line of Terence: “Once that stamp of man drove a trade, a generation or so ago.” Now, therefore, literature, as... its urns pour forth whatever contents in its storehouse of words Helicon possessed to pass on in due succession.

Pleased with my lines, as if she had seen old Homer himself reciting, she smoothed my hair with an encouraging touch of her palm branch, and, stroking my neck more tenderly than was becoming, she said: “Well, Fabius, you are now a new recruit to the sacred rites of Anacreon; and so that nothing may be lacking for my young beginner, receive like praise for your composition and, insofar as my Satire has sprayed you with a wanton dew of words and the allure of love holds you prisoner, give up what you are turning into words as you sleep, and whatever you are pleased to be inscribing on papyrus from the Nile, and take my words into your receptive ears. Nor will there be wanting from your narrative any emotion which you may ask to be wrung from your bowels.”
I replied: "The title of my little work has misled you, noble declaimer. Not through me will the horned adulterer be seized, or the maiden Danaë, deceived by a false shower, be celebrated in verse, as by his own choice the god Jove showed her wealth and tricked with gold one he had been unable to trick by force. I do not write about the thigh of a young lover fed to the teeth of swine, nor in my little work has youthful wantonness been described under a false guise. I am not concerned with him who creeps about as an adulterer in the plumage of a swan, foisting his eggs on maidens as he pours child-bearing seed into their bodies, or with those lamp-carrying maidens, Hero and Psyche, as one wishing to ramble on about such follies of the poets, as, for instance, that the first of these lamented a light that failed and the second one that was burning, Psyche perishing for seeing and Hero for not seeing. Nor do I tell of the maiden Aricina, deceived by a pretense of virginity when Jove sought her, wishing to be greater than in fact he was. What I wish to do is to expose alterations away from the truth, not obscure what is clear by altering it myself, so that this ancient god may keep on with his neighings and the sun, laying aside the fire of its radiance, prefer to be furrowed with the wrinkles of age rather than with rays; and I look for the true effects of things, whereby, once the fictional invention of lying Greeks has been disposed of, I may infer what allegorical significance one should understand in such matters."

She replied: "From what source, little man, do you get such a knowledge of ignorance, and gain such a reasoned view of what is little known? For when you seek out what has lain untouched for centuries, you show yourself wisely familiar with what you can scarcely know at all."

I answered: "If one happens to have at least some knowledge in matters where a degree of ignorance is expected, how much more satisfactory has it been to happen not to have been born to such things, rather than to have been born to them in all their futility. For I consider I have awareness of a new threshold of knowledge denied to you."

She replied: "If such recondite and mystical matters are to be vigorously studied, the full approval of the authorities must be sought; for no trifling must be pursued, whereby we find ourselves patching up correct styles of verse with some frivolous lines. This labor requires a rhetorical ability, lest the construction of such a wonderful work, once undertaken, be abandoned from its vigorous pursuit and fade away just in the very midst of the effort of inspiration. Therefore, Philosophy and Urania will also be my helpers in determining the work, and this gay girl friend of yours will be in attendance to give you consolation; and when these mystic arts of yours
cause you to puff and pant as you labor at them, your Satire will keep you amused."

I answered: "I implore you, bountiful spirit of generosity, do not by any chance entrust to my own home this Satire of yours, to the love of whom you have long since pronounced me a prisoner. For I have a wife who would be livid with envy because of her, so much so that, should she discover her in the house acting like my mistress with wanton ways, she would feel herself obliged to send her back to Helicon with her cheeks furrowed with scratches, in such a state that the waters of the Gorgonean stream would be totally inadequate to cleanse her wounds."

Then shaking with gentle laughter as she struck her thigh two or three times with a blow of her palm branch, she said: "You do not realize, Fulgentius, you uncouth swain of the Muses, how greatly we noble ladies fear satire. Although even lawyers give way under a woman's flood of words, and schoolteachers do not even mumble, although the orator keeps silent and the auctioneer checks his cries, this is the one thing that does impose some restraint on their ragings—but Petronius's character Albucia comes to mind. For with this kind of jesting the whip hand of Saurea in Plautus is broken, and the wordiness of Sulpicilla in Ausonius is wrecked, and in Sallust that of Sempronia, although Catiline took over with a hoarse piece of song."

Earth's territory crossed, and the chill world
Warmed by the chariot-wheels, the charioteer
Loosed his fire-breathing horses, from their necks
Removed the golden reins. Phoebus unyokes
His steeds, as Cynthia prepares her team,
The brother tests the waters with his foot
Up whence his sister rose. With starry cloak
Binding the earth, night bids the sky to rest
On dewy wings, while all agleam the moon,
Its two-pronged diadem adorned with stars,
The twin bulls yoked together, mounted up
The fresh-laid sky, and mind-deceiving shapes,
Phantoms in formless guise, soft pallets fill
With lying images—

And, as I can state in very few words, it was night. Having long since forgotten the word night, I was revelling in these lines like a frenzied bard when the lady I had seen before as a guest, making her appearance with a
sudden rush, burst roughly into my bedchamber and, to her surprise finding me lying down with my eyes drooping in a gentle sleep, drove in upon me, her face gleaming with a kind of darting and quite magnificent glow—for she was tall beyond the average look of mortal man. Then, her nostrils flaring, she interrupted this display of peaceful rest, and by her violent rattling of the door threw the snorer into confusion. Her maidenly temper advanced towards me, a riot of flowers, bedecked with copious ivy, determined in aspect and with a heavy bundle of insults in her mouth, her ironic eye darting with such penetrating sharpness that it showed even the deeply concealed thoughts of her mind at the writings of a drunken reveler. The two sides of the Muse balanced one another, for on her more stately right side, aided by a certain majesticity, she had displayed pearls of starry whiteness over the top of her exalted brow; a moon-shaped crescent, its points studded with rare gems, held in place her white-tipped diadem, and, covered in an azure robe, she twirled a hollow globe of glass tapering down to a small piece of bone. My eyesight was so stirred by the exalted contemplation of this heavenly vision when, tall as she was and penetrating in her gaze, she had scarcely pushed her thumb at the door. With a delicate withdrawal of one side my elusive companion avoided my human gaze by a half-concealing veil. Her silvery hair gleamed white as snow, and the frown on her much wrinkled brow betokened that she had learnt something distasteful to her. Her entrance was slow and awesome in its weighty deliberation.

Then Calliope moved to the region of speech, saying: "I promised, Fulgentius, you would be generously treated by these guardian spirits; if you served them devotedly, they would, in one swift seizure, transport you from a mere mortal into a heavenly being, and place you among the stars, not like Nero with his verse eulogies, but like Plato with his deep thoughts. Do not expect from them those devices which are the ornament of poetry, the source of lament in tragedy, the spouting of oratory, the loud laughter of satire, or the jest of comedy, but those by which the bitter brew of Carneades, the golden eloquence of Plato, and the syllogistic brevity of Aristotle are distilled. Now, therefore, once you have absorbed the message in your mind, unlock its recesses and allow what you assimilate to enter your ear tubes; but let fade the whole mortal nature which is yours, so that the full span of what is concentrated to strict philosophical propositions may take up residence in those recesses. Let me now first explain about the nature of the gods, whereby such a plague of sinful superstition grows in foolish minds. Although there are those who, rejecting the noble resources of the in-
tellect, merely let their stupid and dull senses nibble at a tiny morsel and let their sleepy brains grow dizzy in a fog of deep stupidity, yet errors of the human senses are not produced except when motivated by chance forces, as Chrysippus remarks: 'Insidious attacks are made by insidious compulsions.' First, then, now the preamble has been completed, let me explain the origin of an idol.'

1. The Origin of Idols

The author Diophantus of Sparta wrote fourteen books of antiquities, in which he relates that Syrophanes of Egypt, rich in slaves and possessions, had a son born to him. He was devoted to this son, heir to vast wealth, with an affection beyond words, beyond anything required of a father; and when the son was taken from him by a bitter blow of fate, the announcement of a double bereavement for the father left him cruelly stricken, in that the perpetual support of offspring had been denied him and he had met an unexpected check to the further expanding of his wealth. What use to him now was either his prosperity as a father, now condemned to barrenness, or delightful possessions, now curtailed of succession? Not only should he not possess what once he had, but he could not be the one to regain what he had lost. Then, in the grip of grief which always endeavors to relieve its need, he set up an effigy of his son in his household; but when he sought a cure thereby for his grief, he found it rather a renewal of sorrow, for he did not realize that forgetting is the true healer of distress: he had made something whereby he would acquire daily renewals of his grief, not find comfort from it. This is called an idol, that is idos dolu, which in Latin we call appearance of grief. For to flatter their master, the entire household was accustomed to weave garlands or place flowers or burn sweet-smelling herbs before the effigy. Also some slaves guilty of wrongdoing, in order to avoid the wrath of their master, would take refuge by the effigy and so assure forgiveness, and as a sure guarantee of favor would place there little gifts of flowers or incense, rather from fear than veneration. So too Petronius, recalling such practices, says: "Fear on earth first invented gods." And Mintanor, the musician in the Crumatopeion, the book he wrote on the art of music, speaks of "the god of grief whom the suffering of humanity first fashioned." Thence, therefore, a deep-rooted error, gradually taken up by human devotees, edged forward into what is a pit of perverse credulity.
Despite the authority cited, no source for this anecdote has been traced; it may be no more than a fictional version of the apoc. Wisdom of Solomon 13:9ff., which has much to say on the devising of idols; see further J. D. Cooke, Speculum 2 (1927); 396-410. Like Fulgentius, John Gower (Confessio Amantis 5.1525 ff.) attributes the first idol to Syrophanes (Cooke, p.405). Diophantus Lacedemonum, of Lacedaemon or Sparta, on antiquities is no doubt the Diofounus Lacedemonius on the rites of the gods in Fulgentius’s Explanatio 5, but neither author nor works are known, and we get no farther by linking the name to the mathematical writer Diophantus of Alexandria, who flourished in the 3d century A.D. “Idol,” idos dolu, is for eldos, “appearance, shape,” and ὀδος, though this is more usually “deceit” than “grief,” the meaning of Latin dolor. The Petronius quotation is known as Fragment 27.1, similar to Statius Thebaid 3.661; Servius on Aen. 2.715; Orosius Historiae 6.1; and Chaucer, Troilus 4.1408, “Eke drede fond first goddes, I suppose.” Mintanor is unknown; for his Crumatopoicon, compare χρώμα, “color, adornment,” and ρώμα, “subject,” i.e., the embellishing of themes.

2. The Fable of Saturn

The name of the son of Pollus, and the husband of Ops, is Saturn, an elderly man, with his head covered, carrying a scythe. His manhood was cut off and, thrown into the sea, gave birth to Venus. Let us then hear how Philosophy interprets this. She says thus: Saturn first secured dominion in Italy; and seizing people for his harvest prerogative, he was named Saturn, for glutting (saturando). Also his wife is named Ops because she brought help (opera) to the hungry. He is the son of Pollus, either for his heavy strength (pollendo) or from the wealth of high living (pollucibilitate), which we call the human state. Whence Plautus in the comedy Epidicus says: “Drink up, we live as sumptuously (pollucibiliter) as the Greeks.” He is depicted with head covered because all crops with their cover of leaves are protected in a shady enclosure. He is reported as having devoured his own sons because every season devours what it produces; and for good reason he carries a scythe, either because every season turns back on itself like the curved blades of scythes or on account of the crops; whence also he is said to have been castrated, because all the strength of crops is cut down and cast into the fluids of the belly as into the sea, just as Venus is produced from these circumstances because they necessarily produce lust. Apollodorus also in his epic poem writes that Saturn is for sacrum nun, because nus in Greek means sense, or for satorem nun, as for the divine intelligence as it creates all things. Along with him they add four other children, that is first Jove, second Juno,
Fulgentius the Mythographer

third Neptune, fourth Pluto. Pollus, they explain as *poli filium*, the father of the four elements.

Pollus is apparently for Coelus, the Greek Uranus, although the Roman Saturn as god of time and reaping is more usually equated with Chronos; possibly πόλος, "sky," is in mind as the equivalent of Latin *caelus*, much as in Hyginus *Fabulae* preface, 10, 140.2. The Plautus reference is not from his *Epidicus*, but from the *Mostellaria* ("The Haunted House"), 22, 24. The sea birth of Venus is similarly explained in 2.1 below. Apollonius shares the name of a disciple of Zeno the Stoic (3rd century B.C.), mentioned by Tertullian, *De anima* 14.2, but no epic of his is known. *Sacrum nun* may be for Latin *sacer*, "sacred," and Greek νοῦς, "intelligence," and *sator om nun* for *sator*, "sower," and νοῦς; similarly *poli filium* is Greek πολύς, "many," and Latin *filius*, "son, child." The account of the four elements, fire, air, water, earth, in that order, follows straight on. For Saturn in mythology, see R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (New York, 1964); D. B. Loomis, "Saturn in Chaucer's Knight's Tale," in *Chaucer und seine Zeit*, Symposion für W. F. Schirmmer, ed. A. Esch, Buchreihe der Anglia, 14 (Tübingen, 1968), pp.149-61.

3. Of Jove and Juno

That is, first Jove, for fire, whence he is called Zeus in Greek, for Zeus by interpretation of the Greek can be called either life, or fire, or explained because they say, as Heraclitus claims, that everything is animate through life-giving fire, or because this element gives heat. Second is Juno, for air, whence she is called Hera in Greek. Although they should take air as masculine, yet she is also Jove's sister, because the two elements are truly akin; and she is Jove's wife, because air joined to fire grows hot. For both Theopompus in his Cyprian poem and Hellanicus in the *Dios politia* written by him declare that Juno was bound by Jove with golden chains and weighed down with iron fetters, by which they mean no less than that air joined to heaven's fire produces a union of the two elements down below, that is water and earth, which are denser elements than their two counterparts above.

The traditional notion of fire as the life-giving force is regularly credited to Heraclitus 'the Obscure,' who flourished ca. 500 B.C., as for instance by Cicero, *De natura deorum* 3.14; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 6.3; Servius on *Aen.* 11.196; Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.20.3; and Fulgentius's own Virgil commentary, 3. Hera is taken to refer to both the proper name Πνε and ῥη, "air," Latin masculine *aer*. A Theopompus, historian of Chios, mentioned by Tertullian, *De anima* 44.2, was born in 394 B.C., but no poems of his are
4. The Fable of Neptune

The third element, of water, they explained as Neptune, whom in Greek they also call Poseidon, for ποιόν ἵδονα, which in Latin we call making shapes, for the reason that only this element makes for itself shapes of what things are in store, something which is possible for no other of the four elements. He is depicted carrying a trident because his watery office is discharged in triple strength—that is, mobility, productiveness, and importance for drinking. They assign to this Neptune a wife Amphitrite (in Greek we call ἀμφί), because water is confined by all three elements, that is, both in the sky, in its atmosphere and clouds, and on earth—for instance, springs and wells.


5. The Fable of Pluto

They also say that Pluto was the ruler of a quarter of the earth (for πλῶτος in Greek they call riches), believing that riches were assigned only to earth. They also said that he was banished to the underworld because this sole product of the earth is more hidden than the other elements. He carried a scepter in his hand because his dominions extended only to earth.

Πλῶτος, for πλῶτος, “wealth.”

6. The Fable of Cerberus with the Three Heads

At Pluto’s feet they place the three-headed dog Cerberus because the envies of human quarrels are brought about in a threefold fashion, that is,
by nature, cause, and accident. Hate is natural, as between dogs and hares, wolves and sheep, men and snakes; the passion and jealousy of love, for instance, are causal; what arises casually is accidental, for instance, words between men or a nearby supply of fodder for mules. Cerberus is named for creoboros, that is, flesh eater, and he is imagined as having three heads for the three ages—infancy, youth, old age, at which death enters the world.

Creoboros, compare κρέας, "flesh," and φαγεῖν, "food." This last sentence occurs only in one late manuscript.

7. The Fable of the Furies

Three Furies are also said to have served Pluto devotedly, the first of them Alecto [the second Tisiphone, the third Megaera]. For Alecto means unstoppable, while Tisiphone is for τιτυόν φωνή, that is, the voice of these same ones, and Megaera for μεγάλη ερις, that is, great contention. The first stage, therefore, is to create rage without pause; the second, to burst forth into words; the third, to stir up a quarrel.

The words in brackets are supplied from what follows. Alecto is taken for ἁλυγτός, "elusive"; τιτυόν φωνή, for τοῦτων, "of these" and φωνή, "sound"; μεγάλη ερις, for μέγαλη, "large," and ερις, "strife."

8. The Fable of the Fates

They also assign to Pluto the three Fates, the first of them Clotho, the second Lachesis, the third Atropos. For clitos is the Greek for summons, Lachesis is called destiny, and Atropos is without order, pointing to the interpretation that, first, there is the summons of birth; second, one's lot in life, how one can live; and third, the state of death which comes without prescription.

Clitos, for κλιτός (κλητός), "called"; Lachesis, compare λαχής, "fate"; Atropos, taken as ἀ-τρόπος, "without direction."

9. The Fable of the Harpies

Virgil places the three Harpies in the lower world, the first of them Aello, the second Ocypete, the third Celaeno. For σφάγη in Greek means pillage;
and they are maidens because all plundering is barren and fruitless; they are covered with feathers because whatever pillage seizes it conceals; and they are able to fly because all plundering is very quick to fly away. Aello in Greek is ἐδον ἀλλον, that is, carrying off another's; Ocypete is quickly escaping with it; and Celaeno is the Greek for black, whence Homer in the first book of the Iliad: "Forthwith thy dark blood shall gush about my spear." They intend to show this as meaning that it is the first stage to covet another's, the second to seize what is coveted, the third to hide what has been seized.

Virgil, Aen. 6.289; Homer, Iliad 1.303. Arpage, for ἀρπαγή, "robbery"; ἐδον ἄλλον, for ἔδει, "consume," and ἄλλος, "another"; Ocypete, compare ὀξύς, "carry," and ἱστρομα, "flee"; Celaeno, for κελανός, "dark, gloomy," but also associated in the final sentence with Latin celare, "conceal."

10. The Fable of Proserpine

They also choose to have Proserpine, the daughter of Ceres, married to Pluto; for Ceres is the Greek for joy, and they also chose her to be the goddess of corn, for where there is plentiful increase of crops, joy must abound. They intended Proserpine for crops, that is, creeping forward (proserpentem) through the earth with roots, whence she is also called Hecate in Greek, for hecaton is the Greek for hundred; and they also explain this name for her in the sense that crops yield fruit one hundredfold.

Proserpine (Persephone), daughter of Jove and Ceres (Demeter), was abducted by Pluto and became the queen of Hades, but was allowed to revisit her mother for half the year. The same etymology for Proserpine is cited by Varro, De lingua Latina 5.68; by Augustine, De civitate Dei 7.20, 24; and in Fulgentius's own Content of Virgil 22. Ceres, for καυπός, "profit, increase"; hecaton, for ἐκαρόν, "hundred."

11. The Fable of Ceres

It is also said that her mother sought for her, when she was stolen away, with torches, whence the day of Ceres is celebrated with torches, clearly for the reason that at that time crops are joyfully sought for reaping with torches, that is, with the sun's heat.
12. The Fable of Apollo

They chose Apollo for the name of the sun, for *appolon* in Greek means losing, because by its very heat it ruinously takes all the sap from green plants. They also chose him as the god of omens, either because the sun turns into clear light everything obscure, or because in its rising and setting the orb gives effect to interpretations of many kinds. For the sun (*sol*) is so called either because it is unique (*solus*) or because it habitually (*solete*) rises and sets each day. They also assign to him a four-horse chariot, for the reason that either he goes through the cycle of the year in the four changes of the seasons or he divides up the space of the day into a fourfold division. From this they have given the steeds these appropriate names: Erythraeus, Actaeon, Lampus, and Philogeus. Erythraeus is the Greek for blushing red, because he rises red-faced on the threshold of dawn; Actaeon means resplendent, because he flashes the more brightly as he impetuously pursues the turning posts of his track; Lampus is burning, because he mounts the track towards reaching the midpoint of day; and Philogeus in Greek is called loving the earth because, bending forwards towards the ninth hour, he inclines to his setting.

*Appolon*, compare ἀπαλείπω, “lose, leave behind”; Erythraeus, for ἄφωτος, “red”; Actaeon, for ἄρσις, “light, splendor”; Lampus, for λαμπᾶς, “light, the sun”; and Philogeus, for φιλέω, “love,” and γῆ, “earth.” The daylight is thought of as divided into four periods of three hours each, the ninth hour being the end of the third period, the late afternoon.

13. The Fable of the Crow

They choose to put the crow also under Apollo's protection, either because contrary to the way of nature it alone produces its young by laying eggs at the very height of summer heat, as also Petronius: “So the crow, contrary to the products of the well-known ways of nature, lays its eggs when the corn is high,” or because according to Anaximander in his books on *Orneoscopics*, or according to Pindar, it alone of all the birds has names bearing sixty-four interpretations.

Petronius's Fragment 27.1–2; Anaximander could be the Ionian philosopher of the 5th century B.C., but his *Orneoscopics* (compare ὀρνοτοξικός, “observing the flight of birds”) is unknown, as is anything by the poet Pindar (died 443 B.C.) on the names of the crow.
14. The Fable of the Laurel

They assign the laurel also to Apollo's protection, whereby they also state that he fell in love with Daphne, the daughter of the river god Peneus. And how can a laurel take root except by the waters of a river? This is chiefly because the banks of this same river Peneus are said to abound in the laurel. It has been called the beloved of Apollo for the reason that those who have written on the interpretation of dreams, like Antiphon, Philochorus, Artemon, and Serapion of Ascalon, set forth in their books that if you place laurel on the head of sleepers, the dreams they see will come true.

Antiphon could be the orator of Rhamnus, who died in 411 B.C.; the other three authorities are untraced, but all four, Serapion, Artemon, Antiphon, and Philochorus, are so listed by Tertullian, De anima 46.10, as "testifying to the truth of dreams," and Fulgentius may well have borrowed the list from that source (see also Xenophanes in 1.15 below). Serapion, possibly the Alexandrian medical writer of the 2d century, is not likely to be the one known to Chaucer's Physician, Gen. Prol. 434.

15. The Fable of the Nine Muses

They also assign to Apollo the nine Muses and add him to the Muses as a tenth one, for the reason that there are ten organs of articulation for the human voice, whence Apollo is also depicted with a lyre of ten strings. Also Holy Scripture speaks of a psaltery of ten strings. Speech is produced with the four teeth, that is, the ones placed in front, against which the tongue strikes; and if one of them were missing it would necessarily give forth a whistle rather than speech; two lips like cymbals, suitably modulating the words; the tongue, like a plectrum as with some pliancy it shapes the breathing of the voice; the palate, the dome of which projects the sound; the throat tube, which provides a track for the breath as it is expelled; and the lungs, like a sack of air, exhaling and reinhaling what is articulated. There you have the explanation of the nine Muses and Apollo himself as given by Anaximander of Lampascenum and Zenophanes of Heraclea. Others, like Pisander, the teacher of medicine, and Euximenes in his book Theologumena, confirm this explanation. But I also say that the nine Muses are the stages of learning and knowledge, as follows. First is Clio, standing for the first conception of learning, for cleos is the Greek for fame, whence Homer: "We heard only a rumor"; and elsewhere, "He heard the mighty rumor from afar in Cyprus."
Since no one seeks knowledge except that by which he may advance the honor of his reputation, Clio is named first, that is the conception of the search for knowledge. Second is Euterpe, whom in Greek we call well pleasing, because it is the first step to seek knowledge, the second to delight in what you seek. Third is Melpomene, for melenpieomene, that is, applying persistent thought, as it is the first step to find the need; the second, to delight in what you find needful; the third, to pursue the study of what you delight in. Fourth is Thalia, that is, growth, as if she were called tithonilia, that is, putting forth shoots, whence Epicharmus, the writer of comedies, says in his comedy Diphulos: "When he doesn't see the shoots appear he is consumed with hunger." Fifth is Polyhymnia, for polymnenem, as we say, making much memory, because memory is necessary after growth. Sixth is Erato, that is, euronchomoeon, which in Latin we call finding the same, because after knowledge and memory it is right that one should find something similar about oneself. Seventh is Terpsichore, that is pleasant filling, whence Hermes in his book Opimandra says: "Both from a fill of food and an empty body"—since after finding you must also discriminate and judge what you have found. Eighth is Urania, that is, heavenly, for after judging, you select what to say and what to reject: to choose the useful and reject the inferior is a heavenly ability. Ninth is Calliope, that is, of the excellent voice, whence Homer also says: "The voice of the goddess speaking." This then is to be the order: first, to find the need for instruction; second, to delight in what you find needful; third, to pursue what you delight in; fourth, to grasp what you pursue; fifth, to remember what you grasp; sixth, to discover in yourself something resembling what you remember; seventh, to judge what you discover; eighth, to discriminate in what you judge; ninth, to make known in attractive form what you select.

The ten organs of speech are: four front teeth, two lips, tongue, palate, throat, lungs. As to authorities cited, the lex divina or Bible is here Ps. 32 (33) :2, similarly 91:4 (92:3); Anaximander of Lampscenum on the Hellespont is presumably the same as the Anaximander of 1.13 above; Xenophanes (no doubt for Xenophanes), and Euximenes with his Theologumenon (compare the, "god," and λόγος, "account"), are unknown, but Tertullian, De anima 43.2, mentions a Xenophanes who wrote on the subject of sleep, and Fulgentius at this point seems to be echoing some of Tertullian's authorities (see 1.14 above). As to Pisander, the name is shared by Pisander of Rhodes, epic poet of the 6th or 7th century B.C.; Epicharmus the Dorian writer of comedies in the 5th century B.C., of whose work only fragments survive (together with a few scraps of a poem Epicharmus by Ennius), is also referred to in 3.1 and 5 below (and by Tertullian, De anima 46.10, 11); the Opimandra of Hermes, presumably for ὀ θήματος,
'The Herdsman,' is if genuine more likely to be one of the Hermetic books of Egyptian mythology and magic than the early Christian *Shepherd of Hermas*. The Homer quotations are, in the order of the text, from *Iliad* 2.486, 11.21 ("he" is Cinyras), 2.182 (said of Athene, not Calliope). As to the Muses and their expansive etymologies, taken over admiringly in Boccaccio's *Genealogy of the Gentile Gods* 11.2, we have: Clio, of history, with *cleos* for *xos*, "report, fame," taken as fame, reputation, but with Homeric instances bearing, like Latin *fama*, the primary sense of rumor (the same thing is done in 2.2 below); Euterpe, of lyric poetry, for *e*, "well," and *repw*, "delight"; Mel­pomene, of tragedy, for *melipomein*, compare *melieia*, "study," *mele*, "make," and *meros*, "lasting"; Thalia, of comedy, for *isbonia*, for *theia*, "place," and *lapo", "crop"; Polyhymnia, of sublime hymns, for *polymenein*, *poly*, "much," and *merpia", "memory" (compare E. K.'s gloss to Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar*, April eclogue: "her name, which (as some construe it) importeth great remembrance"); Erist, of love poetry, for *eironchomonein*, compare *eiron*, "and," and *eirones*, "resembling"; Terpsichore, of choral dance and song, here *repw*, "delight," and *repes*, "fill, satiety"; Urania, of astronomy, here compare *uphainai*, "heavenly"; and Calliope, of epic poetry, compare *kalo*, "beautiful," and *poesia", "voice." For Fulgentius's interpretation of the Muses, see further L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony*, ed. A. G. Hatcher (Baltimore, 1963), pp. 38-39. For ancient and medieval attitudes to the Muses, see E. R. Curtius, transl. W. R. Trask, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York, 1953), pp. 228-46, based on his earlier collections of material in *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 59 (1939), 129-88, and 63 (1943), 225-74. Fulgentius's explanation of the names of the Muses goes back ultimately to the catalogue in Hesiod's *Theogony* 76-79, transl. N. O. Brown, Library of Liberal Arts, 36 (Indianapolis, 1953), p.55, with notes, p.85. The first two and the last two (Clio, Euterpe, Urania, Calliope) come in Hesiod's order and are similarly explained; the other five are differently arranged and given different, more fanciful explanations.

16. The Fable of Phaethon

Apollo is said, by making love to the nymph Clymene, to have sired Phaethon, who, aspiring to his father's chariot, sparked off destruction by fire for himself and the earth. So always the sun uniting with water must give rise to certain creatures which, because they appear bounding up from the earth, are called apparitions (*fanontes*), for *fanon* in Greek means appearing. And even though all things are consumed in the destruction of heat, these creatures must seek the heat of the sun for their growth. His sisters are Are­thusa and Lampethusa, who bemourn their brother's destruction by fire with bejeweled and gleaming drops, and shed golden amber from their torn
barks; for a sister is an outgrowth of the complete plant, the family group, and they too are produced by the single union of heat and liquid. So these trees which sweat amber when the sun’s glowing heat—as their fruits ripen in the scorching months of June and July—reaches the sign of Cancer and Leo, with a mighty seething through their split barks these same trees pour into the river Eridanus their liquid sap, to be solidified in its waters.

Phaethon persuaded his father the sun god to let him drive the sun chariot for one day; he lost control, threatened heaven and earth with conflagration, and was killed by Jove’s thunderbolt, which cast him into the river Eridanus (the modern Po). His sisters, the Heliades, so grieved at his death that the gods changed them into poplar trees near the fatal river. Fanon is for φαῖνω, “appear”; with unwonted restraint Fulgentius does not etymologize the personal names involved. In the Zodiac cycle, the Crab begins on June 22 and the Lion on July 24.

17. Of the Tripod, the Arrows, and the Python

They also associate Apollo with the tripod because the sun has had knowledge of the past, sees the present, and will see the future. They assign to him a bow and arrows, either because his rays leap forth from his globe like arrows, or because as he shows his rays he cuts through all the darkness of uncertainty. It is related that the Python was slain with arrows, and in Greek easy belief is called πίθος. They say that he slew the Python because all false belief is crushed like serpents when the true light appears.

**Why He Is Depicted Beardless, Although Called Father**

Because in his death and rebirth his youth is always renewed, or because he never fails in his strength as does the moon, which waxes and wanes.

*Pithos, for πιθὸς; cf. πιθανός, “credible, credulous.”*

18. The Fable of Mercury

If the gods took over thefts, there was no need of a judge for their crimes, since they had the heavenly author of wrongdoing. They say Mercury was in charge of trading, carrying a staff or caduceus wreathed with snakes, fur-
nished with feathered heels, and the divine go-between and thief. Let me explain what his name and appearance mean. They chose Mercury for mercium-curum, for Mercury can be called the complete trader.

Why Feathers

His heels are feathered because the feet of businessmen are everywhere in a rush as if winged.

Why a Staff

They add a staff wreathed with snakes because commerce sometimes gives control and a scepter, sometimes a wound like that given by snakes.

Why a Cap and a Cock

He is depicted with his head covered by a cap because any commerce is always concealed. They place the cock also under his protection, either because any businessman is always on the watch or because at his crowing they rise to transact their affairs.

Why Hermes

In Greek he is also called Hermes, that is, ermeneuse, which in Latin we call translating, for the reason that fluency in languages is needful to a trader. He is said to pass through both realms, the upper and the lower, because now he rushes aloft through the winds, now plunging down he seeks out the lower world through storms.

Why a Thief, Why called Swift

They also choose this god as the patron of thieving because in trading there is no difference for a thief between pillage and perjury or between plunder and sacrilege. The star which is called Stilbos in Greek, and which the pagans associate with him, whereby they have also used his name for one of the days, pursues a more rapid course than all the planets in that it com-
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plete its cycle on the seventh day, something which Saturn can do only in twenty-eight years and Jupiter in twelve; whereby also Lucan says: "And Mercury is stayed from its swift motion."

Why He Slew Argus

Then, too, he is said to have slain Argus, the one encircled with a host of eyes, when he had mown down with a single wound, at one blow from the curved blade of the scythe he carries, this vast crop of eyes in one body, gleaming as they were with lively alertness. What would such a fantastic notion of the Greeks signify except that, with a sly blow of the scythe, the cunning of someone both thief and trader got the better of even a hundred guardians and the same number of artful ones, yet ones useless without barter, whence Argus is the Greek for idle? This is the usual fashion in which Greece and its poetic gossiping, always decked in falsehood and yet lying with good intent, refers to such fabrications,

Mercium-curum, presumably for Latin mercatis, "trading," and cura, "care," unless κυριας, "lord, master," is meant; ermenense, compare ἐρμηνευς, "interpreter." Stilbos, called Stilbon by Cicero, De natura deorum 2.20, and Ausonius Elegiae 5.11 (also Firmicus Maternus [early-4th century A.D.] Mathesis 2.1.5 ed. C. Sitel [Leipzig, 1894], p.39), where one manuscript of the 11th century marginally adds Fulgentius's remarks) is the planet Mercury, compare στριβων, "shine brightly," and Mercury's day is Wednesday. In reality, 12 years for the planet Jupiter and 29 for Saturn are the approximate cycle periods, but that for Mercury is 88 days, not 7. Lucan, Pharsalia 1.662, is being quoted, Mercury there being called Cyllenius from having been born on Mount Cyllene in Arcadia. For Argus, ἀργός means both "bright" and "idle." For the genesis of the many associations and attributes of Hermes-Mercury, see N. O. Brown, Hermes the Thief: The Evolution of a Myth (New York, 1947; repr., 1969).

19. Of Danaé

as when Danaé was seduced by a golden shower, not rain but coins,

20. Of Ganymede

and Ganymede was seized by an eagle, not a real bird but the spoils of war. For Jove, as the ancient author Anacreon has written, when he had started a
war against the Titans—that is, the sons of that Titan who was Saturn's brother—and had made sacrifice in heaven, as a sign of victory he saw close at hand the auspicious flight of an eagle. For so happy an omen, especially since victory did ensue, he made a golden eagle for his war standards and consecrated it to the might of his protection, whereby also among the Romans, standards of this kind are carried. He seized Ganymede in battle as these standards went before him, just as Europa is said to have been carried off on a bull, that is, onto a ship carrying the picture of a bull, as Isis on a heifer, in the same way onto a ship with that kind of picture. Consequently, as you certainly know for a fact, the Egyptians worship the barge of Isis.

Ganymede, the beautiful Trojan boy, was carried off to Olympus by an eagle of Jove to serve as cupbearer to the gods; the rape of Ganymede by the eagle was a popular subject for art in antiquity, for instance, the bronze group by Leochares the Attic sculptor of the 4th century B.C. Isis on a heifer seems to be an error for Io, the maiden loved by Zeus (Jove) and changed into a white heifer by his jealous wife. But the euhemeristic interpretation of all three—Danaë violated and then paid with gold coins, Ganymede captured by a legion with an eagle standard, and Io equated with Isis and associated with a boat—is also found in Lactantius (early 4th century) Divine Institutes 1.11; and this is most likely Fulgentius's immediate source.

21. The Fable of Perseus and the Gorgons

They say that Perseus was the slayer of the Gorgon Medusa. They intended there to be three Gorgons—the first of them Sthenno; the second, Euryale; the third, Medusa—and since their story has been written by Lucan and Ovid, poets perfectly well known in the first teaching stages taken with schoolmasters, I have considered it unnecessary to repeat the tale at length. Theocritus, the historian of antiquities, relates that there was a King Phorcys, who left his three daughters wealthy. Of these Medusa, who was the more forceful, increased her wealth by her rule and by cultivation and husbandry; whence she is called Gorgo, for in Greek georgi is the name for husbandmen. She is also described as having a snakelike head because she was the more cunning. Perses, coveting her rich domain, slew her (he is called winged because he came with ships); and carrying off her head, that is, her substance, he grew all the richer by securing her wide territories. Then, invading the kingdom of Atlas, he forced him to flee into a mountain, whence he is said to have been changed into a mountain, as it were,
by the head of the Gorgo, that is, by her substance. But let me explain what the Greeks, inclined as they are to embroider, would signify by this finely spun fabrication. They intended three Gorgons, that is, the three kinds of terror: the first terror is indeed that which weakens the mind; the second, that which fills the mind with terror; the third, that which not only enforces its purpose upon the mind but also its gloom upon the face. From this notion the three Gorgons took their names: first, Sthenno, for *stenno* is the Greek for weakening, whence we call *astenian* sickness; second, Euryale, that is, broad extent, whence Homer said: "Troy with its broad streets"; then Medusa, for *meidusam*, because one cannot look upon her. Thus Perseus with the help of Minerva, that is, manliness aided by wisdom, destroyed these terrors. He flew away with face averted because manliness never considers terror. He is also said to carry a mirror, because all terror is reflected not only in the heart but also in the outward appearance. From her blood Pegasus is said to have been born, shaped in the form of renown; whereby Pegasus is said to have wings, because fame is winged. Therefore also Tiberianus says: "Pegasus neighing thus across the upper air." Then he is also described as having struck out a fountain for the Muses with his heel, because the Muses either follow their own method of describing the renown of heroes or indicate that of the ancients.

Of the authors mentioned, Lucan deals with the Perseus story in *Pharsalia* 9.620 ff., and Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 4.617 ff.; Theocridus, if not intended for a more famous name like Theognis or Theocritus, who were not historians, is unknown. The Homer quotation is *Iliad* 2.141, and the Tiberianus is Fragment 2, elsewhere unrecorded. Of etymologies, *georgi* is for γεωργός, "husbandman"; *astenian* for ασθένια, "illness"; Euryale, for Εὐρυάλη, "broad"; and *meidusam* appears to be a solitary example of a reversed etymology, for ἀβα-, "evilly," and υἱός, "son." For other references to Pegasus and the Hippocrene, see the tetrameter poem in the prologue above, and 3.1 below. For the ramifications of the Perseus story in folktales, see E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus*, 3 vols. (London, 1894–96).

22. The Fable of Admetus and Alcestis

As there is nothing nobler than a well-disposed wife, so there is nothing more savage than an aggressive one. For a prudent one offers her own soul as a pledge for the safety of her husband, to the same degree that a malevolent one counts her own life as nothing compared with his death; thus the legally espoused wife is taken up either with the honeyed sweetness of plea-
sant ways or with the gall of malice and is either a permanent solace or an endless torture. Admetus, king of Greece, sought Alcestis in marriage; her father had issued an edict that whoever could yoke two opposed wild animals to his chariot might marry her. This Admetus therefore besought Apollo and Hercules, and they harnessed a lion and a wild boar to his chariot, and so he married Alcestis. When Admetus fell ill and discovered he was dying, he sought to avert it by entreating Apollo, who said he could do nothing for him in his sickness unless he found one of his relatives who would voluntarily accept death in his place. This his wife undertook; and so Hercules, when he went down to drag away the three-headed dog Cerberus, also freed her from the lower world. They have explained Admetus as an allegory of the mind, and he is named Admetus as one whom fear (metus) could seize upon (adire). Also he desired Alcestis in marriage, for alee in the Attic dialect of Greek is the word for succour, whereby Homer says: "There is no other strength of mind and no other succour." Thus the mind hoping for succour harnessed two opposed wild beasts to its chariot—that is, adopted two strengths, of mind and body—the lion for strength of mind and the wild boar for strength of body. Then he asked the help of Apollo and Hercules, that is, wisdom and strength. In place of his soul succour exposes itself to death in the form of Alcestis, and strength rescues succour from the shades although it is weakening at the peril of death, as Hercules did with Alcestis.

Admetus was king of Pherae in Thessaly. Alee, for αἰλή, "succour"; the Homer quotation is Iliad 3.45. For the legend, see A. Lesky, Alkestis, der Mythos und das Drama (Vienna, 1925).

Book 2

Prologue

Attentive to your revered command, Master, I have in my destitute state committed this foolishness of mine to your judgment, suspended on the horns of a dilemma whether any reader will praise what I have put together or demolish what I have worked over. But since these matters in no way exalt my reputation or disguise my shortcomings (in the sense that if the reader improve his knowledge by them, he may acknowledge it to God for granting the improvement to him; but if he find worse folly in them, he
may blame it on the one who committed it), these things, therefore, are not ours, but His gift, and whatever improvements may result, their bestowal is of God, not man. Just as it is a sign of malice to keep silent on what I know, so it is not a fault to explain what I have understood. Therefore, if you do learn more about these matters, praise the sincerity of a mind which has not held back what it possessed; and if you were ignorant of these matters before, you at least have from my efforts an arena in which you can exercise your own mental talents.

The parenthesis echoes the Non nobis, Domine Ps. 114 (115):1; compare also I Cor. 1:31, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

1. The Fable of the Judgment of Paris

Philosophers have distinguished a threefold life for mankind, by which they mean first, the meditative; second, the practical; and third, the sensual—or as we call them in Latin, the contemplative, the active, the voluptuary—as the prophet David declared, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful,” that is, does not go, does not stand, does not sit. For the first or contemplative life is that which has to do with the search for knowledge and truth, the life led in our days by bishops, priests, and monks, in olden days by philosophers. With these there is no greed for profit, no insane rage, no poisonous spite, no reek of lust; and if concern for tracking down the truth and meditating on what is right keeps them thin, they are adorned by their good name and fed by their hope. The second kind of life led is the active one, so eager for advantages, acquisitive of adornment, insatiable for possessions, sly in grasping at them, assiduous in guarding them; for it covets what it can get rather than seeks after knowledge, and thinks nothing of what is right when it seizes what is at hand; it has no stability because it does not go about things honorably; in olden times certain despots led such a life, among us the whole world leads it. The life of pleasure, entirely given up to lust, is the sinful kind which considers nothing honorable to be worthwhile, but seeking only the corrupt ways of living is either made effeminate by lust or bloodied by murder or burnt up by theft or soured by envy. This life of an Epicurean or pleasure-lover according to the ancients, what among us seems the natural way of life, is not a punishable offense: since no one pursues the good, no good can be produced. The poets
explain in such terms as these the contest of the three goddesses—that is, Minerva, Juno, and Venus—rivals in the superior excellence of their beauty. They have said that Jove could not judge among these, perhaps because they did not realize that the judgment of this world has preordained limits, for they believed man was made with free will; wherefore, if Jove had judged as God, in condemning two lives he would have committed the world to only one kind. But they pass the decision over to man, to whom a free choice is owed. But the shepherd Paris, being neither straight as an arrow nor sure as a spear nor handsome of face nor wise of mind, did a dull and stupid thing and, as is the way of wild beasts and cattle, turned his snail's eyes towards lust rather than selected virtue or riches. But let me explain what these three goddesses have to say for themselves on the three kinds of living.

**Of Minerva**

The first or intellectual life we name in honor of contemplative wisdom; thus they say that she was born from the head of Jove, because the intellect is situated in the brain; and she was armed, because she is full of resource. They associate her with the Gorgon, worn on her breast as a symbol of fear, just as the wise man bears awe in his breast to guard against his enemies. They give her a plume and helmet, for the mind of the wise man is both armed and noble; whence Plautus in his *Trinummus* declares: "It certainly has a head like a mushroom, it covers him completely." She is also enfolded in a robe of three folds, either because all wisdom is many-sided or because it is kept hidden. She also carries a long spear, because wisdom strikes at long range with its pronouncements. The dress has three folds also because all wisdom is concealed from without and is rarely seen. They also choose to put the owl in her charge, because wisdom has its flashes of lightning even in the dark. Whereby they also claim that she was the founder of Athens, and Minerva in Greek is called Athene, for *athanate parthene*, that is, immortal virgin, because wisdom cannot die or be seduced.

**Of Juno**

They put Juno in charge of the active life, for Juno is named for getting ahead (*a iuvandi*). She is said to rule over dominions, because this kind of
life is so much concerned with riches; she is also depicted with a scepter, because riches and dominions are close kin. They say that Juno has her head veiled, because all riches are always hidden; they choose her as the goddess of birth, because riches are always productive and sometimes abortive. They also place the peacock under her patronage, because the whole acquisitive life of power is always looking to adorn its appearance; and as the peacock adorns its front by spreading out in a curve the star-spangled sweep of its tail, and thereby shamelessly exposes its rear, so the striving for riches and renown is alluring for the moment but eventually exposes itself; whence Theophrastus in his moral writings declared: “Heed what is left behind”; and Solomon: “And in the end of a man is the disclosing of his works.” They also connect her with Iris as the rainbow of peace, because just as the man who is coloring various ornaments for the moment takes refuge in the curve of the rainbow, so fortune, though at first glance brightly colored, soon after fades away.

Of Venus

They have taken Venus as the third one, as the symbol of the life of pleasure. Venus they explained either as the good things of life according to the Epicureans, or as the empty things of life according to the Stoics, for the Epicureans praise pleasure but the Stoics condemn it: the first cultivate license; the others want no part of it. Whereby she is called Aphrodite, for in Greek ἀφρος is the word for foam, either because lust rises momentarily like foam and turns to nothing, or because the ejaculation of seed is foamy. Then the poets relate that when Saturn’s genitals were cut off with a scythe and thrown into the sea, Venus was born from them—a piece of poetic folly meaning nothing less than that Saturn is called Chronos in Greek, for in Greek χρόνος is the word for time. The powers of the seasons, that is, crops, are totally cut off by the scythe and, cast into the liquids of the belly, as it were into the sea, needs must produce lust. For abundance of satiety creates lust, as Terence says: “Venus grows cold without Ceres and Bacchus.” Also they depict her naked, either because she sends out her devotees naked or because the sin of lust is never cloaked or because it only suits the naked. They also considered roses as under her patronage, for roses both grow red and have thorns, as lust blushes at the outrage to modesty and pricks with the sting of sin; and as the rose gives pleasure, but is swept away by the swift movement of the seasons, so lust is pleasant for a moment, but then disappears forever. Also under her patronage they place doves, for the reason that birds
of this species are fiercely lecherous in their love-making; with her they also associate the three Graces (Carites), two turned towards us and one turned away from us, because all grace sets off alone but returns twofold; the Graces are naked because no grace has any part of subtle ornament. They also depict her swimming in the sea, because all lust suffers shipwreck of its affairs, whence also Porfyrius in his Epigrams declares: “The shipwrecked sailor of Venus in the deep, naked and destitute.” She is also depicted carrying a sea-shell, because an organism of this kind, as Juba notes in his physiological writings, is always linked in open coupling through its entire body.

The quotation from David is Ps. 1:1, that from Plautus’s Trinummus 851, of a large hat; from Solomon, Ecclesiasticus 11:29 (11:27); from Terence, Bursulae 732, with reference to corn and wine, also cited by Cicero, De natura deorum 2.60, by Jerome, Epist. 54.9, and by Minucius Felix, Octavius 21, Cicero perhaps being Fulgentius’s direct source, as similarly in the anonymous Pervigilium Venete (see opening prologue above, note 14), line 42: “Both Ceres and Bacchus and the god of poets are in attendance”; for Optatianus Porfyrius (died 304 A.D.), Epigram 29, not elsewhere recorded. The specific moral writings of Theophrastus and the physiology of Juba are unknown, though authors so named are on record: a Theophrastus (died 287 B.C.), a pupil of Aristotle, wrote on metaphysics; Juba, king of Numidia (died 46 B.C.), who sided with Pompey, had a son of the same name (died 23 A.D.), who was educated in Rome and acquired a reputation for learning, and a Juba of Mauretania, a writer on metrics whose work is now lost, flourished in the 2d century A.D. Minerva’s Gorgon means her wearing the head of Medusa; Athene as aphante parthene, for αθανάτος, “immortal,” and ἑαυτής, “virgin,” in allusion to her temple, the Parthenon in Athens. Juno is linked to Iris in the sense ἱρίς, “rainbow.” Venus as Epicurean good things of life presupposes the common noun venus, “charm,” or perhaps venustas, “beauty,” or venia, “favor,” and as the Stoic empty things may be meant for vanus, “empty.” Afris, for ἀφρός, “foam”; chronos, for χρόνος, “time.” The sentence on the sea of the belly is repeated from 1.2 above. Pliny, Natural History 35.36, describes the Venus anadyomenes, “rising from the sea,” painted by the great Apelles of Ephesus, who flourished in the 3d century B.C. For the Venus story, see R. Schilling, La Religion Romaine de Vénus (Paris, 1954). For the foolish choice of the shepherd Paris, compare Spenser’s Shepherd’s Calendar, July eclogue, 145 ff., and for the Graces, E. K.’s gloss to the April eclogue, 109 ff.; much of Milton’s Paradise Regain’d is concerned with the lures of all three lives—voluptuary (2.153 ff.), active (2.406 ff., 3.108 ff., 4.1 ff.), and contemplative (4.212 ff.).

2. The Fable of Hercules and Omphale

Be moderate, I beg you, judges, with the labors to which you commit men. For whatever boyish or effeminate feeling was involved in his love,
the virtue of Hercules fought hard in the battle against lust. For the allure of woman is greater than the world, because the greatness of the world cannot overcome him whom lust tightly held; it attacked through the evil of a woman his virtue which could not be secured by nature. For Hercules fell in love with Omphale, who persuaded him both to soften the delicate shrunken parts of fibers and to whirl the spindle round finely with his thumb. For Hercules is called in Greek, Heracles, that is, eroncleos, which in Latin we call the fame of strong men, whereby Homer says: "We heard only a rumor." So too he is said to be the grandson of Alcaeus, for ake in Greek is translated as the assumption of power; and he has a mother Alcmene, for almera, which in Greek means salty. So from the fire of the mind, from Jove, the assumption of power, from his grandfather Alcaeus, and the saltiness of wisdom, from Alcmene, what else but the renown of valor is produced? Yet he is conquered by lust, for onfalon in Greek means the navel, for lust is ruled in the navel by women, as says the Holy Scripture: "Thy navel was not cut," as if to say: "Your sin was not cut off." For the womb is firmly tied to this, whereby the umbilical cord is situated at the same place for securing the newly born. This shows that lust can conquer even virtue that is still unconquered.

Omphale, independent queen of Lydia, held Hercules in bondage for three years, during which time, according to later accounts, he lived effeminately, spinning wool and sometimes wearing women's garments. Hercules had a grandfather, Alcaeus of Lesbos, writer of warlike odes, and for parents, Jove and Alcmene. The quotations are from Homer, Iliad 2.486 (using aklos however in the primary sense "rumor" rather than for "renown," compare 1.15 above); and the Bible, lex divina, here Ezek. 16:4 ("In the day thou wast born thy navel," etc.). The etymologies are: eroncleos, for ἥρως, "hero," and ἄκλεος, "fame"; ake, for ἀλκή, "force, strong defense"; almera, for ἀλμυρός, "salty, bitter"; onfalon, for ὄμφαλος, "navel"; and epomfalia for the umbilical cord; compare ἐπιμφαλία, "upon the navel." For the Hercules legends, see B. Schweitzer, Herakles (Tübingen, 1922); J. Bayet, Les Origines de l'Hercule Romain (Paris, 1926).

3. The Fable of Cacus and Hercules

If thieves give out smoke, anyone can spot the despoiler even when he denies it. Thus he thrusts out blackness or smoke so as not to be observed, and the very property which came by theft disappears in smoke. Cacus is said to have driven off some cattle of Hercules, which he concealed by having dragged them by the tails into his cave; but Hercules throttled him to death.
For κακός is the Greek for what we call evil. Thus all evil gives out smoke, that is, puts out either what is contrary to the truth, that is, light, or what is offensive to those who see it, as smoke is to the eyes, or what is dark and dismal raillery. And so evil in its manifold forms is two-faced, not straightforward: evil does harm also in three ways, either as aggressive when observed or subtly like a treacherous friend or secretly like an invisible thief. Thus he leads off the cattle, dragging them so that their tracks may be reversed, because every evil person, in order to seize another’s property, depends for his protection on the reversing of his traces. Thus he covets the property of Hercules, because all evil is opposed to virtue. Finally he hides them in his cave because evil is never frank or open-faced; but virtue slays the evil ones and redeems its own possessions.

The giant Cacus stole some of Hercules’ cattle, dragging them backwards into his cave to hide their traces; but the rest of the herd passing the cave bellowed at those within, and the theft discovered, Hercules throttled Cacus. Cacus is for κακός, “evil.”

4. The Fable of Antaeus and Hercules

Antaeus is explained as a form of lust, whence in Greek we say ἁντίον, contrary; he was born of the earth because lust is conceived of the flesh. Also he emerged the more agile by keeping touch with the earth, for lust rises the more evilly as it shares the flesh. Also he is overcome by Hercules as by the strength of renown, for he perishes when contact with earth is denied him and when raised higher he could not draw upon his mother’s aid; whereby he showed the obvious legendary character of his doings. For when virtue bears aloft the whole mind and denies it the sight of the flesh, it at once emerges victorious. Thus too he is said to have sweated hard and long in his wrestling, because it is a hard struggle when the dispute is with lust and vices, as Plato says in his philosophical writings: “Wise men wage a greater war with vices than with human foes.” So too Diogenes the Cynic said when he was tormented by pain in the lungs and saw men rushing past to the amphitheater: “What folly on men’s part: they rush to see men fighting wild beasts, and they pass by me struggling with the pain provided by nature.”

The giant Antaeus, invincible so long as he remained in contact with his mother earth, forced all strangers to wrestle with him and then slew them; Hercules, lift-
ing him from the earth, crushed him to death in the air. *Antion*, for *drown*, "opposed." The quotation from Plato’s philosophical writings (*in moralibus*) and the Diogenes anecdote have not been traced. For Hercules as typifying renown, see 2.2 and 3 above. N. Tadic, "Une Etymologie Fulgentienne, celle d’Antée," *Latomus* 28 (1969) : 685-90, comments on the implications of Fulgentius’s association of Antaeus with lust in terms of his Christian apologist standpoint.

5. The Fable of Teiresias

Teiresias saw two snakes coupling; when he struck at them with his staff, he was turned into a woman. After an interval of time he again saw them coupling, and in like fashion struck at them and was restored to his former sex. Thus when Juno and Jove had an argument about their respective degree of love-pleasure, they sought him out to be their arbiter. He said that a man has three-twelfths of love-pleasure, and a woman, nine. In a rage Juno deprived him of his sight, but Jove granted him divinity.

However monstrous a Greek fabrication this is, it can be explained. For they took Teiresias as an allegory of time, as for *teroseon*, that is perpetual summer. Thus in springtime, which is masculine because at that season there is a closing and immovability of plants, when he saw before him the creatures coupling and struck at them with his staff—that is, in the heat of temper, he is turned into the feminine gender, that is, into the heat of summer. They took summer to be in the form of a woman because at that season all things blossom forth with their leaves. And because there are two seasons for mating, spring and autumn, having stopped their conceiving he returned again to his former appearance. For autumn so strips all things in its masculine guise that, with the veins of life-giving sap in the trees firmly checked once more and pulling tight the open network of the leaves, it stamps out its drooping baldness. Then he is sought as a judge between the two divinities—that is, the two elements, fire and air—as they argue on the true meaning of love. He gives an honest judgment, for in the blossoming of plants twice the amount of air as of fire is required; for air combines with the soil and helps produce the leaves and impregnate the shoots, but the sun serves only to ripen the grain. In proof of this, he is blinded by Juno, for the reason that wintertime grows black with dark clouds in the air, but Jove assists with the conceiving of future growth by granting inner forces, that is foresight; for this reason January is depicted with two faces, so that it can see both what is past and what is to come.
Teiresias seeing two snakes coupling killed the female with his staff and was thereupon changed into a woman; seven years later he saw the same thing at the same place, killed the male, and so regained his manhood. His judgment of a dispute on the comparative pleasure gained by a man and a woman from love earned him the wrath of Hera (Juno), who blinded him; in compensation Zeus (Jove) gave him inward sight and a life extended to seven generations. In Latin ver, "spring," is neuter, not masculine, but the other two seasons mentioned fit the explanation, aestas, "summer," feminine, and autumnus, "autumn," masculine. Terosom is for bipes, "summer," and dei(v), "forever." January was the month of the two-faced deity Janus.

6. The Fable of Prometheus

No protection was sought across the lands of earth until stealing finally reached heaven; there, there was absence of silver or gold, but flame could be stolen. They say that Prometheus made man of clay, but made him without soul or feeling. Minerva in her admiration pledged this office, that if there were anything he desired by way of heavenly gifts, he might ask it to assist his task; if it were possible she would carry him up to the gods and thereafter, if he saw anything suitable for his pottery shop, he might be all the more readily taken for a sharp-eyed judge in the matter. She brought away the workman, bearing him up to the sky between the folds of her seven-coated shield; and when he saw all the heavenly substance of life stirred up in flaming vapors, he secretly attached a stick of fennel to the wheels of Phoebus's chariot and stole some fire; implanting this in the puny breast of man he gave his body life. Thus they describe how he was bound and endessly exposed his liver to a vulture. And although Nicagorus, in the book he wrote called Distemistea, describes how he first gave rise to the image and explains the exposing of his liver to the vulture as a representation of spite, compare also Petronius Arbiter, who says:

    The vulture picks over the liver within him
    And probes the breast and the intestines;
    But this is not he whom lukewarm poets name,
    But spite and debauchery in the heart;

so too Aristoxenus in the book he wrote called Lindosecmercium makes a similar suggestion. Yet I take Prometheus to be for pronianteu which in Latin we call divine foresight. By such divine foresight, and Minerva as
heavenly wisdom, man was made and the divine fire they wanted they explain to us as the soul divinely inspired, which according to the pagans is said to be taken from the skies. The liver which Prometheus exposes to the vulture is what we call the heart, because no small number of philosophers have declared that wisdom dwells in the heart, whereby Juvenal says: “The rustic youth feels no flutter in his left breast.” Thus they explain the vulture as an allegory of the world, because the world is both impelled by a sudden swift flight and fed with an endless supply of corpses and the newly born. Thus is fed and sustained the wisdom of divine providence, which cannot have an end to itself, nor can the world in any way cease from such food. Then it is told how Pandora was fashioned, for Pandora is the Greek for the gift of all, because the soul is universally bestowed on all.

Prometheus, refusing Jove’s offer of Pandora for wife, made the first man and woman of clay, adding the animating fire which with Minerva’s help he stole from the sun. He was chained to a rock in punishment by Jove, a vulture feeding daily on his liver. Of authorities mentioned, Nicagorus may be for Nicagoras, the name of an Athenian sophist of the 2d century B.C., writer of a series of lives of the famous, though nothing is known elsewhere of a work entitled Diisemisseia, compare Δίας θεμωτεία, “customs of Jove”; the four lines of Petronius, not found elsewhere, are known to editors as Fragment 25; Aristoxenus of Tarentum was a philosopher and musician of the 3d century B.C., but no medical book of his called Lindosecemarium is known (variant reading Liuidosecemarium, from lividus, “of the liver,” and secare, “to cut, dissect” ?); the Juvenal line is Satire 7.159, with “It is the fault of the teacher that the rustic youth,” etc., immediately before what is quoted. Of etymologies, with pronianteu compare προνοια, “fore-sight,” and θεός, “god”; Pandora is παράδειπα, “giver of all.” For the legend, see L. Séchan, Le Mythe de Prométhée (Paris, 1951).

7. The Fable of the Adultery of Venus

The Sun fairly reveals the adultery of Venus, while the Moon is accustomed to keep it secret. Venus lay with Mars, and the Sun, detecting her, betrayed her to her husband Vulcan, who forged steel-hard fetters and, enchainning both the deities, showed them lying in their shame. She, in her grief, inflamed with love the five daughters of the Sun—that is, Pasiphae, Medea, Phaedra, Circe, and Dirce. Let us look into what the prating of poets may allude to by this. Certainly for our present age there remains full evidence of this fable, for valor corrupted by lust becomes clear at the witness of the sun, whereby Ovid in the fifth book of his Metamorphoses says: “This
god was the first to see." And this valor corrupted by lust is shamefully held in the fetterlike grip of its ardor. She thus inflamed with love the five daughters of the Sun, that is, the five human senses devoted to light and truth and as if made dark by this corrupting of the Sun's brood. For this reason also they chose names of this kind for the five daughters of the Sun: first, as was seen, Pasiphae, that is, for *painfanon*, which in Latin we call evident to all, for sight looks into the other four senses since it sees the one who gives utterance, notices what can be touched, looks on what has been tasted, and points to what can be smelled; the second, Medea, for what is heard, that is, *medenidean*, which in Latin we call no sight, for the voice is hollow in the body; third, Circe, for touch, that is, as if one said in Greek *cironcrine*, which in Latin we call judgment of the hands; fourth, Phaedra, or odorous, as if one should say *feronedon*, for bearing sweetness; fifth, Dirce, judge of taste, that is, for *drimoncrine*, which in Latin we call judging what is bitter.

The story of Venus, Mars, and Vulcan is told at length by Homer, *Odyssey* 8.266-369; the Ovid line cited, not book five but from *Met.* 4.172, alludes aptly to the sun god seeing the adultery of Venus and Mars. In making all five women daughters of the Sun, Fulgentius seems to depart from the classical tradition: Medea, Phaedra, and Dirce elsewhere are regularly assigned a different parentage; Hyginus *Fabulae* 148, says merely "To Sol's progeny, however, Venus, because of his disclosure, was always hostile." The etymologies are: *painfanon*, for *paian* "in all things," and *pav6s*, "bright, conspicuous"; *medenidean*, for *μηδέν*, "nothing," and *δείκνυμι*, "appearance"; *cironcrine*, for *χειρό*, "hand," and *κρίνω*, "judge"; *feronedon*, for *φέρω*, "bear," and *άδεια*, "sweet"; and *drimoncrine*, for *δρώμω*, "sharp," and once again *κρίνω*, "judge."

8. The Fable of Ulysses and the Sirens

The Sirens are named as deceivers in Greek, for the allure of love is interpreted in three ways, by song or by sight or by habit: some creatures are loved for [the pleasure of their song], some for beauty of appearance, and some for pleasant habits. The companions of Ulysses pass by these with ears stopped up, and he himself goes past tied up. For Ulysses in Greek is for *olonxenos*, that is, stranger to all; and because wisdom is a stranger to all things of this world, so Ulysses is called crafty. Then he both hears and sees, that is, recognizes and sizes up and still passes by the Sirens, that is, the allures of pleasure. And they die just because they are heard, in the sense that all self-indulgent feelings of a wise man die away. Also they are winged
creatures, because they may quickly enter the minds of lovers; whereby they have feet like a hen's, because the indulgence of lust dissipates all it possesses. And finally they are called Sirens, because sirene is the Greek for betray.

The Sirens, three sea-nymphs part bird and part woman, by their seductive singing lured sailors to death. When Odysseus's (Ulysses') ship was to sail past them, forewarned he stuffed wax in the ears of his companions and had himself tied to the mast. Failing in their lure, the Sirens perished in the sea. The words in brackets are supplied to complete the sense. Olonxenos is for ὅλον, "entire," and ἔξωνος, "stranger, traveler"; for sirene, compare νησα, "drag" and its Latin equivalent trabere, both "drag" and "betray." For Ulysses in legend and literature, see W. B. Stanford, The Ulysses Theme, 2d ed. (Ann Arbor, 1963).

9. The Fable of Scylla

They say that Scylla was a most beautiful maiden loved by Glaucus, son of Anthedon. Circe, the daughter of the Sun, thought much of him and, growing jealous of Scylla, put magic herbs in the pool in which she was accustomed to bathe. When she immersed herself in it her loins were filled with wolves and wild sea dogs. For Scylla in Greek is said to be for exquina, which in Latin we call violence. And what is violence but lust? Glaucus loves this lust, for Glaucus is the Greek for one-eyed, whereby we call blindness glaucoma. For anyone who loves debauchery is blind. And he is said to have been the son of Anthedon, because Anthedon in Greek is for antidon, which in Latin we call seeing the opposite; thus inflammation of the eyes is produced by conflicting vision. And Scylla is explained as the symbol of a harlot, because all her lustful groin must be filled with dogs and wolves; she is then truly filled with wolves and dogs, because she cannot satisfy her private parts with inroads of any other kind. But Circe is said to have hated her. Circe, as described above, is named for cironcrine, judgment of the hand or working skill, as Terence says: "From toil to pleasure, she took the offer, and afterwards set up in the trade." Ulysses also sailed harmlessly past her, for wisdom scorns lust; he had a wife called Penelope the chaste, because all chastity is linked to wisdom.
10. The Fable of King Midas and the River Pactolus

King Midas besought Apollo that whatever he touched might turn to gold; since he deserved it, the boon turned into a punishment, and he began to be tortured by the effects of his own wish, for whatever he touched straightway did become gold. This, therefore, was a golden penury and a rich poverty, for both food and drink stiffened and hardened into a gold substance. So he besought Apollo to change his evil choice and received the reply that he should immerse his head three times in the waters of the river Pactolus. From this action the Pactolus is said continuously to carry down golden sands. Clearly poets have sagaciously alluded here to avarice, for the reason that any seeker after avarice when he fixes everything at a price dies of hunger, and such was King Midas; but the greatest contribution of his wealth, as Sollicrates of Cyzicos relates in the books of his history, was that, with this total revenue of his, King Midas diverted the river Pactolus, which once ran to the sea, through innumerable channels for irrigating that territory and made the river fertile by the avarice he had dispensed. Midas in Greek is for medenidon, that is knowing nothing, for a miser is so stupid that he cannot help himself.

Further references to the Midas story are made in the opening prologue (see note 9) and in 3.9 below, where the etymology, medenidon for μηδέν, "nothing," and eido, "perceive," is repeated (an almost identical one has already been used for Medea in 2.7 above). A historian Sollicrates Cizicenus is unknown (Cizicenus for Cyzicenus, native of Cyzicos on the Propontis or Sea of Marmora).

11. The Fable of Minerva and Vulcan

When Vulcan made the thunderbolt for Jove, he accepted a promise from Jove that he might take anything he wished. He asked for Minerva in marriage; Jove ordered Minerva to defend her maidenhood by force of arms.
When they were to enter the nuptial bed, Vulcan in the struggle spilt his seed on the floor, and from it was born Erichthonius with the feet of a serpent, for *eris* is the Greek for strife, and *ctonus* is the name for the earth. Minerva hid him in a basket and entrusted him, with a serpent nearby as guardian, to the two sisters, Aglauros and Pandora. It was he who first invented the chariot. They explained Vulcan as the fire of rage, whereby Vulcan is named as the heat of desire; he made the lightning for Jove, that is, he stirred up rage. They chose him to be the husband of Minerva because even rage is somewhat depleted for the wise. She defended her maidenhood by force of arms, that is, all wisdom by strength of mind protects the integrity of its own habits against fury. Whence indeed Erichthonius was born, for *eris* is the Greek for strife, and *tonos* is not only earth, but can also mean envy, whereby Thales of Miletus says: "Envy is the devourer of worldly fame." And what else but the strife of envy could the weakening rage of wisdom produce? Wisdom, that is, Minerva, hid it in a basket, that is, concealed it in her heart, for every wise man hides his rage in his heart. Minerva placed a serpent close by as a guardian, that is, destruction, which she entrusted to the two maidens, Aglauros and Pandora. For Pandora is called the gift of all, and Aglauros is for *acouleron*, that is, the forgetting of sadness. For the wise man entrusts his grief either to that kindheartedness which is the gift of all or to forgetting, as was said of Caesar: "You who forget nothing except the wrongs done you." When Erichthonius grew up, what is he said to have invented? Nothing less than the racecourse, where there is always the strife of envy, as Virgil says: "Erichthonius first dared to join chariots and four horses." Take note what merit there is when chastity is joined to wisdom, for against it even the god of fire could not prevail.

Erichthonius "with the feet of a serpent," more accurately with serpents’ tails for legs; what he invented is the second time called *circum*, "around," meaning "race-track," but a variant reading *currum*, "chariot," seems distinctly possible. Thales of Miletus fits the famous Greek mathematician of the 6th century B.C., but the moralizing remark credited to him is untraced; the flattering remark made of Caesar is Cicero’s *Pro Ligario* 12, in fact addressed to Caesar; the Virgil reference is to *Georgics* 3.113–14, although Fulgentius may have met this, and a comment on it, in Tertullian’s *De spectaculo* 9. *Eris* is for *eris*, "strife"; *ctonus* for *χθός*, "earth," but in its second citation as *tonos* a play on words seems intended, for *φθόνος*, "envy"; for Vulcan one of the very occasional Latin etymologies is being proposed, here *voluntas*, "desire"; Pandora as *πανδώρα*, "giver of all," repeats the etymology of 2.6 above, but Pandrosos, not Pandora, is more usually the name for the nurse of Erichthonius; for *acouleron*, compare *ἀ-χολος*, "allaying anger or melancholy."
12. The Fable of Dionysus

Jove lay with Semele, by whom Father Liber was born; he roared as he came against her with his thunderbolt; whereby the father bearing off the boy placed him in his own thigh and later gave him to Maro for nursing. There were four sisters named, including Semele, namely Ino, Autonoë, Semele, and Agave. Let us investigate what this fable symbolizes. There are four stages of intoxication—that is, first, excess of wine; second, forgetting things; third, lust; fourth, madness—whereby these four received the name of Bacchae: the Bacchae are so called for their raging (baccantes) with wine. First is Ino, for ῥόδις, the Greek word we have for wine; second, Autonoë, for αὐτονοञε, that is, ignorant of herself; third, Semele, for σομαλίον, which in Latin we call the released body, where she is said to have born Father Liber, that is, intoxication born of lust; fourth, Agave, who is comparable to insanity because in her violence she cut off her son’s head. Thus he is called Father Liber because the rage of wine frees men’s minds; he is said to have conquered the people of India because that race is certainly given to wine, in two respects, one that the fierce heat of the sun makes them drinkers, the other that in that part of the world there is wine like that of Falernum or Meroë, in which there is such strength that even a confirmed drunkard will scarcely drink a pint in a whole month; whereby Lucan says: “Falernian, to which add Meroë, forcing its stubborn nature to ferment,” for it cannot be in any way weakened by water. For nursing Dionysus was handed over to Maro, a form of Mero, for by merum is sustained all intoxication. He is also said to ride on tigers, because all intoxication goes with savageness; and minds affected by wine are softened, whence he is also called Lyaeus, distinguished for softness. Dionysus is depicted as a youth, because drunkenness is never mature; and he is shown as naked, either because every wine-bibber becomes exposed to robbery or because the drunkard lays bare the secrets of his mind.

Dionysus, the Roman Bacchus or Father Liber, god of wine and revelry, was the son of Jove and Semele; the mother was destroyed with the babe in her womb, ripped out by Jove, brought to maturity in his thigh, and given to the nymph Macris (rather than Maro as Fulgentius calls her), daughter of Semele’s sister Autonoë, to be nursed. Of Semele’s other sisters, the Bacchanalial Agave helped tear to pieces her own son Pentheus when he was caught spying on a festival in Dionysus’s honor in which only women were to participate. The names are etymologized as follows: ῥόδις, for ἀλός, “wine”; αὐτονοヵς, compare ἀυτός, “self,” and ἄγνως, “ignorance”; σομαλίον, compare σῶμα, “body,” and λύει, “free”;
Liber, Latin *liber*, "free"; Latin *merum*, "strong wine, unmixed with water"; and Lyaeus, for *Amalae*, "the Liberator," a by-name for Dionysus; Agave is not etymologized, presumably because her name most obviously suggests *ágyavos*, "noble," and nothing resembling the sense of "insane" required by Fulgentius. The reference to a pint of strong wine is literally to one-sixth, that is, of a *congius*, rather less than a gallon. The quotation from Lucan, *Pharsalia* 10.163, runs in full: "The generous Falernian, to which Meroé [in upper Egypt] brings ripeness in a few years, forcing its stubborn nature to ferment." For the reference to Liber in India, compare Orosius, *Historiae* 1.6. For the cult of Dionysus, see further W. F. Otto, *Dionysius, Mythos und Kultus* (Frankfurt, 1933), transl. R. B. Palmer, *Dionysus, Myth and Cult* (Indianapolis, 1965); H. Jeanmaire, *Dionysos, Histoire du Culte de Bacchus* (Paris, 1951).

13. The Fable of the Swan and Leda

Although love of lust is shameful in all men, yet it is never worse than when it is involved with honor. For lust in relation to honor, not knowing what it sets in motion, is always opposed to dignity. He who seeks what he wishes to be something so divine must beware lest it become what it had not been. For Jove disguised as a swan lay with Leda, who laid an egg from which were born the three, Castor, Pollux, and Helen of Troy. This legend carries the flavor of an allegorical interpretation, for Jove is explained as the symbol of power, and Leda is for *tide*, which in Latin we call either insult or reviling. Thus all power getting involved with insults changes the appearance of its magnanimity. He is said to have changed into a swan because the naturalists, particularly Melistus of Euboea who has expounded the meanings of all the natural scientists, declare that a bird of this species is so filled with reviling that when this bird clamors the rest of the birds nearby become silent. For this reason it is also called an *olor*, as if derived from *oligoria*, which in Latin we call insult. Thus as often as nobility turns to insult, it is necessarily involved with insults. But let us see what is produced from this affair, no less than an egg, for, just as in an egg, all the dirt which is to be washed away at birth is retained inside, so too in the work of reviling everything is impurity. But from this egg are born the three, Castor, Pollux, and Helen, nothing less than a seedbed of scandal and strife, as I once wrote: "And the adulteress shatters both worlds with grief." For they explain Castor and Pollux as symbols of destruction, whence they explain the signs (*signa*) of the Castors in the sea as creating peril; they say that both of them rise up and fall down alternately, because pride always commands but always falls; whereby in Greek *iperefania* is the word for pride. *Iperefania* is strict-
ly the term for appearance above, because, in those two constellations which they call by the name of the brothers, one appears above and the other sinks down, like Lucifer and Antifer; for in Greek Pollux is apo in apollin, that is, seeking to destroy, and Castor is for cacon steron, that is, final evil.

*For lide, compare λευθορέω, "abuse"; Latin olor, "swan," is oddly associated with Greek oligoria, ὀλυγορία, "contempt." His own earlier work from which Fulgentius quotes, seemingly with reference to Helen and the Trojan war, is unknown. Castor and Pollux are signa, "signs," that is, constellations, perhaps also with a play on cygnus, "swan." Iperefanía is for ἵππηφανία, "arrogance," then further disserted into ὑπὲρ, "over, above," and πᾶντος, "light, conspicuous." the final sentences refer to the constellation called Gemini or The Twins (Dioscuri), forming the third sign of the Zodiac, with Pollux as ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀπολίνου, "by destroying," and Castor as κατὸν στέρων, for κακὸς, "evil," and ἄρεπος, "last." Lucifer, for Latin lucifer, "light-bearer," is the Morning Star, the planet Venus, and its opposite number Antifer, compare ἀντιφέρεω, "oppose," is Hesperus, the Evening Star. For the Dioscuri in legend and folk tale, see J. Rendel Harris, *The Cult of the Heavenly Twins* (Cambridge, 1906); F. Chapoutier, *Les Dioscures au Service d'une Déesse* (Paris, 1935).*

14. The Fable of Ixion

He who seeks for more than he should have will be less than he now is. Thus Ixion aspiring to marriage with Juno, she adorned a cloud in her likeness, and Ixion making love to it fathered the Centaurs. As there is nothing more attractive than Roman truth, so there is nothing more fanciful than Greek lies. They explained Ixion as for Axion, because in Greek axioma is called worth. Juno is the goddess of dominion, as I explained before; therefore, worth striving for dominion deserves a cloud, that is, the mere simulation of worth. For dominion is to last forever, but fleeting temporal power is envious of this and hastily seizing wings, giving the illusion of momentary achievement rather than the truth of it, takes on an empty look like the quality of the wind. So Vatinius the seer was accustomed to say that the honors of the various cities were acted out in a dream like a city farce; and although each one declared it was not concerned, yet the honor of Rome was seen to be preeminent because it was in part true honor, where the rest was ridiculous and fleeting. For I believe that he had read the sentiment of Cleobulus the philosopher when he said: "Life is a farce." Now therefore let us investigate the legend. Dromocrites in his Theologia writes that Ixion first aspired to the glory of a kingdom in Greece, and that he first of all men
assembled for his use a hundred horsemen, whence the hundred armed men were called Centaurs (they ought to be called centippi, because they are depicted as part horses), but also as a real hundred armed men. So this Ixion, having in a short time seized an opportunist dominion, was driven from its rule; whence they say he was condemned to the wheel, because the full circle of the wheel now brings back down what it holds aloft. By this they wished to show that all who aspire to dominion by arms and violence are one moment held aloft and the next cast down, like a wheel which at no time has a fixed high point.

Ixion, king of Thessaly, planning to seduce Juno was thwarted by Jove, who created a cloud in the form of Juno; making love to it Ixion fathered the monstrous race of centaurs, but was struck by a thunderbolt from Jove and tied to an endlessly revolving wheel. Axioma is δικαιοσύνη, "honor"; the explanation given for Juno, "as I explained before," is repeated from 2.1 above; centippi, a further play on words, is Latin centum, "hundred," and ἵππος, "horse." Vatinius the seer, scarcely the political adventurer of that name defended by Cicero, and Dromoclites and his Θεολογία (θεός and λόγος, "genealogy of the gods"), are unknown, as are Cleobulus and his aphorism, given first in Greek then in Latin, but very similar phrasing is used by Suetonius, Life of Augustus 99, and Seneca, Letters 80.7; very possibly Fulgentius took the name Cleobulus of Rhodes who flourished in the 5th century B.C. and became one of the Seven Sages of antiquity.

15. The Fable of Tantalus

Tantalus the giant, wishing to test the supernatural power of the gods, presented his son Pelops as a dish for the table; for this he was severely punished. They say that in the lower world Tantalus was stood in a pool, the deceiving water of which tickles his lips with a fleeting touch, and fruits appear before him hanging down to his face, but at his fleeting touch turning to ashes. Thus he seemed to prosper but in fact had nothing: the deceiving water made him thirsty and the fruit forced him to be hungry. Petronius explains this tale briefly when he says:

Poor Tantalus, though impelled by his own cravings,
Can neither drink the water round him nor seize the hanging fruit.
This will be the image of the great and the rich man, who has all things in plenty,
And yet has to choke down his hunger dry-mouthed.

Tantalus the son of Jove, for serving the gods his son's flesh, was punished in Hades by being stood in a river whose water ran from his lips, while over his
head branches with fruit always eluded his grasp. The first, explanatory sentence, to "severely punished," found only in a single 15th-century manuscript, is perhaps a later addition, particularly since its proper names are not etymologized in what follows. The fruit which crumbles to ashes at a touch is the Dead Sea Apples, or Apples of Sodom (Deut. 32:32), as described by Josephus and Tertullian; it replaces the usual classical version of fruit whisked from Tantalus' grasp (similarly Milton in *Paradise Lost* 10.565–66, has Satan and his followers greedily seizing fruit like that which tempted Eve, but "instead of Fruit Chewd bitter Ashes"). The four verse-lines of Petronius are taken from his *Satyricon* 82.

16. The Fable of the Moon and Endymion

They chose the moon itself to be Proserpine in the lower world, either because it shines by night or because it takes a lower course and presides over the lands of earth, in the sense that not only the earth but the rocks or the minds of living creatures, and—what may be much harder to believe—even excrement which thrown over gardens at the time of the waxing moon produces little worms, all respond to its wanings and waxings. They also choose Diana, the moon, to rule over woodlands, because she stimulates growth in the sap of trees and fruits. Then, too, wood cut by the light of the waxing moon goes rotten with the sawdust worm-holes of grubs. She is said to have fallen in love with the shepherd Endymion for one of two reasons, either that Endymion was the first man to discover the track of the moon, whereby having studied nothing in his life but this discovery he is said to have slept for thirty years (as Mnaseas has related in the first book of his work on Europa), or that she is said to have fallen in love with the shepherd Endymion because the moisture of the night dew, which the exhalations of the stars and the life-giving moon soak into the sap of the grass, serves well for success with sheep.

As the shepherd youth Endymion slept eternally on Mount Latmus, his beauty warmed the cold heart of the moon, who came down and lay beside him. In Fulgentius' *Explanation* 2, Mnaseas and his book on Europa are cited in connection with an Apollo slain by Jove, see C. Müller, *Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum* 3 (Paris, 1849); possibly Mnaseas of Cyprus, the father of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic philosophy in the 3rd century B.C., provided the name. The reference to dew and stars at the end echoes the tetrameter poem in the prologue to book one above, itself borrowed from the *Pervigilium Veneris*. For the legend, see E. S. Le Compte, *Endymion in England, the Literary History of a Greek Myth* (New York, 1944). For the notion of the moon as stimulating the generation and growth of plants and animals, one popular source is Plutarch, *Ibis and Osiris* 41.
Book 3

Prologue

The shy glance of ignorance is always begging leave to make excuses for itself, so that, whatever mistakes are made through lack of knowledge, one who deserves critical attacks may be absolved by a plea for indulgence which has always covered over errors. But because writings sent to a kindly judge never think evil of themselves, I have committed my simple wares, Master, to your most openhearted judgment, confident that anything absurd has been passed on, not for you to scorn with your disfavor, but for you to set right with your great learning.

1. The Fable of Bellerophon

King Proetus had a wife named Anteia, who fell in love with Bellerophon. When she solicited him to adultery, he refused; and she accused him before her husband. The latter, through his father-in-law, sent him to kill the Chimera; and Bellerophon slew it, seated on the horse Pegasus which had been born of the blood of the Gorgon. They explain Bellerophon as for buleforunta, whereby Homer says: “It does not befit a counsellor of men to sleep all night through.” Similarly Menander in his comedy Disexapaton says: “You have already described, Demæas, our idea of a counsellor.” And to complete the proof, Homer in his narrative says this of Bellerophon: “Devising upright thoughts, a most wise counsellor.” He rejects lust, that is, Anteia, for antion in Greek means opposed, as we say Antichrist for evantion tou christou, that is, opposed to Christ. Notice also whose wife Anteia is described as being, no less than Proetus’s. Prios in the Pamphylian language means heavy, as Hesiod in his Eclogues writes: “Heavy with the blood-colored dew of grapes well trampled.” And his wife is nothing but sordid lust. Then, too, Bellerophon, that is, good counsel, rides a horse which is none other than Pegasus, for pegaseon, that is, an everlasting fountain. The wisdom of good counsel is an everlasting fountain. So, too, is Pegasus winged, because he looks down on the whole nature of the world with a swift perception of its designs. Then, too, he is said to have opened up the fountain of the Muses with his heel, for wisdom supplies the Muses with a fountain. He is born of the blood of the Gorgon because the Gorgon is ex-
plained as fear: she is attached to the heart of Minerva, as Homer says in his book thirteen: “Whereon is embossed the Gorgon fell of aspect, glaring terribly.” Thus the interpretation can be one of two kinds: either wisdom is born when fear is ended, as Pegasus from death in the blood of the Gorgon, because folly is always fearful, or “fear is the beginning of wisdom,” because wisdom grows from fear of its master, and when anyone fears fame he grows wise. Then he slew the Chimaera, with Chimaera for cymeron, that is, the surge of love, whereby Homer says: “The dark billow lifts up its crest.” So too the Chimaera is depicted with three heads, because there are three stages of love—that is, the start, the continuation, and the end. For when love first comes, it makes a mortal attack like a lion, whence Epicharmus, the writer of comedies, says: “Lust is a ruler more forceful than the strength of a lion”; and Virgil in the Georgics alludes to this when he says: “Forgetful of her whelps, the lioness has at no other time wandered more savagely in the fields.” And the she-goat which is depicted in the center of the Chimaera is truly the embodiment of lust, because an animal of this species is most disposed to lust, as Virgil says in the Eclogues: “Frisking young goats.” So too the Satyrs are depicted with goats’ horns, because they can never satisfy their lust. And when the Chimaera is called “behind a serpent,” it is explained in this fashion, that after its completion it may give the death-blow of remorse and the poison of sin. So it is in this order of description that it first attacks in love; second, completes it; and third, has remorse from the death wound.

Bellerophon, the reputed son of Glaucus and the rider of the winged horse Pegasus, rejected the love of Queen Anteia of Argos; her husband Proetus invoked the aid of his father-in-law, king of Lycia, in having the youth destroyed; but Bellerophon killed the monster Chimaera by which his own death was hoped for. Medusa, once a beautiful maiden, had given birth to Pegasus in one of Minerva’s temples, and her hair was changed to serpents by Minerva, who later set the head of Medusa in her shield. For Pegasus and Medusa, see the prologue to book one (and note 14) and 1.21, above. For buleforunta, compare bouληφόρος, “counselling”; antion is for áντιον, “opposed”; triost “in the Pamphylian language,” that is Asiatic Greek, is equivalent to βραδύς, “heavy”; pegaseon is for πηγασόν, “a spring,” and del, “forever”; cymeron is κύμα, “wave, surge,” and δρως, “love,” though cymaera as the text has it in fact means a she-goat (χιμώμια). The Homer quotations are, in order, Iliad 2.24 and 61 (“It does not befit a counsellor . . .”), 6.16 (“Devising upright thoughts . . .”), 11.36 (not 13 as the text states, of Agamemnon’s shield, “Whereon is embossed . . .”), 9.6–7 (“The dark billow . . .”), and 6.181 (“Behind a serpent,” describing the monstrous Chimaera as in front a lion, in the middle a goat, and in the rear a snake). Other
authors include: Menander’s comedy *Disexapaton*, for *bîç*, “twice,” and * étéwarâw* “deceive,” that is, ‘The Double Deception,’ more usually known as *Samîa*, ‘The Girl from Samos’; Hesiod, *Eclogues*, fragment 199; Ps. 110 (111) :10, similarly Prov. 1:7, 9:10, Ecclesiasticus 1:16, 20, for “fear (of the Lord) is the beginning of wisdom”; Virgil *Georg.* 3.245-46 (“Forgetful of her whelps . . . ”), and 4.10 (“Frisking young goats;,” incorrectly assigned to the *Eclogues* in the text); Epicharmus the Dorian comic writer of the 5th century B.C., of whose work only fragments remain, is also referred to in 1.15 above and 3.5 below.

2. The Fable of Perdix

A family association, pleasant in itself, always leads to bias where hard work is involved, and qualities which have been gently trained cause bitterness when something you do not want occurs: it is better to be trained independently in a work free of such cares than for the apprentice to be unexpectedly fear-stricken by the ties of relationship. They say that Perdix was a hunter; they describe him as torn from his mother’s love when both unrestrained lust boiled up and the shame of new villainy came about, and as consumed and oppressed by extreme disease. He first invented the saw, as Virgil says: “For at first men cut the divisible wood with wedges.” But as Fenestella writes in his *Antiquities*, he was first a hunter. When the bloody destruction involved in the slaughter of wild animals and the loneliness of the roving chase lost their pleasure for the wanderer, and he well realized that his companions of the chase (*contiroletas*), that is, Actaeon, Adonis, and Hippolytus, had been slain by the destructiveness of a wretched death, he decided to put aside the pursuit of his former skill, and he took up with agriculture. For that reason he is said to have loved his own mother like the earth, the producer of all things. Consumed by this labor he is said to have become very poor and lean. And because he dragged all hunters away from the taint of their former art, he is said to have discovered the saw, as if it were a bad word. He has for mother Polycastes, like *policarpen*, which in Latin we call many-fruited, that is, the earth.

Perdix or Talos, nephew and pupil of Daedalus, invented the saw, chisel, and compasses, but was killed by his jealous mentor; Athene (*Minerva*) pitying him changed him into a partridge (*Latin *perdix*). Fulgentius also associates him with the rejection of the nomadic for the agricultural life, and alludes to a story of his incest with his mother, who can then be explained as mother earth. For Actaeon, see 3.3, and for Adonis, 3.8, below. The line from Virgil is *Georg.* 1.144. Fenestella was a poet and annalist of the 1st century B.C., his works men-
tioned by Jerome and Pliny but mostly lost, including his *Antiquitates* (archaios); another untraced reference to him occurs in Fulgentius's *Explanation* 59. For *tiroletas*, compare *θρολέτης*, "hunter"; *πολικαρπέων* is for *πολύς*, "much," and *καρπός*, "fruit."

3. **The Fable of Actaeon**

Curiosity, being allied to danger, will always produce for its devotees injury rather than pleasure. So Actaeon the hunter is said to have spied on Diana as she was bathing, and being turned into a stag he was not recognized by his own hounds and was devoured by their bites. Anaximenes, who discussed ancient art in his second book, says that Actaeon loved hunting, but when he had reached mature age, having considered the dangers of hunting, that is, taking a naked reckoning of his skill, he grew afraid. He had the heart of a stag, as Homer says: "Heavy with wine, having the eyes of a dog and the heart of a stag." But while the excitement of the hunt left him, he did not love the qualities of dogs, for in idly gratifying them he lost all his substance; for this reason he is said to have been devoured by his own hounds.

The huntsman Actaeon, having spied on the goddess Artemis (Diana) and her nymphs as they bathed, was changed into a stag and torn to pieces by his fifty hounds. Anaximenes, the Ionian philosopher of Miletus (mentioned by Tertullian, *De anima* 9.5), flourished in the 5th century B.C., but no work of his on art is known; the Homer quotation is *Iliad* 1.225; the phrase "lost all his substance" may recall the prodigal son of Luke 15:13.

4. **The Fable of Hero and Leander**

Love is often close to danger; and when it has eyes only for what it prizes, it never sees what is expedient. In Greek *eros* is the word for love, while Leander could be said as *lixiandron*, that is, the freeing of men: for release produces love in a man. He swims by night, that is, he risks danger in the dark. Hero, too, is depicted in the likeness of love. She carries a lantern, and what else is love but carrying a torch and lighting the perilous path for the beloved? But it is soon extinguished, because youthful love does not last long. Then, too, he swims naked, for love can strip its followers naked and fling them into danger as into the sea. For both of them death at sea is brought about by the extinguishing of the light, and this clearly signifies that
for either sex desire dies with the extinguishing of the ardor of youth. For
dying in the sea they are borne away as into the tears of old age: all the
little fire of ardent youth grows cold in the decline of numbing dullness.

The youthful Leander swam every night across the Hellespont to visit Hero, the
priestess of Aphrodite (Venus). One night he perished in the waves, and Hero
threw herself into the sea. Eros is for ἔρως, "love," and ἱστανδρόν for λίευς, "re­
lease," and ἀρσός, "(of) man." See further M. H. Jellinek, Die Sage von Hero
und Leander in der Dichtung (Berlin, 1890); W. Frentz, Mythologisches im

5. The Fable of Berecynthia and Attis

Nowhere with their false beliefs in demons rather than gods did the
Greeks place their gods in a worse light than when they made their sleepy
old mother not only a youthful lover but also a passionate one. So much did
this envious old woman, inflamed with passion, blaze forth, in her rage not
sparing her own services, that when she hoped for the fruit of lust, the aged
whore sank under its weight. And although in the minds of women lust may
obtain control, yet passion gains control over unsatisfied lust. Let us then ex­
plain what the Greeks intended to be meant by these matters. They intended
Berecynthia for the queen of mountains; they called her the mother of the
gods because they wished the gods to be proudly named; so they called those
living on Olympus the highest and the proud; but so they call demons accord­
ing to Homer when he says: "To the other gods," for δῆμος is the Greek
for people, and ἴσ is for one; and they were called demons because they
wished to subdue the people and be alone over the people. So for the Ro­
mans they were the natives (indigetes) as if they lacked nothing (nihil indi­
gentes). Thus they say that Berecynthia flourished on the mountains like
spring flowers (verniquintos), for quintos in the Attic tongue is called a
flower, whence the hyacinth is for hioscintos, which in Latin we call the
solitary flower because it is more beautiful than all others. For Epicharmus
also says: "Chrysalis advanced, covered with flowers and drunk with wine."
So, too, whoever loves a flower cuts it, as Berecynthia did to Attis, for ἀντίς
is the Greek for flower. As Sosicles the Greek writes in his book which is
called Teologumenon, the mother-goddess wished to be placed in a position
of power, whence she is called Cibebe, for cidos bebeon, that is, firmness of
glory; whereby Homer says: "To whom Jove vouchsafed renown." She is
depicted as furnished with towers, for all elevation of power is in the head;
she rules in a chariot of lions, for all power is lord over strength; also she carries a royal scepter, for all power is attached to the royal state. The mother is called a god, for the reason that they wish to show precisely that whether natives or gods or demons they are named as divinities by the ancients. Thus the mother is the power of gods; whence Homer, speaking of Agamemnon, says: "Happy son of Atreus, child of fortune, blest of the gods"; and Euripides, comparing Tantalus to Jove in his tragedy of Electra, says: "Once happy Tantalus, though I do not mock his fortunes, accounted equal to Jove." Thus the renown of power is always both aflame with love and devoured by envy, and speedily cuts off what it delights in, while it also severs what it hates. Finally all power, now and always, cannot preserve affection among its followers from day to day, and what it loved it soon cuts off through passion or fears through revulsion. Thus they meant Attis to be for *etos* is the Greek for custom. Whatever love there may be among the powerful, it cannot be stable.

Berecynthia is Fulgentius's choice for the much-named Cybele, Cybebe, Agdistis, Dinydmene, or Rhea (the Roman Ops, see 1.2 above), the earth mother who loved the boy-god Attis, or Atys. Her jealous rage drove him to a frenzy, and he castrated himself and bled to death, whereupon Jove turned him into a fir tree; for the legends involved, see G. Showman, *The Mother of the Gods* (Madison, 1901); H. Hepding, *Attis, seine Mythen und sein Kult* (Giessen, 1903); H. Graillot, *Le Culte de Cybele dans l'Empire Romain* (Paris, 1912); M. Mellink, *Hyakinthos* (Utrecht, 1943). Fulgentius may be aware of Virgil *Aen.* 6.784, or *Horace Odes* 1.18.13, 3.19.18, who uses the name Berecynthia with reference to Mount Berecynthus in Phrygia, the site of an orgiastic cult of the Great Mother, Cybele. With his "in the Attic tongue," in place of his usual "in Greek," he may intend to play on Attis and Attic or Attica ("AT0I'S") . The Homer quotations, in order, are *Iliad* 1.222 (more fully "Athene departed to Olympus, to the other gods"); *Iliad* 17.566 (of Hector) and *Odyssey* 19.161 (of Odysseus's son), both "to whom Jove vouchsafed renown"; and *Iliad* 3.182 ("Happy son . . . ," only the Greek being quoted). Euripides' "tragedy of Electra" is in fact his *Orestes* 4–6. For Epicharmus, see 1.15 and 3.1, above, but the quotation is untraced; Sosicles and his *Teologumenon* (compare *theós, ἔρως*, that is, a compendium or genealogy of the gods) are likewise unknown. Demons are explained as for *demos, ἔρως*, "people," and either Latin is, "one," or Greek *eis* with the same meaning; *urniātēνινος* is Latin *vernus*, "springlike," and an assumed word *kwos*, "flower," derived from *dakwos, ἕριχων*, "hyacinth," as Fulgentius dissects that term into for *eis*, "one," and a simplex *kwos* which he takes to mean "flower." Attis is taken firstly for *antis*, compare *átheos*, "blossom, flower," and secondly for *etos*, for *etos, custom*; *eidos behexon* is *kudor, glory,* and *βιβλίας, strong, firm." Fulgentius's play on words early on in the chapter refers to the *di indigentes* or original ("native") gods of the Roman state, the thirty or so deities of war.
and agriculture celebrated in regular festivals, as opposed to the incorporated Greek pantheon; three such native gods are specified in the Explanation 11, and hence their association with demons may be a reminiscence of Cicero's Timaeus 38: "The other gods, those whom the Greeks call daimones, our people call Lares."

6. The Fable of the Goddess Psyche and Cupid

Apuleius in his books of Metamorphoses has clearly told this story, saying that in a certain state there lived a king and a queen who had three daughters, the elder two of moderate good looks, but the youngest of such surpassing beauty that one might have imagined an earthly Venus. Marriage came to the two elder ones who were moderately good-looking, but no one ventured to declare his love to the one like a goddess, being rather prone to worship her and so to displease her enemies. And so Venus, infected with her sense of the dignity of her supremacy and burning with envy, sought out her son Cupid so that he might harshly punish Psyche's state of obstinacy. Rushing to avenge his mother he fell in love with the maiden as soon as he laid eyes on her; the punishment was in fact reversed, and it was as if the proud archer had pierced himself with his own arrow. By the stern sentence of Apollo, the maiden was ordered to be sent to the summit of a mountain; and borne along as if in a funeral procession, she would have a winged serpent as her destined husband. Full of courage, the maiden was borne across the mountain slopes in a carriage and, when left alone, floated downwards, gently wafted by the breath of Zephyr, and was taken into a golden mansion, which could only be thought rich by considering it beyond price and praise. There, by means of voices like those of servants, she was given the use of this mysterious mansion of her husband. By night her husband came to her, and Venus's warfare took place in the darkness, but as he came unseen at evening, so he departed still unknown with the dawn. Thus she had servants who were only voices, power which consisted only in breezes, love by night, and an unknown husband. But her sisters came to weep for her death, and with sad voices were entreating in sisterly words on the summit of the mountain they had climbed; and although her husband who shunned the light forbade her with threats to set eyes on her sisters, yet the invincible ardor of her love for her blood kin overbore her husband's command.

So, borne along on the panting breath of the Zephyr breeze, her worried sisters were brought to her; and falling in with their poisonous advice that she should seek to know her husband's appearance, she yielded to curiosity,
their stepmotherly concern for her safety, and laying aside the judgment of caution, she adopted that ready credulity which is always the mother of decep-
tions. Believing her sisters that she was mated to a serpent for a husband, and prepared to slay him as a wild beast, she hid a sharp knife under the pillow and concealed a lamp near the bed. When her husband was stretched out in a deep slumber, she armed herself with the weapon and lit the lamp concealed by the bed, as she recognized Cupid, he was burned by the dire results of her love, and she scorched her husband by spilling the glittering oil; Cupid, as he fled from the house and strongly reproached the girl for her curiosity, left her to be a wanderer and a fugitive. At length, having been assailed by many persecutions on the part of Venus, her marriage was accepted at Jove’s behest.

I could indeed recount the order of events of the whole story in this little book of mine, how she went down to the lower world and filled a small flask from the waters of the Styx, robbed the sun’s flock of their golden fleece, separated the mixture of small seeds, and—though open to death for it—secured a small portion of Proserpine’s beauty. But since Apuleius has described such a conglomeration of falsehoods very fully in almost two books, and Aristophontes of Athens has published the story, for those who wish to study it, at enormous length in the books which are called Disarestia, for this reason I have reckoned on inserting only a summary from these other books of mine, lest I should divert my works from what properly belongs to them and add to my obligations to others. But he who reads the story in my work may pass over these matters in the knowledge that their falsity has been shown him. They have chosen the state, in which they placed the queen, to represent God and matter, as representing the world. They add three daughters—that is, the flesh; the special quality (ultronietateni) that we call free will; and the spirit. For Psyche in Greek is called the spirit, which they wished to be so much the more youthful because they said that the spirit was added after the body was formed; and to be so much the more beautiful because it was higher than free will and nobler than the flesh. Venus envies her as lust; to her she sends greed (cupiditatem) to do away with her; but because greed is for good and evil alike, greed is taken with the spirit and links itself to her, as it were, in marriage. It persuades her not to look upon its countenance, that is, not to learn the pleasure of greed (thus Adam, although possessing sight, does not see himself as naked until he eats of the tree of covetousness), nor does she agree with her sisters—that is, flesh and free will—that she should satisfy her curiosity concerning its
appearance, until frightened by their insistence she produces a lamp from beneath the bed, that is reveals the flame of desire concealed in her breast and loves and adores it now it is seen to be so delightful. She is said to have burned it by the bubbling over of the lamp because all greed grows hot to the extent that it is desired and marks the flesh with the stain of sin. Thus her fortune is stripped of naked and potent greed, and is flung into dangers and driven from the royal home. But, since as I said it takes a long time to cover all the details, I have given only the gist of the interpretation. If anyone reads this story in Apuleius he will find other details of my explanation which I have not gone into.

This chapter is a close summary of the only detailed account of the Cupid and Psyche legend, by Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* ('The Golden Ass'), 4.28 ff., known in English from the retelling in Thomas Taylor's *The Fable of Cupid and Psyche* (1795), Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* (1883), and many other places, and called by Coleridge "the most beautiful allegory ever composed"; see A. Hoffman, *Das Psyche-Märchen des Apuleius in der englischen Literatur* (Strassburg, 1908). In the opening Fulgentius mentions the "stern sentence of Apollo" without explaining that Psyche's father had consulted an oracle of Apollo to find a suitable husband for her. Psyche is for ψυχή, "spirit." Aristophanes and his Discreciva (compare Δίκαιος απερετής, "heroic deeds of Jove") are unknown. For detailed treatments of the story and its folklore ramifications, see E. Rohde, *Psyche*, 3d ed. (Tübingen, 1903; English version, 1925); W. Anderson, *Roman Apuleya i Narodnaya Skaka*, 1 (Kazan, 1914); E. Tegethoff, *Studien zum Märchentypus von Amor und Psyche* (Bonn, 1922); J.-O. Swahn, *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* (Lund, 1955); E. Neumann, transl. R. Manheim, *Amor and Psyche*, Bollingen Foundation, 54 (New York, 1956).

7. The Fable of Peleus and Thetis

They say that Thetis signifies water, whence the nymph took her name. Jove as God married her to Peleus, and pelos in Greek is lutum, mud, in Latin. Thus they wish to produce a man conjoined with water, whereby they say that Jove also wished to lie with Thetis but was prevented by the thought that she would produce one greater than himself who would drive him from his rule; for if fire, that is, Jove, mingles with water, it is put out by the power of the water. So in the union of water and earth, that is, of Thetis and Peleus, discord alone is not invited, for the reason that there must be concord between the two elements for a man to be produced: their coming together shows that Peleus stands for earth, that is, the flesh, and Thetis for
water, that is, fluid, and Jove who married the two for fire, that is, the spirit. In the conceiving of man from the blending of the elements three goddesses, as I described above, that is, three lives, are involved in conflict. So too discord is said to have rolled the golden apple, that is, greed, for the reason that there is in a golden apple what you look upon, not what you eat, just as greed can possess but cannot enjoy. Jove is said to have summoned all the gods to the wedding because the heathen believed that in a human being separate gods gained possession of separate parts—for instance, Jove, the head; Minerva, the eyes; Juno, the arms; Neptune, the breast; Mars, the waist; Venus, the kidneys and sex organs; Mercury, the feet; as Dromocrites describes in his physiology; so too Homer says: "His head and eyes like unto Zeus (Jove) whose joy is in the thunder, and his waist like unto Ares (Mars), and his breast unto Poseidon (Neptune)." So, too, Tiberianus in his Prometheus says that the gods gave to man his individual traits. Then after Achilles was born his mother dipped him in the waters of the Styx to make him a perfect man, that is, she protected him securely against all trials, but his heel alone she did not dip, as much as to show the physical fact that the veins which are in the heel connect with the faculties of the kidneys, thighs, and sex organs, and that from them other veins run to the great toe; for doctors treating women for inducing childbirth open the veins in the legs at this same place; the covering plaster, which Africanus the teacher of medicine called stisidem, he taught should be applied to the big toe and heel. Orpheus himself demonstrates that this is the chief seat of lust, and in these same intestinal localities they teach that cauterizing must be effected. Thus he shows that human power, though protected, is subject and open to all the blows of lust. After this Achilles is assigned to the court of Lycomedes as if to the kingdom of lust, for Lycomedes is for the Greek gliconmeden, that is, sweet nothing, since all lust is both sweet and nothing. Then he dies of love for Polynexa and is killed as it were because of his heel. Polynexa in Greek is said to be a foreigner to many, either because love causes men's passions to travel far from their minds, or because lust in its wandering state travels about among many peoples.

Jove chose Peleus to be the husband of the Nereid Thetis, having himself wished to marry her, though discouraged by the prophecy that any son of Thetis would be greater than his father. The Olympians attended the celebration of the marriage, all save Eris (discord), who rolled the golden apple inscribed "To the Fairest," in among the goddesses Hera (Juno), Athene (Minerva), and Aphrodite (Venus), whence the judgment of Paris and the Trojan War, "as described above," that is, in 2.1. The son of Thetis and Peleus was Achilles, invulnerable
except for his heel; at the bidding of Thetis he spent some time disguised as a girl at the court of King Lycomedes and was later the lover of Polynexa. Dromoclitès, elsewhere unknown, was named as an author in 2.14 above; the Homeric quotation, referring to Agamemnon, is in Iliad 2.478–79; the Prometheus of Tiberianus is unknown, this particular reference being called fragment 3 by his editors. Orpheus may refer to the Orphic writings traditionally ascribed to the mythical Orpheus (see 3.10 below), but the particular reference, like that to Africanus on medicine, is untraced; for Orphic texts and beliefs, see I. M. Linforth, The Arts of Orpheus (Berkeley, California, 1941); W. K. C. Guthrie, Orpheus and Greek Religion, 2d ed. (London, 1952). The notion of a physical link between heel and genitals reappears, no doubt from Fulgentius, in Boccaccio's Genealogia deorum gentilium 12.52, thence in Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar, March eclogue, 95 ff., and E. K.'s gloss (where the credit is given to Eustathius): "For from the heele (as say the best Phisitions) to the preuie partes there passe certaine veines and slender synnewes, as also the like come from the head." Thetis is associated with water as a Nereid or sea nymph, though Fulgentius may be making a false association with the wife of Oceanus, Tethys, whose name later became a general term for the sea; pelos is ἔρις, "clay, mud"; stisidem (a play on ἁράξις, the river Styx) seems to be connected with ἀράξεις, "plaster"; glionicmeden is for γλυκές, "sweet," and μηδεν, "nothing"; Polynexa, for πολύς, "many," and perhaps ξω, "outside, abroad," or by metathesis ξένος, "foreign (woman or country)."

8. The Fable of Myrrha and Adonis

Myrrha is said to have fallen in love with her father, whose bed she shared when he was drunk. When her father discovered that she was pregnant and her monstrous crime was known, he began to pursue her with a sword. She was turned into a myrrh tree, and as the father struck at the tree with his sword, Adonis was born from it. Let me explain what this story signifies. The myrrh is a kind of tree from which the sap oozes out; she is said to have fallen in love with her father. These same trees are found in India, glowing with the heat of the sun; and since they always said that a father is the sun of all things, by whose aid the growth of plant life develops, so she in this fashion is said to have fallen in love with her father. When she had developed a strong wood which crackled with the sun's heat, she produced fissures from which there oozes out a resin called myrrh; and as if in tears she exudes a weeping pleasantly scented from the gaping cuts. It is told of her that she gave birth to Adonis because ἀδων is the Greek for a sweet savor. So they say that Venus fell in love with him because this kind of liquid is so very fiery; so, too, Petronius Arbiter says that he drank a draught of myrrh
to arouse his sexual desires; so too Sutrius the writer of comedies introduces
the licentious Glico, who says: "Bring me myrrh so that I can attack the
strongholds with virile weapons."

Cinyras, the son of Apollo, by his daughter Myrrha became the father of Adonis,
beloved of Aphrodite (Venus). The Petronius reference, known to editors as his
fragment 8 (7), has to do with his Satyricon 20, where someone asks: "Has
Encolpius drunk all the satyrion (an aphrodisiac)?" In his Explanation 47, Ful­
gentius mentions Sutrius and his comedy Piscatoria, but neither is known, and
for our context the substitution of Furius (as one manuscript reads) has been
proposed—that is, the Furius Bibaculus of the Augustan age, a minor writer of
lampoons who has four poems of Catullus addressed to him; even so, the precise
quotation used here would remain untraced. Adon is for ἀδονίς, "sweetness," and
Glico may be named for the play on γλυκός, "sweet." A note on the text of this
chapter is provided by G. Brugnoli, "Coniectanea," Rivista di Cultura Classica

9. The Fable of Apollo and Marsyas

Minerva invented the double flute from a bone, but when she played on it
at a banquet of the gods and all the gods laughed at her puffed out cheeks,
she went to the salt lake Tritonia, in North Africa; and observing her image
in the water and having adjudged shameful the blowing out of her cheeks,
she threw the flute away. Marsyas, finding it, made himself skillful at it and,
eager for a hard contest, challenged Apollo to perform. They chose King
Midas as umpire. Because he did not judge correctly, Apollo disfigured him
with asses' ears. He revealed something of this state of shame to the servant
who cut his hair, promising him that, if he could hide the shame, he would
give him a share in his kingdom. The servant dug a hole in the earth and
spoke his lord's secret into the ditch and then filled it in. On the same spot
a reed sprang up, whereby a shepherd made himself a flute; and when he
 cut it the reed said: "King Midas has asses' ears," singing out exactly what it
 had absorbed from the earth. Thus Petronius Arbiter declared:

So the greedy servant, fearful of disclosing the secret committed to him,
Dug a hole in the ground and spoke into it about the king's hidden ears,
For the earth absorbed the sound, and the murmuring reeds
Found Midas to be as the informer had devised.

Now, therefore, we may seek the hidden sense of this mysterious story. The
story is shown to be associated with musicians, as Orpheus wrote in his Theo-
gonia, for musicians have established two stages for their art, adding a third as it were of necessity, as Hermes Trismegistus declares, saying adomenon, psallomenon, aulumenon—that is, singing, plucking the lyre, or playing the flute. The first is the living voice, which rapidly covers all musical requirements, for it can both develop intervals (limmata), harmonize changes (parallelos), blend different pitches (distonas), link together the sounds of music (ptongos), and ornament with trills (quilismata). The accompanying lyre ranks next. Although in these matters which musicians call blending (disafexis), as Mariandes writes, it can do much, yet it does not achieve other things that the human voice can, for it does not develop the intervals (limmata) and does not achieve the linked trill (quilismata). But the flute could strictly fulfill only the lowliest role in the art of music. For the lyre has five sets of scales (simfonia), according to what Pythagoras stated when he adduced arithmetic sets of numbers to fit with the scales: the first scale is the diapason or octave, which is the diplasion of arithmetic, what in Latin we call 2 to 1; the second scale is the diapente or fifth, the emiolius of arithmetic, what in Latin we call 3 to 2; the third scale is the diatessaron or perfect fourth, the epitritus of arithmetic, that is, 4 to 3; the fourth scale is called the tonns or major third, known to arithmeticians as the epocdous, for us 5 to 4; and since the order in arithmetic is not allowed to go beyond the limit of nine, because a new set in a second series begins with ten, the limit is reached in having a fifth scale, which is called the armonia or major tone, that is, 9 to 8. You find no digit joined to another beyond that point. Thus music has seven parts, that is, the elements (genera), the notation (diastemata), the composition (systemata), the instrumental sounds (ptongos), the modes or keys (tonos), the transposing (metabolas), and the theory (melopias); whence Virgil says in his sixth book: "Then too did Orpheus the Thracian seer, in a trailing gown, answer their rhythm on seven intervals of notes." For in arithmetic of this kind the full series is like that in geometry, or the modes (tonus) in music. The voice has innumerable sets of scales, as much as nature has endowed the voice with arsis or rising and thesis or sinking, which in Latin we call going up and down. The flute, however, produces scarcely one and a half scales, although each scale has five notes (symphonias). So it was according to the art of music that Minerva discovered the double flute, which anyone skilled in music despises for the poverty of its sounds. They are said to have laughed at her puffed out cheeks because the flute sounds windily with its music and, with loss of individuality in its special tones (idiomatium), hisses rather than clearly enunciates its matter. Thus
anyone at all skilled laughs at her harshly blowing; and so Minerva, that is, wisdom, reproaching herself, throws it away, and Marsyas picks it up. For Marsyas in Greek is morosis, that is, a solitary fool, for wanting to place the flute in musical effect above the lyre; whence he is depicted with a hog's tail. King Midas judged between these two contestants, for Midas in Greek is said to be for medenidon, what we call in Latin an ignoramus. So also he is said to have asses' ears, because being totally lacking in discernment he is in no way different from an ass. Also they relate that his servant betrayed his secrets, for the reason that we must keep our mind a servant obedient to all we wish and guardian of our secrets. But what he betrayed to the reed, "through the reed pipe of the throat," means "through speech." And in that a shepherd heard it, shepherds are those who foster strange things by gently stamping down the earth.

Athene (Minerva) invented the flute but threw it away because it disfigured her cheeks; the satyr Marsyas found it and having mastered it challenged Apollo to a contest. Having won, Apollo punished the satyr by flaying him alive. In a second contest between Apollo and Pan with his reed pipes, which Fulgentius (as Hyginus had done, Fabulae 191) seems to have run together with the first, Apollo gave King Midas asses' ears for having given a faulty judgment against him. Authors brought in include Petronius with four verse-lines known as fragment 28.6-9; Orpheus's Theogonia, that is, teogram, "genealogy of the gods," if genuine, presumably some lost Orphic writing of the kind traditionally ascribed to the legendary bard, as in 3.7 above; an untraced reference to the Hermetic books, usually assigned to the 3d century A.D., fathered on Hermes Trismegistus, the "thrice great," see W. Scott, ed. and transl., Hermetica, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1925-26); and L. Thorndike, History of Magic and Experimental Science, 2 (London, 1923); an unknown Mariandes on music; and Virgil, Aen. 6.645-46. Etymologies involved: Marsyas as morosis, for μουρός, "dull, stupid," and either Latin is, "the one," or Greek εἷ, "one"; and Midas as medenidon, for μηδέν, "nothing," and εἶδον, "perceive," as in 2.10 above. The central part of the chapter is a summary of ancient Greek musical theory in the mathematical associations established for it by the Pythagoreans, in particular their discovery that the musical intervals depend on numerical proportions. The account is designed to support Fulgentius's restatement of the traditional theory of the descending order of musical value and range in, first, the human voice; second, the kithara or large concert lyre (of Apollo); and third, the despised aulos, flute or reed pipe. It is accompanied by a parade of technical terms from music and arithmetic which make translation difficult, not only because Fulgentius in the full flight of learning is more extravagant than accurate, but because our knowledge of ancient Greek music is largely theoretical and not free from ambiguity. Helpful modern accounts include: J. F. Mountford and R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Music," in The Oxford Classical Dictionary (Oxford, 1949; 2d ed., 1970), pp.584-91; R. P. Winnington-Ingram,

10. The Fable of Orpheus and Eurydice

Now this legend is an allegory (designatio) of the art of music. For Orpheus stands for orarephone, that is, matchless sound, and Eurydice is deep judgment. In all the arts there is a first and a second stage: for boys learning their letters there is first the alphabet, second learning to write; at the grammar level, first reading, second clear speech; at the rhetorical level, first rhetoric, second dialectic; in geometry, first pure geometry, second arithmetic; in astronomy, first learning the science, second applied astrology; in medicine, first the diagnosis, second the therapy; in divination, first the inspection of omens, second their application; and in music, first the melody, second the effect. It is one thing for teachers to recognize different aspects of their subject, another to put them into effect; it is one thing for instructors in rhetoric to have profuse, unbridled, and unrestrained fluency, another to im-
pose a rigorous and scrupulous control over the investigation of truth; it is one thing for astrologers to know the courses and movements of the stars and the constellations, another to trace their significance; it is one thing in medicine to recognize the cause of diseases, another to cure the onslaught of the sickness; it is one thing in geometry to construct lines and formulas, another to adapt numbers to the formulas; it is one thing in divination to inspect entrails and orts, another according to Battiades to read the changes in events; and in music it is one thing to deal with scales of notes (ptongorum), compositions (sistematum), and notation (diastematum), another to explain the effect of the scales and the power of the words, for the beauty of the voice as it appeals to the inner secrets of the art also has to do with the mysterious power of words.

Again, Eurydice was desired by the best, that is, by Aristaeus—for ariston is the Greek for best—as art itself avoids the common level of men. She died by the blow of a snake, as it were, by the interception of skill; and she was removed to the secret places of the lower world. For after art has been sought out and raised toward the light, the voice of melody sinks down, because it both assists in the ultimate appeal of the sound and by a secret power gives these hidden forces the effect of delight: for we can say that the Dorian mode or the Phrygian is like Saturn in soothing wild beasts, or like Jove in charming the birds; but if the explanation why this happens is sought for, the theory of the subject inquired into dies away. Therefore, Orpheus is forbidden to look upon Eurydice, and loses her when he does look upon her; therefore the highly skilled Pythagoras when he adapted tunes to numbers and pursued the depths of musical composition in arithmetical terms through their melodies and rhythms and tunes, yet could not explain the reason for their effect.

Orpheus loved the nymph Eurydice; and having charmed her with the sound of his lyre, he took her for wife. When the shepherd Aristaeus, smitten with love, pursued her, she in her flight stumbled on a snake and died. Her husband went down to the lower world in search of her and accepted the ruling that he should not turn back and look on her, but because he did turn back and look at her he lost her a second time. Fulgentius has for once almost entirely dispensed with an outline of the story and goes straight to its interpretation, more or less a continuation of the previous chapter, with some of the same musical terms, ptongos, sistemata, diastemata, as above. Battiades on divination is also mentioned in the Content of Virgil 3, there in connection with spirits and magic, but is otherwise unknown (the name Battus for the founder of the African city of Cyrene gave rise to the term Battiades for a Cyrenian, applied to the rulers of the city from the 6th through the 4th century B.C., and to any prominent
citizen, such as the poet Callimachus). The closing reference to the limitations of Pythagorean number in explaining musical appreciation reads somewhat like an echo of Plato's Republic 7.2.5, transl. H. D. P. Lee, Plato: The Republic (Baltimore, 1955), pp.299-300: "For they [the Pythagoreans] do just what the astronomers do; they look for numerical relationships in audible concords, and never get as far as formulating problems and asking which numerical relations are concordant and why"; the passage is echoed in E. K.'s gloss to Spenser's Shephearde Calender, October eclogue, 25 ff. The term used for musical effect and appeal, apotelesmata (compare το-τάλά, "finish, result"); is something of a favorite with the 4th-century writer Firmicus Maternus in his astrological treatise Mathesis — e.g., 1.4; 2. praef., 10, 11, 16, 18, 27; 3. praef., 2, 13; 4.13, 16-18; 6.24 — ed. C. Sittl, 1 (Leipzig, 1894); possibly this was Fulgentius’s source. Orpheus as orefone is meant for ψωρ, "voice," and possibly ἄρης, "mountainous," that is highest and purest; Eurydice is ἐφίδω, "broad, deep," and δίκη, "judgment"; and ἀσία is ἄρωτος, "best." For the Orpheus legend, see G. R. S. Mead, Orpheus (New York, 1896; repr., 1965); J. Wirkl, Orpheus in der englischen Literatur (Vienna, 1913); K. Heitmann, "Orpheus im Mittelalter," Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 45 (1963): 253-94.

11. The Fable of Phineus

Phineus is taken as a symbol of greed; the name is said to be from fenerando. He is blind because all greed is blind in not recognizing itself. The Harpies snatched away his food because pillaging refuses to share anything of itself. The fact that they befouled his meals with the discharge of their filth shows that the life of usurers is befouled with a flood of pillaging. But Zetes and Calais drove them out of his sight, as we say in Greek zetōn calōn, seeking good. They have wings because no search for good is ever involved with earthly matters. They are the sons of the north wind because the search for good is of the spirit, not the flesh, and as goodness comes all pillaging is put to flight.

King Phineus of Thrace, having revealed a secret of the gods, was punished by losing his sight and being tormented by the foul birds known as Harpies. From these he was delivered by Zetes and Calais, sons of Boreas, the north wind. For the Harpies, see 1.9 above. Fenerando is from Latin fenerari, "practise usury," possibly with a play intended on φέρνων, "bird of prey, vulture"; zetōn is ἄρωτος, "seek," and calōn is from καλός, "noble, good."

12. The Fable of Alpheus and Arethusa

The river Alpheus loved the nymph Arethusa. When it pursued her, she was turned into a fountain. When passing through the midst of the sea, it retains its freshness as it plunges into her hollow. Hence it is said that in the
lower world it bears oblivion to the souls. For Alpheus is for the Greek αλήθιασφός, that is, the light of truth; while Arethusa is for ἀρετεία, that is, equality of excellence. For what can the truth love but equity, or the light, but excellence? And it retains its freshness when passing through the sea because clear truth cannot by any mingling be polluted by the surrounding saltiness of evil ways. Yet all the light of truth sinks into the hollow of equitable power, for as it goes down to the lower world, that is into the hidden knowledge of good and evil, the light of truth always entails the forgetting of evil things.

The river Alpheus, flowing through Arcadia, falls into the Ionian Sea, in places flowing underground, whence the legend that it passed through the sea and rose again, still fresh water, as the fountain at Syracuse named for the Nereid Arethusa. Ἀλήθιασφός is for ἀλήθεια, “truth,” and φῶς (φῶν), “light”; ἀρετεία for ἀρετή, “excellence,” and ἵζει, “equal.” The notion of truth gaining hidden knowledge in the lower world is further developed in Fulgentius’s next work, the Content of Virgil, where this interpretation is applied to the descent of Aeneas in Aen. 6.

1. These chapters or sections are still frequently cited by the numbering of Muncker’s edition (1681) as reprinted by Van Staveren (1742)—MS; in books one and two, but not three, this involves some disparity from the edition by Helm (1898)—H, whose scheme is based on the manuscript tradition and is followed here (except that Arabic replaces his Roman numerals).


4. *Sulpicilla*, that is some writer like Sulpicia, the first-century poetess celebrated for her amatory verses, mentioned later in this prologue for Ausonius's remark on her "wordiness."

5. The Psyche and Cupid story is however to be related, though characteristically from the moral viewpoint and not as entertainment, in 3.6 below, also that of Hero and Leander (prominent in Ovid's *Heroides*, 18, 19) in 3.4, though not that of Theseus and the minotaur.

6. Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* is appended to his *Republic*.

7. *Galagetici*, possibly a compound of Galatians (Celts) and Getae (Goths) from Asia Minor, but Fulgentius's allusions are too vague to permit identifying the particular barbarian invasion of North Africa which caused the distress and devastation he mentions; for conjectures, and for the king whose return he welcomes a few lines later, see general introduction, note 3.

8. Echoing Ecclesiasticus 6:36, "If you see an intelligent man, visit him early; let your foot wear out his doorstep."

9. For Midas and the Pactolus, see 2.10 below. After the bath of Midas the river brought down golden sands.

10. Alluding to Aeneas and his crews as they fetched up exhausted on the shore of Africa, *Aen.* 1.157 ff.


12. *Mauricatos*, no doubt meant for *muricatos*, "walled," but with a possible play on *Mauri*, the Moors, if they were the cause of Fulgentius's distress; see general introduction, note 3.

13. The legendary inventor of agriculture, his teeth being the plough and the sickle.

14. Fourteen long verse lines, an early instance of the trochaic tetrameter catalectic made famous by the anonymous *Pervigilium Veneris* (variously assigned to Florus of the 2d century A.D. or Tiberianus of the 4th), from which Fulgentius in fact takes lines 16–17: "Sparkling purple, that dew breathed out on clear nights by the stars." After mentioning Tempe, the river valley in Thessaly famed for its beauty, he goes on to refer to the winged horse Pegasus, who produced the Muses' fountain Hippocrene by a blow from his hoof, in words no doubt borrowed from the fragment of Tiberianus cited in 1.21 below. *Thespiae* in the first line refers to the town at the foot of Mount Helicon, the Muses' haunt. The Ascrean shepherd is Hesiod, whose home was at Ascra near Helicon; Maro of Mantua is Virgil with his pastoral verse; and the Maeonian (or Lydian) is Ovid's name for Homer (used again later in this prologue) the allusion here being to the satirical *Batrachomyomachia* ('Battle of the Frogs and Mice'), widely attributed to Homer but later than his time.

15. See preceding note.

16. Probably meant as a reminiscence of the claim to immortality made in Ovid's epilogue to the *Metamorphoses* 15.875–76: "I shall soar, undying, far above the stars," also echoed near the end of this prologue.
17. Those of Alexandria, known to the poets as Pella, Pella in Macedonia being the birthplace of its founder, Alexander the Great.

18. The celebrated Greek physician Claudius Galenus, died ca. 201 A.D. Fulgentius as a North African was no doubt familiar with Alexandria and its cultural life, but here he appears to be echoing a traditional rather than topical charge against the anatomical schools of the city: Alexandria is condemned already by Tertullian and Augustine for both human vivisection and the dissection of dead bodies, but the practice seems to have ceased by the later 2d century; see C. Singer, *From Magic to Science* (New York, 1928; repr., 1958), pp. 20–21.


23. *Meonem*, the Maeonian; see note 14 above.

24. "Recruit," mistei, for μύση, "initiate;" Anacreon, the lyric poet of the 5th century B.C., is taken as the founder of erotic verse of the kind from which Fulgentius twice somewhat indignantly dissociates himself.

25. "As you sleep," signatico, presumably for  ἱπνοις, "sleep."

26. Possibly borrowed from the opening of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* 1.1, a work with which Fulgentius elsewhere shows himself familiar: "Deigning to look upon this Egyptian papyrus written with a ready pen of Nile reeds."

27. Jove, perhaps when disguised as a bull in the Europa incident, alluded to in 1.20 below.

28. Danaë and Jove as the golden shower, briefly mentioned in 1.18.

29. The reference appears to be to the death of Adonis, gored by a wild boar, alluded to in 3.2.

30. Jove as the swan seducing Leda, told in 2.13.


32. *Aricinam lusan utraginem*, Helm (p. 11) suggesting that *Aricinam* is an intrusive gloss and the reference returns to the Danaë story (see note 28). If so, *Acrisianum* might be read, Acrisius being Danaë's father. Aricina was the nymph married to Hippolytus, the ill-starred son of Theseus, but this is not one of Fulgentius's stories. Jove's record of seductions was lengthy, and Fulgentius need not be blamed for confusing it. In his *Explanation of Obsolete Words*, 51, a term *aricinae* is "like pottery or clay," but there is no obvious connection with our context.

33. Either Jove once more, with his frequent animal guises, or Apollo as the charioteer of the sun.

34. For Apollo, see 1.12–16.

35. Presumably Christianity, and the interest of early Christian writers in the allegorizing of pagan myths.

36. Urania the Muse of astronomy, here implying heavenly inspiration.

37. Presumably not Calliope herself, though she has her skittish moments with Fulgentius, but either her handmaiden Satire or her sister Thalia, the comic Muse, mentioned in connection with satire at the start of the prologue.
38. Hippocrene, see note 14 above and 1.21 below.
39. Petronius's fragment 6 (7), otherwise unknown.
40. Plautus's *Asinaria* ("Comedy of the Asses"), but the matron Artemona rather than the male slave Sauria is meant.
41. The *Nuptial Cento* 8 of Ausonius (4th century A.D.) reads: "Sulpicia's little work is wanton, her outlook prim;" see note 4 above.
42. Sallust, *Conspiracy of Catiline* 25, mentions Sempronia as a promiscuous charmer and conspirator who "could write verses, bawdy jests, and use language which was modest, or tender, or wanton." But Sallust does not credit Catiline with any poetic skill, and the verses that follow are scarcely intended to be a specimen of his work. These represent eleven hexameters, presumably meant to be Fulgentius's inspiration rather than Calliope's; they read in fact rather like an imitation of Statius, *Thebaid* 1.336-41. For Cynthia or Diana, the goddess of the moon, the text reads Quintia. The final reference to phantoms arising in dreams recalls Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 11.633 ff., associating Morpheus, god of sleep, with such forms (μυθόπαι); similarly his *Amores*, 1.69: "Night with its empty phantoms," also Petronius, Fragment 30 sometimes found added to the *Satyricon* 104: "Dreams, the fleeting shadow-play that mocks the mind." A similarly elaborate account of nightfall, with Phaethon and "pale Cynthia" as in Fulgentius, occurs in Thomas Sackville's 'Induction' to *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1563), lines 36 ff. Spenser has similar cases of "decorative circumlocution," see D. Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, 2d ed. (New York, 1963), pp. 95-97.
43. *Nox erat*, the opening words of Horace's *Odes*, 2.13, *Epode* 15.1, and of Ovid's *Amores* 3.5. For the comic anticlimax, compare Chaucer, *Franklin's Tale*, 1016-18: "Til that the brighte sonne loste his hewe; For th'orisonte hath reft the sonne his lyght—This is as much to seye as it was nyght," and Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), 1.8: "Now the rake Hesperus had called for his breeches, and, having well rubbed his drowsy eyes, prepared to dress himself for all night; by whose example his brother rakes on earth likewise leave those beds in which they had slept away the day. Now Thetis, the good housewife, began to put on the pot, in order to regale the good man Phoebus after his daily labours were over. In vulgar language, it was in the evening. . . ."
44. For Nero's poetic aspirations, see the satirical address to him by Lucan, *Pharsalia* 1.45-47: "When your watch on earth is over and you seek the stars at last, the celestial palace you prefer will welcome you, and the sky will rejoice;" compare also Ovid's lines, note 16 above.
45. Carneades, died 129 B.C., the sceptical philosopher of Cyrene in Africa, a pupil of Diogenes; his 'bitter brew,' *elleborum*, is the black hellebore described by Pliny, *Natural History* 25.5, as a bitter purge. Compare Fulgentius's *Content of Virgil* 3: "Plato with his essences (ideas) . . . or Aristotle with his perfect forms (endelecias)," and 20: "Golden . . . recalling the utterance of Plato."
46. Chrysippus the Stoic, died 207 B.C., is also mentioned alongside Plato and Aristotle by Fulgentius on Virgil, 3, and by Tertullian, *De anima* 5.4. All the tables that follow this prologue are presumably meant to be taken as the explanations of Calliope, assisted by Philosophy if not Urania, even 1.15 which includes an analysis of the Muses.