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CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY IN MEDIAEVAL ART¹

By ERWIN PANOFSKY AND FRITZ SAXL

The earliest Italian writers about the history of art, such for instance as Ghiberti, Alberti, and especially Giorgio Vasari, thought that classical art was overthrown at the beginning of the Christian era and that it did not revive until, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy, it served as the foundation of what is usually called the Renaissance. The reasons for this overthrow, as those writers saw it, were the invasions of barbarous races and the hostility of the early Christian priests and scholars.

In thinking as they did the early writers were both right and wrong. They were wrong in so far as the Renaissance was connected with the Middle Ages by innumerable links, many of them being implicit in the very name Middle Ages, which is a Renaissance term based on the old Italian conception of cultural evolution. Classical conceptions survived throughout the Middle Ages—literary, philosophical, scientific, and artistic—and they were especially strong after the time of Charlemagne, under whose reign there had been a deliberate classical revival in almost every cultural field. The early writers were right in so far as the artistic forms under which the classical conceptions persisted during the Middle Ages were utterly different from our present ideas of antiquity, which did not come into existence until the “Renaissance” in its true sense of the “rebirth” of antiquity as a well-defined historical phenomenon.

During the Middle Ages in the western Eu-

ropean countries it was inconceivable that a classical mythological subject should be represented within the limits of the classical style, as it was in Raphael's picture of Jupiter and Venus in the ceiling of the Villa Farnesina (fig. 1). Although there are monuments of Byzantine art, such as the so-called rosette caskets with reliefs of the Labors of Hercules and other similar themes (fig. 2),² which, in so far as they represent classical subject matter in classical (or at least pseudo-classical) forms, are comparable to Raphael's fresco, we find nothing that is comparable to them in the Western countries during the “high” Middle Ages. Even in the Venice of the dugento, closely connected as it was with Byzantium, an antique relief of Hercules could not be imitated without changing its mythological subject (figs. 4, 5). The lion's skin was replaced by a fluttering drapery, the boar became a stag, the terrified Euristheus was left out, and the hero was made to stand upon a vanquished dragon. As the human soul was often symbolized by a stag, the result of these changes was that the classical hero had been transformed into the Saviour conquering evil and saving the souls of the Faithful. From this example we learn that mediaeval Western art was unable, or, what comes to the same thing, was unwilling, to retain a classical prototype without destroying either its original form, or, as here, its original meaning.

¹ This article is a revised version of a lecture delivered for the first time to the teaching staff and students of the Department of Fine Arts of Princeton University. It resulted, however, from the common endeavor of the two authors, who in their research were assisted by the Hamburg students of art history. Furthermore I feel indebted to Mrs. Margaret Barr for her participation in the English wording. E. P.

² Still, Goldschmidt and Weitzmann in their recent publication of these caskets pointed out that the Byzantine ivory carvers were far from really understanding the subject matter of the classical groups and figures, which they generally used as mere ornaments, finally transforming all the figures into putti, as is the case in our figure 2 (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, fig. 35). As for figure 3, compare note 26.

One of the essential characteristics of the western European mind seems to be the way in which it destroys things and then reintegrates them on a new basis—breaking with tradition only to return to it from an entirely new point of view—and thus produces “revivals” in the true sense of the word. Byzantine art, on the contrary, never having lost its con-

classical thought continued through the post-classical era. To this end he built up a library devoted exclusively to that subject. In doing this, so far from confining himself to what is usually called art history—for that would have made his research impossible—he found it necessary to branch out into many fields until then untouched by art historians. His library, there-



FIG. 1. VENUS IMPLORING JUPITER, BY RAPHAEL
VILLA FARNESINA, ROME

nection with antiquity, was incapable of finding its way to what we may call a modern style. Since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it has contented itself with mere assimilation of the Western attainment to its own tradition of evolution.

Thus we can see that what may be called the problem of “renaissance phenomena” is one of the central problems in the history of European culture. With this as his point of departure the late Professor Aby Warburg of Hamburg conceived the fruitful idea of directing his scientific research at the way in which

fore, embraces the history of religions as well as that of literature, science, philosophy, law, and what we may generally call superstition, together with their various streams of tradition. In the present essay it will be our endeavor, while examining a single problem, to demonstrate the methods of research developed by Aby Warburg and his followers.

Our problem, then, is the rôle of classical mythology in mediaeval art. In examining it we shall pay no attention to the innumerable examples, like the Venetian relief we have mentioned, in which a classical mythological

figure has been deprived of its original meaning and invested with another.³ We shall, on the contrary, consider the way in which mediaeval artists represented classical mythological figures as such. In doing this it will be necessary for us to distinguish sharply between two different traditions of work. In one, which we shall refer to as the "representational tradition," the mediaeval artist had before him a series of versions of his particular subject which had come down to him as integral unities of subject matter and form. In the other, to be re-



FIG. 2. HERCULES FIGHTING THE LION
IVORY CARVING FROM A ROSETTE CASKET
BYZANTINE, XI CENTURY
MUSEO NAZIONALE, FLORENCE

ferred to as the "literary" or "textual tradition," the mediaeval artist had before him only a literary text describing a mythological subject, for the illustration of which he had to work out new types or forms having no visual connection with those of classical times.

I

Our first problem is to find specimens of the representational tradition. We find them, obviously enough, in representations of astronomical and astrological subjects. For the modern man it is a matter of course to speak of the constellations as Andromeda, Perseus, Orion, etc., since we have come to identify the various groups of stars with certain mythological figures. This practice has come about as the result

of a complicated evolution, and in early times was unknown. Primitive man naturally singled out some of the more easily recognizable groups of stars in order to get his bearings on land and sea, and, to remember them, he gave them the names of certain terrestrial objects—animals or tools or human beings without mythological connotation—such as the Bear, the Hyades, the Wain, etc. The primitive Oriental peoples did this and so did the pre-Homeric Greeks. The important thing, however, was that the Greeks did not confine themselves to this. Just as they "mythologized" terrestrial objects such as trees, springs, and mountains, so they gradually invested the constellations with mytholog-



FIG. 3. ORPHEUS, FROM BIBL. NAT. MS. COISLIN 239
BYZANTINE, XII CENTURY

ical meanings. As early a poet as Homer speaks of mighty Orion and Boötes.

This practice increased until, by the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., a considerable number of the constellations had been mythologized. An example of this is the group of constellations associated with the myth of Andromeda, namely Andromeda herself, Cepheus her fa-

³ Even if we do not count the fundamental phenomenon that Early Christian art borrowed its leading types from antique models (assimilating Christ to Roman emperors, Alexandrian shepherds, Greek philosophers, or Hellenistic Orpheuses and developing the types of the Evangelists from the portraits of classical authors), individual transformations analogous to that observed in the Venetian Hercules are much too frequent to be enumerated. A few interesting cases were discussed by Schlosser in "Heidnische Elemente in der christlichen Kunst des Altertums," originally appearing as a supplement to the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 26, 27, 31, 1894, nos. 248, 249, 251, and reprinted in *Präludien*, 1927, pp. 9 ff.

ther, Cassiopeia her mother, Perseus her rescuer, and Cetus her dragon. Other constellations, however, were still called simply the Balance or the Swan, and that which we know as Hercules was still called Engonasin, the Kneeling Man. In passing, it is worth noting that the signs of the zodiac were not connected with mythological ideas until rather late.

manifested themselves. The rational power of scientific systematization is shown by the very aim of Eudoxos's work. The irrational power of mythical imagination is shown by his nomenclature. These same tendencies are shown again by the fact that when about a century later Aratos, a Hellenistic poet, used the catalogue of Eudoxos for a purely poetical descrip-



FIG. 4. HERCULES CARRYING THE CALEDONIAN BOAR
ANTIQUE RELIEF SET IN THE WALL OF
ST. MARK'S CHURCH, VENICE



FIG. 5. ALLEGORY OF SALVATION
XIII CENTURY RELIEF SET IN THE WALL OF
ST. MARK'S CHURCH, VENICE

This was the state of affairs when Eudoxos of Knidos, a Greek astronomer of the fourth century B.C., drew up a catalogue of the constellations which was meant to be as complete as possible. He did this for purely scientific purposes, but he could not help calling the constellations by their mythological names in so far as they had them. He says, for example, "beneath the tail of the Little Bear there are the feet of Cepheus, forming an equilateral triangle with the point of the aforesaid tail." Thus in the treatise of Eudoxos the two principal tendencies and capacities of Greek thought

tion of the firmament, Hipparchos, whose ideas about the procession of the equinoxes brought about a new epoch in the study of astronomy, not content with furiously criticizing Aratos, went on scientifically to perfect the catalogue so that it became a solid basis for astronomical observation in the modern sense of the word.

Aratos, in his elegant poem, often alluded to the stories of the constellations, and, whenever they had them, to their mythological meanings. He confined himself, however, to the names and stories as given by Eudoxos, and never went on to mythologize on his own ac-

count. Sometimes he frankly said he was not able to give more than a mere description, as when he wrote that "not far from it [the Dragon] there revolves a figure that resembles a hard-working man, bent on his knees and spreading out his arms, but nobody knows what he is trying to do and thus they call him simply the 'Kneeling Man.'"

This intermediary phase is illustrated by the Farnese Globe (fig. 6),⁴ the most famous classical astronomical representation that has come down to us. With the exception of the figure of Atlas, which was added in the Renaissance, it is a Roman copy of a Greek original. The Greek original must have been rather closely connected with the poem of Aratos, for in the Farnese Globe the constellations, both those that have been mythologized and those that have not, correspond to the descriptions in the poem. Orion and Perseus, for example, are characterized by their mythological attributes (Perseus is represented with his sword and Medusa's head), but the Kneeling Man is still nothing but a kneeling man, without the club or the lion's skin of Hercules, and the constellation Eridanus is only a simple river represented as a curved ribbon.

In the Hellenistic literature, however, the process of mythologization went much further. Eratosthenes (284-204 B.C.) completed the work which the previous generation had left unfinished. He wrote a poem called *Catasterisms* in which each of the constellations is given a mythological meaning that is explained in a long-winded commentary. He interpreted the Kneeling Man as Hercules fighting with the dragon of the Hesperides. He even mythologized the signs of the zodiac, connecting the Bull with the Rape of Europa, and identifying the Lion with the Nemean Lion. He said that the Crab was sent out by Juno to bite the heel of Hercules when he fought the Hydra. The Scales was the only one for which Eratosthenes found no mythological explanation, and so he tersely said, "The sign of the Scorpion [which

he interpreted most acutely] is very big and therefore is divided into two separate signs, one of which is called the Balance."⁵

Thus the poem of Eratosthenes turned out to be a didactic poem on mythology rather than one on astronomy, and it is a significant fact that one of his numerous followers, an Augustan poet named Hyginus, whose chief work is the *Fabulae*, was originally a mythographer in the narrower sense of the word.

The transformation of the firmament into a rendezvous of mythological figures was very important for the representational evolution. There were at least two reasons for this. Firstly, the adulatory scholars and poets, bustling about the various Hellenistic courts, were given courage to invent new constellations to please their patrons. Thus it happened that imaginary constellations actually invaded the astronomical pictures, e.g., the Hair of Berenice. Kallimachos in his delightful poem told how Berenice, the Queen of Egypt, had sacrificed her hair to Venus so that the goddess might protect the queen's husband during a war. The astronomer royal promptly discovered that the hair had been transformed into a constellation, which although previously unknown was thereafter represented in many an astronomical picture.⁶ Secondly, and much more important, once all the constellations had been identified with well-known mythological figures such as Hercules or Eridanus, which were represented in innumerable reliefs and paintings that had nothing to do with astronomy, the artists who illustrated the astronomical writings could not help remembering and arbitrarily making use of these non-astronomical types. Thus after the constellation the Dragon had

⁴ Cf. Boll, *Sitzungsber. d. bayr. Akad. d. Wiss., Phil.-os.-philol. Classe*, 1899, pp. 110 ff.; Thiele, *Antike Himmelsbilder*.

⁵ Cf. Ovid *Met.* II. 196: "Scorpius . . . Porrigit in spatium signorum membra duorum."

⁶ Cf. Pfeiffer, *Philologus*, vol. LXXVII, part 2, pp. 179 ff.

been interpreted as the dragon of the Hesperides, these artists added a tree to the constellation Hercules, because this tree was held to be an integral part of the story. Also the constellation Eridanus was visualized in the usual form of a reclining river god with urn and reed, instead of as a plain uninteresting ribbon.

Thus what had originally been a scientific astronomical treatise by degrees developed into a kind of semi-mythological picture book, which usually began with representations of

a Byzantine manuscript of the fifteenth century (Cod. Vat. graec. 1087) obviously copied from a ninth-century prototype (such as Cod. Vat. graec. 1291), which in its turn derived from a late antique prototype. It is a curious kind of projection. The northern and southern hemispheres are not represented in two separate drawings, divided by a horizontal section through the equator or the ecliptic, but the whole globe is flattened out, so to speak, into one panorama, consisting of five concentric

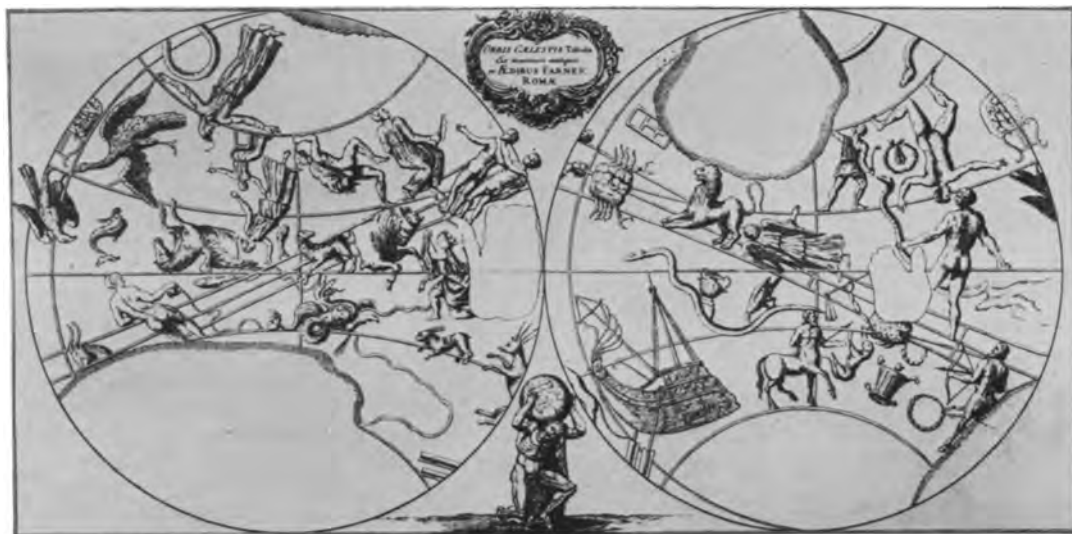


FIG. 6. THE FARNESE GLOBE, FROM AN XVIII CENTURY ENGRAVING

the celestial globe as a whole and continued with full-sized pictures of the single constellations. Often mere pictorial enthusiasm so much prevailed over scientific interest that the stars which originally constituted the bases of the figures were replaced by an arbitrary amassing of dots, and sometimes they were entirely omitted.

The prototype (or rather the prototypes) of these illustrated manuscripts, usually called "Aratea," must have been established as early as in the later centuries of the Roman Empire, because they were imitated in early Byzantine and early Islamic art as well as by the Carolingian illuminators. Figure 8, for example, shows a representation of the celestial globe in

circles. The inner circle represents the northern arctic circle, then follows the northern tropic, then the equator, then the southern tropic, and finally the southern arctic, the constellations of which appear, of course, in a grotesque distortion.

The painter who was commissioned to depict the constellations in a hemispherical dome in *Ḳuseir ʿAmrā*, a castle built by an Arabian prince in the eighth century (fig. 7), executed his commission by simply enlarging a miniature like this. To us this Arabian monument is interesting for two reasons: firstly, because it shows the transmission of the antique astronomical pictures to the Islamic world; secondly, because it reveals a most essential difference

between mediaeval and modern principles of decoration. A modern painter representing the constellations in a dome would try to suggest to the spectator the actual aspect of the firmament, that is to say, he would show in the dome those constellations which a spectator could really see in the sky.⁷ The author of the *Ḳuseir 'Amrā* fresco, however, did not even

not content with a mere planimetric scheme of the celestial spheres, represented the firmament as it can be seen. Instead of designing complete celestial maps, these painters represented only those constellations which were visible at Florence at a certain day and hour, and thereby, from an aesthetic point of view, identified the stone hemisphere of the dome



FIG. 7. THE FIRMAMENT AS REPRESENTED IN THE DOME OF THE VIII CENTURY *ḲUSEIR 'AMRĀ*. RECONSTRUCTION BY F. SAXL

think of that and simply transposed to the ceiling the conventional and extremely unrealistic celestial maps shown in the illuminated manuscripts.⁸

The requirements of the modern mind are met for the first time in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, that is to say, at a time when perspective had been acknowledged as a requirement of artistic representation, in two monuments at Florence. The painters of the frescoes in the smaller dome of the Pazzi Chapel and of the somewhat earlier fresco in the *Sagrestia Vecchia* of San Lorenzo (fig. 9),

with the immaterial hemisphere of the firmament. Thus these early Florentine frescoes are the first specimens of what we usually call the

⁷ This contention can be proved by Lodovico Seitz's frescoes in the dome of the so-called Torre di Leone XIII in the Vatican, mentioned by Zola in his famous novel *Rome*: although the painter intended to glorify the Pope by putting the constellation of the Lion (the celestial coat of arms of "Papa Leone") in a place as conspicuous as possible and even distinguished it by fifteen electric bulbs, he could not but adapt the whole of his composition to the actual aspect of the firmament as visible at Rome.

⁸ Cf. Saxl, in Creswell, part I, pp. 289 ff.

“illusionistic” principle in the decoration of a ceiling, in that they suggest to the beholder a prospect into the open air. We only need to replace the astronomical sky, filled with stars,

The Carolingian Renaissance differed from the “Rinascimento” of the fifteenth century in many respects. Where the latter was based on the irresistible feeling of the whole people



FIG. 8. CELESTIAL MAP, FROM COD. VAT. GRAEC. 1087. BYZANTINE, XV CENTURY

by a meteorological and theological sky filled with clouds and heavenly beings, and we have “illusionistic” decorations of the kind created by Mantegna, Correggio (fig. 10), and the baroque painters.

Now that we have looked at the Byzantine tradition as it had been transmitted to the Arabian East, let us come back to the Middle Ages in western Europe.

and was brought forth in popular political and spiritual excitement, the earlier was the result of the deliberate efforts of a few distinguished men, and thus was not so much a “revival” as a series of improvements in art, literature, calligraphy, administration, etc. Because of this we should do better if we called it, as its contemporaries did, a “renovation” rather than a renaissance. It is our opinion, however, that the

more modern theory, according to which the efforts of Charlemagne and his collaborators resulted in little more than a continuation of Merovingian tendencies, is even less correct than the traditional conception of the Carolingian movement as being a renaissance. We must not forget that it is chiefly due to the deliberate endeavors of the Carolingian leaders

minimators endeavored to copy the illustrations in the ancient astronomical picture books, of which we have explained the development. They conscientiously, and sometimes most successfully, imitated their prototypes in style and technique as well as in mythological subject matter. Thus, for example, the miniatures in the Codex Leydensis Vossianus lat. 79 (cf. fig.

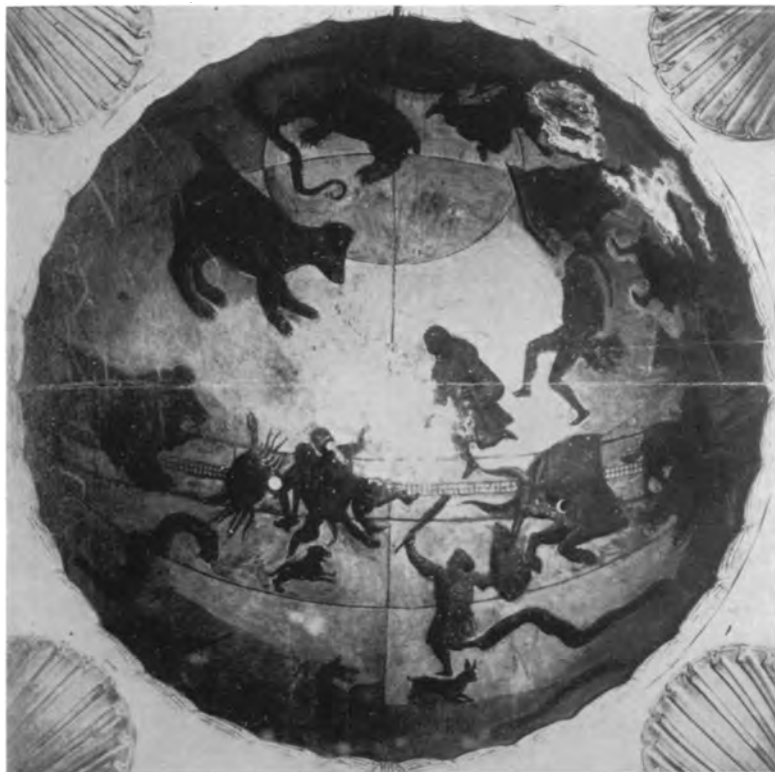


FIG. 9. THE FIRMAMENT AS REPRESENTED IN THE DOME OF THE SAGRESTIA VECCHIA OF SAN LORENZO, FLORENCE. ABOUT 1440

and to the diligence of their scribes, who systematically copied the profane writers of antiquity, that we today have the opportunity of reading such classical poets as Horace and Ovid and such classical scientists as Pliny and Vitruvius. In the same spirit the Carolingian illu-

22) and, still more eloquently, those in the magnificent Harley MS. 647 (cf. fig. 11), which have hitherto been totally disregarded by the art historians, impress us as being closer in spirit to the Pompeian frescoes than anything else made in the West in mediaeval times.⁹

⁹ The Leydensis Vossianus (a more complete copy of this manuscript is to be found in Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibl. Municipale, Cod. 188; tenth century) was edited *in extenso* by Thiele. As for its origin, Byvanck (pp. 65 ff.) seems to agree with Swarzenski, who attributed it to the school of Reims (*Jahrbuch d. königl.*

preuss. Kunstsaml., vol. XXIII, part 2, pp. 88 ff.), while Professor Morey of Princeton rather believes it to be connected with the school of St.-Denis. The Harley MS. 647, the miniatures of which strike us as the most classical elaboration of mediaeval Western painting, in our opinion was executed in a continen-

During the following centuries, in the period generally referred to as the high Middle Ages, the illuminators ceased their faithful imitation of classical models and developed a new and independent manner of seeing things. Transforming the ancient prototypes in such a

union, classical subject matter and classical form were separated.

Let us illustrate this evolution by taking the constellation Hercules as an example. In the Farnese Globe it had not yet become Hercules and was still the simple Kneeling Man (En-



FIG. 10. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST, BY CORREGGIO
CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI EVANGELISTA, PARMA

way that they became almost unrecognizable, they decomposed the representational tradition of mythological figures. Figures which were meant to represent Orion or Andromeda no longer looked like the Orion or Andromeda of classical times. Thus, like the unfortunate lovers in a moving picture who await their re-

tal, not an English, scriptorium about the middle of the ninth century.

¹⁰ Cf. Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part I, pp. 59 ff. An interest-

gonasin) without any mythological attributes (fig. 13). In the Carolingian manuscripts, which were derived from later antique prototypes, Hercules is usually shown in mythological full dress with club and lion's skin. The pictorial style often conforms closely to the classical models (Cod. Vat. Reg. lat. 309, ninth century, previously in St.-Denis; cf. fig. 12).¹⁰ In the

ing and not very well-known specimen of this kind is to be found in the eleventh-century *Krönungsmantel*

high Middle Ages, however, and especially after the beginning of the twelfth century, Hercules becomes either Romanesque or Gothic—that is to say, the classical origin of the figure becomes less and less recognizable as the figure is assimilated to the types most common in high mediaeval Christian art. Thus a Hercules of the twelfth century, such for example as that in Bodl. MS. 614 (fig. 15) hardly differs from a Romanesque Saint Michael fighting the dragon or a decorative figure on a contemporary capital.¹¹ This decomposition of the classical type was not the result of any increasing



FIG. 11. THE CONSTELLATION ERIDANUS
FROM BRIT. MUS., HARLEY MS. 647
MIDDLE OF THE IX CENTURY

respect for the scientific and true position of the stars (which were still placed as arbitrarily as ever) but was due to a purely stylistic and intellectual evolution.

A miniature (fig. 16) in a fifteenth-century German manuscript in The Pierpont Morgan

Library (M.384) shows this decomposition carried still further. In it we see a "late Gothic" Hercules, not dressed as a knight in armor, as in other late mediaeval manuscripts, but clad in bathing trunks. He approaches a tree, which, as we have seen, does not exist in the classical representation of the constellation, and his lion's skin has developed into a complete lion that accompanies him like a peaceable dog. Only one detail shows what has happened: Hercules is armed with a scimitar instead of a club. As the scimitar is an Oriental weapon it suggests that the painter of this fifteenth-century miniature, which in all other respects is only a peculiarly degenerate descendant of the widespread Western tradition, had been influenced by representations deriving from the Arabian East.

Upon examining some manuscripts executed about the middle of the thirteenth century, that is to say, at the time when the Western decomposition of the classical representations had reached its culminating point, we find a Hercules (Paris, Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. 1036; fig. 17)¹² which looks very much like a figure out of the Arabian Nights. He wears a skull cap and his costume has been almost literally copied from an Arabian gown. His lion's skin has been omitted and his club has been replaced by a scimitar—obviously because neither the skin nor the club meant anything to an Arabian artist unacquainted with classical mythology. On the other hand, the pose of

of the German emperors (preserved in the Bamberg Cathedral), which realizes the ancient idea of the "Cosmic Mantle" (cf. Eisler, *Weltenmantel und Himmelszelt*) by embroidering a celestial map on a semi-circular cloth (cf. fig. 14).

¹¹ Further references will be given in Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part III (in preparation). Of course, there are a number of manuscripts which follow the antique prototypes in a more conservative way, such as Cod. Vat. Reg. lat. 123 (Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part I, pp. 45 ff.; eleventh, not twelfth, century) or Cod. Matritensis A. 16 (early twelfth century). This group, however, is less important for the history of stylistic evolution.

¹² Cf. Martin, vol. II, pp. 247 ff. Martin dates this

manuscript in the fourteenth century, which, in our opinion, is much too late, in view of the style of the miniatures as well as of the paleographical character of the script. As for its origin, the curious mixture of Arabic figures and decidedly Western ornament *a priori* suggests southern Italy. Moreover, we learn from an entry referring to the catalogue of the stars that this catalogue was revised at Palermo by means of the instruments of King Roger of Sicily. A manuscript closely connected with Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. 1036, although much more distant from the Arabic prototype, is preserved in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett (Cod. Hamilton 556; cf. Wescher, pp. 80 ff., with several funny mistakes).

Hercules is much more faithful to the correct form than in even the best of the Carolingian manuscripts, the stars are characterized according to their sizes, and they are marked by numbers referring to a scientific text.

For an explanation of this it is necessary to remember that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the West had become more and more familiar with the scientific literature of the Arabs, which in its turn was based on Greek sources. It is common knowledge that at this time acquaintance with the greater part of the works of Aristotle as well as with Greek

did not go through the complicated evolutions of mediaeval Western art. Thus, when the time came, in the thirteenth century, for the West to take over the Arabic illustrations, it again assimilated classical conceptions, but this time from a totally different angle. The Carolingian assimilation had been an absorption of figures which while classical both in style and in mythological meaning were already fairly devoid of scientific exactness. The assimilation of the Arabic types, on the contrary, was an absorption of knowledge which was classical in sub-



FIG. 12. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES
FROM COD. VAT. REG. LAT. 309. IX CENTURY

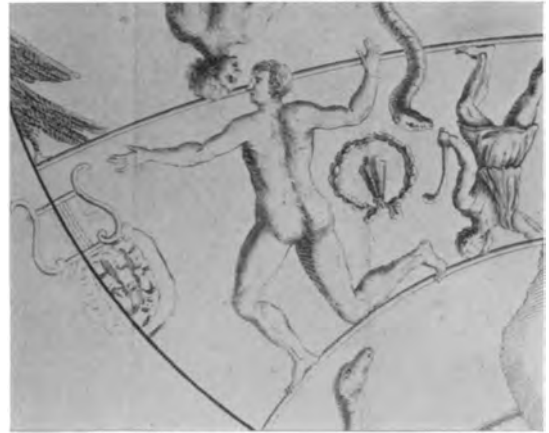


FIG. 13. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES (ENGONASIN)
FROM THE FARNESE GLOBE

natural science came through Arabic sources. As we have learned from the dome of Kuseir 'Amrā, the Arabs were acquainted with Greek astronomical ideas as early as the eighth century. Moreover, they preserved and developed the Greek astronomical figures. This, however, they did in a way quite different from that which was followed in the West. The Arabs did not care so much for the pictures as such, and, in the proverbial sense of the phrase, the mythological meanings were Greek to them, but they endeavored to preserve and even to perfect the scientific precision of their models. They kept the stars in their correct astronomical positions, and where they changed the figures and the accessories they did it by orientalizing them, but in such a way that the representations remained essentially unaltered and

subject and method but was hidden behind entirely non-classical images most of which bore unintelligible Arabic names.

This assimilation from Arabic sources took place through two focal points: Spain and southern Italy, especially Sicily. Our figure 17 is taken from a Sicilian manuscript in which the style of an Arabic prototype was imitated with an almost archaeological faithfulness that was extremely rare and perhaps unique in the Middle Ages. The Spanish group may be exemplified by the Hercules (fig. 18) from the Cod. Vat. lat. 8174, which is a copy of a manuscript executed for the famous King Alphonso the Wise and is distinguished by the fact that the images of the constellations are placed in roundels, about each of which are radiating

sectors filled with a thorough scientific explanation of the several stars in the constellation.¹³

The degenerate Western types persisted and sometimes, as in the Morgan manuscript, interbred with Oriental types. Nevertheless, in spite of their lack of mythological appurtenances, the astronomically correct Oriental types, such as that of the Hercules we have just examined, served as models for many Western manuscripts. They were followed in an interesting fifteenth-century manuscript (Cod. Vind. 5415; fig. 19) that in its turn became the model upon

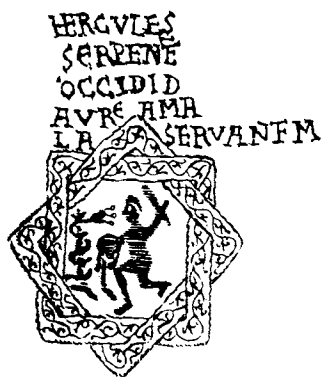


FIG. 14. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES
FROM THE XI CENTURY "KRÖNUNGSMANTEL"
BAMBERG CATHEDRAL

which Dürer based his two woodcuts of the celestial globe (B.151 [fig. 20] and B.152). In figure 21A-C we have juxtaposed Dürer's Hercules with a detail from Cod. Vind. 5415 and an original Arabic miniature. In this Arabic miniature Hercules is even more fantastic than in Cod. Vat. lat. 8174 or Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. 1036, for he wears a turban and carries a kind of sickle. And now we can see how Dürer achieved "the happy end of the story."¹⁴ Although he kept fairly close to the orientalized image in the fifteenth-century Western manuscript, he none the less reverted to the classical conception of Hercules by giving him a muscular body and the correct facial type with curls and a manly beard, and especially by returning to the hero his lion's skin and club. Thus in his woodcut Dürer achieved a reintegration of the classical type by bringing together again both

scientific and mythological antiquity, classical meaning and classical form. This process may be regarded as a general characteristic of what we know as the Renaissance movement.

This evolution could be illustrated by many more examples but we shall confine ourselves to that of Perseus. In the ninth-century Leyden manuscript (Cod. Leydensis Vossianus lat. 79) Perseus appears as a beautiful classical figure (fig. 22). He runs gracefully and except for a billowing drapery is almost entirely naked. At his heels he has the wings lent to him by Mercury. In his right hand he brandishes a sword and in his left he bears the head of Medusa with its snake locks and with blood dripping from its throat.

We shall pass over the gradual degeneration of this image in the mediaeval Western tradition, and come immediately to its treatment in the Italo-Arabic manuscript in the Arsenal (fig. 23). Here, not only has the pose of the Greek hero been changed to agree with the true positions of the stars but he is clad in Oriental costume (cf. fig. 24A). The most striking change, however, is that the head of a bearded male demon has taken the place of Medusa's head. The Arabian illustrators, who were ignorant of the classical myth, completely misunderstood Medusa's head and interpreted its terri-

¹³ Cf. Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part I, p. 95.

¹⁴ Cf. Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part II, pp. 35 ff., 150 ff. The two woodcuts resulted from the united endeavor of no less than three persons: Dürer, who did the definitive drawing, Georg Heinfogel, who *stellas posuit*, and Johannes Stabius, who was responsible for the general arrangement of the celestial maps (*ordinavit*). Stabius was a professor in history and astronomy at the University of Vienna, and, since the Cod. Vind. 5415 was owned by a Viennese patrician as early as the fifteenth century, it is beyond doubt that this codex was the actual prototype of the two Dürer woodcuts. The humanistic modifications mentioned in our text are all the more remarkable since a celestial globe of 1480 preserved in Cracow (cf. *Anzeiger d. Akad. d. Wiss. in Krakau*, 1892, pp. 108 ff.), very similar to the Vienna miniatures in every respect, also shows the Hercules provided with a scimitar and the Perseus carrying the bearded demon's head.

fying expression as a demoniacal quality and the drops or streams of blood as a beard. Thus they transformed Medusa into a demon and even called that part of the constellation Perseus by the name of Ra's al Ghul, i.e., "Head of the Demon." And this is why we all speak of the star Algol in that constellation.

The Vienna miniature that was used as a model by Dürer also follows the Arabic tradition, even in so far as Perseus is labeled with its Arabic name and the bearded head is called "Caput Algol" (fig. 24b). Here again Dürer, while keeping to his prototype in every other respect, endeavored to restore the classical idea by adding wings to the heels of Perseus, replacing the demon's head by that of a Gorgon with snakes for hair, and changing the inscription "Caput Algol" to "Caput Meduse" (fig. 24c).¹⁵

The assimilation of Arabic knowledge brought to the Western countries not only a new conception of astronomy, medicine, and other natural sciences, but also a knowledge of astrology, which until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was almost unknown, or at least was not practised in the West. The belief that the stars had power to determine destiny and character, although consistent with the polytheistic system of late antique paganism and with the fatalism of Islam, was originally considered to be incompatible with the essential principles of the Christian religion. Nevertheless, the fas-

cination of astrological beliefs, once they became known through the intermediary of the Arabs, was so irresistible that even great Christian theologians like William of Auvergne (Gulielmus Parisiensis) and Thomas Aquinas were obliged to compromise with it. Good Catholics no longer shrank from arranging their entire lives in accordance with the stars, even down to their clothes and their most minute daily occupations. The very calendars which precede Christian prayer books still usu-



FIG. 15. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES
FROM BODL. MS. 614. XII CENTURY

ally include a representation of a human figure indicating the influence of the signs of the zodiac on the various parts of the body.¹⁶

This revival of astrological beliefs gave added importance to a kind of star, or perhaps astral divinity, which previously had not played a great rôle in the strictly astronomical manuscripts. Nevertheless, the planets, for it is of these that we are speaking, are of even greater importance for our purposes than the constellations.¹⁷ The deities of the constellations, such as Hercules or Perseus, belonged to what Tasso called "la plebe degli dei" (the lower class of the gods) whereas the deities of the planets were identified with the really "big shots," such as Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury. These deities of the movable planets, endowed with all the might of powerful gods, were capable

¹⁵ Cf. Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part II, *loc. cit.* Curiously enough, Dürer's Medusa head strikingly resembles the well-known Gorgoneion type of Greek archaic art, as for example in the famous Gorgoneion from the Acropolis (Athens, Museum) and the Perseus metope from temple C of Selinus (Museo nazionale, Palermo) and on the archaic coins of Neopolis in Macedonia and several other cities. In fact it is quite possible that Dürer had an opportunity of seeing a specimen of this kind, for we know that Wilibald Pirckheimer, his best friend and adviser in *humanioribus*, owned a considerable collection of Greek and Roman coins.

¹⁶ Cf. Boll and Bezold, p. 54, and *passim*, pls. X, XI.

¹⁷ Cf. Saxl, *Islam*, vol. III, pp. 151 ff.

of fighting, opposing, or assisting one another, and were regarded as the true rulers of mankind. They determined the physical constitution, the character, the destiny, and even the calling of the newborn child. "Man," as an astrological text puts it, "is a child of his planet."

In astronomical manuscripts of the kind we have so far been dealing with, the representations of the planets were limited to series of busts such as those we see on Roman coins, to which were sometimes added maps of their orbits. In these maps the deities of the single planets, who were also the deities of the days of the week, were represented according to their classical types. Thus, for instance, in the Leyden manuscript, the small-sized figures of the planets (cf. fig. 26) exactly repeat the figures appearing in the famous "chronograph of the year 354," which in their turn conform to the types developed in the usual Greek and Roman representations of the Olympic deities (fig. 25).¹⁸

In the astrological manuscripts, however, we find images so entirely different that they cannot be explained as mere degenerations or Oriental transformations of classical pictures, but must be recognized as complete innovations. Michael Scotus (died 1234), the court astrologer of the Emperor Frederic II, first gave a thorough description of these new images. The earliest illustrations of them that are known to exist in manuscript form are those in Cod. Monac. lat. 10268 (fig. 27), of about the middle of the fourteenth century. Jupiter, for instance, is a distinguished gentleman who is seated before a table and carries gloves, upon which the text lays great emphasis; Venus is a lovely young lady in a contemporary costume who holds a rose to her face; and, to crown it all, Mercury is a bishop holding a crosier and a book. The derivation of these types from the East is proved by the fact that the Arabian writers and illustrators gave to the planetary divinities these same unwonted and distinctly

non-classical characteristics and attributes.¹⁹ According to the Arabic texts and pictures Venus is a lovely young woman carrying flowers, Jupiter is a distinguished and learned gentleman, and Mercury, who carries a book, often has a halo, which distinguishes him as a kind of holy priest or dervish.

It is interesting to find that these planetary figures were transmitted to the West in a way quite different from that which was followed by the figures of the constellations. As we have pointed out, the Arabic pictures of such constellations as Hercules and Perseus were connected by a representational tradition with both the classical prototypes and their Western derivations. The Arabian planets, on the other hand, were not directly derived from classical types and were so incomprehensible to the Western mediaeval illuminators that they did not attempt to copy or imitate them. Anyone can see that the Arabian planets, as represented, for example, in the Bodleian MS. Or. 133 (fig. 28), have no possible connection with the classical figures. They seem Arabian, or even somewhat Indian, while the figures in the Scotus manuscripts appear to be fourteenth-century Giottesque personages in contemporary costumes and poses. Scotus, who was trained in Spain and lived in Sicily, had enjoyed particularly good opportunities of becoming familiar with the elaborations of the Arabian astrologers, and his book was inspired by Arabic sources, both literary and representational.²⁰ In spite of this, however, it is evident that the

¹⁸ Cf. Strzygowski, *Jahrbuch d. kaiserl. archäol. Inst.*, 1888, supplement I. Similar types of planets (slightly degenerated, however, and provided with clothes) occur in Cod. Vat. Reg. lat. 123 (Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part I, pl. V).

¹⁹ Cf. Saxl, *Islam*, loc. cit. As for the flower of Venus, see Cod. Cracov. 793 DD36, fol. 382.

²⁰ Still, Scotus's descriptions of the planetarian divinities reveal his acquaintance with a peculiar type of Western literature of which we shall speak below (p. 253), namely, the writings of the mediaeval mythographers. This is proved, for instance, by his descrip-



FIG. 16. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES
FROM MORGAN LIBRARY, MS. M.384
XV CENTURY



FIG. 17. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES
FROM BIBL. DE L'ARSENAL, MS. 1036
XIII CENTURY



FIG. 18. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES, FROM COD. VAT. LAT. 8174
COPY OF A MANUSCRIPT EXECUTED FOR KING ALPHONSO THE WISE OF SPAIN

artists who illustrated his astrological text instead of imitating Arabic images used contemporary European figures. Thus we can understand how their trecento figures came to have such peculiar attitudes.

As the Arabic figures obviously are not derived from Greek or Roman types, it is necessary to find out where the Arabs got them. The

as late as in the fourth century B. C. Thus Plato does not yet connect the planets with any deities, calling the planet Saturn, for example, simply Phainon, "the glaring star." Moreover, it should be remembered that the old Babylonian conceptions of Ishtar, Marduk, and Nergal were much more deeply rooted in the Oriental mind than the classical conceptions of

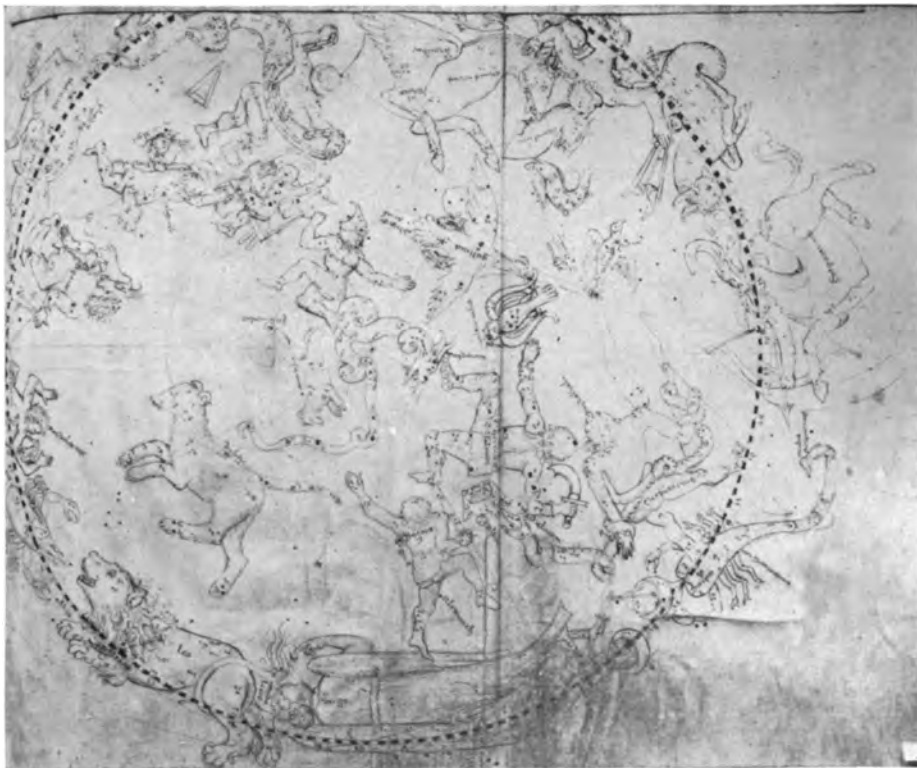


FIG. 19. CELESTIAL MAP, FROM COD. VIND. 5415. BEFORE 1464

answer is a rather surprising one. They were derived in part from ancient Babylon. We must not forget that originally the worship of the planets was neither Greek nor Roman, but Babylonian, and was transmitted to the West

Venus, Jupiter, and Mars, which had subsequently taken their place. We can even trace the channels by which these Oriental conceptions were transmitted to the mediaeval Arabian astrologers and artists.²¹ Both the repre-

tion of Saturn, whom he asserts to be an old man, having *capillos canos* and *galeam in capite*. Now the "Mythographus III" (most probably identical with Alexander Neckham, died 1217) describes Saturn as "senem canum, caput glauco amictu coopertum habentem" (Bode, pp. 153 ff.; cf. Liebeschütz, p. 58). Since we learn from a fourteenth-century treatise deriving from Mythographus III (the passage in question is quoted by Liebeschütz, *loc. cit.*) that Neck-

ham's *glauco* had been occasionally misread as *galeatum* ("caput galeatum amictu coopertum habebat," the fourteenth-century author says), it is most probable that Scotus's *galea* (which henceforth became a typical feature of the image of Saturn in astrological illustration, although it cannot be accounted for by any astrological source prior to Scotus) also derives from a misreading of Neckham's description.

²¹ Cf. Saxl, *Islam*, *loc. cit.*

sensation of Mercury as a priestly man with a book and a halo and the representation of Jupiter as a distinguished scholar can be traced back more easily to the conceptions of the Babylonian deities Nebo and Marduk than to those of the classical deities Hermes-Mercury and

deities as the chairman, so to speak, of an assembly of other persons arranged in horizontal series. There are seven of these other persons in each series, but our illustration actually includes only three of them (the four others being represented on the opposite page). These



FIG. 20. CELESTIAL MAP, BY DÜRER. WOODCUT B.151, DATED 1515

Zeus-Jupiter. Thus these odd images of the planets, which sprang up in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and completely supplanted the classical types of the Carolingian Aratea manuscripts, may be regarded as being not merely deviations from the classical tradition, but new mediaeval elaborations of ancient Oriental conceptions. Their further development is curious.

The miniature from the Bodleian MS. Or. 133 (fig. 28) represents each of the planetary

persons are the "Children of the Planets" and they typify the various callings suitable for men who were born under the influence of their several planets. The children of Mercury, for instance, are particularly gifted in painting, writing, and every kind of subtle craftsmanship.

"Synoptical tables" such as these gave rise to a particular group of representations²² which

²² Cf. Lippmann, *Die sieben Planeten*; Hauber, *Planetenkinderbilder und Sternbilder*; Saxl, *Verzeichnis*,

play rather an important rôle in the secular iconography of the later Middle Ages. In the so-called Salone at Padua, for example, there are mural paintings of this kind, which have been dated by local writers in the beginning of the fourteenth century and have even been attributed to Giotto. In their present state, however, they are in the style of about 1420, the year in which the building was damaged by fire. They illustrate the influence of the planets upon callings, characters, and physiological

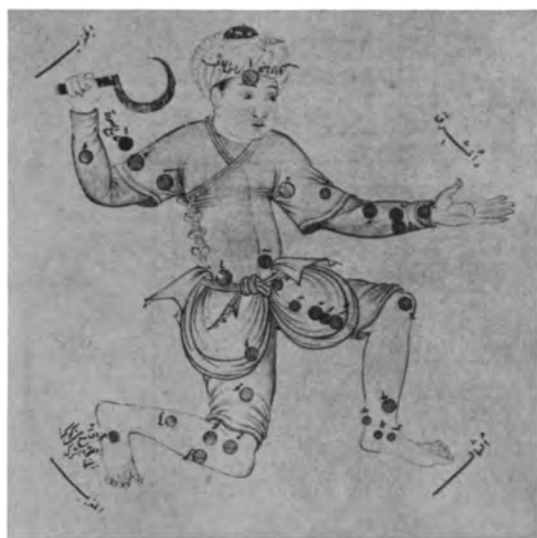


FIG. 21A. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES
FROM PARIS, COD. ARAB. 5036

conditions. Our figure 29 shows some of the children of Saturn, who are subject to rheumatism and melancholy, and are fitted to be farmers, shear grinders, leather dressers, stone carvers, carpenters, gardeners, and anchorites. While the figures as such do not differ from the usual types of Western fifteenth-century art, their arrangement shows the Oriental origin of the general conception, for it is still in the scientific tabular form of the Arabic manuscripts.

The realism of Northern fifteenth-century art, however, tried to bring the rationalistic

and heterogeneous coördination of the Arabs into an intuitive and homogeneous unity: some of the professions were done away with, and the planet and its remaining children were placed in a unified pictorial space in order to suggest a kind of congenial mental atmosphere. This development seems to proceed from the *Épître d'Othéa* of Christine de Pisan, a learned lady attached to the royal court at Paris, who had inherited from her father, an Italian physician and astrologer, a knowledge of astrological theories as well as an inclination to visualize them in pictures. Thus in the illustrations to her book the children of Mars are pulled together into a battlepiece, and the children of Mercury are all scholars or philosophers in discussion, while the planetary deity is seated on a rainbow in Heaven (fig. 31). It is obvious that the scheme of the composition has been assimilated to those of religious representations, such as the Last Judgment, some scenes from the Apocalypse, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. The last of these especially is comparable to the pictures of the planets' children, as in each a celestial emanation governs the minds and behavior of human beings subject to an influence, in the literal sense of that word (fig. 32).²³

Having been assimilated to a type that was familiar to the popular mind, this compositional scheme was universally accepted. It was developed by Northern art into a more complex and amusing type which, with some improvements, was copied by the Florentine engravers. The later fifteenth-century compositions differed from the illustrations to the poem by Christine de Pisan in an intensification of the feeling for perspective and an unprejudiced observation of everyday life, so that they became genre pictures in which were depicted slices of human life and habits as ruled by one or another of the planetary deities. Thus the

part II, pp. 67 ff., and *Kunstchronik*, n. s. vol. XXX, pp. 1013 ff.; Panofsky and Saxl, pp. 121 ff.

²³ Cf. Bamberg, Staatl. Bibl., *Mittelalterliche Minia-*

turen, part 2, pl. 5. As for the Apocalypse, instructive specimens were recently published by Neuss, especially figs. 98, 101, 190.

picture of the children of Jupiter developed into a portrayal of fashionable life, while that of the children of Saturn became a portrayal of the poor and miserable, such as unfortunate peasants, beggars, cripples, and criminals. The planetary deity is represented in various ways. Sometimes he is enthroned. Sometimes he is a naked standing figure. In Italian pictures, in accord with Petrarch's *Trionfi*, the planet generally drives a chariot. In the German pictures he often appears on horseback, as though at a tournament. A good example of this is to be found in the delightful drawing of about 1490 by the Master of the House Book (fig. 30), in which the aged Mercury is seen riding a richly caparisoned horse, while he governs and protects a series of incidents which are all connected with the idea of the more or less "fine" arts. These incidents all display a most wonderful sense of humor. The celestial Virgin (one of the signs of the zodiac belonging to Mercury) looks in her mirror and arranges her hair, a teacher flogs his unfortunate pupil, the sculptor's wife to her husband's chagrin offers a goblet to his journeyman, and the painter is interrupted and presumably pleased by the visit of a charming young lady.²⁴ It is a little difficult to realize that this colorful picture is mentally connected with a classical mythological figure.

About the same time that the Master of the House Book made his drawing a curious thing happened. In some German manuscripts of Michael Scotus's astrological treatises the absurdly non-classical figures were replaced by others which impress us as being much more akin to the Greek and Roman representations of the corresponding deities. In fact, they were imitated from a Carolingian copy of the chronograph of 354, as is shown, for instance, by the Darmstadt MS. 266. Thus, if we look at Mars (fig. 33A) in that manuscript we see that his shield, his facial type, and his proportions are

"late Gothic" in type, but at the same time the position of his arm, his fluttering drapery, and his backward turning movement are obviously imitated from the classical prototype (fig. 33B). It is as if, thanks to the humanistic movement of the fifteenth century, some Northern artists had suddenly become aware that it was incon-



FIG. 21B. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES
FROM COD. VIND. 5415



FIG. 21C. THE CONSTELLATION HERCULES
FROM DÜRER'S WOODCUT B.151

gruous to represent a classical deity, such as Mercury or Mars, in so non-classical a manner as was usual in late mediaeval illustrations and had started what we may call a pseudo-Renaissance on the basis of the Carolingian manuscripts, which at that time were practically the only sources upon which they could draw for their classical prototypes. Although this movement did not completely do away with non-classical representations, it is nevertheless a rather important symptom of the gen-

²⁴ Cf. Bossert and Storck, *Das mittelalterliche Hausbuch*, and the references given in note 22 above.

eral mental evolution. Representations of the planets such as those in the Darmstadt and other manuscripts²⁵ are by no means exceptional, as we shall see at once. They certainly prepared the way for the definitive reintegration of the genuine classical types in the sixteenth century on the basis of actual antique reliefs and statues, as exemplified by a German woodcut of about 1520 (fig. 34), which represents a Roman Mercury that had been excavated at Augsburg twenty years earlier.



FIG. 22. THE CONSTELLATION PERSEUS
FROM COD. LEYDENSISS VOSSIANUS LAT. 79
IX CENTURY

II

Now, when looking about for further mediaeval representations of classical divinities connected with antiquity by what we have called the representational tradition, we turn, in the first place, to the manuscripts of the great classical poets, such as Virgil and Ovid. Here, how-

²⁵ Planets similar to those in the Darmstadt MS. 266 are also to be found in several other Scotus manuscripts (Cod. Vat. Pal. lat. 1370, dated 1472; cf. Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part I, pp. 20 ff., fig. 29; Salzburg, Studienbibliothek, Cod. V 2 G 81/83, not mentioned in Tietze's *Die illuminierten Handschriften in Salzburg*). The connection between these figures and the types of the chronograph of 354 was observed by our friend Dr. E. Breitenbach of the Municipal Library at Frankfurt.

ever, we are greatly disappointed: of Ovid, it seems, no illustrated manuscripts have been preserved, and the two illustrated Vatican Virgils, as far as we know, were never copied during the Middle Ages. There are, however, two species of monuments in which we find what we are searching for: firstly, a limited number of Biblical representations in which classical mythological figures were inserted for special reasons; and, secondly, the illustrations in the mediaeval forerunners of our modern encyclopedias, which endeavored to gather together the fragments of classical scientific literature and usually dealt with the pagan divinities in a particular chapter, "De diis gentium" or the like.²⁶

As for the Biblical representations, we limit ourselves to reminding our readers of the Carolingian crucifixions representing Sun and Moon as well as Oceanus and Tellus in accordance with classical iconography. Oceanus is rendered as a reclining figure very similar to the Eridanuses which we mentioned before.

²⁶ There is, of course, a lot of theological literature mentioning the pagan deities, mostly for polemic reasons, so that we encounter, for instance, a Coronation of Proserpine in the *Legenda aurea* (cf. Huard, in *Les Trésors des bibliothèques de France*, vol. III, fasc. 9, pp. 25 ff.)—not counting the manuscripts of Saint Augustine's *Civitas Dei* (Laborde, *Les Manuscrits de la Cité de Dieu*) or the innumerable representations of martyrdoms in which a pagan idol is made to stand upon a column. However, in Western art these mythological images are not connected—or at most in a very general way—with genuine classical types, while in Byzantine theological manuscripts we find some surprising specimens of true representational tradition. Thus in a twelfth-century Greek manuscript of the Sermons of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (Paris, Bibl. Nat., MS. Coislin 239; cf. Omont, pl. CXVIII) there can be seen small representations of Orpheus, Isis, Venus, and so forth. In part these are but loosely connected with classical models, so that nearly the same type of "pagan idol" was used for Cybele as for Hecate. On the other hand, the picture of Orpheus unmistakably derives from genuine classical representations of this particular subject (fig. 3) except that he is provided with a halo, owing to the fact that, in Early Christian art, Christ had already been assimilated to the Orpheus type.

Tellus is a half-naked woman carrying a cornucopia and nursing two snakes. The maker of the famous Munich ivory²⁷ illustrated in figure 35 even goes so far as to show in two

way that the figures of Hercules, Eridanus, and Perseus did, so that in the high Romanesque crucifixions, such as the well-known relief called Externsteine, executed in 1115, the



FIG. 23. THE CONSTELLATION PERSEUS
FROM BIBL. DE L'ARSENAL, MS. 1036



FIG. 24A. THE CONSTELLATION PERSEUS
FROM PARIS, COD. ARAB. 5036



FIG. 24B. THE CONSTELLATION PERSEUS
FROM COD. VIND. 5415



FIG. 24C. THE CONSTELLATION PERSEUS
FROM DÜRER'S WOODCUT B.151

medallions the quadriga of Sol and the biga of Luna drawn by two oxen, both of them most faithfully following genuine classical prototypes. These motives, however, during the following centuries degenerate in the same

way that the figures of Hercules, Eridanus, and Perseus did, so that in the high Romanesque crucifixions, such as the well-known relief called Externsteine, executed in 1115, the

²⁷ Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, vol. I, p. 41.

In the encyclopedias the classical types are given up even more abruptly. As we are not

acquainted with illustrated manuscripts of the first mediaeval encyclopedia, the *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville, we must have recourse to the elaboration of his Carolingian follower Hrabanus Maurus, Abbot of Fulda in Hesse. The original ninth-century manuscript of his *De rerum natura* (subsequently called *De universo*) has not yet been discovered, but we possess a rather clumsy copy executed about 1023 in Monte Cassino and preserved there to our own time. In it (book XV, chapter 6)



FIG. 25. MERCURY, FROM THE "CHRONOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 354." RENAISSANCE COPY IN THE BIBLIOTECA BARBERINA, ROME

we find the whole pantheon of pagan deities (fig. 37), and when we juxtapose these images with classical reliefs and statues, we realize at once that they are connected with antiquity by true representational tradition (perhaps through the intermediary of illustrated Isidore manuscripts), in spite of the fact that they impress us at first glance as rather strange-looking.²⁸ Some of their details can be accounted for only by the indications of the text. Thus, for example, the jar that Pluto carries is to be explained by the fact that the text derives his Latin name Orcus from *orca*, which means "urn"; and that Mercury kills a snake with a long staff obviously results from a misreading of the textual description of the caduceus

(Hrabanus reads "Virga, qua serpentes dividit," that is, "a staff by means of which he cuts snakes to pieces" instead of "Virga, quae serpentes dividit," that is, "a staff which separates two snakes"). The general types, however, indubitably derive from genuine classical models. Proof of this is provided by the goblet of Bacchus, which is not mentioned in the text, and consequently must have been taken over from a visual model. The very misunderstandings confirm the fact that the illustrations of the original manuscript were connected with antiquity by a representational tradition. Thus



FIG. 26. MERCURY FROM COD. LEYDENSIS VOSSIANUS LAT. 79

the lion's skin of Hercules, which is not mentioned in the text, has developed into a living animal peeping over the hero's shoulder. The snake winding itself round his right leg seems to be taken over from a representation of his fight with the Hydra.²⁹

²⁸ Amelli, *Miniature sacre e profane dell' anno 1023 illustranti l'Enciclopedia medioevale di Rabano Mauro*; Goldschmidt, *Vorträge der Bibl. Warburg*, vol. III, pp. 215 ff.; Lehmann, *Sitzungsber. d. bayr. Akad. d. Wiss., Philosoph.-philol. Klasse*, 1927, part 2, especially p. 14, note 3.

²⁹ Other "visual" misinterpretations, however, are not due to the Carolingian illuminator, but to the eleventh-century copyist who executed the Montecassinen-sis. Between the legs of Mercury, for instance, there flutters a bird which can be accounted for only by a misinterpretation of the traditional foot wings, which

Now, characteristically enough, these Hrabanus pictures sink into oblivion for many centuries and are replaced (just as happened with the pictures of the planets) by mytholog-

only are these images clumsy and partly incorrect, as the Hrabanus illustrations were, but they are actual travesties, because in them mere textual descriptions were translated into the



FIG. 27. SATURN, JUPITER, VENUS, MARS, AND MERCURY
FROM COD. MONAC. LAT. 10268. XIV CENTURY

ical images which, standing in no representational tradition whatever, must have been drawn exclusively from literary sources. Not

immediate language of contemporary mediaeval art.

the artist believed to belong to a complete bird. As this mistake does not occur in a fifteenth-century manuscript copied from another prototype (see fig. 42), we learn from it that the Carolingian original was perfectly correct in this respect.

The later Greek philosophers, particularly the Stoics, inclining towards a dissolution of the religious reality of the pagan gods, had interpreted them as mere personifications either of natural forces or of moral qualities. In the last centuries of the Roman Empire this tend-

ency increased so greatly that the classical Homeric or Olympian deities had become not so much the objects of pious worship as the subjects of didactic allegorical poetry and scholar-

were either illusions or malignant demons, the pagan world itself had become so estranged from those deities that the learned Roman writers felt entitled to "moralize" them in a purely

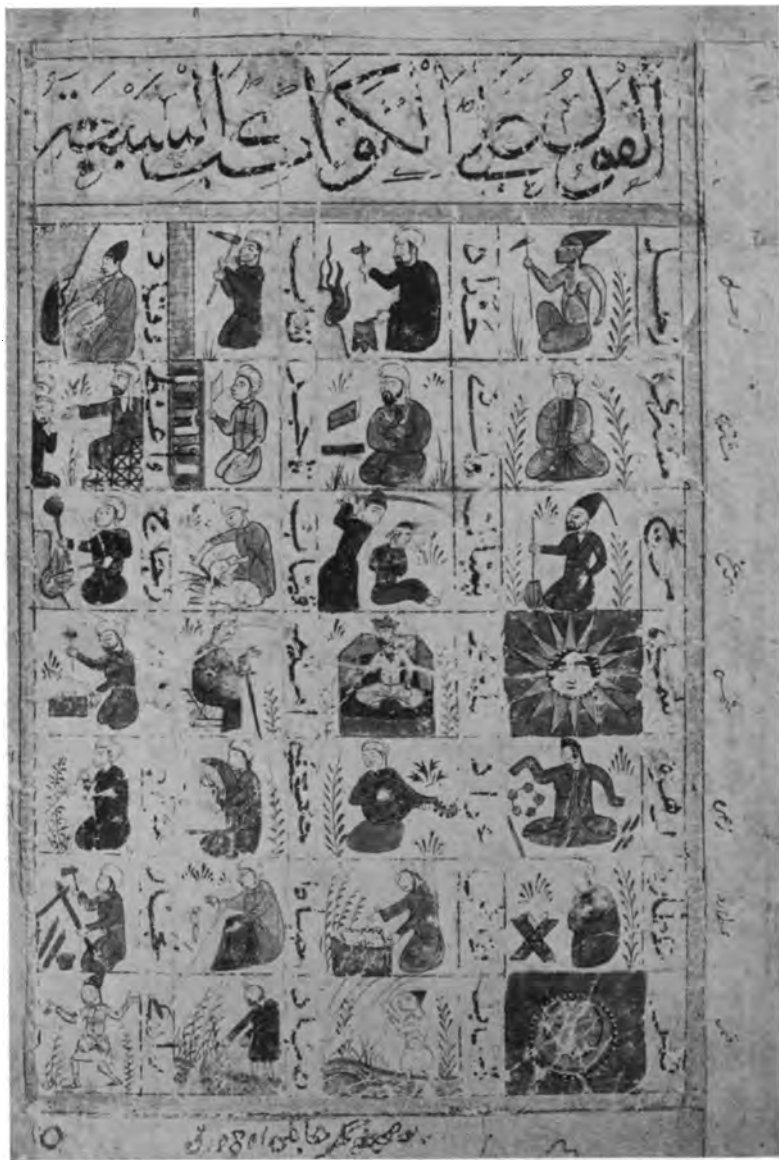


FIG. 28. THE SEVEN PLANETS AND THEIR CHILDREN
FROM BODL. MS. OR. 133. ARABIC, XIV CENTURY

ly investigations. While this was happening the true religious feelings of the pagan peoples concentrated more and more on exotic mysteries, such as those of the cults of Mithras, Isis, and Orpheus. While the early Christian Fathers endeavored to prove that the pagan gods

allegorical manner. Martianus Capella wrote his long-winded novel, *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology*, the very title of which eloquently proves what we may call the "allegorical secularization" of the Olympian divinities. Another important work of this kind is the

Saturnalia of Macrobius. Fulgentius in his *Mitologiae* interpreted Hercules as a personification of virtue, and the three feet of the Delphic tripod as symbols of present, past, and future. In the famous commentary of Servius on Virgil's *Aeneid*, which was three times as long as the poem itself and perhaps more intensely studied, the myth of Hercules and Atlas is explained by the assumption that Hercules was an astrologer who learned his discipline

raphers were illustrated. These illustrations actually determined the general mediaeval conception of the classical mythological figures. Because they were drawn immediately from the descriptions in the text, they impress us almost as deliberate caricatures, although of course they are meant quite seriously. When a modern man thinks of the Laocoön and the Three Graces, his mind unconsciously visualizes the Vatican group and the innumerable



FIG. 29. THE CHILDREN OF SATURN. MURAL PAINTING IN THE SO-CALLED SALONE AT PADUA, ABOUT 1420

from Atlas, and so forth, *ad infinitum*.

Now this mass of rather dry late antique literature was the foundation of what we might call mediaeval mythography. Mediaeval writers gathered together the various statements of the late antique authors, commenting upon the texts and even upon the commentaries, in order to justify as well as to facilitate the reading of classical Roman literature. From the end of the eleventh century or the beginning of the twelfth throughout the following centuries, the works of these mediaeval mythog-

raphers were illustrated. These illustrations actually determined the general mediaeval conception of the classical mythological figures. Because they were drawn immediately from the descriptions in the text, they impress us almost as deliberate caricatures, although of course they are meant quite seriously. When a modern man thinks of the Laocoön and the Three Graces, his mind unconsciously visualizes the Vatican group and the innumerable

³⁰ Cf. Förster, *Jahrbuch d. königl. preuss. Kunstmus.*, vol. XXVII, pp. 156 ff.; also Goldschmidt, *Vorträge der Bibl. Warburg*, vol. I, pp. 42 ff.

Thus an illuminator of about 1100, in illustrating Remigius's commentary upon Martianus Capella (Cod. Monac. lat. 14271; fig. 39),

represented Saturn in a manner so extremely different from the classical one that he looks rather like one of the saints in the celebrated altar frontal given to the Basel Cathedral by Henry II, now in the Musée de Cluny at Paris.³¹

assimilated it to the eagle inspiring Saint John or the dove of the Holy Ghost inspiring Saint Gregory, is provided with a dainty halo. Apollo, finally, rides in a rustic cart and holds the Three Graces in a nosegay. This funny detail



FIG. 30. THE CHILDREN OF MERCURY. PEN DRAWING BY THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE BOOK, ABOUT 1490. WOLFEGG CASTLE, AUSTRIA

Because the texts speak of a *caput velatum*, the "covered head," which in the classical period was rendered by bringing a fold of the mantle over the head, is here rendered by a floating *veil*, which stands out at the sides with characteristic billows. Jupiter looks like an enthroned mediaeval king, and his prophetic raven (*corvus*, according to Cicero's *De divinatione* I. 12), because the illuminator unconsciously

is a very instructive example of what we are endeavoring to make clear. In classical Greek sculpture there was a type of Apollo that held in his hand a small replica of the famous group of the Three Graces, much as the world-renowned Jupiter by Pheidias held in his hand a small figure of Victory. Such a statue was

³¹ Cf. Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part I, pp. 108, 110; *idem*, *Repertorium f. Kunstwiss.*, vol. XLIII, pp. 220 ff.

indexed by Pausanias, the author of the antique traveler's guidebook for tourists through Greece, and his description was taken over by the late antique writer Macrobius, mentioned above.³² By him the motive was handed down to the ninth-century author whose treatise was illustrated by our illuminator. This unfortunate man, absolutely ignorant of the classical group of the Three Graces, as well as of the classical

raphy formerly called the *Mythographus tertius*. The story of this text is curious enough. In the fourteenth century it was used by Boccaccio for his famous *Genealogia deorum*, in which, however, he surpassed the mediaeval mythographer by reverting to the genuine antique sources and carefully collating them with each other, so that, for example, he is in a position to enumerate five different Venuses and



FIG. 31. THE CHILDREN OF MERCURY
FROM A MANUSCRIPT BY CHRISTINE DE PISAN
BIBL. NAT., MS. FR. 606. EARLY XV CENTURY



FIG. 32. THE COMMUNITY OF THE FAITHFUL
INSPIRED WITH THE HOLY GHOST
FROM COD. BAMBERG, MS. LAT. 5. EARLY XI CENTURY

quadriga solis, was expected to illustrate a text which said that Apollo, the divinity of the sun, was to ride in a chariot drawn by four horses and was to hold the Three Graces in his hand.

Characteristically enough, the focal point of this mediaeval mythography was a region fairly remote from direct Mediterranean tradition: northern France and England. About 1200, the rather well-known English scholar Alexander Neckham (died 1217) composed the conclusive compendium of mediaeval mythog-

no less than thirty-one labors of Hercules. Even Petrarch drew from the English compendium for the description of the sculptural representations of classical divinities which were admired by Scipio in the palace of the African king Syphax.³³ Petrarch turned Alexander Neckham's rough mediaeval Latin into the most beautiful Latin hexameters, omitted the whole moralistic explanation, and dramatized the description according to the dynamic principles of classical poetry (compare Neckham's "unde et Argum dicitur occidisse quod astuti fures . . . negotiatores, saepe etiam sapientissimos viros . . . desipiant et defraudant"

³² Cf. Overbeck, vol. III, book 5, pp. 17 ff.

³³ Petrarch, *Africa*, book III.

with Petrarch's "Curvo cadit Argus ab ense"). It is a memorable fact that the most distinguished poet of the Italian trecento was obliged



FIG. 33A. MARS, FROM THE DARMSTADT MS. 266
MIDDLE OF THE XV CENTURY



FIG. 33B. MARS, FROM THE
"CHRONOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 354"

to have recourse to an English compendium of about 1200 in order to glean information about the gods of his own ancestors.

Meanwhile, in the Northern countries, a further step in the moralization of classical mythology had been taken: the figures of ancient mythology were not only interpreted in

a general moralistic way, but were quite definitely related to the Christian faith, so that, for instance, Pyramus was interpreted as Christ, Thisbe as the human soul, and the lion as Evil defiling its garments. The best-known document for this tendency is the French *Ovide moralisé*, in which all the *Metamorphoses* are interpreted in a Christian manner. Petrus Berchorius (Pierre Bersuire), a French theo-



FIG. 34. MERCURY. WOODCUT FROM CONRAD PEUTINGER
"INSCRIPTIONES VETUSTAE ROMANORUM ET EORUM
FRAGMENTA IN AUGUSTA VINDELICORUM. . ."
MAINZ, 1520

logian and a friend of Petrarch's, composed a new moralized Ovid, not in French verse but in Latin prose, and provided it with an introduction in which he explained the pagan divinities so often mentioned in the following text. Thus he in his turn used the descriptions of Petrarch, but he endowed them again with complicated moralistic explanations. In accordance with the increase of astrological thought and the strengthening of belief in it, he emphasized the identity of the seven greatest divinities with the seven planets and arranged their hierarchy in the same sequence as the celestial spheres. As his introduction, except for its long-winded explanations, was capable of

being very useful to artists who wished to represent the pagan gods, the whole thing was summarized and its explanations were again deleted in the curious *Albricus sive Libellus de imaginibus deorum*, a kind of popular mediæval handbook of classical mythology for educational and pictorial purposes.³⁴

This *Albricus* was illustrated in a fine Italian

beholder and the other two did not. But the classical composition itself had been forgotten, and therefore the Grace with her back turned is no longer shown in the middle. No mediæval artist could imagine that the reason for the positions in the classical group had originally been a mere aesthetic one, for in the mythological literature they were explained by



FIG. 35. THE CRUCIFIXION
CAROLINGIAN IVORY CARVING
STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, MUNICH



FIG. 36. THE CRUCIFIXION
ROMANESQUE STONE RELIEF CALLED EXTERNSTEINE
ABOUT 1115

manuscript executed about 1420 in northern Italy (Cod. Vat. Reg. 1290). Figure 40 shows Venus and Mercury from this manuscript, both of whom are independent of any classical prototypes. The Three Graces in the picture of the birth of Venus are most amusing. All that had remained in the textual tradition of the famous classical representations of the Graces was the fact that one turned her back to the

an allegory, according to which a favor conferred (the Grace with her back turned stands for the departing favor) will be returned two-fold. So it did not matter whether or not the Grace whose back was turned was in the middle. Mercury is represented with a great many attributes, partly masculine, partly feminine. He carries a caduceus, a distaff, a lance, and an instrument intended to be a curved sword, and he plays a flute. Towards him flies the cock sacred especially to him, and on the right are shown a merchant and a thief who is cutting the former's purse. On the ground lies the

³⁴ Cf. Liebeschütz (who gives an instructive survey of the development of allegorical mythology throughout the Middle Ages); Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheide-
wege*, pp. 11 ff.

many-eyed Argus with his head cut off.³⁵ This strange image of Mercury developed in full accord with the general stylistic evolution of late mediaeval art. In a Flemish manuscript of Bersuire's of about 1480, which is connected with the two printed editions of Bruges and Paris (Copenhagen, Thottske Slg. 399; fig. 42),³⁶ Mercury looks like a gallant young dandy, as he was often represented in secular Northern fifteenth-century art, and poor Argus resembles the wounded man in the parable of the Good Samaritan.



FIG. 37. VULCAN, PLUTO, BACCHUS, AND MERCURY FROM A COPY OF THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HRABANUS MAURUS. MONTE CASSINO. ABOUT 1023

Just before this time a thing we have observed in the astrological representations happened also in the mythological ones: the Carolingian prototypes, forgotten for so many centuries, again emerged for a short period. About 1430 the original manuscript of the Hrabanus Maurus Encyclopedia, which had obviously been preserved in Fulda, was copied by a local illuminator, and in this copy (Cod. Vat. Pal. lat. 291) we rediscover the images we found in the Monte Cassino manuscript (compare fig. 41

with fig. 37).³⁷ They are of course transformed according to the style of the period (as had happened in the above-mentioned fifteenth-century Scotus manuscript), but they unmistakably renew the representational tradition so long supplanted by a literary tradition, and thus prepare for the definitive rediscovery of the classical types.

With the exception of the astrological representations, which had a tradition of their own, the images established by Bersuire and Albricus, in spite of their apparent absurdity, were the leading types for a long time.

Whenever they needed a Jupiter or a Saturn the painters and engravers had recourse to this tradition, even in the Italian quattrocento (for we may recall the fact that the Reginensis 1290 was executed in Italy about 1420). In Italy the way back to the classical original did not pass through a Carolingian intermezzo, but led immediately to the genuine sources. In at least one case, however, we meet with an archaic intermezzo instead of the Carolingian one. About the middle of the fifteenth century, Cyriacus of Ancona, perhaps the first archaeologist and epigrapher in the modern sense of the word, went to Greece, and he brought back with him a picture of Mercury which he had copied from an archaic relief of the early fifth century B.C. (Bodl. MS. Can. lat. misc. 280; fig. 44). It depicted the Hermes Sphenopogon ("Bearded Hermes"), clad in a fluttering chlamys and stretching out his left hand, while holding the caduceus in his right in a horizontal position (fig. 45). We can easily conceive that, to a mind accustomed to the Albricus pictures, access to this rather fantastic archaic figure was much easier than access to the classical type in the narrower sense of the word. In fact the genuine antique, but not properly classical,

³⁵ Cf. Liebeschütz, pl. XVIII; also Saxl, *Verzeichnis*, part I, p. ix, and *Repertorium f. Kunstwiss.*, vol. XLIII, pp. 246 ff.

³⁶ Cf. Henkel, *De Houtsneden van Mansion's Ovide moralisé*; *idem*, *Vorträge d. Bibl. Warburg*, vol. VI,

pp. 58 ff., and *Oud Holland*, vol. XXXIX, pp. 149 ff.; also Sant, *Le Commentaire de Copenhague de l'Ovide moralisé*.

³⁷ Cf. Lehmann, *Sitzungsber. d. bayr. Akad. d. Wiss., Philosoph.-philol. Klasse*, 1927, part 2, pp. 13 ff.

type discovered by Cyriacus of Ancona was immediately introduced into the Albricus scheme. Thus the series of the "Tarocchi" (a set of engraved playing cards executed in northern Italy about 1465) shows a picture of Mercury (fig. 46) which follows the description of Albricus with regard to the iconographical accessories (note the flute, the cock, and the head of Argus), while the type of the main figure obviously derives from the Hermes Sphenopogon imported by Cyriacus of Ancona. In this form Mercury wandered back to the Northern coun-

carvings adorning sixteenth-century houses in Germany.³⁸

The Italian cinquecento, however, generally disapproved of the archaizing Cyriacus type and reestablished the classical one, so that by 1515 the classical appearance of the antique divinities had become a matter of course for the Italian artists. A genius such as Raphael had, so to speak, a free command of classical syntax without limiting himself to a classical vocabulary. Thus the Mercury in the ceiling of the Villa Farnesina, who displays his beauty in the



FIG. 38. THE STORY OF LAOCOÖN, FROM COD. VAT. LAT. 2761. XIV CENTURY

tries and was popularized by numerous engravings and woodcuts. Our figure 43 shows a woodcut from a Lübeck Calendar of 1519, in which the Tarocchi Mercury, transmitted to the Hanseatic draftsman through the intermediary of Hans Burgkmair's woodcut B.46, was made the central figure of a planet-children picture conforming to the usual Northern fifteenth-century type. This Mercury finally became a typical figure in the decorative wood-

movement of an ethereal flight, is conceived in a classical spirit without being copied from a particular classical prototype (fig. 47).

In passing, we should now mention that the transmission of the Trojan cycle, which of course contained a considerable amount of incidental mythology, occurred in a way rather similar to that of the transmission of the pagan mythology as compiled by Neckham, Bersuire, and all the others. One might expect that the content of the *Iliad* and other classical poems would have remained more alive in Italy than in other countries, and have given rise to abundant illustrative material. But, on the contrary, it was a French poet of the twelfth century, named Benoît de Sainte-Maure, who com-

³⁸ Cf. Warburg, *Jahresber. d. Ges. d. Bücherfreunde zu Hamburg*, 1908-1909, pp. 45 ff. This article will be reprinted in a comprehensive edition of Warburg's writings, some of which appeared at rather out-of-the-way places. Cf. also Behrendsen, *Darstellungen von Planetengottheiten an und in deutschen Bauten*.

posed the standard work of the Trojan cycle, the *Roman de Troie*. The content of this was partly adopted by the author of the later *Histoire ancienne*,³⁹ and, what is more important,

This invasion of Italy by the Trojan cycle as a whole, both text and pictures, came chiefly through her opposite frontiers. Not only, as was most natural, did it come through north-



FIG. 39. THE PAGAN DIVINITIES, FROM COD. MONAC. LAT. 14271. ABOUT 1100

was elaborated by mediaeval German poets as well as by the Italian trecento poet Guido da Colonna. Thus the Italian trecento drew its knowledge of the tribal legend of Italy from France, in the same way that it drew its knowledge of the Olympian divinities from England. Moreover, the high mediaeval illustrations of the Trojan cycle were also worked out in France and subsequently were transformed in Italy.

ern Italy, which was geographically and culturally connected with the transalpine countries at least as closely as with Tuscany and Latium, but also it came through southern Italy, which was ruled in turn by the Normans, the Hohenstaufens, and the Anjous. Thus as early as about 1100 we are struck by the remarkable artistic relationship between the two

³⁹ Cf. Meyer, *Romania*, vol. XIV, pp. 1 ff.

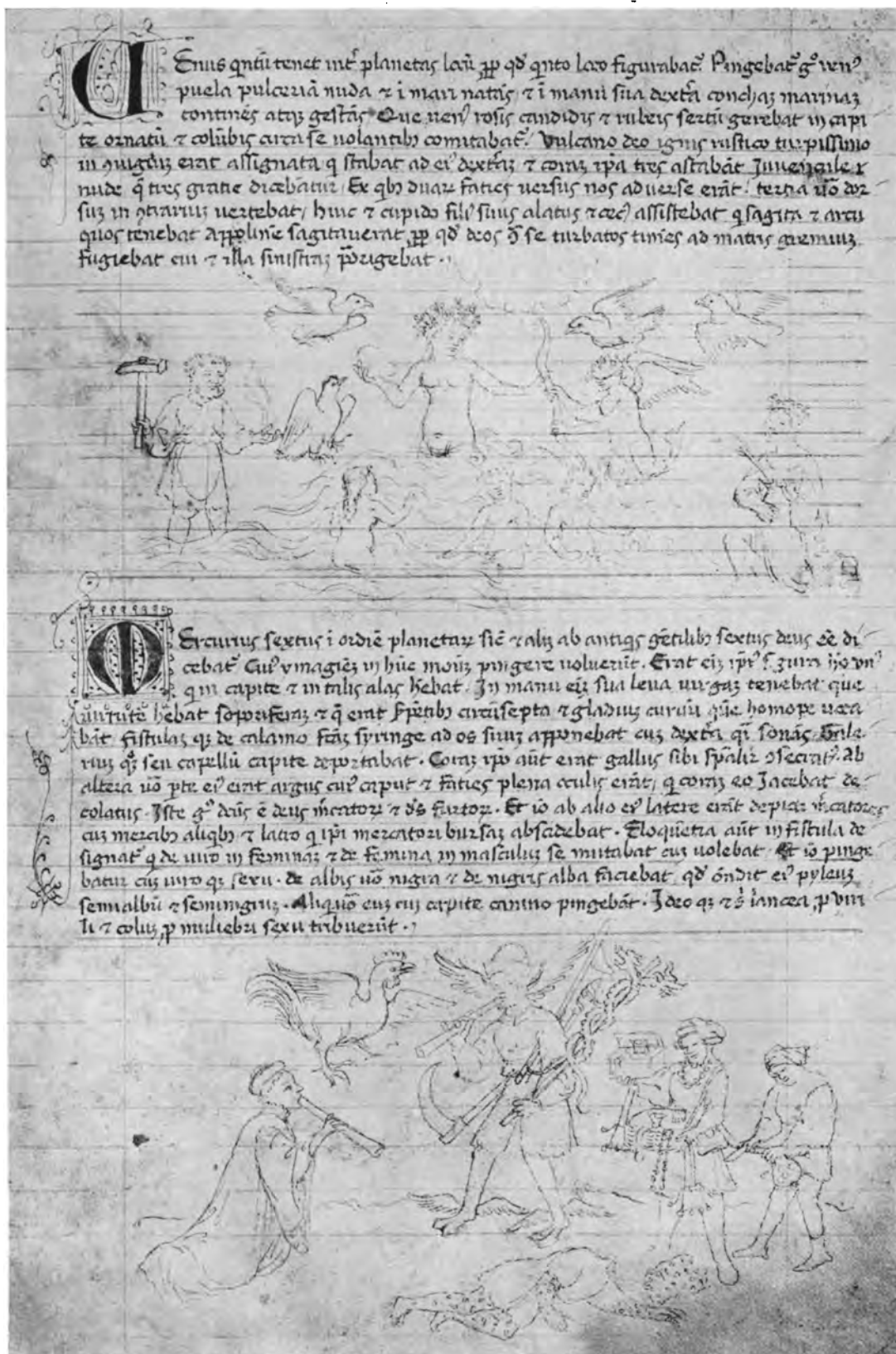


FIG. 40. VENUS AND MERCURY, FROM COD. VAT. REG. 1290. ABOUT 1420

opposite regions of Italy (as witness the sculptures of Bari and Modena). During the trecento conditions in northern and southern Italy were analogous in that self-dependent communalism had not yet, as in central Italy, prevailed over dynastic autocracy with its courtly life and habits and its delight in pictures and stories dealing with chivalrous exploits.

For northern Italy we limit ourselves to adding several manuscripts of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, written in French but illustrated by illuminators of Bologna, who were famous for



FIG. 41. VULCAN, PLUTO, BACCHUS, AND MERCURY
FROM COD. VAT. PAL. LAT. 291. COPY OF THE
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HRABANUS MAURUS, ABOUT 1430

their excellence in "quell'arte che luminare è chiamata in Parisi" (fig. 49)⁴⁰ and to a *Historia Troiana* by Guido da Colonna, executed in the Venetian district about 1380, the hurried pen drawings of which foreshadow the characteristics of fifteenth-century draftsmanship (Cod. Ambros. H.86 sup.; fig. 48).⁴¹

For southern Italy we have the good fortune to possess a remarkable *Histoire ancienne*, which is also in French but which for stylistic

and heraldic reasons can be located at Naples (Brit. Mus., Royal XX.D.1; fig. 50).⁴² Although the miniatures were executed as late as about the middle of the fourteenth century and strikingly resemble the illustrations of a *Vitae patrum* manuscript datable about 1360,⁴³ they seem to reflect an unknown prototype with the curious mixture of Oriental and Occidental elements characteristic of Frederician and Manfredian manuscripts, such as the celebrated *De arte venandi cum avibus* and the Bible of Manfred,⁴⁴ which may thus be placed in the middle of the thirteenth century. This hypothesis is confirmed by at least two other manuscripts of the *Histoire ancienne* (Bibl. Nat., MS. fr. 9685 and Cod. Vat. lat. 5895; figs. 51A and 51B) which were executed in southern Italy about 1300. In them our hypothetical French models were translated into a style which is entirely untouched by the attainments of the great trecento masters and thus shows the characteristics of the Manfredian or Frederician period even more clearly than the Neapolitan manuscript just mentioned. To crown it all, a manuscript such as Bibl. Nat., MS. fr. 1386, while obviously deriving from the former ones (compare fig. 52B with figs. 52A and 51A) so emphatically reverts to pre-Gothic tendencies that we feel as if it echoed the style of the twelfth-century Petrus de Ebulo manuscript preserved at Bern⁴⁵ or even of the famous tapestries of Bayeux. Small wonder then that some of these rather exotic-looking pictures strike us as almost "early Romanesque."

Now, in all these illustrations of the Trojan legend (from which innumerable later miniatures, as well as prints and woodcuts, were derived) the classical heroes and heroines appear

⁴⁰ Cf. Hermann, pp. 136 ff. The Cod. Petropolitanus (Franz. F. v. XIV. v. 3.), from which our figure 49 is taken, may be joined to the two manuscripts mentioned by Hermann, although it is of an incomparably higher quality and seems to be more closely connected with Sienese art.

⁴¹ Cf. Toesca, p. 388.

⁴² Cf. Warner and Gilson, vol. II, pp. 375 ff.

⁴³ Morgan Library, MS. M. 622. Cf. Berenson, pp. 115 ff., fig. 111.

⁴⁴ Cf. Erbach-Fuerstenau, especially pls. I, IV, and figs. 8 ff.

⁴⁵ Cf. Rota, *Petri Ansolini de Ebulo de rebus siculis carmen*, with fine reproductions of the miniatures.

as mediaeval knights and ladies. The typical scenes of battle, love-making, and mourning wholly conform to the contemporary types most common in novel illustration and religious art, as, for example, in figure 50, where Hecuba, lamenting over the dead body of Troilus, is obviously assimilated to the Virgin lamenting over the dead body of Christ. Cases like that in which the tomb of Achilles reveals an immediate memory of the late antique strigulated sarcophagi (fig. 51) are exceptional. Here, too, the Renaissance reintegrated the classical idea. Giulio Romano's murals in the Palazzo Ducale at Mantua visualize the Trojan cycle within the limits of a classical style based not only on the attainments of Raphael but also on the immediate assimilation of classical monuments. In the Death of Patroclus (fig. 54), for instance, the artist freely used a Roman relief of the same subject (fig. 55) still preserved at Mantua.⁴⁶

The process we have observed in these many instances can be expressed in a general formula. Wherever a mythological subject was connected with antiquity by a representational tradition, its types either sank into oblivion or, through assimilation to Romanesque and Gothic forms, became unrecognizable. While this went on, they were supplanted by non-classical types, either derived from the East or freely invented on the basis of the textual tradition. Then, beginning in the second half of the

quattrocento, imitation of the antique gradually reintroduced the classical types—a process that, in Germany, had been prefigured by modest attempts to revive the pseudo-classical Carolingian types.⁴⁷

Now if we ask for the interior reasons of this development, the answer seems obviously to be that high mediaeval art, though sometimes obliged to represent classical themes, had no



FIG. 42. MERCURY, FROM A MS. IN THE COPENHAGEN ROYAL LIBRARY. THOTTSKE SLG. 399. ABOUT 1480

feeling for classical form. This explanation, however, is hardly sufficient. Everybody knows

⁴⁶ Cf. Dollmayr, *Jahrbuch d. kunsthistorischen Sammlungen*, vol. XXII, particularly p. 187. Needless to say the center group of the composition is identical with the famous "Pasquino" group, which also represents Menelaus protecting the body of Patroclus.

⁴⁷ A similar evolution can be observed in the Terence illustrations which "are the outstanding example of the transmission and transformation of antique style" (to speak in the terms of Leslie W. Jones and Charles R. Morey), in fact unrivaled except by the astronomical illustrations to which we try in this article to call the attention of art historians. We possess more than twelve illustrated manuscripts of Terence executed between 800 and 1200 which all derive from a late an-

tique but rather classical prototype (as, in spite of the many vicissitudes of textual and illustrative tradition, has been conclusively explained by Jones and Morey in their admirable corpus, *The Miniatures of the Manuscripts of Terence*). These mediaeval Terence miniatures, also, show a gradual "degeneration" of the classical models so that the latest manuscripts, such as Bodleianus Auct. F. 2. 13 and Turonensis lat. 924, impress us as purely Romanesque work. After them, however, no illustrations of the comedies are to be found for about two centuries. As late as the beginning of the fifteenth century the text was illustrated afresh (a list of manuscripts is given by Jones and Morey, p. 225; the most famous specimen is the Té-

that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the classical types of mythological figures were being supplanted by the non-classical ones, Christian subjects, especially in the field of sculpture, were so markedly assimilated to classical forms that art historians are now in the habit of speaking of a proto-Renaissance. It is not by accident that this movement, so contrary to the literary activities of those mediæval mythographers who might appropriately be characterized as proto-Humanists,⁴⁸ found



FIG. 43. MERCURY AND HIS CHILDREN
WOODCUT FROM A LÜBECK CALENDAR OF 1519
PRINTED BY STEPHAN ARNDES

its origin in the Mediterranean atmosphere of southern France and Italy, instead of in Brit-

rence des Ducs, Bibl. de l'Arsenal, lat. 25), and these miniatures are totally independent of the classical tradition, directly illustrating the text in accordance with the general principles of fifteenth-century art. This is also the case with the first printed edition (Ulm, 1486). Then, about 1492, the Basel publisher Amerbach planned another edition of Terence, which never appeared, although 130 woodblocks and nine prints from lost woodblocks which were prepared for it have been preserved in the Kunstsammlung of Basel. The astonishing fact is that these illustrations, in which the young Dürer participated, partly revert to the Carolingian prototypes (as was proved by Römer in *Jahrbuch d. preuss. Kunstsaml.*, vol. XLVIII, pp. 77 ff., 156 ff.), thereby affording a parallel to what could be observed in the representations of the planets and the pagan divinities.

tany or in England. But it spread farther and reached its first point of culmination in Chartres and Reims.

The facts are too well known to require any particular discussion. We only remind our readers that this proto-Renaissance movement, too, approached the classical prototypes by degrees and not immediately. It began, in such places as Modena and St.-Gilles in Provence, by absorbing the illusionism of provincial Roman stone sculptures and ivories, while limiting itself to the assimilation of single motives such as heads, animals, draperies, pieces of architecture, and ornamental details. Then, after a Byzantine intermezzo in Laon, Braisne, Chartres (transepts), etc., the Gothic artists began to feel the more essential qualities of antique art, above all the principle of *contraposto*. Finally, at Reims and Pisa, they penetrated to the very heart of classical art, no longer seeing the epidermis of late antique work, so to speak, but absorbing some of the fundamental principles of classical sculpture, so that we can easily understand why the two figures of the Reims Visitation (cf. fig. 53), with their easy gyratory *contraposto*, for a long time were believed to be sixteenth-century work.⁴⁹ Because of all this, it would be an exaggeration to assert that the high Middle Ages were completely blind to the aesthetic qualities of classical art.

Thus, to speak generally, knowledge of classical subject matter and appreciation of classical form were not lacking during the Middle Ages, but, because of the failure to relate them in practice, classical subject matter, especially the mythological stories, completely lost its original form, and classical form so lost its original subject matter that a Phaedra could be used as a Virgin Mary and a Venus as an Eve. It was the privilege of the Renaissance again

⁴⁸ As for this proto-Humanism, especially flourishing during the twelfth century, we should like to refer our readers to the splendid researches of Charles H. Haskins.

⁴⁹ Cf. Lübke, vol. II, p. 458.



FIG. 44. MERCURY, BY CYRIACUS OF ANCONA
BODL. MS. CAN. LAT. MISC. 280
MIDDLE OF THE XV CENTURY



FIG. 45. MERCURY
ARCHAIC RELIEF FROM PANTICAPAEUM
EARLY V CENTURY B. C.



FIG. 46. MERCURY, FROM THE "TAROCCHI"
ABOUT 1465



FIG. 47. MERCURY DESCENDING FROM OLYMPUS, BY RAPHAEL
VILLA FARNESINA, ROME

to visualize classical subject matter under classical forms and so to reintegrate these two things. This we can easily understand.

There were, of course, certain distinguished scholars, such as Hildebert of Lavardin (the author of those famous distichs on the Roman

adherence to orthodox beliefs. In general, however, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance reacted to antiquity in quite different ways. For the mediaeval mind antiquity was distant, but not distant in a historical sense of the word. It was no more distant than, for instance, the



FIG. 48. THE CAPTURE OF TENEDOS, FROM COD. AMBROS. H.86 SUP. ABOUT 1380

ruins which for a long time were thought to have been composed by a late antique poet),⁵⁰ in whom the mediaeval proto-Humanism was already tinged with a sensitive feeling for the classical past seemingly comparable to quattrocento tendencies, although, in reality, their fundamental attitude differed essentially from that of the Renaissance thinkers in its unerring

contemporary pagan East, or the world of the fairy tales, so that Villard de Honnecourt could call a Roman tomb "li sepulture d'un sarrazin," because to him it meant a pagan monument rather than an antique one.⁵¹ Because of this, although the Middle Ages used classical ideas, literary as well as philosophical and artistic, wherever they could, they were unable to

⁵⁰ Cf. Schramm, especially pp. 296 ff.

⁵¹ Cf. Villard de Honnecourt, pl. XI.



FIG. 49. PARIS AND HELEN MEETING AT THE TEMPLE OF VENUS
FROM LENINGRAD, COD. PETROPOLITANUS, FRANZ. F. V. XIV. V. 3
MIDDLE OF THE XIV CENTURY

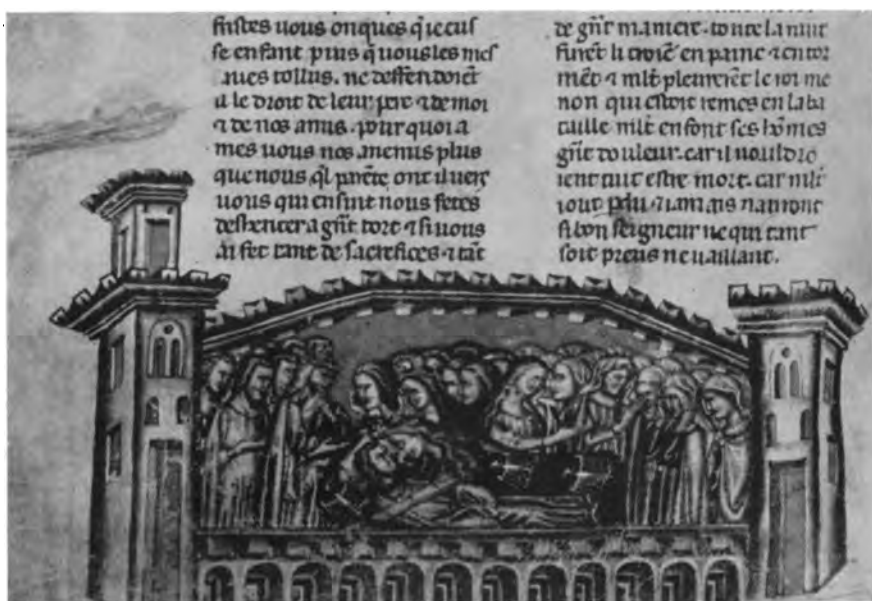


FIG. 50. HECUBA EMBRACING THE DEAD BODY OF TROILUS
FROM BRIT. MUS., ROYAL XX.D.I. ABOUT 1350-1360

see antique culture as a cultural cosmos historically so far removed from them that they could think of it as an integral unity. Thomas Aquinas assimilated the ideas of Aristotle and melt-



FIG. 51A. THE SACRIFICE OF POLYXENA
FROM BIBL. NAT., MS. FR. 9685. ABOUT 1300



FIG. 51B. THE SACRIFICE OF POLYXENA
FROM COD. VAT. LAT. 5895. ABOUT 1300

ed them into his scholastic system and the mediaeval poets abundantly used the classical authors, but no mediaeval mind could think of what we call classical philology; the artists of Reims and Pisa assimilated their figures to Roman statues, but no mediaeval mind could think of what we call classical archaeology.

Thus the mediaeval mind, being incapable of realizing, as the modern mind automatical-

ly does, the unity of classical form and classical subject matter, actually avoided bringing the two together – for we must remember that any combination of what were regarded as two separate things would have been meaningless to both the average artist and the average beholder. Being familiar with the idea of the Virgin Mary, mediaeval artists and spectators could visualize and understand her even when rendered in classical forms. Being familiar with the game of chess as a characteristic feature of courtly life, they saw no incongruity in a picture of Medea playing chess, although they would not have understood her had she been represented as the heroine of the drama by Euripides. Being familiar with the appearance of mediaeval tombs, they saw nothing odd in the picture of an up-to-date Thisbe sitting on a Gothic tombstone with the inscription “Hic situs est Ninus Rex,” preceded by the usual cross (Bibl. Nat., MS. lat. 15158; fig. 56).⁵² But they could not have understood a classical Thisbe sitting by a classical mausoleum.

As in the history of mind visible phenomena usually appear simultaneously as “causes” and “effects,” so the reintegration of classical mythological subjects achieved in the Renaissance was an incentive as well as a symptom of the general evolution which led to the rediscovery of man as a natural being stripped of his protecting cover of symbolism and conventionality. For the mediaeval mind such things as beauty and ugliness, lust and pain, cruelty and fear, love and jealousy were encompassed by so many transcendental conceptions that all had moralistic or theological connotations. Beauty appeared either as a symbol of supreme spiritual virtues or as a means of diabolical temptation. Thus while Adam, Christ, and the Virgin Mary had to be beautiful because their beauty was held to be a reflection of the eternal brightness infused into the human body by the very act of creation, the beauty of classical statues

⁵² Reproduced in Lehmann, *Pseudo-antike Literatur des Mittelalters*, fig. 11.

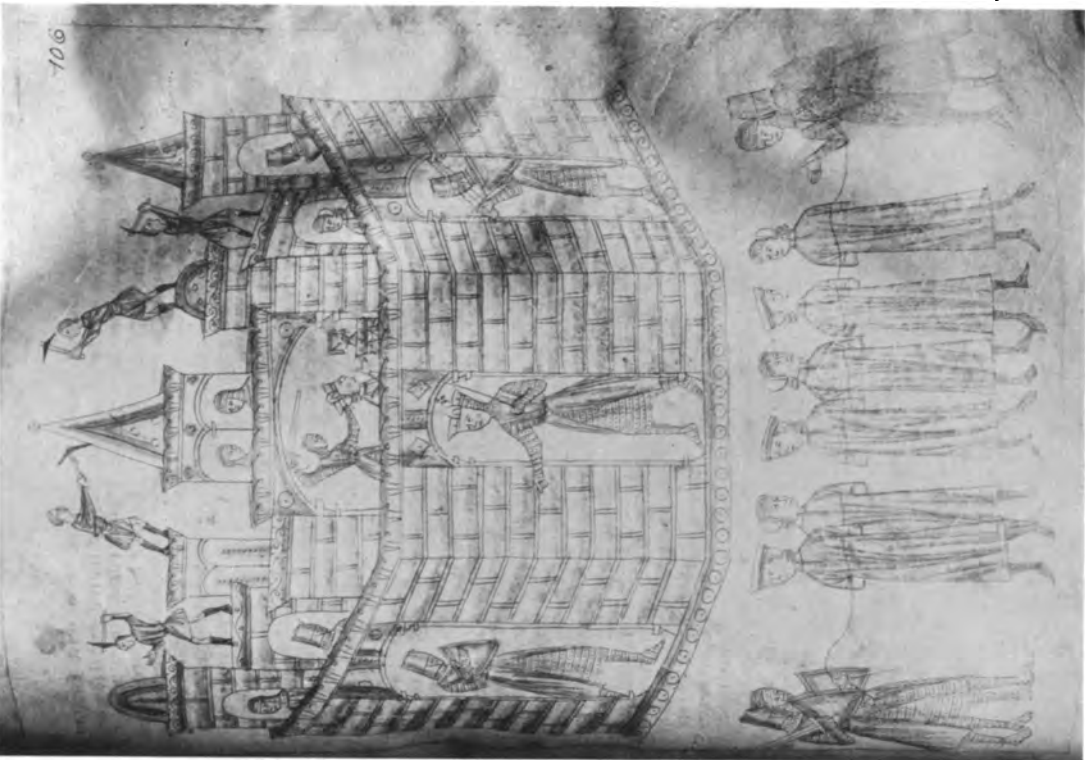


FIG. 52A. THE SACK OF TROY
FROM BIBL. NAT., MS. FR. 9685. ABOUT 1300

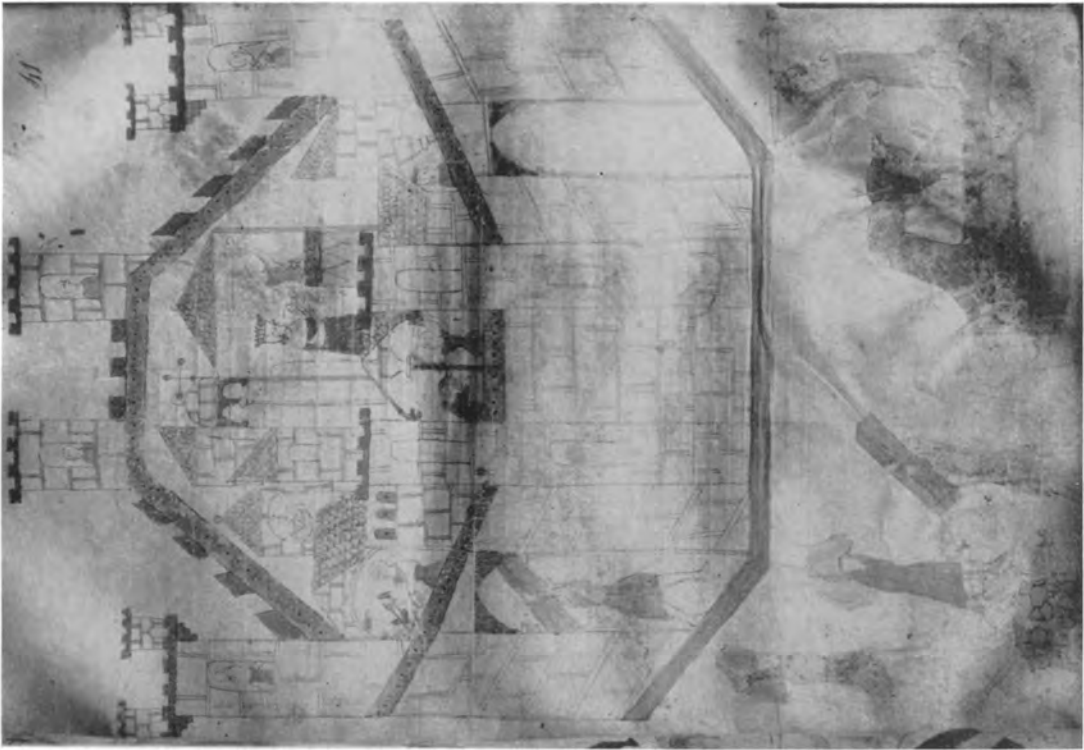


FIG. 52B. THE SACK OF TROY AND THE SACRIFICE OF POLYXENA
(RIGHT LOWER CORNER). FROM BIBL. NAT., MS. FR. 1386. EARLY XIV CENTURY

meant to the mediaeval mind a *magica quaedam persuasio* used by the devil in order to corrupt the souls of the Faithful. Cruelty was considered as a kind of professional quality of pagan executioners or wicked giants, and sensual love, which was anathematized by the commandments of religion and in the mediaeval epics usually entered into a conflict with feudal loyalty, was either conceived as a warning example or sublimated so as to become a quasi-metaphysical experience justified by a profound philosophical theory and ruled by a

Middle Ages. Where the one considered man as an integral unity of body and soul, the other thought of him as a mere "clod of earth" not endowed with forces of its own but forcibly and miraculously united with an immortal soul ("plenum fuit miraculo, quod tam diversa et tam divisa ab invicem ad invicem potuerunt coniungi," as a great mediaeval philosopher put it). The formulae of classical art were obviously incompatible with that mediaeval trend of thought which had developed mere natural functions into quasi-moralistic



GEORG SWARZENSKI, "NICCOLÒ PISANO," PL. 26

FIG. 53. ROMAN FIGURE JUXTAPOSED WITH A VIRGIN BY NICCOLÒ PISANO (PULPIT OF THE BAPTISTERY, PISA) AND THE VIRGIN FROM THE VISITATION (REIMS CATHEDRAL)

complicated ceremonial code. Thus mediaeval art was neither able nor inclined to visualize the physical qualities and emotions we have just mentioned in the manner of classical art, according to which beauty was a mere functional equilibrium (such as is found in the organization of a perfect animal), pain was a mere functional reaction against physical injury, and love was either a mere functional enjoyment of physical pleasure or a mere functional suffering from unappeased physical appetites.

The admirable artistic formulae by which these qualities and passions had been expressed in the classical style had resulted from a conception of man very different from that of the

symptoms (or quasi-iconographical attributes). Wherever classical types or attitudes had subsisted in Christian mediaeval art or had been freshly assimilated, as at Reims or Pisa, they appeared transformed in such a way that the beholder was not too strongly impressed by the natural qualities and movements as such. Instead of identifying his own sensations with the functional experiences of the beings represented, such as organic equilibrium, pleasure, or pain, he conceived the expressions of the figures chiefly as indications of spiritual principles, good or evil, holy or infernal. The formal motives inherited from antiquity were deprived of their functional immediacy in order that they might embody non-classical mean-

ings. To that end they were so attenuated and "spiritualized" (by either inorganic exaggeration or inorganic torpescence) that they became congenial to the current religious and moral ideas. After all is said, even the Virgin of

were replaced by fashionable knights and damsels whose behavior and appearance conformed to the canon of mediaeval social life. Thus the reunion of classical form and classical subject matter as achieved by the Renaissance speaks



FIG. 54. THE DEATH OF PATROCLUS, BY GIULIO ROMANO. PALAZZO DUCALE, MANTUA



FIG. 55. THE DEATH OF PATROCLUS. ROMAN RELIEF. MUSEO STATUARIO, MANTUA

Reims, in spite of its classical appearance, remains a "Gothic" figure endowed with a more-than-physical beauty. In a similar way, the sensual pathos of the passionate scenes of antique mythology and secular poetry was transposed into the atmosphere of courtly manners and conventionalized sentiments, so that heathen divinities and heroes mad with love or cruelty

eloquently of the rehabilitation or even re-discovery of a purely "human" vitality—both structural and emotional—which, if not exactly disapproved of, had been shoved aside for many centuries. "Quae ergo compositio membrorum," Gianozzo Manetti says, "quae conformatio lineamentorum, quae figura, quae species quam humana pulchrior aut esse aut

excogitari potest? Quod cum illi veteres sapientissimique homines animadverterent, deos in humana se specie confiteri audebant.”⁵³ And Leonardo Bruni, while emphatically disapproving of those who unrestrainedly indulge in luxury and sensual gratification, still does not shrink from asserting that puritanic asceticism is something “insensible” and “inhuman”: “...



FIG. 56. THE STORY OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE FROM BIBL. NAT., MS. LAT. 15158. DATED 1289

ab omnibus penitus abstinere, et omnem omnino voluptatem refugere, est quasi insensibilitas quaedam et inhumanitas, si et vina et epulas et convivium et omnem jocunditatem refugiat, qualem ego ne amicum quidem habere velim.”⁵⁴

However, this new emphasis on the physical qualities of man did not lead to a purely materialistic conception; rather it enriched the feeling for the nobility of the human soul which now was believed to form a specifically “personal” unity with the body. Thus moral

values were felt to be based in natural forces just as mere vital qualities were held to be ennobled by their connection with the immortal soul. “Only men can laugh and shed tears,” Marsilio Ficino says, “because in them the mental emotion rules the body . . . , from which we learn that our body, compared to that of other animals, contains a minimum of earth . . . and a maximum of subtle elements so that it is capable of being the receptacle of the celestial soul.”⁵⁵ But even this moderate attempt to do justice both to “pagan” vitalism and to “Christian” spiritualism meant an unmistakable alienation from the moral system of the Middle Ages. Thus it could happen (although this is an entirely exceptional case) that a radical thinker such as Leonardo da Vinci ventured so far as to destroy the very foundation of mediaeval ethics by proving the fact that what the Middle Ages had considered as “mortal sins” in reality had to be regarded as the positive principles of natural life. “Lussuria [note Leonardo’s deliberate use of the *termini tecnici* of mediaeval moral theology!] è causa della gieneratione. Gola è mantenimento della vita, paura over timore è prolungamento di vita e salvamento dello strumento.”⁵⁶

As for the rediscovery of vital beauty, in-

⁵³ Manetti, p. 55; cf. Gentile, pp. 111 ff. (“Il concetto dell’ uomo nel Rinascimento”); Ruggiero, part 3, vol. I, pp. 140 ff.

⁵⁴ Bruni, vol. II, p. 140.

⁵⁵ Ficinus, book I, p. 208: “Hinc accidit rursus, ut solus homo rideat, solus et lachrymetur, ex eo quod animi motus plurimum in corpus habent imperium. . . . Ideo corpus nostrum si ad caetera animalia comparetur, quam minimum terrae, et illud quidem subtile possidet, sublimiorum elementorum quamplurimum, quocirca coelestis est animae receptaculum.”

⁵⁶ Richter (ed.), no. 842. While Manetti (p. 161) did not go so far as that, he endeavored to justify certain vices such as envy, anger, ambition, and the craving for worldly power, by asserting that they were nothing but undesirable results of the same forces which are the foundation of the dignity of man (“nam qui sese ita dignum factum fuisse considerat, ut cunctis rebus creatis praeesse ac dominari videatur, perfecto non modo ab aliis superari non patietur, quod est invidiae, sed potius caeteros excellere vel maxime con-

stances are abundant and known to all. We should merely like to adduce one of the frescoes executed about 1470 by Francesco Cossa in the Palazzo Schifanoia at Ferrara (fig. 57), because it shows most eloquently the fascination of classical beauty. The picture which represents the Triumph of Venus follows the compositional scheme of the pictures of the planet's children and the iconographical arrangements of the mediaeval mythographers, such as we find in Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum*.

tation, appear inexpressive. Europa, clad in the costume of the fourteenth century, sits on her inoffensive little bull like a young lady taking a morning ride, and her companions, similarly dressed, form a quiet little group of spectators. Of course they are all meant to be anguished and to cry out, but they don't cry out, or at least they don't convince us that they do; and they don't convince us that they do because the art of that time lacked any immediate means of expressing what was considered a merely



FIG. 57. TRIUMPH OF VENUS, BY FRANCESCO COSSA, ABOUT 1470. PALAZZO SCHIFANOIA, FERRARA

But it is to be noted that the Graces, and they only, have resumed their classical positions, acting under the spell of the reappreciated antique monuments.⁵⁷

As for the vital emotions, we shall juxtapose two representations of the Rape of Europa. In the first place we will consider the miniature from a fourteenth-century *Ovide moralisé* (Lyons, Bibl. de la Ville, MS. 742; fig. 58). The landscape is very schematic and the figures, in so far as they are meant to reveal interior agi-

“carnal passion.” A period accustomed to deny any autonomy of physical life and to regard man as a “*mira societas carnis et animae, spiritus vitae et limi terrae*” was basically incapable of expressing appropriately (that is to say, functionally) such animal emotions as the struggling pain of Orpheus slain by the maenads, the sensual excitement of a bull-shaped god, or the agitation of a girl trying in vain to defend herself from abduction.

A drawing by Dürer copied from an Italian

cupiscet, quod superbiae et ambitionis proprium vitium existimatur et creditur”). Although contentions such as these impress us as rather innocuous in comparison with the radical sentences of Leonardo, Manetti's treatise was put on the Index in 1584.

⁵⁷ The problem of the frescoes in the Palazzo Schifanoia was resolved by Warburg in *Atti del X Congresso internazionale*, pp. 179 ff. Cf., however, the revised reprint of this article in the new edition of Warburg's writings, referred to in note 35 under Saxl.

prototype (L. 456, executed about 1495; fig. 59) precisely emphasizes the passionate vitality lacking in the mediaeval representation. The literary source is no longer a text comparing the bull to Christ and Europa to the human soul, but the pagan text of Ovid himself as transformed into two delightful stanzas by Angelo Poliziano: "You can admire Jupiter transformed into a beautiful white bull by the power of love. He dashes away with his sweet terrified load, her beautiful golden hair flutters in the wind which blows back her gown, with



FIG. 58. THE ABDUCTION OF EUROPA
FROM LYONS, BIBL. DE LA VILLE, MS. 742
XIV CENTURY

one hand she grasps a horn of the bull, while the other clings to his back. She draws up her feet as if she were afraid of the sea, and thus crouching down with pain and fear she cries for help in vain. For her sweet companions remained on the flowery shore, each of them crying: 'Oh, Europa, come back!' The whole seashore resounds with: 'Europa, come back!' and the bull looks round and kisses her feet."

Dürer's drawing actually gives life to this sensual description. The crouching position of Europa, her fluttering hair, her clothes, blown by the wind and revealing her graceful body, the gestures of her hands, the furtive movement of the bull's head, the seashore scattered over with the lamenting companions—all this is visualized, and, even more, the sea itself

rustles with the life of *aquatici monsticuli*, to speak in the terms of another Italian quattrocento writer, while satyrs hail the abductor.⁵⁸

Needless to say, such a reintegration of classical mythology was not so much a humanistic as a human occurrence, a most important element of what Michelet and Jacob Burckhardt called the "discovery both of the world and of man." Moreover, this occurrence allows us an insight into the curious and rather enigmatic rôle which was to be played by antiquity throughout the following centuries in the making of what is deprecatingly called "Classicism," but what in reality is an essential element of modern European culture, that deeply rooted conception of antiquity as a worldly paradise, an ideal realm of unsurpassable beauty, freedom, and happiness.

As we have already pointed out, the Renaissance attitude towards antiquity was different from the mediaeval one in that the Renaissance had become aware of the "historical distance" separating the Greeks and Romans from the contemporary world. This realization of the intellectual distance between the present and the past is comparable to the realization of the visual distance between the eye and the object, so that a parallel may be drawn between the discovery of the modern "historical system," which was mentioned in the first paragraph of this article, and the invention of modern perspective, both of which were achieved by the Renaissance. Now, this new attitude (from which resulted the apparent paradox that, while so many classical conceptions were freshly taken over from antique art and thought, many another was deliberately abandoned because it had been handed down, and thereby altered, by mediaeval tradition) automatically gave rise to a problem which was to determine the specific character and the further development of Western culture. The mediaeval mind, being unaware of its historical distance from

⁵⁸ Cf. Panofsky, *Jahrbuch f. Kunstgesch.*, vol. I, pp. 43 ff., also published separately.

the antique mentality, was consequently undisturbed by the idea that antiquity was a "cultural cosmos" concentrated about its own center of gravity. It was therefore capable of assimilating the classical elements, artistic as well as philosophical and scientific, much as a plant assimilates the elements of the soil and the car-

ologia Platonica in which he endeavored to prove the compatibility of Platonic philosophy with Christian theology. While the masters of Reims, Pisa, etc., could use classical models for the images of the saints and the Virgin without any reflections or scruples, Dürer felt obliged to justify his reestablishment of the



FIG. 59. THE ABDUCTION OF EUROPA. PEN DRAWING BY DÜRER (L.456), ABOUT 1495. THE ALBERTINA, VIENNA

bonic acid diffused in the atmosphere. The Renaissance, on the contrary, had to contrive a deliberate conciliation.

While Thomas Aquinas could make use of Aristotle without discussing or even realizing the difficulty of harmonizing two mental attitudes fundamentally different from each other, Marsilio Ficino felt obliged to write a *The-*

classical proportions in Christian pictures: "The pagan people attributed the utmost beauty to their heathen god 'Abblo,'" he says. "Thus we shall use it for Christ the Lord who is the most beautiful man, and just as they represented Venus as the most beautiful woman, we shall chastely display the same features in the image of the holy Virgin, mother of God."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Lange and Fuhse, p. 316. Johann Joachim Winckelmann's classicist conscientiousness, of course, emphatically disapproved of such a *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*: "Einige Künstler haben Bilder aus dem Alter-

thume angebracht aber ungereimt, wie das Bild der Theologie ist, in Gestalt der Diana . . . , an dem Grabmale Pabsts Sixtus IV von Ertzt [by Antonio Pollaiuolo] in der St. Peterskirche zu Rom, wovon der

Thus Renaissance art and thought are characterized by an intrinsic tension, unknown to previous periods, which was to become decisive for the further evolution.⁶⁰ As we learn from many sources, this tension was felt from the very beginning, but for a while it was disguised by that peculiar gift of harmonization which we admire in the great masters of the so-called High Renaissance, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Giorgione, and Raphael. However, this beautiful harmony, apparently conciliating really incompatible things, was able to last only a few decades, and it soon led to a frightful crisis both in artistic and in intellectual life. This crisis broke out in the period of the Counter Reformation, when Giordano Bruno's philosophy and Galileo's scientific research entered into open conflict with the Christian dogma and the world of the figurative arts was upset by a struggle between the High Renaissance tendencies and what we may call neo-mediaevalism. Everybody knows that, under Paul IV, the nude figures in Michelangelo's Last Judgment, being furiously attacked for their indecency and irreligion, had to be painted over by Daniele da Volterra, and that, in 1573, Paolo Veronese was sued for having enriched the representation of a Last Supper by worldly figures such as clowns and lansquenets. The *Ovide moralisé* was put on the Index for the very reason for which it was written and appreciated, that is to say, because it was meant to connect Christian theology with pagan mythology. Artists, suffering horribly from the irresolvable conflict between their faithful devotion to Christian beliefs and their aesthetic admiration for antiquity, sometimes dolefully repented having made naked images.

On the other hand, the fascination aroused by the classical monuments increased in the same measure that the secular tendencies in Christian art were opposed by the moralists, so that what had been, a few decades before, an unconstrained enthusiasm for classical beauty and vitality became transformed into a strange self-conscious feeling composed of reluctant admiration, disquieting scruples, and cool archaeological interest.⁶¹ The fig leaf, an invention of the period in question, is a significant symptom of this uneasy attitude which, manifesting itself stylistically in the so-called Mannerism, was characterized by a conflict between a renewal of mediaeval tendencies and an overemphasis upon classical principles. Bronzino's Descent into Limbo (fig. 60), for instance, almost relapses to the principles of Gothic art in that its composition is lacking in spatial perspective and its figures are distorted and interwoven with each other so as to form a complicated, almost two-dimensional pattern, while at the same time the figure of Eve is imitated from an antique statue much more literally than any figure of Giorgione's or Raphael's.⁶²

Out of the chaos resulting from the frustrated attempt to harmonize the humanistic craving for freedom both in art and in thought with the authoritative postulates of the Christian religion, there emerged one sphere which was apparently exempt from this destructive antinomy: the antique world itself, as reintegrated by the new reunion of classical thought and feeling with classical form and expression. In it physical beauty and carnal desires, heroic pathos and playful amorousness had never entered into conflict with moral or theological conceptions, so that what had proved incom-

Grund nicht anders als lächerlich seyn kann" (*Versuch einer Allegorie*, p. 55).

⁶⁰ This intrinsic tension characteristic of the Renaissance mentality was analyzed by Warburg in *Kunstwissenschaftl. Beiträge August Schmarsow gewidmet*, pp. 129 ff.

⁶¹ Cf. Schlosser, *Kunstliteratur*, pp. 378 ff.; Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, pp. 31 ff., and *Idea*, pp.

39 ff.; also Saxl, *Antike Götter in der Spätrenaissance*, *passim*.

⁶² The model was the Venus of Knidos, also used by Bronzino for the Virgin in his famous Holy Family in the Uffizi. In the latter case, the head is copied so faithfully that Schweitzer was able to identify the individual replica, which Bronzino had under his eyes; cf. Schweitzer, *Roem. Mitt.*, vol. XXXIII, pp. 45 ff.

patible with Christian culture appeared all the more as a perfect harmony in itself. As a result of this the field of the genuine classical subjects, especially the mythological ones, turned

any enclave of untroubled beauty and vitality. There the unrestricted vital feeling, which had been roused with the reintegration of classical art and therefore was felt to be inconsistent



FIG. 60. THE DESCENT INTO LIMBO, BY BRONZINO
MUSEUM OF SANTA CROCE, FLORENCE

out to be the only place in which the modern mind could locate a vision of unproblematic or unbroken completeness, and the interpretation of genuine classical subjects both in painting and in poetry became for the real world of tensions and suppressed emotions a vision-

with the spirit of the Christian religion, was "in its proper place," so that while the moralized Ovid and other Christianizations of classical poetry were put on the Index,⁶³ the *Meta-*

⁶³ Cf. Reusch, *Die Indices librorum prohibitorum des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts*. The most authoritative In-

morphoses themselves remained free from objection.

Thus, curiously enough, antiquity was poison and antidote at the same time. It was poison in so far as the reintegration of antiquity contributed to the fundamental discrepancy in modern art and thought, and antidote in so far as the same reintegration of antiquity had opened the vision of an imaginary kingdom in which this very discrepancy seemed to be harmonized.

The everlasting nostalgia for this imaginary kingdom is the main foundation of Classicism. Enthusiasm for beauty and strength, sensual love and amoeba-like *dolce far niente*, and the craving for perfect harmony, in the purely natural sense, concentrated more and more upon the classical sphere, so that the bucolic life became located in Arcadia. The innocent shepherds and shepherdesses who embodied civilized people's innate desire for nature and peace

were no longer named Robin and Jeannette as in the mediaeval French pastoral poetry, but Meliseo and Phyllis, Aminta and Sylvia. Thus the classical past, while it was more and more thought of and investigated as a concrete historical phenomenon, simultaneously developed into an enchanting Utopia that was surrounded with a halo of sweet and melancholy resignation, as in some of the paintings by Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorraine. The idea of antiquity developed into a dream of bliss and happiness; the classical past became a visionary harbor of refuge from every distress. A paradise lamented without having been possessed and longed for without being attainable, it promised an ideal fulfillment to all unappeased desires. From this we can understand why, from the crisis of the Counter Reformation in the sixteenth century, when the classicism of the Carracci led the way out of Mannerism into the baroque style, down to the crisis of our own days, which, among other phenomena, has given rise to the classicism of Picasso, almost every artistic and cultural crisis has been overcome by that recourse to antiquity which we know as Classicism.

dex, that of Pius IV, Trent, 1564 (Reusch, p. 275) explicitly says: "In Ovidii Metamorphoseos libros commentaria sive enarrationes allegoricae vel tropologicae," but does not mention the works of Ovid themselves. Even licentious writings of classical authors are but scarcely to be found in the Indices.

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