

GVILLELMI DE CONCHIS ACCESSVS AD MACROBIVM

[83] Theoretical (science) has three species. (The first is) theology, i.e., the contemplative (science) of incorporeal things that exist outside of bodies, such as (the science) of God, the world soul, and angels. Whence it is called theology, as it were, an ‘account of divine things’. For *theos* (in Greek) means God, and *logos* means account or discussion. The second (theoretical science) is mathematics; for it is (the science) of things that exist with bodies, that is multitude in itself or multitude in relation, mobile magnitude or immobile magnitude. Whence, of mathematics there are four species: arithmetic, which is (the science) of multitude in itself, i.e., the power of number; music, which is (the science) of multitude in relation, i.e., the proportions of numbers; geometry, which is (the science) of immobile magnitude; astronomy, which is (the science) of mobile magnitude. It is called mathematics, i.e., ‘doctrinal’. For *mathesis* with an *h* means doctrine; without an *h* it means folly. And it is called ‘doctrinal’ because greater erudition occurs there than in the other (liberal) arts, or because, while teaching occurs in the other (arts) only by discussion, in these (the mathematical sciences) it occurs by sight, because what is stated by speech is demonstrated with a figure to the eyes<sup>1</sup>. The third species of theoretical (science) is physics, which deals with the properties and qualities of bodies and the natures of things, whence it is called ‘physica’, i.e., natural. However, this book is subject to all the above mentioned species: to the practical (science) through (all) its species, and the theoretical (science) likewise (through all its species). And this<sup>2</sup> each (reader) will be able to assess from his own<sup>3</sup> consideration.

[100] Now let us see about that title. For titles are customarily placed at the beginnings of authors in order that through those titles the intention (of the author) may be indicated. The title is such: ‘Here begins the commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Macrobius Ambrosius Onerios or Oneirocrites<sup>4</sup>’. Now let us see what is a commentary, beginning from its origin. Just as Priscian says in his *Praeexercitamina* (Introductory Exercises) for boys, to comment<sup>5</sup> is to collect into one many things considered<sup>6</sup> with study in the mind or gathered by learning. But because according to this explanation, any treatise can be called a commentary, we say that a commentary is properly called an explanatory book – explanatory, I say, of only<sup>7</sup> the sentences (or ideas), without the continuity of the letter (of the text). And in this a commentary differs from a gloss, which, in

<sup>1</sup> to the eyes] lit. under the eyes (*sub oculis*)    <sup>2</sup> and this] *quod*, the object of *perpendere*; its antecedent is the previous *idea*, namely, that Macrobius book belongs to all parts of philosophy

<sup>3</sup> his own] *propria* (-us, -a, -um), often used as a reflexive possessive adjective (like *suus*, -a, -um)

<sup>4</sup> These last (Greek) ‘names’ are part of the later commentary tradition, his full name was Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius    <sup>5</sup> *comminiscor*, *comminisci*, *commentum*    <sup>6</sup> considered] *habita*

<sup>7</sup> only] *tantum*

its explanation, (both) explains the sentences (and) joins letter to letter. And for this reason it is called a 'gloss', as it were a 'tongue', because it instructs the reader in the explanation of the ideas and the continuity of the letter just as (does) the teacher's tongue. Whence it is called a 'gloss'. 'On the Dream of Scipio' is placed (in the title) for this reason, that it may be shown that this book is properly an explanatory book, for the preposition 'on', placed after the noun 'commentary' indicates this<sup>8</sup>.

[115] The author is Macrobius. *Macros* (in Greek) means 'long'; *bios* means 'way'. Hence, (his name) means, as it were, the 'long way', namely, (the way) from heaven to earth, because his treatise, in describing the orbits of the planets and the motions of the same, is led<sup>9</sup> from the highest sphere, called 'aplanos', all the way to the earth. His proper name is Ambrosius. Certain (scholars) argue that he was Saint Ambrose, because they (Macrobius and Ambrose) strongly<sup>10</sup> agree in (their) manner and style of writing. According to other (scholars), 'ambrosia' is an herb that used to be placed in the temples of the gods at the time of sacrifice. Thence he is called Ambrosius, as it were, the 'food of the gods', i.e., of men who after death are deified on account of the conservation of justice. He is called Oneirocrites, as it were, the 'judge of dreams'. For he teaches which dreams are worth the concern of interpretations, and which ones are not. In Greek we say *oniro*, in Latin, *somnium*; *crisis* means (in Latin) judgment, whence Horace: 'as the *critici* speak', i.e., the judges. Now let us come to the letter.

<sup>8</sup> this] *hoc*, the object of *innuit*    <sup>9</sup> is led] *deducitur*    <sup>10</sup> strongly] *multum*