

On Astronomy, and Its Role in the Spiritual Development of Man

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“Qui se cognoscit in se omnia cognoscit.”

“Descend from Heav’n, Urania, by that name if rightly thou art called,” thus invokes Milton in the beginning of Book VII of *Paradise Lost*.¹ For what reason needs Milton to call upon this particular Muse? Was it not enough to invoke Calliope, the sacred Muse of the epic, in his *magnum opus*? Calliope, though she may be a high intelligence worthy of devotion and may carry many tunes, is in need of a contrapuntal partner to spin the music of astronomy; although she herself, being the most encompassing Muse, may subsume whatever quality lies in her subordinates, yet is Urania needed to assist in particular matters of construction, just as the Demiurgus is necessary for the fabrication of the physical cosmos. Hence Urania, in all her starry glory, shines forth from the flaming regions of the celestial heavens, so that man, in his search for knowledge, may look up, and thus recall whence he came.

That the study of astronomy is imperative to man’s understanding of the cosmos and himself is characteristic of that tradition of scientific and intuitive thinking which may be traced back to Pythagoras and his school at Crotona, and which was carried on through the late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. in the writings of Plato, whose works were later revived in a slightly varied but similar style by Cicero, Sallustius, and Manilius; this tradition then saw a great renewal during the third through fifth centuries A.D. via the writings of the Neo-Platonists.² This tradition continued throughout the Medieval Ages, culminating in the masterful poetry of Dante; by the time of Aquinas and the High Medieval Ages, however, scholasticism then reigned supreme over the minds of men. This system of dogmatic logic continued until a brief but great revival of Platonic thought took place due to the efforts of the great classical scholar Marsilio Ficino, whose translations and commentaries on the works of Plato and the Hermetic writers offered a much-needed respite to the world of philosophy, and aided in preparing Europe for the Renaissance.

But, though an essay at determining the reasons for which man should study astronomy should not be totally lacking in a summary of its history, yet it is not the primary subject of our endeavor; rather, we should seek to know *why* man must study the stars, and what benefits, if any, it may bring him. This is not to say, by any means, that man should labor for the sake of reward: such a labor would be entirely misdirected and foolish; man should instead strive for the tranquility and repose of mind that intellectual contemplation will bring to him as he studies the

¹ Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Penguin Classics, 2000, Book VII, ll. 1-2, page 150.

² By science, I mean that method by which the dianoetic part of the rational soul engages in dialectic to, through the process of reconciliation and paradox, arrive at notions of the truth which become clearer as the dianoetic part of the soul itself becomes clearer and purer in remembering more of that which it had formerly known before it was plunged into the dark abyss of matter. Intuition, by contrast, is a higher class of knowing, for science, in the motion which is inherent in dialectic movements, cannot partake of that more sublime quality of motionless plurality, for it itself, though abiding in itself, is moved by the intellect, and does not maintain the consistency of focus characteristic of its mover. *Vide* Ficino: “So far we have discovered some sort of form above the body’s complexion, which we shall call rational soul. Its essence always remains the same. This is proved by the stability of the will and the memory. Its activity, however, is liable to change, in that it does not think about all things simultaneously, but step by step.” Ficino, Marsilio. *Platonic Theology*, Vol. I, Translated by Michael J. B. Allen with John Warden. The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University Press, 2001, Book I, Ch. V, page 59.

stars, which, if we may divulge a great secret, are yet a part of himself, and are buried within, to use the terminology of Shelley, his *epipsychidion*.³ Before we begin, however, we should note that by astronomy, we mean not simply the observance of the orbits, eclipses, and other celestial phenomena of the stars, though these are of significance to him who is skilled in reading them and deciphering their enigmas; on the contrary, astronomy, for our purposes, may be termed not only the study of the physical manifestations of the stars, but also their soular and intellective characteristics, and, most importantly, their relationship to man, and his to them.

It seems requisite, that in setting out to determine why man should study astronomy, we should first discover what the stars themselves, being the objects of our inquiry, are. First, we should ascertain whether the stars are living or not, for no study devoted to that which is lifeless is a possible course of study for the true aspirant of wisdom, the exception being the study of that which is the origin of life, which, of course, would be beyond life; but, to do this, we must first examine what life itself is, and only then can we determine whether or not the stars partake of life, and, if so, what their characteristics are. “May we not say,” begins the Athenian in Plato’s *Epinomis*, “that the name ‘living creature’ is most properly used in the case when a single complex of soul and body gives birth to a single form?”⁴ This statement of the Athenian strikes an important crux, namely, that a living creature is that which partakes of both soul and body, or, in other words which may be more readily adapted to the higher principle of mind, a governing principle and a vehicle for its expression.

We have recounted, at least according to Plato, what constitutes a living creature, but we have not identified what life itself is. Here, we find it worthwhile to turn to Schiller, the great playwright and poet. In his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller argues for a definition of life derived from dialectic, arguing that life alone is the material impulse, form the impulse pertaining to thought, and “the object of the playful impulse [*Spieltrieb*], presented in general outline, can consequently be called *living form*: a concept serving to characterize all aesthetic properties of phenomena, what is in a word most generally called *beauty*.”⁵ Although we disagree with Schiller on his definition of life (and even living form), namely on the grounds that it is derived from a dialectic process, and that such a qualification of life would exclude the intellect, which, to us, is in fact beauty, we point out his notion because it demonstrates lower natures’ participation of that which is above them: this conception is certainly applicable to beauty. Does not Plotinus say, “but it is requisite that we should transfer this divine spectacle into ourselves, and behold it as one, and as the same with our essence,” and that, upon doing so, “in the secrets of his own essence, he will behold divinity in himself?”⁶ Thus, if Schiller has erred at all in his ascertainment of what life is, he has, nonetheless, demonstrated that lower natures may partake of beauty. The purpose of this digression may be thus summarized by, once again, the words of Plotinus: “But becoming beautiful, he will thus especially exist in beauty.”⁷

³ “Lady mine,/ Scorn not these flowers of thought, the fading birth/ Which from its heart of hearts that plants put forth/ Whose fruit, made perfect by thy sunny eye,/ Will be as of the trees of Paradise.” “Epipsychidion” from *Shelley: Poetical Works*. Edited by Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford University Press, 1986, page 420, lines 383-387.

⁴ *Epinomis* 982a. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, translated by A.E. Taylor, Princeton University Press, 2009, page 1,523.

⁵ Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education*. Translated by Keith Tribe, Penguin Classics, 2016, Fifteenth Letter, page 53.

⁶ “Ennead V, iii” from *Collected Writings of Plotinus*. Translated by Thomas Taylor, The Thomas Taylor Series, Vol. III, Prometheus Trust, 2017, page 52.

⁷ *Ibid.*

In the aforementioned quotation from Plotinus, in addition to its emphasis upon man's ability to become beautiful, we may find the key in discovering what life itself is. When man becomes beautiful, says Plotinus, he will *exist* in beauty. What is existence, but *being*? This *being* then, is what we see fit to be called life. This seems sound to us, for, the soul, being immortal, as so many great philosophers have so eloquently proven, thus partakes of immortality. But through which part, for the soul is, indeed, composed of numerous parts, does the soul partake of immortality? If we note the subdivisions of the soul as according to Pythagoras (per Diogenes Laertius), we see that "the soul of man... is divided into three parts, intelligence (*νοῦς*), reason (*φρόνες*), and passion (*θυμός*)."⁸ Here, we see the well-known tripartite division of the soul into the irrational (passion), the reasoning, and the intelligent. Surely it is not passion, that part of the soul which is irrational, which is immortal; for that which is irrational, being always inconstant and in motion, and thus subject to change, can never be permanent; and, although Diogenes Laertius holds that Pythagoras claimed, "Intelligence and passion are possessed by other animals as well, but reason by man alone,"⁹ we think that here Diogenes is mistaken, at least if we take intelligence (*νοῦς*) to refer to the intellect. If this is the case, then surely animals do not partake of it (or at least not to the degree that man does), for intellect is to the soul as the soul is to the body, and surely man, as a whole, is more intelligent than the class of animals. If Diogenes, however, is seeking to communicate that man possesses a faculty which animals do not possess, we agree with him, although we would say that such a faculty might be better termed *intellect* or, as Ficino says, *angel*, rather than reason (*φρόνες*). If the intellect is that which is stable and always focused, and reason, in engaging in dialectic, partakes of motion, then it seems more appropriate to us that, while man does possess reason to a higher degree than animals, it is the intellect which allows man his excellence.

In an effort to clarify our point using a slightly different terminology, we suggest that the other two portions of man's soul besides the irrational are the dianoetic portion (itself consisting of two parts, the dianoetic proper and the intellect) and *the one*. Surely *the one* partakes of immortality, for *the one* is that part of the soul which partakes of oneness, which comes from *The One*, and is abiding in itself and changeless: that in which there is no interval is incapable of change; similarly, the dianoetic part, in partaking of reason, is immortal; for, as Ficino puts it, "This essence the Platonists adjudged both true and immortal... because it is not constrained by place, nor subject to time or motion (on account of the indivisible and self-abiding simplicity of its nature)."¹⁰ Hence, each thing partakes of life to the degree to which it possesses immortality, of which both the rational, dianoetic portion of the soul and *the one* partake. Only that which is completely devoid of all reason, intellect, or oneness would be lifeless, and, because nothing cannot partake of oneness, in that multiplicity cannot spontaneously come into being (or becoming, rather), but needs a singular root from which it may spring, it follows that it is impossible for there to exist a thing that does not in some degree partake of life. In the words of Proclus: "This *one*, therefore, is the principle of all generation, and is that which reigns over the many powers of Nature, over partial natures, and universally over everything subject to the dominion of Nature."¹¹

⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1958, VIII.30, page 347.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ficino, Marsilio. *Platonic Theology*, Vol. I, Translated by Michael J. B. Allen with John Warden. The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University Press, 2001, Book I, Ch. III, page 53.

¹¹ Proclus qtd. in "Taylor's Introduction to 'Two Orations of Julian' from *Collected Writings on the Gods and the World*, Thomas Taylor, The Thomas Taylor Series, Vol., IV, Prometheus Trust, 2006, page 37.

Now having thoroughly treated the preliminaries of our investigation, we may return to our investigation of whether or not the stars live. Looking to the *Epinomis*, let us see what the Athenian has to say: “Now the sort [of creature] which moves in disorderly wise – as the kind of creature which includes ourselves – we must take to be unintelligent, but as for that which holds its course uniformly through the sky, we should count this abundant proof of its intelligence.”¹² While we agree with the Athenian here that orderly, uniform motion is a sign of intelligence, we think that here his proposition, at least in its current state before any further development, is too absolute, and does not accommodate according to degree; we should say, rather, that, as a creature partakes progressively of greater intelligence, so does it partake of greater life; ignorance, conversely, in being the opposite of intelligence, is death, following likewise in degree. Accordingly, as a creature partakes increasingly more of uniform motion, so too does it partake increasingly more of life.

If the uniform motion of the stars in their circuits is not great enough evidence of their possession of life, there is also the defense that the whole cosmos is one living animal. If the cosmos is indeed one living creature, then, truly, it follows that there can be nothing in the cosmos which is truly lacking in life, for if any part possessed the quality of lifelessness, and the cosmos as a whole did not possess it, then the part would contain something that the whole itself did not contain, which, the cosmos being a living animal, is impossible; hence, each thing in the cosmos is alive in proportion to the degree to which it possesses knowledge, and this is, in turn, correlated with respect to the role that each thing plays in being a particular part of a cosmic whole. Just as a man who is sleeping is alive, yet partaking less so of the quality of living than the man who is awake (especially the man who spends his waking hours in contemplation), so too does each part of the cosmos partake of life and knowledge.

Let us, however, examine the arguments for the cosmos being a single living animal. Though the arguments of the work are too extensive to cover in detail here, Plato’s *Timaeus* is an excellent defense for the cosmos being one animal. Of the many arguments Plato presents, let us look at this one: “For the present, then, we must conceive of three kinds, — the Becoming, that which “Wherein” it becomes, and the source “Wherefrom” the Becoming is copied and produced. Moreover, it is proper to liken the Recipient to the Mother, the Source to the Father, and what is engendered between these two to the Offspring.”¹³ The cosmos, being the direct offspring of the Demiurgus (forming the cosmos in the image of the Intelligible, which is the image of *The One*) and matter, is thus the offspring of the two. “For this our Cosmos has received the living creatures both mortal and immortal and been thereby fulfilled; it being itself a visible Living Creature embracing the visible creatures, a perceptible God made in the image of the Intelligible, most great and good and fair and perfect in its generation.”¹⁴ Plato, furthermore, is not the only philosopher to consider the cosmos a living creature, for Iamblichus thus remarks, “It is requisite, therefore, to understand that the universe is one animal; and that the parts in it are, indeed, separated by places, but through the possession of one nature hasten to each other.”¹⁵ So does the Emperor Julian, in his *Oration to the Sovereign Sun* proclaim, “Is not the world one

¹² *Epinomis* 982b. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, translated by A.E. Taylor, Princeton University Press, 2009, page 1,524.

¹³ *Timaeus* 50c. Plato. *Plato VII*. Translated by R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1961, page 119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Iamblichus. *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*. Translated by Thomas Taylor, Wizards Bookshelf Mecosta, 2006, Sec. IV, Ch. XII, page 219.

animal, profoundly replenished with soul and intellect, and perfect from the conjunction of perfect parts?"¹⁶ It may be determined, therefore, that the cosmos is one animal.¹⁷

Knowing now that the cosmos is one animal and therefore, the stars, being contained within it, are alive, we must, in accordance with the earlier conclusion that all living creatures partake of life in proportion to the degree of which they partake of knowledge (and, as an addition to this, we might add that not any knowledge is adequate enough, but only *true* knowledge) seek out to discover in which class of life the stars are placed. As, for instance, the tree and the herb both partake of the class of plant life, the lion and dog of the animal class, and the man and the woman of the human class, in what class, then, do the stars belong? Now we must discern what class or classes exist beyond man, so that we may place the stars in their proper kind.

Having reasoned that there is nothing in the universe which does not come from and participate of intelligence, the Athenian of the *Epinomis*, speaking of the stars, in conjunction with his previous comment that we should "think of their magnitude," proceeds to claim that, the body being of an earthy nature, and the soul being of a fiery nature, it follows that "it must be right to hymn them [the stars] as very gods, or we must believe them to be the likenesses of gods – images, as it were, fashioned by the gods themselves."¹⁸ Thus, just as man possesses a body that is in accord with the level of his spiritual development, so too do the gods possess celestial bodies that are the images of their true being. We must not be led into believing, however, that these gods are bound by mortality in the way in which the corporeal and transient body of man is; we must also, moreover, note that when Plato here speaks of the elements (in this case, the earthy and fiery elements), he does not speak of the physical elements, but of the spiritual counterpart to each: "These are not, however, to be confounded with the Fire, Air, Water, and Earth usually recognized under these terms, but to the subtil [sic] aethers underlying them, and necessary for the manifestation of the gross elements."¹⁹ This underlying elemental substratum is entirely immaterial, and, as such, it is not a contradiction to attribute certain elemental properties to immortal beings, for it would only be improper to apply to them the physical, "gross" elements, for divinity is unimpeded by corporeal nature. To put it another way, the stars (or, more specifically, their corporeal manifestations) are the emanations from the gods crystallized into corporeal form: divinity loses no more splendor in this occurrence than the highest sun does when its rays beam forth into the physical cosmos.

Thus, before we move on to further concerns, we shall briefly enumerate the other classes of the divine natures, in order to complete the system. The other creatures of the elements are, according to Plato, the following: "Next to fire we will place aether, assuming that soul fashions another sort of creature out of air, and a third from water.... After them and below them, come in order the daemons and the creatures of the air.... As for our fifth and last of our substances,

¹⁶ "Julian's Oration to the Sovereign Sun" from *Collected Writings on the Gods and the World*, Thomas Taylor, The Thomas Taylor Series, Vol. IV, Prometheus Trust, 2006, page 58.

¹⁷ We might be prudent in taking note of the clarification that Taurus the Platonist says in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*: "Plato does not say that the world is a body, but that it has a body." "Taurus on the Eternity of the World" from *Collected Writings on the Gods and the World*, Thomas Taylor, The Thomas Taylor Series, Vol. IV, Prometheus Trust, 2006, page 129.

¹⁸ *Epinomis* 983a-984a. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, translated by A.E. Taylor, Princeton University Press, 2009, page 1,526.

¹⁹ "The Vision of Scipio Considered as a Fragment of the Mysteries" from *Collectanea Hermetica*, Vol. V, Edited by William Wynn Westcott, Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1998, page 37.

water, the safest guess would be that what is formed from it is a demigod.”²⁰ Hence Plato demonstrates that nowhere in the cosmos is there a void or vacuum of any kind: life is everywhere.

That the stars are living creatures is clear when one considers the ubiquity of life everywhere in the cosmos, and, that they are gods, is clear from their magnitude and the uniformity of their motion. Let us then proceed to examine what benefits the investigation of such concerns may bring man. Of astrology, Iamblichus writes, “This divine mode is indeed [in astrology also], and a certain clear indication of truth, though it is but small, is at the same time preserved in it. For it places before our eyes manifest signs of the mensuration of the divine periods.”²¹ Iamblichus, speaking here of astrology, which, if we may be candid, cannot be divorced from astronomy without depraving both itself and its companion, vindicates the study of the stars through the knowledge, in this case, of divine periods. Proclus, Cicero, and Diodorus Siculus all recount that the Chaldeans possessed astronomical data that could be traced back to, at least, 300,000 years ago, and, at most, 473,000 years ago.²² Though we have not seen such records and, therefore, cannot attest to them, such a wealth of observations would have afforded humanity with knowledge far surpassing that which contemporary material empiricists (or at least those who propose “practical” data as being the only confirmable reality) claim to know. What these divine periods of which Iamblichus speaks are, and of what they consist, we shall now explore.

Ficino recounts that the Platonists “have claimed that to be completed the circuit of the universe takes an interval of thirty-six thousand solar years, what they designate the Great or Cosmic Year.”²³ But what is this Great Year? “So when the Sun shall again fail [sic] in the same position and at the same time, then, when the Signs of the Zodiac shall have returned to their original position, and the Stars are recalled, the cycle of the Great Year shall be accomplished,” thus the elder Scipio tells the younger in Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio*.²⁴ This Great Year, or the procession of the equinoxes, is of paramount importance to the student of philosophy, for the sun, in moving through each sign of the Zodiac and eventually arriving back at his original starting position, is emblematic of the nature of the soul, which, having been drawn down into matter, journeys through the Zodiac in successive reincarnations as it works its way back to its home above.²⁵ Hence Ficino’s comment on the sayings of Zarathustra are appropriate: “This was Zoroaster’s view, who believed that when exactly the same causes returned at some point in time, the same effects would similarly occur.”²⁶ Similarly, Taylor, in his notes on Julius Firmicus Maternus’ *Mundi Thema*, mentions Macrobius as stating that the mundane year, the time in

²⁰ *Epinomis* 984b-985c. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, translated by A.E. Taylor, Princeton University Press, 2009, pages 1,526-1,527.

²¹ Iamblichus. *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*. Translated by Thomas Taylor, Wizards Bookshelf Mecosta, 2006, Sec. IX, Ch. V, page 318.

²² *Ibid.* *Vide* the second footnote at the bottom of page 318.

²³ Ficino, Marsilio. *Platonic Theology*, Vol. I, Translated by Michael J. B. Allen with John Warden. The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University Press, 2001, Book IV, Ch. II, page 303.

²⁴ “The Dream of Scipio” from *Collectanea Hermetica*, Vol. V, William Wynn Westcott, Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1998, page 19-20.

²⁵ *Vide* the myth of Attis in the Emperor Julian’s “Oration to the Mother of Gods.”

²⁶ Ficino, Marsilio. *Platonic Theology*, Vol. I, Translated by Michael J. B. Allen with John Warden. The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University Press, 2001, Book IV, Ch. II, page 303.

which it takes not just the sun, but all of the stars, to return to their original position in the sky, consists of 15,000 years, and the great apocatastasis consists of 20,000 of these mundane years.²⁷

What this apocatastasis is we think worthy of investigation, even though our discourse has already grown long and is nearing its destined end. According to Taylor,

“In the greater apocatastasis of the world, which is effected by a deluge or a conflagration, the continent becomes sea, and the sea continent: ‘This, however,’ says Olympiodorus (in his Scholia on the first book of Aristotle’s Treatise on Meteors), ‘happens in consequence of what is called the *great winter*, and *the great summer*. But *the great winter* is when all the planets become situated in a wintry sign, *viz.* either in Aquarius or Pisces. And *the great summer* is when all of them are situated in a summer sign, *viz.* either in Leo or Cancer.’”²⁸

What shall happen during the apocatastastic period is recounted, among other sources, in the treatise *On Providence* of Synesius and the Hermetic *Asclepius*; the age, being one of depravity, ignorance, and atheism, shall see that, “The land that was the seat of reverence will be widowed by the powers and left destitute of their presence. . . . They [the people of this age] will prefer shadows to light, and they will find death more expedient than life. No one will look up to heaven. The reverent will be thought mad, and the irreverent wise.”²⁹ This apocatastastic age is then the age of winter, and all of the attributes of that season shall be the qualities which characterize the men of that era.

If the reader should find such a period cause for concern, let him not be distressed, for, though the year has reached its coldest and most desolate point, in which the fields that formerly bore sweet fruits lie fallow and the rivers that coursed from the Pierian springs are frozen into a sea of illusion, the all-embracing sun shall soon rise forth once more from the Antichthonic depths, and at that time men shall sing, “The Virgin now returns, so too return the reigns of Saturn; Down from the lofty heav’n is sent a generation new.”³⁰

In examining the knowledge that astronomy and astrology provide us upon inquiry, we have thus realized that, when man turns his eyes to the stars and fixes his mind in steady contemplation upon them, he may be granted that sacred knowledge of the course of the cosmos; such knowledge, especially the Promethean ability to foreknow, is of tantamount importance for the philosopher, for through this he is able to adapt his own nature to that of the divinities above him, and, in doing so, become a god himself. “Hence,” says Porphyry, “he who energizes according to the practical virtues, is a *worthy* man; but he who energizes according to the cathartic virtues, is a *good daemon*. He who energizes according to the intellectual virtues alone, is a *God*,” indicating clearly that man, though he may partake of a corporeal nature, possesses within him the capability to elevate himself to the heights of divinity.³¹

Though we have now arrived at the most celebrated and noble of man’s pursuits, that transformation of himself into divinity through the divine art, to uncover the secrets of such greatness would be too extensive of a labor for us now, and, after soaring aloft into the celestial regions, we must rest for the moment and gather our spirits together, ensuring that they, in their

²⁷ “Julius Firmicus Maternus – *Mundi Thema*” from *Collected Writings on the Gods and the World*, Thomas Taylor, The Thomas Taylor Series, Vol. IV, Prometheus Trust, 2006, page 141-142.

²⁸ Ibid. *Vide* Taylor’s third footnote on pages 138 and 139.

²⁹ “Asclepius” from *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English translation*, Brian P. Copenhaver, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pages 81-82.

³⁰ Virgil. *Eclogue IV*, ll. 6-7. The translation supplied here is my own.

³¹ Porphyry qtd. in “On the Virtues, I.ii” from *Collected Writings of Plotinus*. Thomas Taylor, The Thomas Taylor Series, Vol. III, Prometheus Trust, 2017, page 183.

splendid flight, do not overreach their capabilities; but soon, after we have rested beneath the shady bough of that wise tree, we shall again lift ourselves up, and, coursing ever higher with the keen, flashing blade of the intellect, we shall once more remount the glorious throne which is our inheritance, and the philosopher, his heart filled with reverence and awe, now “triumphantly directing to the stars his star-like eyes, looks ever more closely at Olympus and inquires into the nature of Jove himself; nor does he rest content with the outward appearance of the gods, but probes into heaven’s depths and, in his quest of a being akin to his own, seeks himself among the stars.”³² Thus man, in seeking another, finds himself, and, in this, begets the universe.

³² Manilius. *Astronomica*. Translated by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1997, Book IV, ll. 905-910, page 295.