

# Pliny and the Roman Encyclopedia

## Commentary



*Naturalis historia Manuscript Fl, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 82.4, fol. 3r (15th Century)*



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## Introduction

### *Pliny and the Natural History*

Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* is one of the most fascinating texts we have from antiquity. It is in many respects a work of extremes. Pliny took on the staggeringly ambitious project of collecting the entire knowledge of the ancient world in one monumental work, divided into 37 books, covering topics such as cosmology, geography, anthropology, zoology, botany, medicine, minerals, metals, and many more, even art criticism. It is, in fact, so vast, that it alone makes up roughly 10% of all the Latin literature up to the time of Pliny himself that is collected by the Loeb Classical Library.<sup>1</sup>

It was composed throughout Pliny's life (23/24–79 CE) and not finished by the time of his death in the eruption of the Vesuvius volcano, a catastrophe that famously destroyed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. It is then edited and published by his nephew, Pliny the Younger.

Pliny's approach in compiling data for the *Natural History* was quite exhaustive. He claims to have consulted around 2,000 books by 200 authors. The fact that Pliny gives us his sources and refers to them by name for individual facts is itself an interesting practice. What would seem like a normal "scientific" working method to us, was still quite uncommon in antiquity. It is still not quite like a modern encyclopedia. We will think about what makes it so while reading.

He did all that while occupying a busy position in the Empire's administration and being a close confidant of the emperor Vespasian. It is in a sense like an ancient Wikipedia, written by one author. Though, describing it as the work of one individual does not fully capture how this encyclopedia was produced. His nephew, Pliny the Younger gives us an interesting account of his uncle's working method that reads a bit like an ancient predecessor of today's "productivity" coaches (see Text 1 in your reader). This description highlights the extensive involvement of enslaved persons in the production of ancient texts. These individuals played crucial roles in researching and managing the immense volume of information that Pliny compiled and show the collective effort behind what might initially seem like a solitary endeavor.

For the longest time, the *Natural History* was one of the most widely read works of antiquity. In the medieval period, Pliny was a major source of education. Renaissance authors valued him for his insights into the ancient world, that they were so eager to recreate. It was among the very first books to be printed in Europe with the newly developed printing press. The first edition was published 1469 in Venice.

Yet, the *Natural History* is a rather understudied text these days. It rarely features in Latin classes and a great number of scholars condemned it as uninspired throughout the past two

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, this number would be much smaller if everything actually written in that period had survived (and the LCL does not even cover everything that did), but it gives us a rough idea what we are dealing with.



centuries, mainly due to the nature of its content: Pliny was for a long time seen as an unoriginal compiler of other people's ideas. And while it is certainly true that many passages are tough to get through (various pages about rivers, their length, and sources can be quite a test of one's patience), these books are still a vast treasure trove of details about the ancient world.

Your reader includes representative passages from every part of Pliny's work to give readers an idea the general character of the *Natural History*.

### *On Reading Pliny*

Pliny is not Cicero. His writing belongs in the early phase of what is now often called "silver Latin." The language will therefore be slightly different from what you might be used to from text books. Besides, Pliny's text is much more engaged with the "real world" than many other works. This poses some difficulty when it comes to vocabulary, but it also gives us a great opportunity to learn some words for things that don't often feature in other texts: like counting, measuring, the human body, animals, other countries, or the weather.

Pliny does not simply present us with pure "facts" about the ancient world (or what a typical Roman would have taken for facts). As you read, consider how Pliny's presentation of information reflects his own moral views and those of the broader Roman society. Think, for example, about what kind of entity Pliny imagines "nature" to be, how it functions, and what the place of the human occupies in it. Or take note of the Roman perception of other peoples, especially those in "the east," often coined by a mixture of fascination and othering, etc.

### *About This Commentary*

The following is a commentary on all the texts of the semester reader. It will start out more detailed to help you find your way into Pliny's Latin (with extensive vocabulary help) and then slowly be less and less exhaustive. Pliny's *Natural History* is great to just leaf through and read here and there without any specific order. However, the commentary will proceed in order and only comment on the same word once.

*The Contents of the Natural History:*

Volume	Books	Contents
I	1	Preface and list of contents, lists of authorities
	2	Astronomy, meteorology
II	3–6	Geography and ethnography
	7	Anthropology and human physiology
III	8–11	Zoology, including mammals, snakes, marine animals, birds, insects
IV–VII	12–27	Botany, including agriculture, horticulture, especially of the vine and olive, medicine
VIII	28–32	Pharmacology, magic, water, aquatic life
IX–X	33–37	Mining and mineralogy, especially as applied to life and art, work in gold and silver, statuary in bronze, art, modelling, sculpture in marble, precious stones and gems

## Abbreviations and Other Practices

abl.	Ablative
sc.	<i>scilicet</i> = “that is”
lit.	literally (a literal translation, but one that does not work here)
~	“here,” for non-common meanings of a word that apply to this passage
≈	“roughly” (for less literal translations, that try to sound better in English)

There will be a *macron* (**ā**) over some letters to guide pronunciation. It indicates a long vowel. I have not been very consistent with it, which means that the absence of macron does not indicate a short syllable. In rare occasions, when I had the feeling that anglophone intuition might wrongly suggest a short vowel, I supplied a *breve* (**ă**) to indicate a short vowel.

## Pliny the Younger on his Uncle's Work

**C. PLINIUS BAEBIO MACRO SUO S.:** *G(aius) Plinius Baebio Macro Suo S(alutem) (dicit)*: a typical Latin letter opening consists of the abbreviated formula “A wishes (good) health to their (good friend) B.” Therefore, the author (A) is in the nominative and the addressee (B) in the dative. Another common formula is *salutem pluriman dicit* (“wishes a lot of [good] health to”), which can be abbreviated as *s.p.d.*

**Baebius Macer:** Roman Senator, patron of the poet Martial & friend of Pliny's

**lēctitāre, lēctitō, lēctitāvī, lēctitātum:** verbs ending in *-itare* are often “intensive” or “frequentative” forms of a verb. They indicate that an action is happening more intensely or more frequently. They are usually formed from the Supine stem. This one is from *legere* (*lectum*): ⇒ read eagerly, read multiple times

**fungī, fungor, fūctus sum** (+ Abl.): be engaged, perform, execute, serve as ⇒ *fungi partibus* ≈ play the part of

**iucundus alicui:** pleasant/delightful for someone

**cognitio, -onis, f.:** learning, knowledge, acquaintance, discovery

**iaculatio, -onis, f.:** throwing (of a javelin) ⇒ *iaculatio equestri* ≈ javelin throwing from horseback

**unus** sc. *liber* (also *duo, viginti, etc. [libri]*)

**Publius Pomponius Secundus:** statesman and poet

**exsolvere, exsolvō, exsolvi, exsolūtum:** pay (back) ⇒ *debitum munum exsolvere* ≈ pay back an owed debt/favor

**amatus** sc. *avunculus meus*

**mīlitāre, mīlitō, mīlitāvī, mīlitātum:** perform military service

**Nero Claudius Drusus** (38 BCE – 9 CE): brother of Emperor Tiberius; father of Emperor Claudius. Military commander who launched the first major campaign across the river Rhine; died in a riding accident

**assistere, assistō, adstitī, –:** stand/come to stand somewhere ⇒ *assistere alicui effigies* ≈ an image/ghost appears to someone

**commendare:** to entrust

**asserere, asserō, assēvi, assitum:** to defend against, to set free from

**incunabula, -ōrum, n.:** cradle

**dubius sermo:** ~ ambiguous language?

**novissimis annis:** in the last years (of)

**servitūs, servitūtis, f.:** condition of slavery, mastery/rule (over slaves)

**omne studiorum genus:** all kinds of ~ (intellectual) endeavor

**Aufidius Bassus:** Roman historian

**scrupulosus, -a, -um:** (*scrupulus* = a sharp little stone): ⇒ rough/ rugged, ~ minute/ careful/ detailed

**occupatus, -a, -um:** busy

**actitasse:** intensive form (see above); *-asse* = *-avisse*: ⇒ *causas agere* = plead in the courts

**dēcēdere, dēcēdō, dēcēssī, dēcēssum:** to pass away

**tempus agere:** spend one's time

**distinēre, distineō, distinuī, distentum:** hinder, occupy, detain, engage

**quā...quā:** ~ on the one hand...on the other hand

**lucubrare:** work by lamp light (sc. work by night)

**Vulcānālia, iōrum, n.:** annual festival for the god Vulcan on August 23

**auspicārī, auspicor, auspicātus sum:** ~ to do something for a good omen

**paratus, -a, -um (+Gen.):** ready/prepared (for)

**si quid otii** (sc. [sibi] erat)

**legere, legō, lēgī, lēctum:** to read. The passive voice could technically just mean “a book was read (by him).” However, a common Roman reading practice was to have an enslaved person read it out loud. We should therefore assume that it means “a book was read (to him)” here. Cf. below: *lector* (= reader)

**frigida** sc. *aqua*

**cursim:** hastily, quick

**perperus, -a, -um:** faulty, incorrect

**nempe:** certainly, of course

**luce:** ~ while it was still light

**tamquam:** as if

**medios labores:** this is a partitive use of the adjective. It does not mean “the middle works” but rather “(in) the middle of work.” Cf. *summus mons* (either “the highest mountain” or “the top of the mountain.” Cf. English “early morning” which doesn’t mean “the earlier one of several mornings,” but “in the early part of the morning.”

**dēstringere, dēstringō, dēstrīnxī, dēstrictum:** use the *strigil* to scrape off dirt from the body or the oil that was applied before bathing. See a strigil from the Walters’ Art Museum in Baltimore on the right.

**notarius, -i, m.:** shorthand writer, stenographer, secretary



Bronze Strigil



**pugillārēs, pugillārium, m:** writing tablets (with wax as a writing surface)  
see for more on writing in the chapter on papyrus below

**manicae, -arum, f.:** gloves, mittens

**ne...quidem:** not even ...

**sella, -ae, f.:** litter, chair

**corripere, corripio, corripui, correptum:** ~ reproach

**commentarius, -i, m.:** ~ note-books

**opisthographus:** written on from both sides. From Greek *όπισθόγραφος* (*όπίσθιος* + *γράφειν* = behind/rear (part) + to write). A papyrus written on from both sides. That was not a common practice because one side was not as smooth.

**Larcus Larcinius:** we don't know much about him. Apparently, he wrote *Ciceromastix*, a book attacking the rhetorical style of Cicero.

**procurare:** be a Procurator, officials that were in charge of the finances of a province

**nummus, -i, m.:** coin. If the word *nummus* is used without specification, it usually means a "sesterce"

*sestertius, -i, m.:* the most common Roman coin. It changed value and material over time. Originally, it was worth two and half *asses*, which was a quarter of a *denarius*, which was ten *asses*. The name is therefore derived from *semis tertius* = "≈ the third as half"

**recordārī, recordor, recordātus sum:** think of, consider

**impendere, impendō, impendī, impēsum:** to spend, expend, put into

**impedīre, impedio, impedivī, impedītum:** hinder, hold back

**ego autem tantum:** ≈ "is it just me?"

**assidēre, assideo, assēdī, assessu (+ Dat.):** dedicate something to (something)

**cōnferre, cōnferō, contulī, collātum:** compare, put side by side

**destinare:** ~ undertake, plan to do

**futura (sc. esse)**

**aemulatio, -onis, f.:** competition, rivalry

**vale:** farewell

## Pliny the Elder: Letter to the Emperor (abbreviated)

**Camena, -ae, f.:** one of the muses (here a metonym for “Latin literature” in general)

**Quirites, Quiritium, m.:** the Romans

**novicus, -a, -um:** novel, new

**fetura, -ae, f.:** offspring, bearing

**licentior:** licentious, ~ wide-ranging/ long. When the comparative stands alone (without something to compare to) it often means “somewhat (larger, smaller, etc.)” or “a bit too (large, small).”

**praefatio, -onis, f.:** preface, ~ title/address

**maximus:** sc. the title of “maximus” ⇒ *maximus consenescit in partre*: “that title shall grow old with your father” (i.e.: this title shall remain with your father, you get a fancy new one)

**namque...putare:** quoting Catullus 1.3–4 (though with a slightly different word order)

**nugae, -arum, f.:** ~ trifles, nonsense

**aliquid putare:** to consider it something (i.e., ~ actually think it’s worth something)

**haec:** sc. these books I wrote

**subīre, subeō, subī, subitum:** to go under/to undergo, ~ to submit to

**laccessere, laccessō, laccessīvī/laccessī, laccessitum:** provoke, challenge, excite, ~ invite (the criticism/judgement)

**dicare:** dedicate

**tum:** then (in the sense of “in that case”)

**iste, ista, istud:** demonstrative pronoun “that.” Usually adds a derogatory connotation (“that kind of stuff/that fellow over there”)

**condicere, condicō, condīxī, conductum:** agree, make an engagement, promise

**album, -i, n.:** Refers to a white wax tablet. ~ the tablet on which the names of the senators were enrolled ≈ “list/register”

**quidem:** adverb that expresses emphasis or assurance: certainly, in fact, of course, at least

**fastīgium -ī, n:** the top, gable

**religiosus, -a, -um:** ~ with reverence

**dis = deis**

**mola, -ae, f.:** millstone, ~ spelt coarsely ground and mixed with salt (strewn on animals before sacrifices)

**accedere (+Dat.):** to come to (something) ≈ is added (to something)

**capax, capacis** (+Gen.): wide, large, able to hold, ~ containing (something)

**alioqui**: in another respect, otherwise, ~ in any case/generally

**perquam**: quite, exceedingly

**honorem praefari/dicere**: ~ to apologize (for one's language) ⇒ *vocabulis ... cum honoris praefatione ponendis*: "words to be put (down) with an apology"

**terere, terō, trīvī, trītum**: wear (off), grind, ~ to wear, tread often

**peregrīnārī, peregrīnor, peregrīnātus sum**: be in a foreign region/country, roam, wander, travel

**quae vero tractata ab aliis dicuntur immensae subtilitatis**: those things that are said to be treated by others of immense sharpness/exactness

**obscuris rerum tenebris**: the darkness of the ~ subject matter/contents

**ἡ ἐγκύκλια παιδεία**: "the encyclical education," a general education before the professional studies (comprised grammar, arithmetic, geometry, & music) ⇒ τῆς ἐγκυκλίου παιδείας is genitive ≈ "call by the name of ..."

**nitor, nitōris, m**: brightness, glamor, splendor

**assequī, assequor, assecūtus sum**: to arrive, reach, to gain/procure ⇒ *assecutis (sc. his rebus)* = elliptical Ablative Absolute

**dignus, -a, -um** (+Abl.): worthy (of something)

**Domitius Piso**: we don't quite know who that was

**thesaurus, -i, m.**: storehouse, treasure

**admodum**: adverb: to a (great) measure, much, very; with negations: at all

**subsicīvus, -a, -um**: that is cut off and left = left over, remaining, unoccupied

**cessare**: ~ to be inactive, idle, at leisure, to do nothing

**mūginārī, mūginor, –**: the Oxford Latin Dictionary explains this as "to hum and haw, to shilly-shally"

**stomachus, -i**: stomach; figuratively: good or bad humor/spirit ⇒ refers to a passage not in the reader in which Pliny explains that he has no ambition to compete with his predecessors or followers grudgingly

**argumentum, -i, n.**: argument, proof

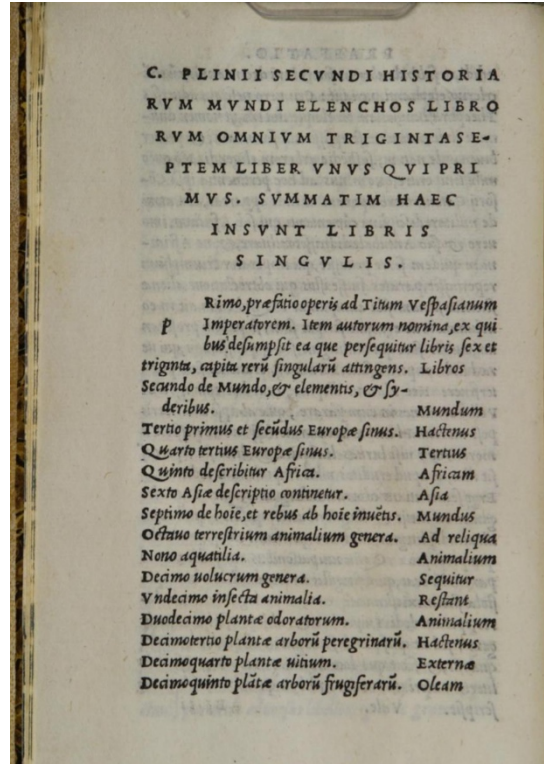
**praetexere, praetexō, praetexuī, praetextum**: ~ to preface

**sors fiat ex usura**: ≈ "capital creates interest"

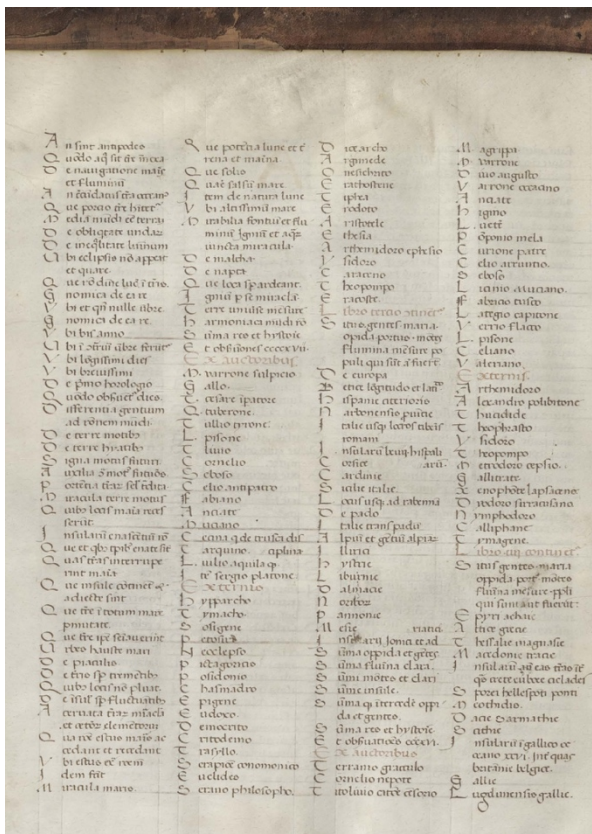
On the following page: some examples from Renaissance manuscripts and prints of the *Natural History*, that show how an "index" (such as Pliny offers) could look like over time:



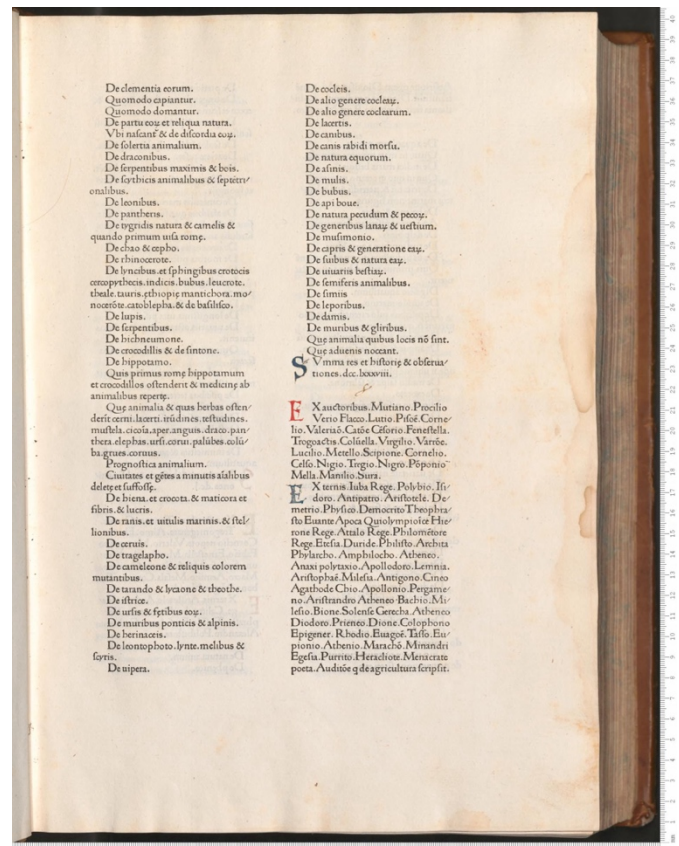
1536 a cura di Andrea Rabirio (Aldine)



1536 - Index



1450 - Manuscript



Venezia. Johannes de Spira [ante 18 IX] 1469 – 2°



## Pliny's Natural History

### *Book 2, Chapter 1: The Nature of the World*

**par est:** it is right/just to...

**numen, numinis, n.:** a deity (Pliny might be talking here about the Stoics or the Pythagoreans who believed that the world itself is a deity)

**exter, externa, exterum:** ~ what is outside (of it)

**indāgāre, indāgō, indāgāvī, indāgātum:** to trace out, investigate

**interest** (+ Gen. or *meā, tuā, suā*): it concerns/interests makes a difference to (someone)

**coniectura, -ae, f.:** conjecture, guess, reasonable inference

**infinitus ac finito similis:** other manuscripts read *finitus ac infinito similis*

**mensura, -ae, f.:** measurement

**quīdam, quaedam, quiddam:** certain people/things

**agitasse:** *-asse = -avisse*: ⇒ *animo agitare* = to consider/weight/meditate (in one's mind)

**prōdere, prōdō, prōdidī, prōditum:** to put forth, proclaim, publish

**occasione hinc data aut ab his sumpta:** having taken the opportunity/initiative from that or having been given it from those people

**trādere, trādō, trādidī, trāditum:** similar to *prodere*: publish, teach

**innumerabiles mundos:** that there are countless world is a belief of the atomists like Democritus or Epicurus. In Rome, a main proponent of Epicurean philosophy was Lucretius

**incubare:** ~ to lie in a place or upon a thing ⇒ *una (sc. natura) omnes (sc. mundos) incubaret* ≈ "one nature underlies all worlds"

**eadem quaestiones semper in termino cogitationi sint occurrentes:** ≈ those same questions will always encounter (our) thought process at the end

**adsignāre** (+ Dat.): to attribute something (to somebody)

**praesertim:** especially (since)

## *Book 2, Chapter 2: The Shape of the World*

*The following chapters are a very interesting description of the ancient knowledge about the world. Since they include quite a bit of geometry, they can be hard to translate. Try to make good use of the commentary.*

**absolutus, -a, -um:** ~ perfect

**vergit in sese:** it converges upon itself

**sibi tolerare:** ~ to hold itself up

**compāgēs, compāgis, f.:** joint, structure, fastening

**egēre, egeō, egūī, – (+ Gen.):** need (something)

**subinde:** immediately after, shortly

**motum, quo subinde (sc. se) verti mox adparebit:** in Latin, two different types of clauses can be mashed together into one. In English, this is much more difficult so that we usually have to untangle them back into two.

Example: *Hic vir est, quem praeclarum oratorem esse puto.* The predicate is *puto* “I believe.” Attached to it is an object clause (accusative with infinitive): *praeclarum oratorem (se) esse* “that he is a famous orator.” The whole phrase, however, is placed into a relative clause, depending on *hic vir est* “this is a man, who...” We could untangle these two clauses (relative and Acc. + Inf.) into two subordinate clauses: “This is a man, of whom I believe (relative), that he is a famous orator (object clause).” In Pliny’s sentence we have the same thing: “a motion, through/by which it will appear” and “it will appear that (the earth) is being turned”

**probatio, -onis, f.:** trial, proof, demonstration

**convexus, -a, -um:** in Latin *convexus* means both convex & concave

**medius:** literally “the middle (one).” Here it agrees grammatically with the earth, but technically describes the position of the observer  $\Rightarrow$  *medius cernatur* = “it appears middle in all directions.” That is: no matter from where you look, the firmament will always appear centered on you, which is only possible if it is a sphere.

**quacumque:** in all directions

**accidere, accidō, accidī, –:** ~ happen, be the case

### *Book 2, Chapter 3: The World is turning*

**reliquēre:** = *reliquerunt* (3.Pl. Perf. Ind. Act.)

**haut:** = *haud*: not

**solis exortus et occasus:** sun rise and sun set

**excedere:** ~ to exceed (i.e., to go beyond one's capacity)

**Hercule!:** "by Hercules!" a typical Latin exclamation of emphasis

**concentus -ūs, m.:** from *concinere* "to sound together" ⇒ harmony

**volucris, volucris, f./m.:** bird

**lubricus, -a, -um:** lit. slippery, ~ smooth

**levitas, -atis, f.:** smoothness

**terrēnus, -a, -um:** terrestrial, of the earth

**deciduus, -a, -um:** falling

**alibi:** somewhere

**per verticem:** across the pole

**ornamentum, -i, n.:** ornament ⇒ *nomen ornamenti* = the name (of) "ornament." The Greek word is κόσμος (*cosmos*). The Latin word *mundus* also means something like ornament or decoration, or toiletry or dress

**caelare:** to engrave

**Marcus Terrentius Varro:** Roman polymath; wrote a great number of books of which only one on agriculture (*Rerum rusticarum libri III*) as well as fragments of one on the Latin language (*De lingua latina libri XXV*) survive.  
He explains the name *caelum* for sky from the fact that it is "engraved" (*caelatum*) with the constellations

### *Book 2, Chapter 4: The Elements, The Planets, & The Sun*

*This is another tough one. Try to picture the universe that Pliny is describing.*

**ignium...tellurem:** one long indirect statement depending on *nec video dubitari (elementa esse quatuor)*. The indirect statement is skipping the *esse*

**cōnserere, cōnserō, cōnseruī, cōnserum:** connect, intertwine

**librare:** to hold in equilibrium, balance, make even

**ita...inniti:** again, a long indirect statement depending still on *nec dubitari video*

**quo minus:** similar to *ne*

**n̄sus -ūs, m.:** push, striving, urge

**quaeque...constricta:** sc. *elementa*

**cardo, cardinis, m.:** hinge, pivot, pole (a point about which something turns)

**cardo universus:** the pivot point of the universe (its center around which things turn)

**pendēre, pendeō, pependī, –:** ~ be suspended

**innītī, innītor, innīxus sum:** to rest/lean upon, to support oneself by something

**errantia:** the planets (from *errare* “to wander”). Calque the the Greek term πλανήτης (“wanderer;” from πλανάω “to wander”)

**planius:** ~ or rather, to be more clear

**ministrare:** ~ to serve (up something)

**fenerare:** lit. to lend on interest, ~ lend

**placēre, placeō, placuī, placitum (+ Dat.):** lit. to please (someone), often: “to approve something” or “be of the opinion that something is right” (while the Dative is the one approving/deeming right)

### *Book 2, Chapter 6: Astrology is Foolish*

**hinc:** from here (sc. from our last topic, which was the nature of the divine)

**dīves, dīvitis:** (adj.) rich

**dēfectus, -a, -um:** ~ weak, worn out

**sors, sortis, f.:** lot, share

### *Book 2, Chapter 39: The Effects of Stars*

**causa stata:** ~ certain cause

**manifestum est:** it is clear



**vicis, -is, f.:** turn, recurring occasion; *in vicem* = “in turns, alternating;” *vice versa*: ≈ “conversely;”  
⇒ *annua vice* = “annually”

**temperando anno:** ≈ in moderating/controlling the year (i.e., its seasons); ⇒ *natura solis...intellegitur*: “as the role of the sun in moderating the seasons is understood, thus also...”

**propria vis cuiusque et cuique ad naturam fertilis :** ~ there is an own power/ability to each (star) and (it is one that is) effective to the (specific) nature of each (of them)

**fecundus, -a, -um:** fruitful, ~ productive of (i.e., producing)

**in liquorem solutus umor:** ~ moisture dissolved into a liquid

**pruīna, -ae, f:** hoar-frost, rime, frost

**glaciare:** freeze, congeal

**tepor, tepōris, m.:** warmth

**rōs rōris, m.:** dew

**rigor, rigōris, m.:** cold, stiffness, rigor

**tantus...quantus:** ‘that big...how big’ = as big as

**ratio declaret:** calculation declares (i.e., demonstrates)

## *Book 2, Chapter 45: Science in Peace and War*

**de his:** about these things (sc. meteorology which Pliny discussed in the preceding chapters)

**inventus -ūs, m.:** the act of finding, research (as opposed to *inventum, -i, n.:* discovery, invention)

**piratis transituros famā terrentibus:** ablative absolute with an indirect object *transituros* “those about to travel” and an ablative of means/instrument “with/through rumors (of themselves, i.e. of pirates being around)”

## *Book 2, Chapter 55: Thunder and Lightning*

**fulgetrum, -i, n.:** lightning (less common version of *fulgor, fulgoris/fulgur, fulguris*)

**modularī, modulator, modulātus sum:** ~ to regulate

**profecti... non inlati:** *proficīscī* = to start; *inferre* ~ to arrive, hit

**etiamnum:** yet, still, moreover

**spīritus -ūs, m.:** air

**quatere, quatiō, quassī, quassum:** shake

**laevus, -a, -um:** left, on the left

## *Book 2, Chapter 63: Humans exploit the Earth*

*Pliny had just described the beneficial things that earth produces for humans: crops, herbs, medicine, etc. Now he turns to what the human do to the earth.*

**etiamsi:** even if

**ferre:** ~ create, bring forth

**fāmŭlārī, famulor, famulātus sum (+ Dat.) (+ Abl.):** to serve (*something* to someone), to be a slave (to someone)

**summa, -ae, f.:** lit. highest point (sum, main point), ~ top layer, outer part

**cŭtis, cŭtis, f.:** skin

**scrōbis, -is, m./f.:** ditch, trench, shaft

**quo:** sc. digito

**cŭnīcŭlus, -i, -m.:** lit. rabbit, ~ burrowing, canal, pit

**refodere, refodiō, refōdī, refossum:** dig up

**arcēre, arceō, arcuī, –:** keep away, fend off

**dea, -ae, f.:** referring to the earth

**placatus, -a, -um:** soothed, appease, ~ gentle, friendly

**rigare:** moisten, irrigate, to water

**expurgare:** cleanse, purify, exculpate, vindicate

## *Book 2, Chapter 65: Do People in The Other Hemisphere Stand on Their Heads?*

**littera, -ae, f.:** lit. letter, ~ literature, learning, science, scholarship

**vertex, verticis, m.:** top highest point (~ sky)

**calcare:** to tread, trample, step

**illo:** sc. vulgo

**praestō:** at hand, here; *praesto esse*: to appear, come up

**nux pinea:** does Pliny mean a pine nut or a pinecone?

### *Book 2, Chapter 68: The Zones of the Inhabitable World*

**eius:** sc. of the landmasses of the earth (Pliny talked about how much of our world is taken up by oceans and sky before this passage)

**utrimque:** on both sides

**septentriōnēs, septentriōnum, m.:** lit. the seven plow-oxen (from: *septem* [seven] + *trio, trionis, m.* [ox]). The constellation that is now usually called the Great Bear (Ursa Major)/Big Dipper.

Since it is in the north it is often used metonymically for “north”

**auster, austri, m.:** the south wind (sc. blowing from south to north). Often metonymically for “south.” Adjective: *austrinus, -a, -um*

**ūtrōbīquē:** on both parts or sides

**cālīgo, cālīginis, f.:** darkness

**alienus, -a, -um:** lit. strange, foreign, ⇒ *alienus aspectus* = an unusual sight (in the sense of: the sun doesn’t reach the pole regions)

**malignus, -a, -um:** evil, malicious, ~ stingy, frugal

**orbīta, -ae, f.:** track, path, orbit

**pervius, -a, -um:** that can be crossed, passable, accessible

### *Book 2, Chapter 73: Time Zones*

**oppositus, -us, m.:** an opposing, interposition (of a barrier)

**glōbus, -i, m.:** globe, sphere

**ambitus, -us, m.:** going around, revolution

**specula, -ae, f.:** watch-tower

**quīs:** = *quibus*

**eiusdem:** Pliny had already mentioned Alexander above.

**hora diei/hora noctis:** the Romans divided a day in 12 daytime and 12 nighttime hours. The day started at sunrise and ended at sunset year-round. In the summer, daytime hours were therefore longer than in the winter, the opposite is true for nighttime hours. Here: the sixth hour of the day is noon. The third night hour would vary throughout the year, but roughly 9pm.

**stādium, -i, n.:** a “stade:” about 150-200 meters (you tell me how much that is in feet or inches). However, there were different kinds of stades in antiquity, so that an exact conversion is difficult.

**Sicyon/Elis:** Greek cities on the Peloponnes. Starting at daybreak, i.e. took 15 hours home as opposed to 9 hours out.

But perhaps the length of the route is overestimated at 1200 stades as the distance from Sicyon to Elis measures only about 80 miles in a straight line on the map. Elis lies higher above sea-level than Sicyon, but only the latter part of the return journey can be described as downhill.



**declivis, -is, -e:** declining downwards, downhill

**remētīrī, remētior, remēnsus sum:** ~ travel again

## *Book 2, Chapter 80: Effects of Climate on People*

**contexere, contexō, contextuī, contextum:** to entwine, interweave, ~ to continue

**nectere, nectō, nexuī/nexī, nexum:** connect

**crurum argumento:** ~ this is proven by their legs (*ipse* is for emphasis)

**sūcus -ī, m.:** juice, moisture, ~ (vital) humor

[...]: square brackets in a Latin text mean that these words appear in the manuscript tradition but the modern editor thinks that they must be a later introduction (either through scribal error or conscious editions made by someone later than Pliny himself)

The opposite is indicated by <...>: the editor thinks that these words must have been in the original text but dropped out in the course of the copying process.

**prōcērītās prōcērītātis, f.:** large size, height



**tractus, -us, m.:** ~ a tract/stretch (of land)

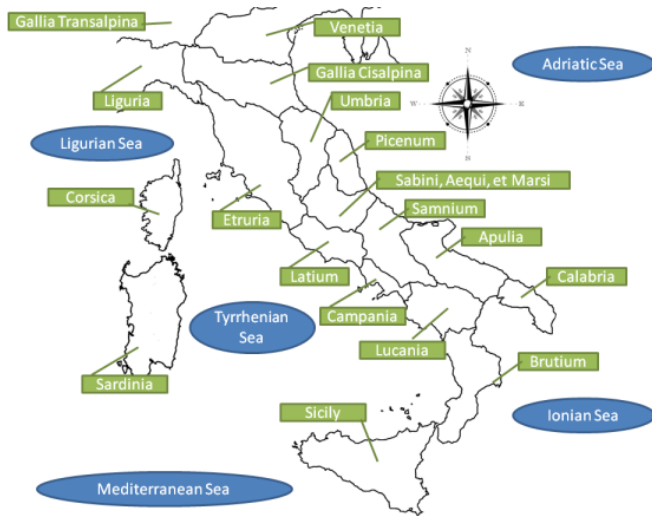
**temperiēs temperiēi, f.:** proper mixture, moderate temperature

### *Book 3, Chapter 5: Italy & Rome*

**Ligures...Liburni:** see map for some of those regions

**Graeciae ora:** Pliny does not talk about the actual coast of the Greek mainland, but of the Italian region called *Magna Graecia*, which covers the south of the peninsula.

**XVI p.:** a straight line over a Roman numeral indicates multiplication by a thousand. *p.* is an abbreviation for *passus -ūs, m.* (a step, pace). A Roman mile is a thousand paces or *mille passūs* (sometimes the Genitive *mille passuum* is used instead, “a thousand of steps”). One Roman *passus* is five Roman feet. One Roman foot is a bit over 10% less than an American foot.



See a little detour through Roman numbers on the following pages.

**obiter:** superficially, in a cursory manner

**deum:** = *deorum*

**quae...faceret:** relative clause with connotation of purpose (see Syntax Overview)

**...:** at this point, there is a gap in the manuscripts, and we don't know how to fill it. The technical term for that is *lacuna*.

**qualiter...per se...:** *sc. narrare debet*

**iam vero:** marks an exclamation

**apricus, -a, -um:** open (to sun), sunny

**Grai, Graiorum:** poetic form of *Graeci*

**quōtus:** how many, how few, of what number?

### Little Detour Through Roman Numbers and Numerals

Below a chart showing Latin numerals (both Cardinal and Ordinal, see next page).

There are also Distributives (like *ternīs*: “three each”), Adverbials (like *quinq̄uēns*: “five times”), Multiplicatives (like *triplex*: “triple”), but those shall not interest us here...yet

0	n/a	nūllus	n/a		30	XXX	trīgintā	trīcēsīmus
1	I	ūnum	prīmus		40	XL	quadrāgintā	quadrāgēsīmus
2	II	duo	secundus (alterius)		50	L	quīnquāgintā	quīnquāgēsīmus
3	III	trēs	tertius		60	LX	sexāgintā	sexāgēsīmus
4	IV	quattuor	quārtus		70	LXX	septuāgintā	septuāgēsīmus
5	V	quīnque	quīntus		80	LXXX	octōgintā	octōgēsīmus
6	VI	sex	sextus		90	XC	nōnāgintā	nōnāgēsīmus
7	VII	septem	septimus		100	C	centum	centēsīmus
8	VIII	octō	octāvus		...	...	...	...
9	IX	novem	nōnus		110	CX	centum decem	centēsīmus decimus
10	X	decem	decimus		200	CC	ducentī	ducentēsīmus
11	XI	ūndecim	ūndecimus		300	CCC	trecentī	trecentēsīmus
12	XII	duodecim	duodecimus		400	CD	quadringentī	quadringentēsīmus
13	XIII	ūndecim	tertius decimus		500	D	quīngentī	quīngentēsīmus
14	XIV	quattuordecim	quārtus decimus		600	DC	sescentī	sescentēsīmus
15	XV	quīndecim	quīntus decimus		700	DCC	septingentī	septingentēsīmus
16	XVI	sēdecim	sextus decimus		800	DCCC	octingentī	octingentēsīmus
17	XVII	septendecim	septimus decimus		900	CM	nōngentī	nōngentēsīmus
18	XVIII	duodēvīgintī	duodēvīcēsīmus / nōnus decimus		1000	M	mīlle	mīllēsīmus
19	XIX	ūndēvīgintī	ūndēvīcēsīmus / octāvus decimus		2000	MM	duo mīlia	bis mīllēsīmus
20	XX	vīgintī	vīcēsīmus		...	...	...	...
21	XXI	vīgintī unum	vīcēsīmus primus / ūnus et vīcēsīmus					
22	XXII	vīgintī duo	alter/secundus et vīcēsīmus					
23	XXIII	vīgintī trēs	tertius et vīcēsīmus / vīcēsīmus tertius					
24	XIV	vīgintī quattuor	quārtus et vīcēsīmus / vīcēsīmus quārtus					
...	...	...	...					

**Ordinal Numbers:**

Ordinal numbers indicate the “how maniest”:

*primus* – the first

*secundus* – the second etc.

As with cardinal numbers, you can swap the ones and tens: *vicesimus tertius* (the twenty-third) or *tertius et vicesimus* (the twenty-third).

For the numbers from 13–19, only the first order mentioned is used, i.e., never ~~*tertius et decimus*~~.

The form *alter et ...* is much more common than the corresponding form with *secundus*.

The subtractive form is much more common for the last two tens of a series. So rather: *ūndetrīcēsīmus* than *nōnus et vīcēsīmus*.

*Book 4, Chapter 12: The Hyperboreans*

**R(h)ip(h)aei:** a range of mountains in the most northern part of Scythia

**Pterophoros:** τό πτερόν = feather; φέρειν = to carry (cf. lat. *ferre*)

**āquīlo, -ōnis, m.:** north wind

**pone:** (adv.) behind

**cardo, cardinis, m.:** hinge, pivot

**sēmēnstris, -ris, -re:** six month long, semi-annual

**brūma, -ae, f.:** (from *brevima* = *brevissima*) the shortest day of the year, winter solstice

**vīrītim:** (adv.) separately, individually

**antīpōdes, -um, m.:** those on the opposite side of the earth

**accōla, -ae, f./m.:** neighbor; one who lives (near)by (as opposed to *incola*, someone who live in a region)

**conterminus, -a, -um:** neighboring (*cum* + *terminus*: with a [shared] border)

## *Book 5, Chapter 1: Africa*

**vel:** With superlatives *vel* denotes the highest possible degree: *the very; the utmost; the most...possible*

**C. Caesar Germani filius:** This is the emperor Caligula, the son of Germanicus Iulius Caesar

**columnae Herculis:** the pillars of Hercules, promontories that flank the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar. Often called the edge of the known world for ancient mediterranean cultures.

See 16<sup>th</sup> century map of Africa (based on geographical descriptions in Ptolemy's *Geographia* on the next page.

**Tingis/Tingi:** The Roman province of Tingis, the modern Tangier in Morocco. Important port city, that was eventually granted the status of a Roman colony and made the capital of the province of Mauretania Tingitana.

**Antaeus:** Figure in Berber and Greek mythology. Son of Poseidon and Gaia and husband the goddess Tinge (or Tinja in the Berber languages). Meets Hercules during his eleventh labor (stealing the golden apples of the Hesperides). He was invincible as long as he touched his mother, Gaia, the Earth. Heracles killed him by holding him aloft and crushing him in a bear hug.

**proximus traiectus:** ~ the shortest passage (between Spain and the African continent)

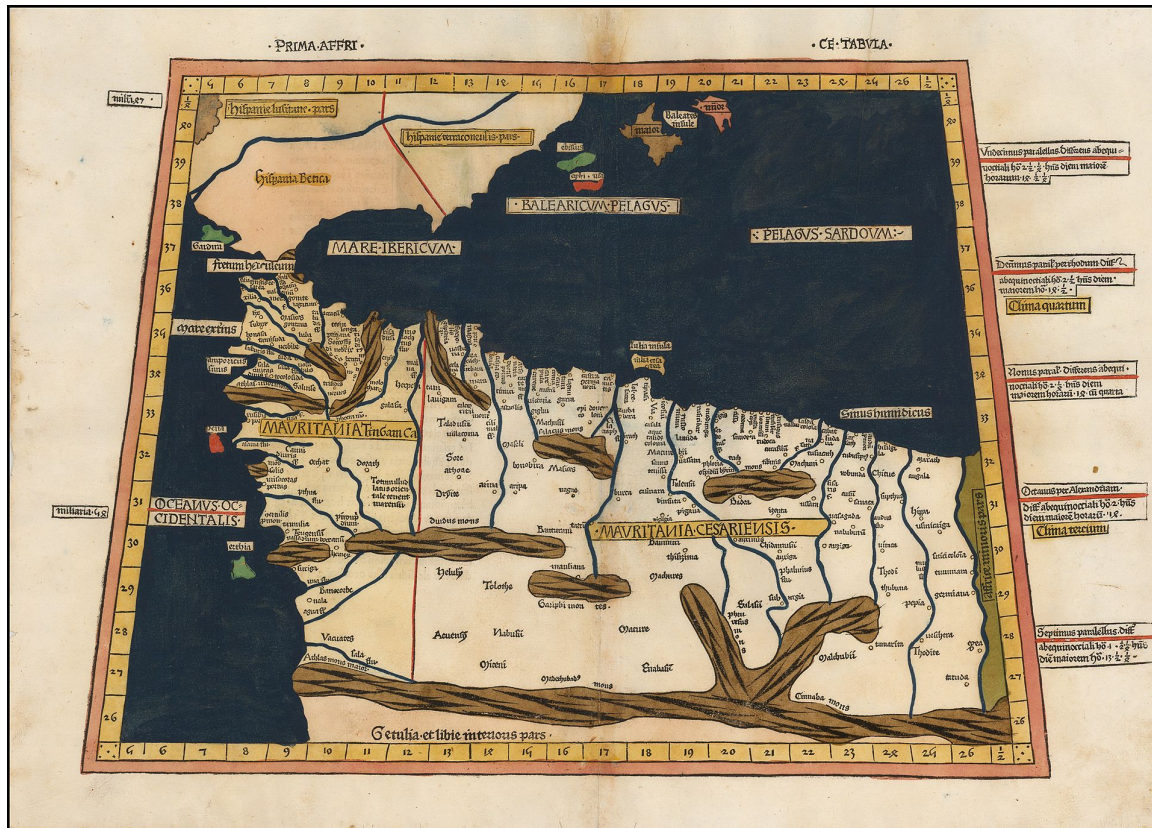
**iura petere** (+ Acc loc.): ~ to go somewhere for judicial decisions ⇒ *colonia ICZ iussa est iura petere in Baeticam*

**aestuārium -ī, n.:** A channel extending inland from the sea, and only filled with water at floodtide, a creek, inlet. (also in Pliny: an air-hole, air-shaft in mining)

**instar, n.** (indecl.): image, likeness; (+Gen.) ~ like something, after the fashion of something ⇒ *draconis custodiae instar*

**ōlēastēr, oleastrī, m./n.:** wild olive tree

**Cornelius Nepos:** Roman biographer and historian. Besides his biographies, all of his writings are lost. He must have talked about this marvelous place in one of those, maybe the *Chronica*, a universal history including nations outside of Rome. Pliny refers to him for an island called Atlantis, off the coast of Africa, in book 6.36 as well.



First printed Map of Africa, showing Mauretania (from Johann Schott's edition of Ptolemy's Geography (1513))

## Book 5, Chapter 16: The Dead Sea & its People

**Asphaltites**, -ae, f.: (Ἀσφαλτίτης), the Dead Sea; ἡ ἄσφαλτος = bitumen

**praeferre**: to carry in front, ~ to display, reveal

**Callirroë**: Καλλιρρόη = beautiful flow

**Ab occidente litora Esseni fugiunt usque qua nocent**: this sentence is a bit complicated. I think it must mean that the tribe of the Esseni moves away from the shores of the Dead Sea from its west side (i.e. they move westward) up to the point where they (i.e. the shores) are harmful. That is, they start living just outside the sphere of bad influence of the Dead Sea. Though Pliny is not really telling us what makes those shores harmful.

Similar construction in 6.4 (*nunc habet Surium tantum, et ipsum ab amne influente ibi cognominatum usque quo magnarum navium capacem esse diximus*) and 17.176

**in diem** (more frequently *in dies*): day to day, every day

**bustum**, -i, n.: heap of ashes (from funeral pyre), ruins

## Book 6, Chapter 20: China

**primi:** Referring to the first people inhabiting the region after some deserts

**lānīcius, -a, -um:** of wool, woolly; as noun: woolly stuff (here probably cotton)

**cānītiēs, cānītiēi, f.:** grey/white color, grey hair, ~ grey stuff

**labos:** = *labor*; it's not quite clear to me what the double labor here is. Maybe that the bunch of cotton has to be separated into filaments first and then woven together again? But that would be true for wool as well

**rēdordīri:** unravel, unweave

**trālūcēre:** = translūcēre: To shine through, show through; to let shine through, to be transparent or translucent.

Pliny is here probably talking about muslin, a cotton fabric often with high sheerness, originating around Dhaka (in today's Bangladesh). It was very expensive due to the delicate weave.

It was traded since antiquity, and had a great renaissance in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century French fashion under names like "Mode à la grecque," where it found many fans (including Marie Antoinette). It certainly faced similar moral opposition as Pliny voices here.

**volume condere:** ~ to dedicate a volume (to them)

## Book 6, Chapter 24: Sri Lanka

**Tāprōbānē, -ēs, f.:** (Ταπροβάνη), Sri Lanka

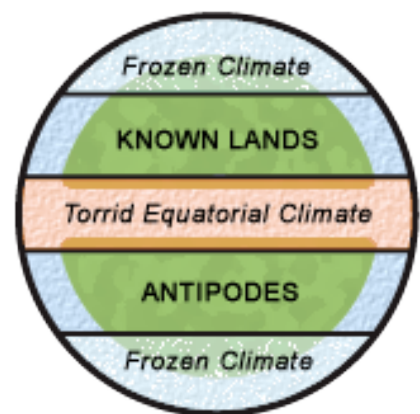
**antichthōnes, -um:** the Counterearthers (ἀντί ("opposed") and χθών ("earth"); suggesting the inhabitants of another land-mass balancing our own in the southern hemisphere. Cf. also 2.68

**praestāre, praestō, praestitī, praestitum:** ~ to show, prove

**Palaeogoni, -orum:** the "old-born"; παλαιός = old ὁ γόνος = offspring, descent. Cf. the Latin term *aborigines*

**margarīta -ae, f.:** pearl

**armāmenta, -ōrum, n.:** ~ the tackle of a ship



**sēnī**: distributive numeral (see chart below). They denote “one each,” “two each,” etc. They are also used for multiplying

⇒ ≈ not more than six paces (i.e., at each *vadum*)

Example: *bīnī senātōrēs singulīs cohortibus praepositī* – “a pair of senators was put in charge of each group of soldiers”

**prōra**, -ae, f.: The forepart of a ship, the prow/bow (opp. *puppis*: the stern)

**fiscus**, -i, m.: ~ the treasury

**quadrīduum** -ī, n.: (a period of) four days

**gubernaculum**: rudder

**detergere**: wipe off, ~ brush (by, over)

**Vergīllae**, -ārum, f.: the constellation of the seven stars, that rises at the end of spring = the Pleiades

**ab octava in XVI**: sc. *die*

**in nostrum caelum cadere**: i.e., towards the north (as opposed to south)

**montes (H)Emodi**: eastern part of the Himalayas

**rūtīlus**, -a, -um: red-ish, golden

**servom**: archaic accusative singular = -um

**in pretio esse**: to be valued, in high demand

**annona**, -ae, f.: (from *annus*), the yearly produce, the annual income of natural products;  
~ meton.: the price of grain

**capitis damnare**: sentence to death

**appellatio**, -onis, f.: ~ appeal (of a sentence)

**fēstum**, -i, n.: holiday, festival

**sūperfīcies**, -ēi, f.: upper side, surface, ~ shell

**Distributive Numerals:**

1	I	singulī	11	XI	ūndēnī	21	XXI	vīcēnī singulī	101	CI	centēnī singulī
2	II	bīnī	12	XII	duodēnī	22	XXII	vīcēnī bīnī	200	CC	ducēnī
3	III	ternī	13	XIII	ternī dēnī	30	XXX	trīcēnī	300	CCC	trecēnī
4	IV	quaternī	14	XIV	quaternī dēnī	40	XL	quādrāgēnī	400	CD	quadrīngēnī
5	V	quīnī	15	XV	quīnī dēnī	50	L	quīnquāgēnī	500	D	quīngēnī
6	VI	sēnī	16	XVI	sēnī dēnī	60	LX	sexāgēnī	600	DC	sescēnī
7	VII	septēnī	17	XVII	septēnī dēnī	70	LXX	septuāgēnī	700	DCC	septīngēnī
8	VIII	octōnī	18	XVIII	duodēvīcēnī	80	LXXX	octōgēnī	800	DCCC	octīngēnī
9	IX	novēnī	19	XIX	ūndēvīcēnī	90	XC	nōnāgēnī	900	CD	nōngēnī
10	X	dēnī	20	XX	vīcēnī	100	C	centēnī	1000	CD	mīllēnī

*Book 7, Chapter 1: The Human Condition*

(+ Gen.) **causa**: for (something's/one's) sake

**noverca**, -ae, f.: stepmother

**hūmus**, -i, f.: ground, earth, soil

**vagitus**, -us, m.: Latin verbs in -gire are often onomatopoeic. A cow says “moo,” so the corresponding Latin verb is *mugire*. A baby cries “vaaa,” so the Latin verb is *vagire*.

**rudimentum** -ī, n.: first attempt, trial, beginnig ⇒ *lucis rudimentum* ≈ first step into the light (of life)

**supplicium**: from *supplex* (kneeling down); ~ punishment, torture, distress

**auspicari** (ab + Abl): ~ to enter upon, begin (something)

**heu**: exclamation for the drama ≈ alas!

**palpitare**: palpitate, throb ⇒ *palpitans vertex* ≈ throbbing skull. Pliny must be talking about the fontanelle in infants. In Book 12 he says: *omnium cerebro medio insunt ossicula parva. uni homini in infantia palpitant, nec conroborantur ante primum sermonis exordium.*

**pernicitas**, -ātis, f.: from *pernix* (nimble, quick); agility, speed

**vescī, vescor**, –, –: to eat, feed

**quam** (+ Superlative): as (...) as possible



## Book 7, Chapter 2: On Curious Humans

The marvelous tales of foreign lands and peoples that Pliny describes in this chapter have a rich history in antiquity. Already in the Greek world there are a lot of fantastical travel narratives like Palaephtus' On Incredible Things (Περὶ ἀπίστων ἱστοριῶν) or Apollonius' Mirabilia. They go back to more serious works like Herodotus' Histories, which primarily cover the lives of prominent kings and famous battles such as Marathon, Thermopylae, Artemisium, Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale. His work frequently deviates from the main topics to provide a cultural, ethnographical, geographical, and historiographical background that forms an essential part of the narrative.

Pliny's description also sparked the imagination of artists who tried to visualize the curious beings. See below some examples from the Nuremberg Chronicle, one of the earliest printed encyclopedias (finished 1493 by Hartmann Schedel):



A Cynocephalus



A Sciapod



A Blemmy

mandere, mandō, mandī, mānsum: to eat, chew

anthropophagus, -i, m.: from ἄνθρωπος (human) + φαγεῖν (to eat) = cannibal

convallis, -is, f.: valley

itinerum mensor: ~ route-surveyor

mantēle, -is, n.: towel, napkin

effascināre, effascinō, –, -: to practice sorcery

pollex, -icis, m.: thumb, big toe

līēnōsus, -a, -um: "splenetic" (those suffering from disease of the spleen)

lōcūlus, -i, m.: diminutive of *locus* (forms in -ulus are diminutive) = a little place, compartment

scatēre, scateō, scatuī, – (+Abl.): to be bubble/gush/flow (with), to be plentiful (of), to swarm (with)

internodium, -i, n.: space between two joints

**cūbītum, -i, n.:** lit. the elbow; a measure of length, the distance from the elbow to the end of the middle finger: “an ell, a cubit”

According to Vitruvius, a cubit was equal to 1½ Roman feet or 6 palm widths (approximately 444 mm or 17½ inch)

**lātrātus, -ūs, m.:** a barking

**aucūpīum, -i, n.:** bird-catching, fowling

**Sciapodes, -um, m. (Acc.: -as):** σκιά = shade, ὁ πόος, ποδός = foot

**Trōglodytae, ārum, m.:** (Τρωγλοδύται) = cave dweller

**quidam sine cervice:** people without heads were also a staple in ancient travel narratives. They are sometimes called *Blemmyae* (Greek: βλέμμυες). During the Age of Discovery, a rumor of headless men called the “Ewaipanoma” was reported by Sir Walter Raleigh in his *Discovery of Guiana*, to have been living on the banks of the Caura River.

**lōrīpēs, pēdis:** club-footed

**Astōmi, ōrum, m.:** from Greek ἄστομοι = without a mouth

**lānūgo, -īnis, f.:** woolly substance, down

**hālītus, -ūs, m.:** breath, vapor

**grūs, gruis, f./m.:** crane

**putāmen putāminis, n.:** shell



Here is a Blemmye from a 1556 map by Guillaume Le Testu



A cynocephalus alongside a blemmye, a cyclops and a sciapod, from *The Voyage and Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (written between 1357 and 1371)



In margin of “*Heures à l'usage des Antonins*”, 15th century. Attributed to the “*Maître du Prince de Piémont*”

*Book 7, Chapter 3–8: On Human Sexuality and Procreation*

**sub** (parentibus): ~ under the eyes of their parents

**Thysdritanum**. . . **editis**: here, one editor assumes a lacuna (a missing part of the text)

**puerperus, -a, -um**: (*puer-pario*) = parturient, bringing forth children; *puerpera* = a woman in labor or in childbed; *puerperium* = a newborn, baby

**mares in dextera fere geri parte, in laeva feminas**: the theory that the position of the fetus in the uterus decides over the sex of the child is a very common theory in antiquity. It goes back to Parmenides, Anaxagoras, and Empedocles. Other philosophers suggested that male and female genetic material compete with each other in the womb over the sex determination

**tra(ns)laticius, -a, -um**: handed down, transmitted

**oscitatio, -onis, f.**: opening the mouth wide, (yawning)

**sternuere, sternuō, sternuī, –**: to sneeze

**frīvolus, -a, -um**: worthless, trifling, pitiful

**lucerna, -ae, f.**: lamp

**ăcīnus, -i, m./ăcīnum, -i, n.**: a berry, grape

**truncus, -a, -um**: mutilated, disfigured

**regenerare**: bring forth again, reproduce, resemble (not in the modern sense of “replenish, getting better”)

*Book 7, Chapter 19–20: Exceptional Attributes in People*

**Agelastus**: from Greek ἀγέλαστος = not laughing; (γελάω = to laugh)

**άπαθεις**: acc. pl. of άπαθής = without feeling/emotion/affects

**ēvēhere, ēvēhō, ēvēxī, ēvēctum (+ in)**: ~ proceed, advance, come (to, to the point of)

**ructare**: belch, burp

**vēscus, -a, -um**: small, thin, weak

**Samnitium armatura:** one of the earliest gladiatorial fighting styles. The *samnis* (*samnitis*, *m.*) fought in the style of a warrior from Samnium: with a sword (*gladius*), a rectangular shield (*scutum*), a greave (*ocrea*), and a helmet.

**cancellatim:** lattice-formed, trellis-like (criss-cross)

**culleus, -i, m.:** (leather) sack; also: A large measure for liquids, holding 20 *amphorae* (aka *quadrantal*, which was one cubic foot, which holds about 80 *libra* of wine). See below a table for Roman liquid measurements

**exīnānīre, exīnānīo, -īvi, -ītum:** to empty

**carpentum, -i, n.:** chariot, carriage, wagon



*Two Samnites from Charlotte Mary Yonge's Young Folks' History of Rome (1880)*

### Roman Liquid Measurements:

Roman unit	Equal to	Metric	Imperial	US fluid
ligula	1/288 congius	11.4 mL	0.401 fl oz	0.385 fl oz
cyathus	1/72 congius	45 mL	1.58 fl oz	1.52 fl oz
acetabulum	1/48 congius	68 mL	2.39 fl oz	2.30 fl oz
quartarius	1/24 congius	136 mL	4.79 fl oz	4.61 fl oz
hemina or cotyla	1/12 congius	273 mL	9.61 fl oz	9.23 fl oz
sextarius	1/6 congius	546 mL	19.22 fl oz 0.961 pt	18.47 fl oz 1.153 pt
congius	1 congius	3.27 L	5.75 pt 0.719 gal	3.46 qt 0.864 gal
urna	4 congii	13.1 L	2.88 gal	3.46 gal
amphora quadrantal	8 congii	26.2 L	5.76 gal	6.92 gal
culeus	160 congii	524 L	115.3 gal	138.4 gal

### *Book 7, Chapter 24: Memory*

**mēlīcus, -a, -um:** musical, lyric; ~ *melicus* = a lyric poet

**alias...alias:** sometimes...sometimes...

**particulatim...universa:** sc. *memoria*



**adfinis:** neighboring; usually: related by marriage

**propinquus:** neighboring; usually: related by blood

**serpere, serpsō, serpsī, –:** creep/crawl (in)

### *Book 7, Chapter 50: Live is short, Fortunately (?)*

**quid quod:** ~ what about the fact that

**reputare:** ~ to count

**ciborum instrumenta:** ~ digestive organs (probably a direct translation from Greek ὄργανα

**trinis quadrinisve:** ≈ ternis quaternisve

**aliquantisper:** for a while, some time. Pliny seems to use it more like “in a certain respect”

### *Book 7, Chapter 59: The Invention of Shaving*

Originally, Roman beard fashion seems to have resembled that of the Greeks. With the appearance of barbers, beardlessness became common, but the (daily) self-shave – as practiced by Scipio or Augustus – was the exception.

For the Romans the cutting off of the first beard was an act symbolizing the transition to manhood and was celebrated publicly (*depositio barbae*).

The first evidence of barbers in Rome is around 300 BC. The barber (*tonsor*) cuts hair, toenails and fingernails and beards and makes hairpieces and wigs. As in Greece, the Roman barber shop (*tonstrinae*), too, were meeting places to socialize, get the latest gossip, or conduct business.

The trade was mostly practiced by men, less commonly by women; barbers were associated with each other belonging to a *collegium*, an early form of professional guilds. Their salary is stated in the *Edictum Diocletiani* as two *denarii*. The barbers' assistants also made house visits.



1. Mycenaean, c. 1500 BC.
2. Archaic-Etruscan, 6th cent. BC.
3. Classical, 5th cent. BC.
4. *Strategos* type beard, 5th cent. BC, after the bust of Pericles.
5. Philosopher's beard, 5th-4th cents., after the bust of Plato.
6. Short Roman beard, 1st cent. AD.
7. Hadrianic, 1st cent. AD.
8. Severian, 2nd half of the 2nd cent.-1st half of the 3rd cent. AD

*Beard style from Brill's New Pauly*

## *Book 8, Chapter 1–10: Elephants*

**vitulus, -i, m.:** male calf

**iusiurandum, -i, n.:** oath

**allegare:** to send someone away with a commission or charge, to dispatch

**nōthus, -a, -um:** from Greek νόθος = illegitimate, bastard

**Liber Pater:** Liber Pater is an Italic-Roman god of nature, fertility, and wine, usually identified with Dionysus (Bacchus). The etymological origin probably lies in verbs like *libare* (to pour a libation) and its Greek counterpart λείβειν.

**inconditus, -a, um:** without order, confused, clumsy

**pyrrichē (pyrrhichē), ēs, f.:** from Greek πυρρίχιος; a metrical foot that consists of two unaccented, short syllables.

This rhythmic pattern apparently formed the basis of an identically named ancient Greek war dance with weapons (πυρρίχη), performed all over the Greek world.

**funis, is, m.:** rope; ~ for tightrope walking. We still have the word “funambulist”

**lamina, -ae, f.:** a thin sheet/layer, plate

**mandere, mandō, mandī, mānsum:** chew

**mūs, mūris, m.:** mouse

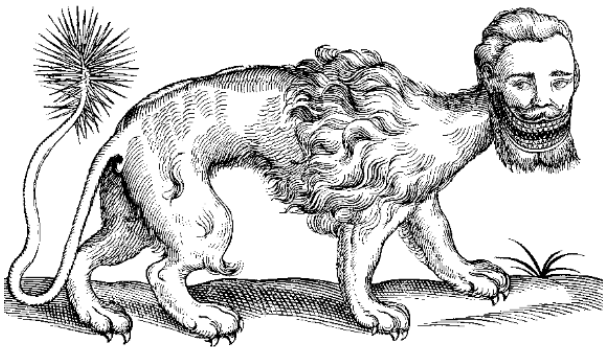
## *Book 8, Chapter 30–34: Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*

*The following chapter is dedicated to marvelous fantasy animals, which are a stable feature in all cultures around the world. In the Middle Ages, ancient descriptions evolved into the genre known as the “Bestiary” which catalogued those animals, often combining natural history with moral lessons.*



*An amazing catalogue of all beasts featured in those Bestiaries (with descriptions, lots of medieval drawings, and manuscript index) can be found at: <https://bestiary.ca/>*

**apud eosdem:** Pliny gives an overview of the fauna of Ethiopia. With this text he turned to more marvelous creatures. Some commentators think that this is actually referring to the Indians instead.



from "The History of Four-Footed Beasts" (1607) by Edward Topsell

**mantichora:** the mantichora is a monster from Persian legends. Ctesias, whom Pliny got the story from, was a physician at the Persian court (for the Achaemenid king, Artaxerxes II). He wrote two books, the *Persica* and the *Indica*. The term is translated into Latin *mantichora* from Ancient Greek μαρτιχόρας. This in turn is a transliteration of an Old Persian compound word consisting of martiya 'man' and xuar-, 'to eat' = man-eater (Mod. Persian: مردخوردن; mard + khordan). Ctesias himself says the Greek name is ἀνθρωποφάγον.

**pectinatim:** like a *pecten* (a comb)

**monoceros, -cerotis, m.:** from Greek μονοκέρας = the unicorn

**catoblepas:** from Greek κατωβλέπων (that which looks down)



Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KB, 76 E 4 (Der Naturen Bloeme), f. 15v.



British Library, Harley MS 4751, f. 15r.



Aberdeen University Library, Univ. Lib. MS 24 (Aberdeen Bestiary), f. 66r

**mustēla/mustella, -ae, f.:** weasel

**ad praesens (tempus):** for the moment, temporarily

**versipellis, -is, -e:** shapeshifting (lit.: which changes skin)

**maledictus, -a, -um:** cursed, under influence of a curse

**spernere, spernō, sprēvī, sprētum:** despise, contemn

**quercus, -us, f.:** oak tree

### *Book 9, Chapter 53–58: Luxury and Pearls*

*In his very long discussion of sea animals, Pliny arrives at some of the more particular uses of shellfish. After talking about the murex snail that is harvested to make purple dye for expensive clothes, he gets to pearls. Of course, he gives this account his typical flavor of moral indignation:*

**concha, -ae, f.:** from Greek κόγχη; mussel, pearl-oyster

**mēnsa -ae, f.:** table, ~ dish

**quis:** = quīs

**conchylīum:** the purple snail; ~ meton. purple garments

**margarita, -ae, f.:** pearl

**gŭla, -ae, f.:** throat, gullet

**quid...:** elliptical question; ≈ “what’s going on with...?”

**esto:** Imperative of the third person ≈ “There be ...” (in the sense of: “ok, let’s assume that/be it so”)

**animā hominis quaesitā**

**cōlūmen, -inis, n.:** pillar, highest point, summit

**sponsalia, -ium, n.:** wedding

**quadringenties:** adverbial numeral; indicates how many times something happens. See table below

**sēstertium -ī, n.:** Roman money values are rather complicated. See an attempt to understand them on the next pages

**colligere, colligō, collēgī, collēctum:** ~ to acquire, to get

**mancīpātīo/mancŭpātīo, -ōnis, f.:** purchase (*manus* + *capere* = take in/with hand)

**ūnīo, ōnis, f.:** the number one, single one; ~ a single pearl (as opposed to a necklace)

**sagīnāre:** to fatten, gorge, stuff, feast

**prōcax, -ācis:** shameless, wanton



**fastus, -ūs, m.:** disdain, arrogance

**meretrix, -tricis, f.:** courtesan, prostitute

**obtrectare:** disparage, belittle

**HS:** common modern abbreviation for the *sestertius* or *sestertium* (see table below). Originally it was ~~HS~~, which symbolizes the original value (two *asses* as a half). The *II* is the Roman numeral 2, *S* stands for *semis*. The striking through shows that one is talking about the coin (and not any number). In modern type, simply using the similar looking *H* is more convenient (though it has technically nothing to do with the letter “h”; the abbreviation is therefore not pronounced “aitch” [yes, this is how it is written] “ess”).

**spōnsiō, -onis, f.:** a bet, promise, guarantee

**corollarium, -i, n.:** garland of flowers; ~ present, a bonus

### Adverbial Numerals:

Adverbial Numerals indicate how many times something happens

1	I	<i>semel</i>	11	XI	<i>ūndeciēns</i>	21	XXI	<i>vīciēns semel</i>	101	CI	<i>centiēns semel</i>
2	II	<i>bis</i>	12	XII	<i>duodeciēns</i>	22	XXII	<i>vīciēns bis</i>	200	CC	<i>ducentiēns</i>
3	III	<i>ter</i>	13	XIII	<i>trēdeciēns</i>	30	XXX	<i>trīciēns</i>	300	CCC	<i>trecentiēns</i>
4	IV	<i>quater</i>	14	XIV	<i>quattuordecīēns</i>	40	XL	<i>quadrāgiēns</i>	400	CD	<i>quadringentiēns</i>
5	V	<i>quinqūiēns</i>	15	XV	<i>quīndeciēns</i>	50	L	<i>quīnquāgiēns</i>	500	D	<i>quīngentiēns</i>
6	VI	<i>sexiēns</i>	16	XVI	<i>sēdeciēns</i>	60	LX	<i>sexāgiēns</i>	600	DC	<i>sescentiēns</i>
7	VII	<i>septiēns</i>	17	XVII	<i>septendeciēns</i>	70	LXX	<i>septuāgiēns</i>	700	DCC	<i>septingentiēns</i>
8	VIII	<i>octiēns</i>	18	XVIII	<i>duodēvīciēns</i>	80	LXXX	<i>octōgiēns</i>	800	DCCC	<i>octingentiēns</i>
9	IX	<i>noviēns</i>	19	XIX	<i>ūndēvīciēns</i>	90	XC	<i>nōnāgiēns</i>	900	C <del>CD</del>	<i>nōngentiēns</i>
10	X	<i>deciēns</i>	20	XX	<i>vīciēns</i>	100	C	<i>centiēns</i>	1000	<del>CD</del>	<i>milliēns</i>

The suffix *-iēns* may also be spelled *-iēs* (e.g., by Pliny above)

## Roman Coin Values:

We already encountered the *sestertius* (-i, m.), which was originally two and a half *asses*. The word was basically interchangeable with the word *nummus* = “coin.” One could also use them both.

### Sums under 1,000 *sestertii*

were expressed with an ordinal number + *sestertii*, *nummi*, or *sestertii nummi*

#### Example:

20 sesterces = *viginti nummi* = *XX sestertii* = *XX sestertii nummi*

### The sum of 1,000 *sestertii*

was also called a *sestertium*, -i, n. (it is unclear if this is originally just a contraction of the genitive plural *sestertiorum*). Its plural is *sestertia*

#### Example:

1,000 sesterces = *M sestertium* (for *sestertiorum*?) = *M nummi* = *M nummum* (for *nummorum*)  
= *M sestertium nummum* = *sestertium*.

### Sums between 1,000 and 1,000,000 *sestertii*

are expressed by taking any form of “1,000 *sestertii*” (above) with an ordinal number. Sometimes *millia* is used instead of *sestertia*: sometimes both words are omitted: sometimes *nummum* or *sestertium* is added

#### Example:

600,000 sesterces = *sescenta sestertia* = *sescenta millia* = *sescenta* = *sescenta sestertia nummum*

### Sums of a 1,000 *sestertia* (i.e., a million *sestertii*) and above:

are expressed by adding a numeral adverb (see table above) plus the neuter singular *sestertium* (in the case required by the sentence). These adverbs indicate how many times something is the case. It is understood with *centena millia* (a hundred thousand), though this is usually not expressed.

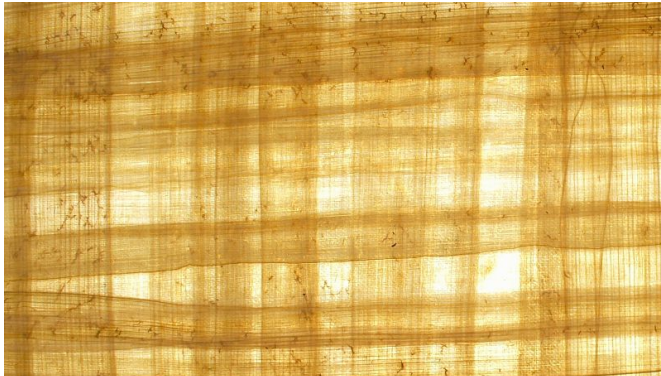
#### Examples:

1,000,000 *sestertii* = *decies sestertium* = *decies centena millia sestertium* = *ten times a hundred thousand sestertii* = 1000 *sestertia*

100,000,000 *sestertii* = *millies HS* = *millies centena millia sestertium* = a thousand times one hundred thousand *sestertii* = 100,000 *sestertia*

## *Book 13, Chapter 21–26: History of Writing & the Invention of Papyrus*

*Papyrus was the most important writing material in the ancient world (together with wax tablets). It was made out of the reeds of the Papyrus plant that grows in the Nile delta*



*Blank Papyrus (image wikipedia)*

**pāluster, -tris, -tre:** (sc. *plants*) ferny, marsh-, swamp-

**līber, -bri, m.:** the inner bark or rind of a tree. It was used as a writing surface and therefore turned into the main word for “book.” We have to keep in mind, however, that an ancient “book” did not look like a modern book. When someone talks about *libri* what is meant is usually a papyrus scroll. When ancient works of literature are divided into “books,” it usually means that they were split into various scrolls.

Everyday writing that was not meant to be kept for long times (think shopping lists, letters, notes) was mostly done on wax tablets.

The bound book is called *codex* and is a much later phenomenon. Closest to that come the *pugillares* which are several wax tablets bound together (see image below)

**volumen, voluminis, n.:** lit. that which is rolled; a book, a volume; usually means a scroll of papyrus



*Writing Tablet & Stylus (image by Peter van der Sluijs, wikipedia)*

**pugillārēs, pugillārium, m.:** (from *pugillus* = size of a fist, what can be held in the hand); writing tablets, bound together into a kind of notebook

**apud Homerum:** mentions writing tablets (πίναξ) in the *Iliad* (book 6, 168f.):

πόρεν δ' ὃ γε σήματα λυγρὰ  
γράφας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῶ θυμοφθόρα πολλά  
and gave him baneful tokens,  
graving in a folded tablet many signs and deadly

**prodere:** ~ write, publish

**nomos, ī, m.:** from Greek νομός = a territorial division in ancient Egypt

**velifico cursu:** trip by sailing-ship

**supprimere:** ~ suppress (scil. the export)

**membrana, -ae, f.:** skin = parchment; The modern name “parchment” does indeed derive from the city of Pergamon, which was a center of its production in the Hellenistic period. Although Pliny’s explanation that it was invented there is certainly false. It already had a long history outside the Greek world.

**evagari:** to wander off, extend, spread, ~ flow over

**gurgēs, gurgitis, m.:** lit. abyss, whirlpool, stream; although it seems like what Pliny means here is more like a puddle or pool

**fastigare:** to slope up, raise, make pointed

**thyrsus, -i, m.:** A staff twined round with ivy and vine-shoots, borne by Bacchus and the Bacchantes; the Bacchic staff

**cacumen, cacuminis, n.:** end, top, tip, peak

**tēgēs, tēgētis, f.:** cover, mat

**stragulum, -i, n.:** rug, mattress, bed

**philyra, -ae, f.:** ~ the skin or rind of the papyrus

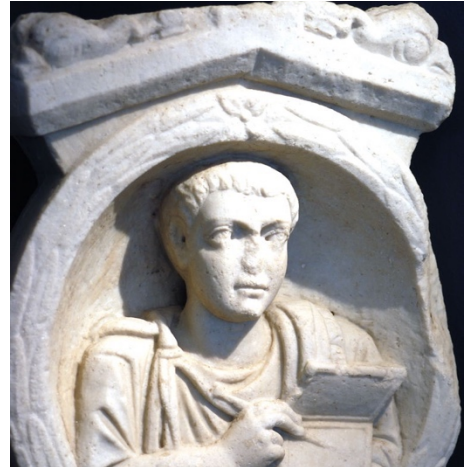
**scissure, -ae, f.:** a tearing, dividing, cutting

**hierāticus, a, um:** from Greek ἱερατικός: belonging to sacred uses, hieratic

**amphitheatrum:** scil. one in Alexandria

**interpolatio, -onis, f.:** from *interpolare* = to refurbish, touch up, improve

**sēgestre, -is, n.:** wrapper, covering



*Roman scribe with his stylus and pugillares, on his tomb stele at Flavia Solva in Noricum*



*Cyperus papyrus (Wikipedia)*

**a mercatoribus:** that is “from the Greek term for...”; ἔμπορος = merchant

**scirpus, -i, m.:** rush, bulrush

**omnis:** scil. *papyrus*

**sc(h)ŭda/sc(h)ēda, -ae, f.:** strip of papyrus bark, sheet of paper

**rēsegmīna, -um, n.:** (from *resecare*) clipping, paring

**crātis, crātis, f.:** wickerwork, lattice

**prēlum, -i, n.:** (from *premere*) a press (also for olives, wine, clothes)

**plāgŭla, -ae, f.:** (originally: A part of a garment which is to be sewed to the other parts, a breadth); ~ a sheet of paper

**scapus, -i, m.:** a shaft, stem, stalk; ~ a cylinder on which sheets of paper or leaves of papyrus were rolled

**malleus, -i, m.:** hammer, mallet ⇒ *malleo sufficit* ≈ “it’s not enough for the hammer” (i.e., the papyrus is smaller than the hammer used for making it)

**mutare:** scil. the official standards

**cālāmus, -i, m.:** lit. reed, cane; pen

**tra(ns)mittere:** ~ make/allow to shine/show through; subject is the (cheap) papyrus

**lītūra, -ae, f.:** from *linere*; smearing, blot, stain

**alias (adv.):** at another time; in another respect/manner; elsewhere

**cōrŭm, -i, n.:** rind, skin, bark; ~ kind of quality (of bark)

**statumen, statuminis, n.:** ~ foundation

**subte(g)men, -tegminis, n.:** that which is wrought or woven in, the woof/weft of a web

**pollis/pollen, -inis, n.:** fine flour, meal, dust

**flos, floris, m.:** lit. flower; ~ the best part of something (e.g. *flos vini* = the best kind of wine)

**cummis, -is, f.:** resin, rubber, (engl. gummy)

**mollia panis:** the soft part of bread (the crumb?)

**intergeriuus, -i, m.:** usually: a common wall between two properties; here applied to the paste between two layers of papyrus

**erugare:** getting out the *rugae* (wrinkles/creases)

**vates, vatis, m.:** lit. prophet, seer; later typical word for poet

## Celsus, *De medicina*: Proem

*Aulus Cornelius Celsus was another important encyclopedic writer of the early Roman Empire. He wrote a large work on various branches of knowledge, including agriculture, military tactics, rhetoric, and philosophy. Only the part on medicine survived antiquity and is now known as De medicina (On Medicine). It offers a comprehensive overview of the medical knowledge of Celsus' time, drawing on both Greek and Roman sources, in eight books.*

*Typical for ancient treatises on medicine, it deals with three major aspects: diet, pharmacology, and surgery. We don't know if Celsus was himself a practicing physician or only a scholar. That he also wrote about so many other subjects suggests the latter, the great detail of De medicina the former.*

*Celsus is one of the first to translate Greek medical theory and practice into Latin. This must have been quite a difficult task and in a language that did not have a rich medical tradition and its technical terminology. His achievement is therefore sometimes compared to Cicero's in the realm of philosophy.*

*Celsus' work stands out not only for its clarity and depth but also for its accessibility, making it one of the first medical texts in Latin that could be used by practicing physicians and laypeople alike. After it was lost for almost half a century (between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> century), it became the first complete textbook on medicine to be printed (in Florence 1478).*

*The text in your reader is from the introduction to De medicina and gives a little overview of the history of the discipline.*

**commilitō, -tōnis, m.:** comrade, fellow soldier. In Germany, fellow students/classmates at university are still called "Kommilitonen"

**īs:** = *iis/eis*

**uerique simile:** = *verisimilis*: probable, likely

**sapientia, -ae, f.:** ~ philosophy

**διαιτητικὴν ... φαρμακευτικὴν ... χειρουργίαν:** science of "diet" ... "pharmaceutics" ... "surgery."

The latter comes from *χειρ* (hand) + *ἔργον* (work) and is later latinized as *chirurgia* and then finds its way through old French to the modern English word "surgery."

In antiquity surgery was practiced but had a complicated social standing. In the famous Hippocratic Oath, for example, the doctor explicitly vows not to perform any surgeries.

**vindicare:** ~ to claim for oneself

**rationalem disciplinam...empiricos:** Here Celsus describes the major theoretical schools of ancient Greek medicine: the Rationalists and the Empiricists. Each offering a distinct approach to understanding and treating illness. The Rationalists, also known as the Dogmatists, believed in a theory-based approach to medicine, where understanding the underlying (and hidden) causes of diseases through logic and reasoning was paramount.

They emphasized the importance of a solid grounding in anatomy and physiology. They were convinced that if one understands the secret workings and make-up of the body (for example the four humors), one could apply medical principles logically.

In contrast, the Empiricists eschewed excessive theoretical foundations in favor of evidence gathered from observation, experience, and experimentation. They argued that because the human body is too complex for the human mind to fully comprehend, treatment should be based on empirical evidence of what works, rather than on speculative reasoning (as long as something works, it doesn't matter if we know why).

Lastly, a third school emerged: the Methodists (Celsus does not give their name, but mentions their founder, Asclepiades), who offered a more streamlined approach, focusing on commonalities among diseases and treating symptoms based on general rules. They claimed that every problem with the body was either due to a constriction or relaxation of a part of it. One could identify that by observing bodily functions like digestion (if something goes through too quickly, there must be a relaxation, if something is backed up, there must be a constriction). Their emphasis on pragmatic and expedient care made their practices especially appealing to those who valued efficiency and accessibility in medical treatment.

## Pliny's Natural History

### *Book 26, Chapter 28: Medicine and Pharmacology*

**alvus, -i, m.:** belly, bowels

**venere:** i.e. *vēnēre*

**condire, condiō, condīvī/condiī, conditum:** to preserve, to season/spice (cf. “condiment”)

**Phasis:** city at the Black Sea coast. Might be today's Poti in Georgia.

**sistere, sistō, stetī, statum:** to make stop. Here, Pliny gets into technical terminology that reminds of the Methodist School (cf. Celsus above). If the bowels are too loose, they need to be slowed down, if they are too constricted, they need to be opened up.

**scordōtis, -idis, f./scordion:** some plant that apparently smells like garlic

**drachma:** A unit of weight. Roman units of weight were mostly based on factors of 12.

They go in fractions of the *libra* (a Roman pound, that is roughly 0.725 lb) down to the *unica*, a Roman ounce which is 1/12 of a *libra* (or roughly 27.4g/0.967oz).

The *unica* was again divided into fractions of 12. A *drachma* was 1/96 of a *unica* (about 3.41 grams).

**polemonia, -ae, f.:** Greek valerian

**verbascum, -i, n.:** mullein

**nymphaea (heraclia):** water lilies

**xiphion, -i, n.:** Iris

**plantago, -ginis, f.:** plantain (not the banana)

**ālīca, -ae, f.:** a kind of grain/spelt or grits

**pāpāver, -ēris, n.:** poppy

**v(/b)ettōnica:** bettony

### *Book 30, Chapter 1–17: Magic*

**etiamnum:** also now, even at this time

**specie:** ~ under the guise of, looking...

**cālīgāre:** lit. to be dark/cloudy; ~ to be in the dark (+ *ad aliquid*: about something), to be blinded in judgement



**miscuisse:** scil. *eam artem*

**(ars) mathematica:** ~ astrology

**unus hic an et alius:** was there only one Zoroaster or several different ones?

**eam:** scil. *ars magica*

**error, erroris, m.:** wandering, “odyssey”

**commentārī, commentor, commentātus sum:** to study, to discuss, write about

**ōbīter:** on the way, in passing, incidentally

**Proconnesus:** island in the Sea of Marmara

**antiquitus (adv.):** in former times, from ancient times

**peregrinatio, -onis, f.:** travel, trip abroad

**praedicare:** proclaim, praise, preach

**pendens:** ~ derived from, stemming from

**Galliae:** Gaul is in the plural because there were two provinces, *Gallia cisalpina* & *Gallia transalpina*

**tollere, tollō, sustulī, sublātum:** ~ take away, make away with something

**inane naturae:** the emptiness of nature; ~ in the middle of nowhere (like England)

**(Britannia) dedisse Persis videri possit:** i.e., as opposed to the other way around

**in illo:** this refers to Nero. In a preceding passage that is not in your reader, Pliny described how nobody was as eager to learn magic as the Emperor Nero. Apparently, he tried everything possible to learn how to become mightier than the gods, but even he who had all the means in the world, had to give up and admit that it was all a fraud in the end.

### *Book 35, Chapter 1–36: Painting*

**nobilitare:** make famous

**dignari:** deem worthy

**pellere, pellō, pepulī, pulsum:** ~ oust, replace

**interradere, interrādo, rāsi, rāsum:** to scrape, to emboss or work in low relief

**vermiculātus, -a, -um:** lit. to be full of worms; technical term for “inlaid so as to resemble the tracks of worms, vermiculated” (esp. of mosaics.)

**crusta, -ae, f.:** lit. crust (as in hard surface of any body); technical term for “inlaid, chased, or embossed work on walls or vessels, plasterwork, stucco-work, mosaic work”

**abacus, -i, m.:** A painted panel or square compartment in the wall or ceiling of a chamber

**dilatatio:** to spread out; ~ to be spread out, to extend oneself

**imago, -ginis, f.:** ~ portrait

**figura, -ae, f.:** ~ appearance

**exolēscere, exolēsko, exolēvī, exolētum:** come to an end, grow out of use

**clipeus, -i, m.:** a round bronze shield

**surdus, -a, -um:** lit. deaf; ~ insensible, indistinct

**sāl, salis, m./n.:** lit. salt; figurative: Intellectual acuteness, good sense, shrewdness, cunning, wit, facetiousness, sarcasm, a witticism, witty saying

**pīnācōthēca, -ae, f.:** from Greek πινακοθήκη = picture gallery

**tabula, -ae, f.:** picture

**foras:** out, out of the doors

**laqueus, -i, m.:** noose

**ceroma, ceromatis, n.:** Greek for wax ointments used by athletes, and also denoting the rooms where these were applied before or after a match

**Epicurus:** Greek philosopher of the Hellenistic period. His philosophy builds on Democritus' atomism. One of his main concepts is that of ἡδονή (hedone = pleasure). It denotes an absence of too strong emotions in either side, good or bad. But his critics often misinterpreted this as a license for excessive sensual pleasures. That's what our modern term "hedonistic" still denotes. His philosophy was translated into Latin by Lucretius with his long poetic *De rerum natura*.

**natalis (sc. dies):** birthday

**īcas, ādis, f.:** from Greek εἰκάς (twenty)

**ii maxime:** ~ those of all people (derogatory)

**ne viventes quidem nosci volunt:** A maxim of Epicurus was λάθε βιώσας "live unnoticed!"

**maiores, maiorum, m.:** the ancestors; the *maiores* played an important role in Roman morality. The *mos maiorum* (the "old way"), conceived as morally superior, was frequently alluded to in all kinds of situation where one wanted to stress how bad things have become (in other words, not quite unlike today)

**armarium, -i, n.:** a sideboard, closet; ~ compartment in the wall, where death mask is hung or set up.

**imagines:** Families of the Roman elite displayed masks of ancestors in their houses. These *imagines* were most likely made of wax, colored and detailed to create as accurate a depiction as possible. They could be arranged in a family tree, with a title (*titulus*) summarizing the individual's offices held (*honores*) and accomplishments (*res gestae*).

They were not only used at funerals but were also displayed at important family gatherings such as weddings. They were therefore not housed in the tomb, but in the family *domus*. Their making was acknowledged as requiring a high level of skill; they were intended as a faithful rendition of their subject, but were apparently not considered works of art. Since they were made of perishable materials, none survived antiquity.

**familia, -ae, f.:** the Roman *familia* does not denote the same as our term “family.” It rather means “household” and therefore every person associated with the house, including various enslaved individuals.

**stemma, stemmatis, n.:** pedigree

**tăbŭlĭnum, -i, n.:** balcony, terrace; ~ a place where family records were kept, archives

**refigere:** unfasten, ~ take down

**Laevinii:** The Laevini and the Messalae were still closely related, which goes to show how strict this Messala was about his family lineage.

**pax Messalarum:** from *pax* (peace); ~ with the Mesallas’ permission (as in: I hope they are fine with me saying...)

**suas:** scil. *virtutes* or *imagines*

**loquuntur:** as in “through their writings”

**utique:** in any case, certainly, anyway

**opus:** as in: this work (the *Naturalis historia*)

**in orbitate tecti:** without a roof

**commĭnus (adv.):** nearby, close to each other, in contest/fight

**Gaius princeps:** i.e. Caligula

**tectorium, -i, n.:** plaster, stucco, fresco-painting

**aequales eius:** Pliny talked about the painter Zeuxis before

**concedere palmam:** yield the prize (the victory palm branch); concede

**deferre:** ~ to produce

**lintheum, -i, n.:** curtain

**tumens (+ abl.):** lit. be swollen; ~ to be proud (of something)

**flagitare:** to urge, demand

**consummare:** accomplish, perfect, finish