CHAPTER 10

‘Parents of Human Civilisation’: The Lots of Love and Necessity

Eros und Ananke sind auch die Eltern der menschlichen Kultur geworden.

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2 In Das Geheimniss der Hermetischen Philosophie, in welchem die Verborgenheit der Natur und der Kunst, die Materie und Weise zu wirken betreffende, vom Steine der Weisen, durch gewisse Regeln ordentlich geoffenbaret wird. Aus der dritten vermehrten und verbesserten Lateinischen Ausfertigung Parisischen Drucks ins Hochdeutsche übersetzt (Frankfurt and Leipzig: In der Fleischerischen Buchhandlung, 1770), title page.
Prologue: Macrobius’s Caduceus

Macrobius, who wrote in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, is known for two works, the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* and the *Saturnalia*. In both of these he shows his familiarity with current religious and philosophical traditions, including Pythagoreanism, Orphism, Platonism and what we now call Neo-Platonism. It is also obvious that he had at least a working knowledge of astrology and astrological principles, for both the *Commentary* and the *Saturnalia* contain discussions on the planets, the zodiac and the use of astrology. Several chapters of the *Saturnalia* are devoted to syncretizing other gods with the Sun, and within those chapters is the following:

[16] Another clear proof that it is the sun that we worship under the name of Mercury is the caduceus, which the Egyptians have designed as the sacred staff of Mercury. It shows a pair of serpents, male and female, intertwined; the middle parts of the serpents’ coils are joined together as in a knot, called the knot of Hercules; their upper parts are bent into a circle and complete the circle as they meet in a kiss; below the knot their tails rejoin the staff at the point at which it is held, and at that point appear the wings with which they are provided. [17] The Egyptians also maintain that the attributes of the caduceus illustrate the nativity, or ‘genesis’ as it is called, of mankind; for they say that four deities are present to preside over a man’s birth: his Daimôn, Tuchē, Erōs and Anankē [Daimon, Fortune, Love and Necessity]. By the first two they understand the sun and the moon; for the sun, as the source of the breath of life and of heat and of light, is the creator and the guardian of a man’s life and is therefore believed to be the daimon, or god, of a newborn child; the moon is Tuchē [Fortune], since she has charge of the body, and the body is at the mercy of the fickleness of change; the kiss of the serpents is the symbol of Love; and the knot is the symbol of Necessity. [18] Why wings are added has already been explained, and of the above-mentioned attributes the coiled bodies of the serpents have been specially chosen, as

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3 *Commentary*, 1, 12, 19, 20.1–8, 21; 11,11; *Saturnalia*, 1, 19.16–18, 21.
4 Perhaps in an effort, during a period where Christianity was becoming ever more powerful, to ‘monotheize’ paganism.
5 Recall Chapter 3, Figure 3.2, right (no. 3180), 82, and Figure 3.3, 86, with the caduceus pictured with the Agathos Daimon; Dunand mentions a few more such images in *LIMC* 1/1, 281 (nos 31–35).