

BELLARIA (XII)



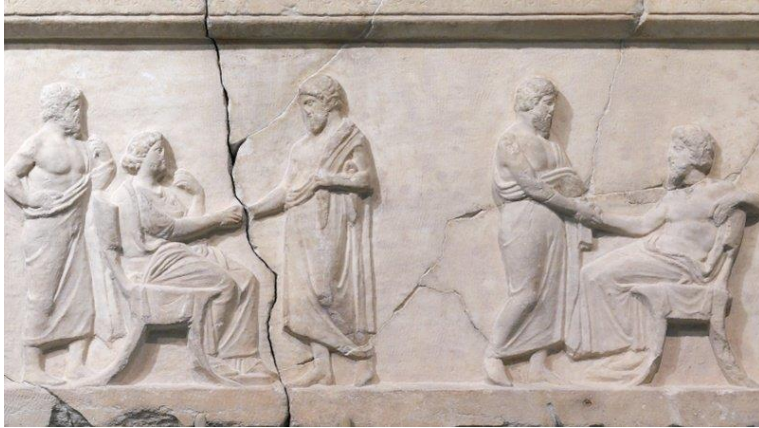
Morpheus, god of sleep and dreams, by Jean-Bernard (appropriately) Restout (1732-1791)

ARTEMIDORUS: THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS (2)

Artemidorus from Daldis, near Ephesus, writing c. AD 200, composed his Interpretation of Dreams (Oneirokritika in Greek) in five books, showing the beginner how it should be done. This run of Bellaria will introduce supporters of Classics for All to this enthusiastic hero of the genre.

*Note: ‘**Hammond ID**’ refers to Martin Hammond, The Interpretation of Dreams (Oxford World’s Classics, 2020). For grateful acknowledgement of all the sources of this Bellaria sequence, see Bellaria XI.*

Here he describes the subjects of the dreams discussed in the first two of his (eventually) five books.



Greeting



Athletics: a pankratiast surrenders



Fishing



Harvesting

The Interpretation of Dreams Books 1-2: contents

1.10.1 We shall move on now to address the question of how the dreams should be interpreted, arranging our treatment in this rough order. We shall not follow the old authorities in beginning with the gods, however impious that might seem to some, but with regard to the natural sequence of things we shall begin first with birth, then deal next with upbringing, next with the body and the parts of the body (dreams about parts added or lost, growing or diminishing in size, changing shape or substance), then education in all manner of trades, manual work, and professions, then early manhood, physical exercise of all types, athletic games, the baths and washing in general, all kinds of food, wet or dry, perfumes and garlands, sexual intercourse, and sleep. This will be the content of our **first book**.

2 The **second book** will deal with waking up, greeting people, all forms of male and female clothing, the weather and related issues, hunting, fishing, sailing, farming, legal matters, public administration and liturgies, military service, divine worship and the gods themselves, death, and anything else prompted in the course of the discussion.

Hammond ID 1.10.1-2

1.10.1 ἐξῆς ὑποθησόμεθα πῶς δεῖ κρίνειν τοὺς ὄνειρους. ἔξει δὲ τάξιν ἢ πραγματεία τοιαύτην. οὐχ ὥσπερ οἱ παλαιοὶ ἀπὸ θεῶν ἀρξόμεθα, κἂν ἀσεβεῖν τινὶ δοκῶμεν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἀναγκαῖον τῆς ἀκολουθίας ἀποβλέποντες ἀρξόμεθα, πρῶτον ἀπὸ τοῦ γεννᾶσθαι, ἔπειτα ἀνατρέφεσθαι, ἐξῆς περὶ σώματος καὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι μερῶν—προσγινομένων τε καὶ ἀπογινομένων καὶ αὐξανομένων καὶ μειουμένων καὶ ἀλλοιουμένων εἰς μορφήν ἑτέραν ἢ εἰς ὕλην—εἶτα περὶ διδασκαλίας τεχνῶν παντοδαπῶν καὶ ἔργων καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων, εἶτα περὶ ἐφηβίας, περὶ γυμνασίων κατ' εἶδος, περὶ ἀγώνων, περὶ βαλανείου καὶ λουτροῦ παντοδαποῦ, περὶ τροφῆς πάσης ὑγρᾶς τε καὶ ξηρᾶς, περὶ μύρων καὶ στεφάνων, περὶ ἀφροδισίων συνουσίας, περὶ ὕπνου. ταῦτα μὲν περιέξει ἡ πρώτη βίβλος·

2 ἢ δὲ δευτέρα περὶ ἐγρηγόρσεως, ἀσπασμάτων, κόσμου παντὸς ἀνδρείου καὶ γυναικείου, ἀέρος καὶ τῶν περὶ ἀέρα, περὶ κυνηγεσίας, περὶ ἀλιείας, περὶ πλοῦ, περὶ γεωργίας, περὶ δίκης, ἀρχῆς δημοσίας καὶ λειτουργίας, στρατείας, θεῶν τιμῆς καὶ περὶ θεῶν, περὶ θανάτου, καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο προῖων ὁ λόγος ὑπομνήσει.

Ὀνειροκριτικά 1.10.1-2

The reason why Artemidorus did not, in time-honoured fashion, 'begin with the gods' is that he did not believe dreams emanated from them. So they took their place in his chosen structure: in Book 1 from birth to the body and its exercise and care (including food and decoration) sex and sleep; in Book 2 looking out to the wider world, to human interaction and dress, the weather, the animal kingdom and

natural world, human society, gods, death and other odds and ends (pots and pans, eggs, flying etc.).

Cause (but *not* effect)

Artemidorus was keen to stress that his work was the result of years of experience and research. By the same token, he was aware that simply saying to your client ‘Your dream of competing in the pentathlon means you will travel abroad’ might well invite the question ‘Why?’, and to answer ‘Don’t ask me, squire, it just does, that’ll be two obols, † NEXT’ might affect one’s professional reputation. His answer: keep the punter happy and *make something up*. It did not matter what, as long as it sounded plausible: it was the predicted outcome, which was not affected by the ‘cause’, that counted.

† Evidently the charge for a dream-interpretation in late 5th C BC Athens (Aristophanes *Wasps* 52). At that time two obols was one third of a day’s pay for a skilled craftsman, and fees were probably at about the same level in Artemidorus’ day (c. AD 180-210). We can only guess at how long a consultation lasted.

Here, in the first of two later books [4 and 5] addressed to his son, a trainee dream-interpreter, Artemidorus explains:

4.20.1 You should always try to assign a **cause** and accompany any interpretation with a stated reason and some credible explanations: otherwise, even if you are quite accurate in your interpretation, giving a bare declaration of the outcome stripped of all its surrounding material will make you seem less professional. But you must not let yourself be misled into thinking that the causes you assign do actually determine the outcomes. Some people have frequent dreams with the same outcome, and we know that there is some logical pattern to these outcomes from the fact that they always turn out the same, but we cannot find the causes why that outcome is as it is. That is why it is our opinion that outcomes are arrived at on the basis of practical experience, but explanations of their causes are simply the best that each of us can come up with from his own resources.

Hammond ID 4.20.1

4.20.1 πειρῶ δὲ πάντα μὲν αἰτιολογεῖν καὶ προσάπτειν ἐκάστῳ λόγον καὶ πιθανάς τινας ἀποδείξεις, ὡς εἰ καὶ πάνυ ἀληθῆ λέγοις, ψιλὰ καὶ περιλελεπισμένα ἀποτελέσματα λέγων ἤττον εἶναι δόξεις ἔμπειρος· αὐτὸς δὲ μὴ ἐξαπατηθῆς ὡς τῆς αἰτιολογίας κυρίας τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων οὔσης· πολλὰ γὰρ ἀποβαίνει συνεχῶς ἐνίοις, καὶ ὅτι μὲν κατὰ λόγον ἀποβαίνει ἴσμεν ἐκ τοῦ πάντοτε ὁμοίως ἀποβαίνειν, τὰς δὲ αἰτίας, δι’ ἃς οὕτως ἀποβαίνει, εὐρεῖν οὐ δυνάμεθα. ὅθεν ἠγούμεθα τὰς μὲν ἀποβάσεις ἀπὸ τῆς πείρας εὐρῆσθαι, τὰς δὲ αἰτιολογίας ἀπὸ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν κατὰ τὴν ἐκάστου δύναμιν.

Ὀνειροκριτικά 4.20.1

Here are some examples of Artemidorus' causal observations (underlined). One has to admire his imagination:

a. Learning to read and write



Possibly Orbilius? From Benevento Cathedral: note the raised hand

1.53.1 If an illiterate man dreams of learning **to read and write**, that signifies that something good is coming for the dreamer, though there will be toil and terror along the way: pupils have a hard time and live in terror of their masters, but they learn to their ultimate advantage†. For a literate man to dream of learning his letters all over again must be considered malign and unnatural, as learning to read is what children do. For that reason it signifies unemployment as well as the toil and terror ...

† The poet Horace described his teacher Lucius Orbilius Pupillus, who came from Beneventum and was then about 60, as *plagosus* 'flogger'

Hammond ID 1.53.1

1.53.1 γράμματα μανθάνειν μὴ εἰδότα ἀγαθόν τι μετὰ πόνου καὶ φόβου τῷ ἰδόντι ἐσόμενον προαγορεύει· φοβοῦνται γὰρ ἅμα καὶ πονοῦσιν οἱ μανθάνοντες, πλὴν ἐπὶ τῷ συμφέροντι μανθάνουσιν. εἰ δέ τις εἰδὼς γράμματα πάλιν μανθάνοι, πονηρὸν καὶ ἄτοπον νομίζειν χρή· παιδαριῶδες γὰρ τὸ μανθάνειν. διὸ ἀπραξίας ἅμα τοῖς φόβοις καὶ πόνοις σημαίνει ...

Ὀνειροκριτικά 1.53.1

b. Decapitation

1.35.1 To dream of being **beheaded**, either through judicial execution or by bandits or in gladiatorial combat, or in any way whatsoever (it makes no difference), is malign for anyone with parents or children. The head is like parents, as the source of one's life; and like children, because of the facial resemblance. After this dream people have before now lost a wife, a friend, or a good steward, and been left with no figure to keep an eye on their property ...

3 For bankers, money-lenders, presidents of an eranos,† shipowners, merchants, and all who accumulate money, the dream signifies the loss of their capital, because 'capital' (*kephalaion*) comes from the word for 'head' (*kephalē*). For debtors, by parity of reasoning, the dream is auspicious.

4 Anyone who is in a foreign country will return to his own, and anyone in a lawsuit concerning land will win his case. This is because when the head is removed from the body it falls to the earth and stays there, and ensures that the rest of the body will feel no more pain.

† A sort of 'friendly society'

Hammond ID 1.35.1, 3-4

1.35.1 ἀφηρησθαι δὲ δοκεῖν τῆς κεφαλῆς εἴτε ἐκ καταδίκης εἴτε ὑπὸ ληστῶν εἴτε ἐν μονομαχίᾳ εἴτε οἰωδῆποτε τρόπῳ (οὐ γὰρ διαφέρει) πονηρὸν τῷ γονεῖς ἔχοντι καὶ τῷ τέκνῳ· γονεῦσι μὲν γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ κεφαλὴ διὰ τὸ τοῦ ζῆν αἰτίαν εἶναι· τέκνοις δὲ διὰ τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα. ἤδη δὲ τινες καὶ γυναικὸς καὶ φίλου καὶ οἰκονόμου ἀγαθοῦ ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ ὀνειρῷ ἐστερήθησαν καὶ οὐκέτι ἔσχον τὸ ἐπιβλέπον τὰ κτήματα πρόσωπον ...

3 τραπεζίταις δὲ καὶ δανεισταῖς καὶ ἐρανάρχαις καὶ ναυκλήροις καὶ ἐμπόροις καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς χρήματα συνάγουσιν ἀπώλειαν τῶν κεφαλαίων διὰ τὸ ὁμώνυμον σημαίνει. ἀγαθὸν δὲ καταχρέοις διὰ τὰ αὐτά.

4 ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ ξένης ὦν εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ κατέλθοι ἄν, καὶ ὁ περὶ γῆς δίκην ἔχων νικήσει· ἀφαιρεθεῖσα γὰρ ἡ κεφαλὴ εἰς τὴν γῆν πίπτει καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ μένει καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ σώματι παρέχει τὸ μηκέτι λυπεῖσθαι.

Ὀνειροκριτικά 1.35.1, 3-4



Decapitated Roman skeleton



This is an extract selected for you as part of Classics for All's 'Bellaria' series to cheer us up during the COVID-19 pandemic. The full series of weekly instalments may be found on our website classicsforall.org.uk/bellaria/