Book I: The Betrothal

Book I begins as Mercury determines that he is of the right age and stature to get married; he begins to consider his options. He first considers Wisdom, then Prophecy, and finally Psyche, but finds that none of the three are either suitable or available. Upon his companion Virtue’s advice, Mercury decides to seek out his brother Apollo in order to decide who else might be a suitable marriage partner. As Mercury and Virtue search for Apollo, they encounter the music of the gods, beautiful music in the perfect harmonies of the celestial spheres. Here, Virtue learns that as these harmonies poured forth from Apollo’s grove, it is Apollo (the sun) that controls the motion of the celestial spheres.

When Mercury and Virtue find Apollo, he suggests Philology, who symbolizes human learning, as a suitable partner for Mercury, who symbolizes the divine mind. Mercury agrees, and as he, Apollo, and Virtue ascend to present this marriage proposal to Jove, heaven rejoices; the celestial spheres produce sweet symphonies, embodied by the Muses. Jove decides to call a council of the gods together in order to decide whether or not to allow the marriage. He invites several gods from nearly every region of heaven, including Universal Lar, a representation of the World Soul. Together, the gods decide to allow the marriage, saying that though Philology is earthbound, she is “destined to rise to the stars” (32).
Book II: The Marriage

As Book II begins, Philology is having second thoughts about marriage; she is afraid that the ascent to heaven will cause her to lose the myths and legends of Earth and mankind. In order to ease her mind and determine if she and Mercury will be compatible, Philology performs calculations, adding up their names. She comes up with the ratios 3:4 and 9:8, straightforward ratios which indicate the proportions of musical harmony. Philology then determines that she will have a harmonious marriage.

As she continues to prepare for her wedding, she is told through the songs of the Muses that as she is accustomed to assessing melodies and knowledge, she is well prepared for ascending to the celestial realm. The Muses see that Philology is well-versed in the arts and in all aspects of learning, and they tell her that because of this, the world is subject to her.

When the songs of the muses are finished, Philology “retches violently” (47), bringing up writings and books filled with learning—science, math, and musical notation and harmonies. She then drinks from Immortality to revive herself so that she may begin her ascent to heaven. Through her journey to the celestial realm, Cappella writes that Philology ascends six celestial intervals, and as she ascends, all of the spheres break forth in consonance and harmony, refreshing her in her journey.

Philology then becomes aware of the father who is above the entire system, who has transcended even the celestial realm and is in the highest heaven, a realm of “pure understanding” (61). She prays to the three gods (the One, Mind, and World Soul) seeking truth. Through this prayer, she earns deification and worship, and her soul enters the celestial realm.
As this book begins, Mercury is tempted by his passion for Venus, and Juno suggests that they hold the wedding quickly, but Jupiter is hesitant as he does not want to rush any festivities or preparations. He notes that several of the bridesmaids have not yet responded. Apollo mentions that Medicine and Architecture could be bridesmaids, but decides that since they are mortal and interested in more mundane matters, they would not be the best choice. Instead, they call on Harmony, “the particular darling of the heavens” (346) to come and be a bridesmaid.

Harmony brings pleasure and comfort to the gods and the heavens, but it seems she has been absent for quite some time, and they are eager for her return. When she appears, the heavens welcome her with a symphony of beautiful harmonies. She is dressed in gold and walks with measured steps, and she carries a round shield of sorts, from which all of the modes pour forth in consonance. At the sound of this music, all the other music falls silent, and Harmony begins a hymn to Jupiter.

Following her songs, Harmony gives a discourse on the art of music. She explains that she had been sent with the souls to earth in order to watch over them. While there, she introduced harmony into all things, assigning numbers and ratios to music as well as to human bodies, establishing a firm relationship between soul and body. She reveals that she also created instruments so that her art could be comprehended by men.

Harmony describes the power of music as it has brought healing and joy and comfort, and then she begins to explain the theory of her art, describing intervals and tones, consonances and motion. Abruptly, Harmony finishes her description, and she begins singing again, a lullaby, as she enters the marriage chamber.

Work Cited